

# Energy giant: No price cuts in power plan

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Scotland's state-owned energy firm will not be able to undercut the big suppliers, industry leaders have claimed.



SNP ministers want to set up a cut-price power company to sell "competitively priced" gas and electricity to help the poorest and boost the economy.

But one of the UK's biggest energy firms, SSE, has told the Scottish Government it is unclear how the new firm could offer "meaningful reductions" in a crowded field of 42 other suppliers.

In addition, SSE says, the £140 discount on utility bills offered to low income households might not be available to the new state-backed energy firm because it won't have enough customers to qualify.

Government consultants have already warned there are "significant challenges" to setting up an energy firm.

Responding to a Holyrood inquiry into creating a publicly-owned energy firm, SSE Energy

Services said: "It remains unclear how an energy company would have the capabilities to offer customers meaningful reductions in price."

ScottishPower said increased competition in the market has led to an "increase in low margin tariffs" and added it was "increasingly challenging for new market players to operate at profit".

Western Isles Council also raised doubts with its submission to the Scottish Government. Scottish Conservative energy spokesman Alexander Burnett said: "The proposal doesn't stand up to scrutiny."

The Scottish Government said: "The business case is being commissioned and this will include detailed commercial, economic and financial analysis."

## Stage set for more women

The lack of women in Scotland's TV and film industry will be debated by MSPs this week.

This year's BAFTA Scotland awards saw women make up just 18% of entrants to the writer category.

Scottish Labour MSP Claire Baker said: "The figures are stark and must be addressed."



## Greens: No action? No support for SNP

The Scottish Greens are demanding "meaningful" progress on a string of issues, including scrapping the council tax, before they back the SNP's budget plans.

The Greens have previously supported the minority Scottish Government but yesterday said there needed to be "meaningful progress" before MSPs enter into discussions over the 2019/20 budget.

Among the issues the Greens want progress on are giving local councils the power to introduce a visitor levy and a timescale for scrapping council tax. Andy Wightman MSP, the party's local government spokesperson, said: "The way Scottish local government's hands are tied by national government looks bizarre to our European neighbours."

# EXCLUSIVE Anger as convicted paedophile who

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# The inquiry was meant to be giving the victims a voice at last. So why is it giving our attacker the chance to abuse us all over again?

— David Whelan yesterday

Victims yesterday criticised the Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry's decision to invite a convicted paedophile to give evidence.

John Porteous, branded the Beast of the Belltower, is expected to give evidence at the inquiry led by Lady Smith in Edinburgh next month.

He will be the first child abuser convicted in Scotland to give evidence but has never admitted his crimes and continued to protest his innocence while in jail.

One of his victims, David Whelan, has named Porteous — who was jailed in 2002 for abusing two boys in a bell tower at Quarriers Village children's home in Renfrewshire between 1969 and 1977 — will use the opportunity to "abuse victims all over again".

Mr Whelan, 61, fears Porteous will use the platform to continue to deny his guilt.

He has been cited as part of the inquiry's next investigation into three institutions, including Quarriers, which starts next week.

Mr Whelan, a campaigner for the rights of victims of institutional abuse, said: "Porteous has never accepted his guilt for destroying our lives. I believe he will use the invitation to continue abusing us."

"We've waited decades for the truth to come out and for our voices to be heard. It is hard to understand why the inquiry sought to give convicted paedophiles a voice."

The inquiry will hear allegations of abuse at Quarriers' Bridge of Weir home, which was set up by Victorian philanthropist William Quarrier.

The former children's institution has the most abuse convictions out of any Scottish home.

Seven people, including Porteous, have been convicted of abusing 23 children at the home.

David, born in Glasgow, ended up in care along with his sister Irene when his mother suffered a breakdown. He said: "Despite Quarriers having the highest number of convicted carers, the charity has done everything in its power to ensure victims have been denied justice and reparation for what we endured, using time-bar to refuse claims."

"To this day, some won't realise what evil went on at Quarriers."

"Porteous refused to accept responsibility for what he did but so have others."

"He used a change in the law to have his sentence shortened, but has never appealed his conviction or taken part in paedophile programmes in prison."

A BBC Scotland programme, Secrets Or Lies, which questioned the guilt of Porteous, was later criticised by the corporation's standards watchdogs.

They said the programme makers had made "serious errors of judgment", adding that it was unbalanced and so-called new evidence had not been properly researched.

David said: "The audacity of Porteous to even take part is why I'm convinced



The church bell tower in Quarriers Village, Renfrewshire where John Porteous abused two children

# still protests his innocence is asked to speak at homes abuse probe



David Whelan, left, and above with sister Irene at Quarriers. Below, David speaks out about abuse



His lawyers had their say in court and he was found guilty of terrible crimes

So many have died, including my own sister, without seeing justice they deserved

confront what had been done." Porteous is not the first convicted sex offender to be asked to appear at the SCAI.

Earlier this year we revealed how former priest Bernard Traynor, 65, has been called to give his testimony after allegations about him were made to the inquiry by former residents at Smyllum Park in Lanark.

The Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry said: "It is vital that the inquiry hears evidence from anyone who has important and relevant information, including survivors and those who worked for the institutions under investigation."

"This may include convicted abusers.

Extensive efforts are made to ensure the hearings process is dealt with thoroughly but sensitively.

"Convicted abusers are not routinely covered by the chair's general restriction order."

"In addition, members of the inquiry's trained witness support team sit in the public gallery during every hearing to offer assistance to anyone who requires it."

As well as examining abuse claims at Quarriers, the SCAI will also hear evidence about children's homes run by Barnardo's and the Aberlour Child Care Trust.

This case study is expected to continue until the new year.

JUSTICE DELAYED