

The Rt Hon Emma Reynolds MP  
Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs  
Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs  
Seacole Building  
2 Marsham Street  
London, SW1P 4DF

By email: [secretary.state@defra.gov.uk](mailto:secretary.state@defra.gov.uk)

23 March 2026

Dear Secretary of State

Following the recent closure of Defra's consultation on solid fuel burning, I am writing to underline the importance of ensuring that rural households, particularly those off the gas grid, retain access to all practical forms of heating, including wood-burning stoves.

This issue has been brought into sharp focus by the conflict in the Middle East and the resulting volatility in global energy markets. Millions of off-grid households that rely on heating oil are now facing severe and immediate financial pressure, with prices having doubled in some areas since the start of the conflict.

The government's announcement this week of a £53 million heating oil support package is welcome recognition of that pressure. However, it also underlines a wider problem: rural households remain uniquely exposed to energy shocks, with too few viable alternatives available to them.

For many rural families, log burners and other solid fuel appliances are not a lifestyle choice, but an essential safeguard against exactly this kind of volatility. At a time when energy security has become a central political and economic concern, it would be deeply counterproductive to pursue policies that restrict access to one of the few heating options that remain affordable, flexible and within the control of the household.

We are concerned that, without a clear recognition of these realities, well-intentioned air quality measures risk placing a disproportionate burden on rural communities, effectively asking those with the fewest options to bear the greatest cost. Alternatives such as heat pumps remain out of reach for many off-grid homes due to cost and practicality and cannot yet provide a universal solution.

In light of this, we urge Defra to ensure that rural households are not disadvantaged by future policy decisions and that access to log burners and other solid fuel appliances is retained as part of a balanced and resilient rural energy mix.

The Countryside Alliance stands ready to work with you to ensure that environmental ambition is matched by a clear understanding of rural life and the practical realities facing off-grid communities.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'T.P.C.' followed by a stylized flourish.

Tim Bonner  
Chief Executive