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NEWS

Rich enjoy free fuel AND taxpayers' cash while millions must choose between heating and eating

A Government subsidy scheme for 'biomass' boilers is allowing the rich to almost literally burn public money while fuel poverty grips Britain



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By [Nick Sommerlad](#) & Rob Eveleigh

22:12, 10 NOV 2014 | **UPDATED** 22:23, 10 NOV 2014



Incentive: Britain's richest MP Richard Benyon may get a boiler for his Berkshire pile (Image: PA / The People / Getty)



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Wealthy landlords are enjoying free heating and hundreds of thousands of pounds in taxpayers' cash under a controversial green energy scheme.

The owners of "biomass" boilers, which run on woodchip pellets, are coining in generous Government subsidies worth up to five times their installation cost.

Meanwhile, 2.33 million households are **living in fuel poverty** in England alone and research **by Age UK** last winter showed the cold would kill 24,000.

Toffs looking into getting a boiler include Britain's richest MP Richard Benyon
Cameron's father Sir Reggie Sheffield.

Subsidies for the boilers are guaranteed for the next 20 years. Owners pay to install the boilers and the Government gives them a tariff for the heat produced. Those who have joined the scheme are raving about the savings.

Property magnet Jon Gauld, 56, has one for converted flats in Kent and said he saw it as a "pension fund".

He said: "The installation will pay for itself within five years. After this the payments I'm expecting, around £23,000, a year are profit. I can heat the place for free. The bizarre thing is the more energy you use, the more money it makes you."

Ann Gerrard, 58, who lives on a £2million estate in Nutley, East Sussex, warms her home, gym, cottage and stables by burning fuel from her woods.

She is expecting to receive £12,000 a year for 20 years – as well as saving £6,000 a year by burning wood instead of oil.

She said: "It's permanent hot water and permanent heating in the winter, and it is not costing us anything really."

David de Boinville installed a boiler to heat his manor house Walkern Hall as well as neighbouring flats, coach house, stables and estate office, near Stevenage, Herts.

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Nice little earner: Walkern Hall in Herfordshire

His forecast payments tot up to nearly £23,000 – against installation costs of £95,000. He said: “I’m saving half my heating costs and selling heat to tenants.”

One installer told us: “We hear of companies installing boilers that are larger than required. They leave the boiler running and their windows open.”

The Government launched the Non-Domestic Renewable Heat Incentive almost three years ago.

It is open to businesses and public bodies - but loopholes mean anyone warming multiple buildings from one source can apply.

Clare Welton, of Fuel Poverty Action, said: “Huge cash handouts for rich homeowners whilst millions suffer is clearly not the way to solve our energy crisis.”

The Department of Energy and Climate Change expects the Government to pay out £146million under the scheme over the next 12 months.

DECC said the high tariffs are needed to “kick-start” the renewable energy market but a “tiering” tariff

system is in place to deter people from generating excess heat.

Ofgem, which [runs the renewable heat incentive](#), said there is a phone line to report suspected abuses of the scheme.

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