



enclosure
From: Fiona Hepper
Energy Division

Date: 17 December 2012

To: 1. Andrew Crawford
2. Arlene Foster MLA

A 20/12
A 3/1 content + reply

COR/643/2012 SOLAR PANELS

Issue: Alderman Gordon Dunne MLA has received a complaint from one of his constituents that ageism exists in respect of solar panel grants.

Timing: Routine

**Need for referral
To the Executive:** Not Applicable

Presentational Issues: None

Freedom of Information: This submission is fully disclosable.

**Programme for Government
/PSA Implications:** Not Applicable

Financial Implications: None

Legislation Implications: Not Applicable

**Statutory Equality
Obligations:** None

Recommendation: That you agree the advice and reply to Ald Dunne. A draft for your consideration is attached at **Annex A**.

INTRODUCTION

Alderman Gordon Dunne MLA wrote to Minister McCausland's office on behalf of one of his constituents who has a complaint about solar panel grants. As DETI is the only Northern Ireland department currently offering grant support for solar panels, DSD has passed the correspondence to your office for reply.

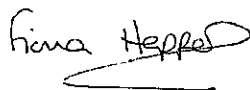
BACKGROUND

2. One of Mr Dunne's constituents has complained to him that she received notification of government grants for solar panels from a private company. However on making a further enquiry was told she was ineligible to apply for the grant as she was not aged 65 or under.

3. The lady is 75 years of age and believes she is being discriminated against because of her age. No other details of the grant in question or the private company were provided.
4. Through the Renewable Heat Premium Payment (RHPP) scheme DETI currently offers a grant of £320 towards the installation of a solar thermal panel. The RHPP does not contain any age restrictions and is open for anyone to apply.
5. Individuals should apply for the grant which stipulates that systems must be installed by someone registered under the Micro-generation Certification Scheme (MCS). As individuals make the application to DETI for the grant, it is not for MCS installers to apply their own additional criteria.
6. The current position with RHPP is that there have been 480 applications, 451 current offers of grant and 175 claims for payment. Of the claims received 60% have been grants for solar thermal panels.
7. The value of the offers to date under RHPP is £690k and payments of £105k have been made.

RECOMMENDATION

8. The RHPP is open to all irrespective of age and a draft reply for your consideration is attached at **Annex A**.



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cc David Sterling
David Thomson
Joanne McCutcheon
Paul Dolaghan
Judith Wallwin
Karen Fullerton
Dan Sinton
Peter Hutchinson
Neth Energy
Alastair Ross MLA