

## The British Gas energy trust

## The Scottish Gas energy trust

In 2004, the British Gas Energy Trust (BGET) was established. Solely funded by British Gas, it is governed by a Board of independent Trustees from across the UK. Trustees have a wealth of relevant experience across the money advice, energy, charitable and financial sectors.

### The British Gas Energy Trust exists:

1

for the relief of poverty for those who cannot pay for their energy and other household bills

2

for the education of the public in relation to debt awareness and prevention and

3

to work with other UK trust funds and organisations to encourage good practice and consistency.

### The Trust meets its aims by delivering two grant programmes:

#### 1. Individuals and Families Grants Programme

Grants are awarded to clear gas and electricity debts. In exceptional circumstances other priority debts can be cleared and grants awarded for essential energy efficient white goods purchased. These awards are known as Further Assistance Payments (FAPs).

Applicants also benefit from the BGET working with other utility Trusts and Funds administered by Charis within a 'Shared Programme of Giving' to provide holistic help and enhance the advantage of their awards, namely the Anglian Water Assistance Fund, EDF Energy Trust and the npower Energy Fund. In addition the Trust endeavours to encourage them to work with utility suppliers to enable them to manage their bills going forward. An applicant only has to complete one application form to be considered for help from any of these Trusts and Funds.

The BGET encourages applicants to seek money advice at all stages of the application process in order to increase their chance of a successful application and support applicants in becoming financially sustainable.

#### 2. Organisational Grants Programme

Grants are awarded to advice organisations across the UK to increase specialist fuel debt advice, providing one-to-one assistance for those in need with:

- Resolving energy debt problems and negotiating with energy suppliers
- Completing applications to the British Gas Energy Trust and other grant giving schemes where appropriate
- A range of other energy issues including:
  - Energy efficiency advice
  - How to read energy meters
  - Setting up payment plans and monthly direct debits
  - Money / fuel debt advice
  - Referrals to other grant making trusts or schemes or alternative specialist advice agencies for resolution of other debt issues and welfare benefits advice.

### CASE STUDY

Mr and Mrs L lived in a privately rented property with their son. Mr L stayed at home to care for their son and Mrs L worked part time which meant the family survived on a low income of wages and benefits. Their son had a bowel condition which left him incontinent therefore a large chunk of the household income was spent on purchasing new underwear, clothing and bedding which left them with little excess after all the bills had been paid.

When their washing machine broke down the family had to rely on the generosity of their friends and neighbours who allowed them to use theirs. The family had no savings and could not afford the repayments and high interest charges from weekly repayment stores such as BrightHouse. They had also fallen into arrears with their gas due to having the heating on constantly in order to dry the washing.

During a meeting with their Support Worker, Mr and Mrs L were

advised that they could apply to the BGET to clear their gas arrears and replace their washing machine. They were supported by their Social Worker and their application was successful.

Mr and Mrs L were awarded £512 to clear their gas arrears and received a brand new A rated washing machine. In addition the new washing machine was installed and the old machine taken away for disposal.

The award made a huge difference to the family. Their Social Worker helped them devise a weekly budget and they were also put on a more suitable tariff so they did not fall behind with their gas payments again.



# Chair's Report

I am pleased to present the 2014 Annual Report for the British Gas Energy Trust (BGET) in its tenth year of operation.



In 2014 the BGET received 26,074 applications and made a total of 16,310 awards totalling £12m, a 39% increase on the number of awards made in 2013. Awards were granted to families and individuals in need to clear their energy debts, and in exceptional circumstances help with other priority household bills, energy efficient white goods and boilers.

The BGET continues to receive high volumes of applications and still generously supports customers of all utility companies experiencing financial hardship. In 2014 the average energy debt award totalled £769 and the average boiler award £2,601.

The BGET continued to support its organisational grant programme in 2014 by financially supporting specialist project workers working within charitable advice organisations. In 2014 the BGET supported 28 organisations (including 12 Shelter organisations) in the provision of specialist fuel debt advice and holistic money / debt advice, promotion of the BGET via presentations within local communities and PR campaigns and increasing the submission of quality charitable applications to the BGET and other grant making schemes.

In 2014 the Trust welcomed a number of new projects to the programme including Plymouth Energy Community, Energy Projects Plus (the Wirral) the Zinthiya Trust (Leicester) and Foundations Independent Living Trust. Shelter's project also expanded with the addition of eight new branches extending the project's geographical reach across the UK.

