

For Immediate Release: **10 February 2023**

Tackling the cost-of-living crisis and soaring energy bills for rural, off-gas households

A Derbyshire charity is taking a number of important steps to support rural people through the current cost-of-living crisis.

Rural Action Derbyshire is helping the most vulnerable in countryside communities through several avenues which tackle the cost of energy, food and everyday living.

Rising energy bills are affecting households across Derbyshire, but they are proving even more challenging for the 67,000 households living off the mains gas in the county - with as many as 40% of properties in the Derbyshire Dales relying on oil, coal or liquid petroleum gas (LPG) to warm their homes.

Within a year, the cost of heating oil has skyrocketed, pushing many rural households closer to the breadline. This is why RAD's support is so important.

We have launched a new pilot scheme to provide financial support for fuel poor households off the mains gas network. The British Gas Energy Fund is providing funding so RAD can offer a one-off sum of £150 per household to go towards energy costs. This will be paid direct to the supplier for heating oil, LPG or solid fuel. Provided beneficiaries are not in debt with their energy suppliers, this can help to tackle rising alternative energy costs, pushing prices closer to 2021 levels.

And thanks to the generosity of Homefire and Feeding Britain, RAD is able to provide supplies of smokeless coal to those relying on solid fuel to heat their homes.

Four tonnes of coal will be available at sites across Derbyshire for vulnerable households, meaning beneficiaries referred can receive much-needed supplies over winter.

Rose Bray, Project Manager at Feeding Britain, said: "We're delighted that Homefire gave the green light to offer this donation. It's fantastic. We chose to split this donation across five Feeding Britain partners where we believe the demand will be greatest. This includes Derbyshire, where a large quantity of coal will be made available."

RAD's Oil Bank will continue to provide deliveries of 500 litres of heating oil. Applications are judged on a case-by-case basis, only one delivery per household and strict eligibility criteria apply.

Finally, RAD can help with other costs through its Rural Hardship Fund, which has been relaunched with funding from DCC Public Health. This benefits those who are in financial hardship and need help with critical expenses. If a car, fridge, cooker or washing machine breaks down, for instance, many people will struggle to find the money to get it repaired or replaced. Some may need essential furniture or carpets. This Fund provides vital support with these costs.

In the past, we have processed over 80 applications, offering just under £18,000 to vulnerable residents in total. We can now offer a maximum of £300 per household to continue our support for those in need.

Applications for any of these support funds are only by referral from services such as [Citizens Advice](#), [Social Care](#), [Public Health](#), [Food Banks](#), [Derbyshire Rural Chaplaincy](#) and [AgeUK](#).

Emma Simpson, Fuel Poverty lead at Rural Action Derbyshire, added: "It is certainly more challenging for people who live in rural properties off the mains gas grid. Alternative energy prices are not regulated and the payment options mean it is much harder to spread the cost. I am so grateful to the British Gas Energy Trust, Homefire and Feeding Britain.

"Through these vital avenues of support, we can take steps towards bringing energy prices back down to a more manageable level, helping vulnerable people to fight the cold this winter."

For more information on how to apply for any of these avenues of support, including our terms and conditions, please visit the Rural Action Derbyshire website.

If you'd like to support the work of Rural Action Derbyshire, please visit ruralactionderbyshire.org.uk/donate/rural-action-derbyshire.

ruralactionderbyshire.org.uk/rural-hardship-fund

NOTES TO EDITOR

For more information on RAD's work in tackling the cost of living, please contact Emma Simpson at Rural Action Derbyshire on 01629 592970 or email e.simpson@ruralactionderbyshire.org.uk.

[Rural Action Derbyshire \(RAD\)](#), formerly Derbyshire Rural Community Council, is an independent organisation and registered charity operating across the county since 1924. RAD aims to improve the life of those living and working in rural Derbyshire, by providing direct services to help people and groups in rural communities, and by raising awareness of the issues faced by rural communities. For more information, go to the RAD website. RAD is a network member of ACRE.

[Feeding Britain](#) is an award-winning charity with a vision of a UK where no one goes hungry. They support a national network of 50 regional anti-hunger partnerships comprising more than 600 local organisations – ranging from community centres to schools. RAD hosts Feeding Derbyshire, one of the original Feeding Britain partners.

[The British Gas Energy Fund](#) helps families and individuals experiencing hardship who are struggling with gas and electricity bills by awarding grants. This is the first time BGET have offered financial support specifically for off-gas households. RAD is the first organisation in the UK to be running this fund as a pilot basis. It is hoped that it will be rolled out to other parts of the country and repeated in future years.