



**Under embargo until: 00.01hrs Friday 11<sup>th</sup> May, 2012**

## **BRAVE AND BOLD, BUT BIG SWITCH AUCTION DOESN'T QUITE DELIVER**

The announcement today that Co-operative Energy has won the Big Switch auction with a plan that is more expensive than the cheapest tariff already on the market, and that will only be made available to 30,000 people, brings a disappointing end to the first attempt at collective switching, says [uSwitch.com](http://uSwitch.com), the independent price comparison and switching service.

**Ann Robinson, Director of Consumer Policy at [uSwitch.com](http://uSwitch.com), says:** “The Big Switch was a brave and bold move, but the outcome is disappointing. 280,000 people signed up, and yet the winning deal will only be offered to 30,000 on a first come, first served basis. This means that the lucky few will be leaving the process with a deal that is more expensive than the cheapest plan on the market, while those who get the fall back offer of EDF Energy’s Blue+ Price Promise plan will be getting a tariff that is already readily available on the market and that they could have signed up to weeks ago.

“However, it’s good news that the bid has gone to a smaller, new entrant supplier as this will help to encourage more consumers to realise that the smaller players are a serious and viable alternative to the big six suppliers that currently dominate the market.

“At £1,027 a year, First:Utility still offers the cheapest energy plan in the market today<sup>[1]</sup>, coming in at £21 a year cheaper than the price the Co-op is offering and £27 a year cheaper than EDF Energy’s plan<sup>[1]</sup>. Moreover, it’s highly likely that there will be people who are already on more competitive tariffs. This is why we would urge everyone who has signed up to the Big Switch to run an independent price comparison, making sure to check the whole of the market. This is especially important for those who have switched before as the deals they are already on may actually be more competitive.

“However, this mustn’t detract from the fact that the Big Switch has provided a benefit to those who have never switched before – they will be getting a better deal than the one they are on and it has opened their eyes to the benefits of switching. The scheme has also provided some

valuable learnings and Which? is to be applauded for taking this first brave step. Its experiences will be invaluable to the rest of the industry and we look forward to hearing the feedback. We still believe that collective purchasing offers a new way to encourage people who have never switched before to get involved in the market.”

**For more information visit [www.uSwitch.com](http://www.uSwitch.com) or call 0800 093 06 07**

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**For more information please contact:**

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**Notes to editors:**

1. Based on a medium user customer using 3,300 kWh of electricity and 16,500 kWh of gas, on a dual fuel plan, paying monthly by direct debit with bill sizes averaged across all regions. First:Utility iSave Dual Fuel V10 averages at £1,027 a year. EDF Energy Blue+ plan averages at £1,054 a year.

**About us**

uSwitch.com is a free, impartial, online and telephone-based comparison and switching service, helping consumers compare prices on gas, electricity, water, heating cover, home telephone, broadband, digital television, mobile phones and personal finance products including mortgages, credit cards, current accounts and insurance. In 2010 uSwitch.com celebrated ten years of saving customers money.

uSwitch.com is the first comparison website to achieve the Plain English Campaign's Internet Crystal Mark, which is recognised as a standard that a website has clear language, is accessible and easy to use, and has been tested on a sample of its users.

uSwitch.com is dedicated to helping consumers save money whether they have internet access or not. It offers a dedicated call centre, manned by uSwitch customer service representatives, as well as a freepost 'Send us your bill' service, whereby customers can post their latest energy bills with their telephone number to FREEPOST USWITCH, to get a free call back from a dedicated customer services representative. The service is also available via fax, email and post. Consumers should fax 0203 214 8417, email [CustomerServices@uswitch.com](mailto:CustomerServices@uswitch.com) or write to Customer Services, uSwitch.com, Centro 3, 19 Mandela Street, London, NW1 0DU with their postcode and usage details.

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