2014 also saw the growth of the BGET's organisational grant programme via the introduction of a new project aimed at reducing debt via the Heath Sector. On 1 April three of the existing funded organisations, St Helen's CAB, Bromley by Bow Centre (London) and Manchester CAB were all invited to pilot the project with Community Law Service Northampton and County joining the programme on 1 December 2014. The pilot was successful and the programme has continued into 2015 with the addition of five more projects based in England, Scotland and Wales. On behalf of Trustees I would like to thank all funded organisations, both past and present for their work in the community and their support of the Trust.

During the year we were sad to lose Gill Tishler and Michelle Mitchell from the Board. Gill was a member of the Board for four years and Michelle joined in May 2013 however their busy roles as Director of Oxford CAB and Chief Executive at the MS Society led to their decision to step down. I would like to thank Gill and Michelle for their input and valuable contribution during their time on the Board.

Following Gill and Michelle's departure, we were delighted to welcome John Kolm-Murray, Seasonal Health and Affordable Warmth Co-ordinator at Islington Council to the Board in May 2014, Daksha Piparia, Head of Campaigns and Targeted Services at Coventry CAB and Colin Trend, Founder and Project Manager of Plymouth Focus Advice Centre who both joined the Board in December 2014.

I would like to take this opportunity to sincerely thank my fellow Trustees old and new for their commitment, enthusiasm and contribution to the Trust during the year.

On behalf of Trustees I would like to express our sincere thanks to British Gas for their continued support and generosity over the last 10 years. Without the considerable level of funding and support they provide, the Trust would not be able to help the vulnerable families and individuals most in need of support.

And finally we thank the staff at Charis for their services in administering the Trust and the support and guidance they provide to Trustees.



**Imelda Redmond CBE,**  
Chair

## Achievements in 2014

- A total of 26,074 applications were received in 2014, a 6% decrease on 2013's total of 27,683.
- 16,310 awards were made to individuals and families in need, a 39% increase on 2013's total of 11,771.
- The total value of these awards was £12m.
- The Trust funded a total of 28 charitable organisations throughout the year to deliver specialist fuel debt advice within their local communities and raise awareness of the help available from the Trust.

## Summary of the Trust's 2015 Objectives

- i The effective administration of a programme of grant giving aimed at reducing energy debt for individuals and families experiencing poverty and hardship.
- ii The Trust will receive a mixture of core funding of circa £9.1million and further incremental funding that is less predictable in both its amount and the timing of receipt e.g. any donation funded by the release of credit balances at British Gas. The intention is that the core funding should be expended evenly over the 12 months to 31 March 2016, which means the grant making capacity in the year is arrived at by adding this core funding to brought forward reserves, and then ensuring that sufficient funds are carried forward at 31 December 2015 to finance the first quarter of expenditure in 2016. The spending for the incremental receipts will be determined on a more flexible basis as and when the funds are received and the timing / quantum is known.
- iii The funding of an effective organisational grants programme supporting the provision of holistic advice services aimed at reducing and managing debt, maximising income and tackling fuel poverty via specialist fuel debt advisors based in:
  - I. CABx and charitable money advice organisations
  - II. GP surgeries and healthcare centres.

# Grants Programmes

## 1. Individuals and Families Grants Programme

The Trust primarily awards grants to individuals and families to clear energy debts. However it also has a smaller budget from which grants are awarded to clear other priority debts and purchase essential energy efficient white goods (known as Further Assistance Payments).

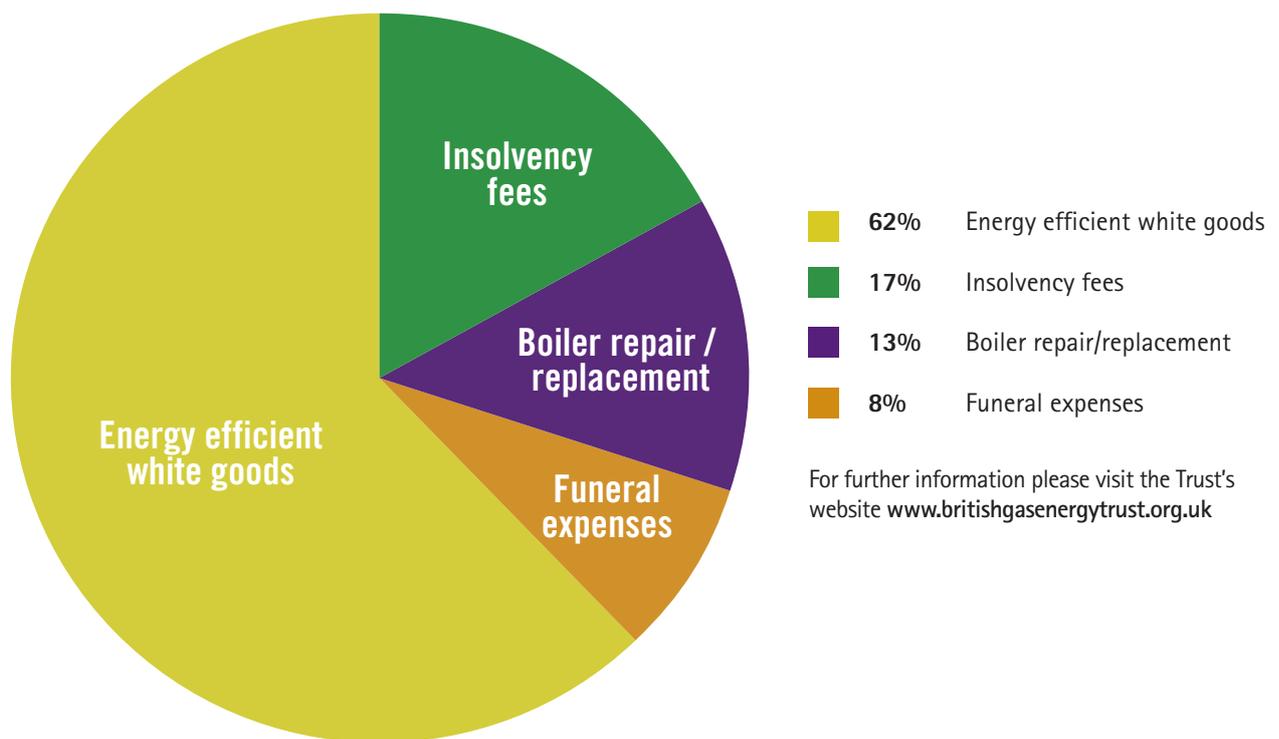
A total of 26,074 applications were submitted to the Trust in 2014 and resulted in 16,310 awards totalling £12m.

- 12,496 awards were made to clear energy debt totalling £9.6m.
- 3,814 Further Assistance Payments were awarded totalling £2.4m.
- The average energy award was £769 and the average Further Assistance Payment was £728.

### Further Assistance Payments

In 2014 the majority of Further Assistance Payments were for energy efficient white goods. Whilst Further Assistance Payments do not directly clear fuel debt, they can alleviate an applicant's financial difficulties by releasing additional funds into the household budget.

- 62% of payments were for energy efficient white goods.
- 17% of payments were for insolvency fees and 8% for funeral expenses.
- 13% of payments were for boiler repairs / replacements.
- 75% of Further Assistance Payments related to the alleviation of fuel debt either via an energy efficient white good or boiler, in line with the Trust's main objectives.



## Application Numbers versus Requests

As applicants make multiple requests on an application e.g. for a utility debt and a Further Assistance Payment, the total number of requests is always greater than the total number of applications made, highlighting the level of need of applicants to the Trust. In 2014 42,872 requests were made from 26,074 applications, a 16% decrease on the number of requests received in 2013.

*'Thank you so much for help to clear my mother's funeral arrears. It lifted a huge weight off my shoulders during a very difficult time for me and my family, thank you so much.'*



**Applicant awarded £1,995 to clear the remaining balance on mother's funeral arrears**

## 2. Organisational Grants Programme

The Trust funded 28 organisations (including 12 Shelter organisations) based across the UK in 2014. The grants funded 52 funded workers working within vulnerable communities, plus a further 10 debt advice workers working within the health sector and a level of administrative support for all projects. Engagement between Charis and the funded organisations is crucial and is carried out on a regular basis. The overall aim of the Programme is to help each client receive the holistic help they require to get them back on track and remain free of energy debt. The organisations ensure every client receives the help, support and guidance required to meet their individual needs and resolve debt problems to their entirety, regardless of whether they have a British Gas debt or not. All organisations will go the extra mile for a client when liaising with their debtors, but equally will let able clients deal with any follow up work where appropriate; this often leaves the clients feeling empowered, teaching them life skills for the future.

The Trust funded 13 new organisations in 2014. On 1 April Plymouth Energy Community, the Zinthyia Trust (Leicester) and Energy Projects Plus (the Wirral) commenced funding followed by Foundations Independent Living Trust (FILT) whose one year pilot project commenced

on 1 July. Eight new Shelter organisations based in Bristol, Glasgow, Lanarkshire, London, Newcastle, Sheffield, South Lanarkshire and Wrexham which launched on 1 October. Finally, on 1 December 2014 Community Law Service Northampton and County commenced their debt via the Health Sector project.

In 2014 the funded organisations submitted over 2,400 applications with awards totalling £874k and provided support and advice to thousands of people in need including both customers and non-customers of British Gas. Applications supported by a funded organisation are more likely to be successful as they are usually of a better quality and can demonstrate holistic intervention.

Charis provides ongoing support to help the organisations meet their KPIs with training provided at the commencement of their project and ongoing networking and training opportunities provided including refresher training from NEA and Charis' team of Grants Assessors. This helps to keep their knowledge of the Trust up to date.

For more information and details of the funded organisations please visit [www.britishgasenergytrust.org.uk](http://www.britishgasenergytrust.org.uk)

### Total funding awarded in 2014

Organisation	Funding awarded in 2014	Organisation	Funding awarded in 2014
Bromley by Bow Centre	£69,915	Preston CAB	£35,000
Bromley by Bow Centre - Debt via Health	£43,000	Riverside Advice	£35,000
Dawn Advice	£70,000	Shelter	£159,118
Energy Projects Plus	£100,000	Speakeasy Advice Centre	£83,423
FILT	£127,786	St Anne's Advice Centre	£68,650
Local Solutions	£69,173	St Helens CAB	£119,945
Manchester CAB	£119,866	St Helens CAB - Debt via Health	£43,000
Manchester CAB - Debt via Health	£129,000	Talking Money	£119,967
Money Matters Money Advice Centre	£120,000	Zinthyia Trust	£85,075
Plymouth Energy Community	£69,560		
		<b>Total</b>	<b>£1,667,478</b>

#### CASE STUDY

Miss P suffered with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and anxiety after being raped a number of years ago. After the attack the perpetrator stalked Miss R and made her life unbearable, she had become scared to leave the house and as a result was unable to work. Her attacker was eventually caught and sent to prison however by this point the damage had already been done.

Miss P fell into debt after her attack. Her PTSD and panic attacks had a huge impact on her mental health and wellbeing. She struggled to budget and was terrified of leaving the house which led to her losing her job. The impact of the attack left her wary of people and she became more and more withdrawn from those trying to help her. She was reluctant to seek help and support however she bravely decided to relocate away from her hometown and started a new life in Bristol.

Following her move she attempted to improve her life and took steps to achieve that by taking benefits advice and support from a specialist

sexual violence organisation. She also approached Bristol based funded organisation Talking Money who gave Miss P debt advice and referred her to their Energy Advice Project to help with the gas and electricity arrears at her previous address.

Miss P's application to the Trust was successful and she was awarded £2,190 to clear her gas and electricity arrears. The award helped Miss P become financially stable and she was able to keep on top of her current energy charges. Importantly the award helped her to put another part of her old life behind her and help her continue to move forward.

*Thank you so much for my new washing machine. I have recently come off benefits and started a new job so I don't have much spare money. I could not afford the laundrette costs and was struggling to keep on top of all the families washing. The award from the Trust means so much to us and I now feel able to take pride in my appearance when I go to work.'*



**Applicant awarded a new energy efficient electric cooker**

## Treasurer's Report - Review of Finances

During 2014 the BGET continued to operate to the financial model established in earlier years. As noted in my previous report, a substantial donation of £8.1m from British Gas was received part way through 2014.

In order to sustain consistency in the assessment of awards the disbursement of this was extended over several months, extending through 2014 and beyond. The net outflow of funds of £3.6m during the year was therefore a consequence of planned disbursement of the reserves brought forward at the start of the year. It is expected that a continuation of grant awarding at these established levels will lead to a further net outflow of funds in 2015 with lower reserves being carried forward at the 2015 year end.

Administration and grants assessment have been outsourced to Charis Grants. The residual funds available after their costs have been applied to charitable purposes in proportions agreed in advance by the Trustees, which have been largely consistent with those applied in previous years. During the year a total of £14m was applied in charitable giving, focusing on trying to help recipients into a more sustainable position with regard to this aspect of their financial affairs. Of this sum £1.7m was committed to organisations spread across the country providing financial advice to those in hardship, with the balance of £12.3m paid direct to individuals to either relieve energy debt or in the form of a Further Assistance Payment, relieving the other aspects of hardship.

A key governance issue has been ensuring that applicants were assessed consistently and to appropriate standards given the substantial increase in donation. The budgeted monthly 'run rate' for making awards has been set so as to ensure a broadly even monthly spend through 2015.

The BGET continues with its commitment to organisations providing financial advice to disadvantaged communities. Most of the 12 organisational contracts entered into in 2012 have been renewed with a further four organisations assisted in 2014 and the partnership with Shelter now being fully operational. As well as providing valuable debt advice these organisations have been an important source of referral of applications to the Trust during the year. The designated reserves include £0.9 million to finance the roll forward of the organisational programme at the expiry of the current contracts in 2015.



Stephen Harrap,  
Treasurer, British Gas Energy Trust

## Summary of BGET Account for the year ended 31 December 2014

Summary Statement of Financial Activities	Year ended 31 Dec 14		Year ended 31 Dec 13	
	£,000	%	£,000	%
Funds available brought forward	12,863		4,735	
Total incoming resources	12,366		18,176	
Total funds available this year	25,229	100	22,911	100
<b>Resources expended</b>				
Charitable activities	15,988	63	10,040	44
Governance costs	13	0	8	0
<b>Total resources expended</b>	16,001		10,048	
<b>Funds balance at 31 December</b>	9,228	37	12,863	56

*'I am so grateful to the Trust for clearing my gas and electricity arrears. After my partner left I became depressed and struggled to keep on top of my bills. Before I knew it I was in debt and could not see a way out. The help from the Trust means I can now keep on top of my bills, I've finally been able to sleep at night.'*



**Applicant awarded £763 to clear gas and electricity arrears**

# How to apply to the British Gas Energy Trust



The quickest and easiest way to apply to the British Gas Energy Trust is via its online application form via <https://bget.app.charisgrants.com>. Supporting evidence should be scanned and attached to the form to allow for assessment of the application to begin.

Alternatively application forms can be downloaded from the Trust's website [www.britishgasenergytrust.org.uk](http://www.britishgasenergytrust.org.uk)

Or requested via the Trust's dedicated telephone line **01733 421060**

Or by emailing [bget@charisgrants.com](mailto:bget@charisgrants.com)

Written correspondence should be addressed to the Trust's freepost address:

**FREEPOST BRITISH GAS ENERGY TRUST**

## Trustees and Officers 2013

### Imelda Redmond

Chair

### Stephen Harrap

Treasurer

### Maria Wardrobe

### Andrew Brown

### John Kolm-Murray

Appointed May 2014

### Colin Trend

Appointed December 2014

### Daksha Piparia

Appointed December 2014

### Gill Tishler

Resigned September 2014

### Michelle Mitchell

Vice Chair, Resigned January 2014

### Registered Address

Midgate House  
Midgate  
Peterborough  
PE1 1TN

### Charity Registration Number

1106218

### Auditors

Rawlinsons  
90 Lincoln Road  
Peterborough  
PE1 2SP

### Bankers

National Westminster Bank plc  
PO Box 15  
Cathedral Square  
Peterborough  
PE1 1HW

### Solicitors

Farrer & Co  
66 Lincoln's Inn Fields  
London  
WC2A 3LH

### Administrators

Charis Grants Ltd  
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Peterborough  
PE1 1TN

Charis is a company with extensive experience of delivering a range of holistic services for companies to support vulnerable customers. These include: grants management, services for charitable and corporate giving; assessment of eligibility for 'hardship' schemes such as the Warm Home Discount; assessment for social tariffs, etc. Visit [www.charisgrants.com](http://www.charisgrants.com)