



For immediate release: Tuesday 22nd May, 2012

DRAFT ENERGY BILL: CONSUMERS THE 'FORGOTTEN PART OF THE EQUATION'

The draft electricity market reform legislation has been published today. uSwitch.com, the independent price comparison and switching service, welcomes the forthcoming inquiry to scrutinise it and urges the Government to ensure that consumers are not the forgotten part of the equation.

Lucy Darch, Director of Energy at uSwitch.com, says: "We are facing an 'energy trilemma' where the Government is attempting to balance security of supply, a low carbon future and affordability. Something has to give and unfortunately at the moment the scales are tipping away from affordability. Our concern is that consumers will become the forgotten part of the equation.

"Affordability is already a concern for a third of households and already we are seeing signs of the strain consumers are under when it comes to the cost of energy. Eight in ten households rationed their energy use last winter in an attempt to keep costs down and nine in ten people say that energy is the household bill that they worry about most.

"In 2004 the average household energy bill was £522 a year – today it's £1,252 a year^[1], but household incomes have not kept pace. Research tells us that we are approaching a cliff edge and that when bills reach £1,500 a year consumers will drastically change their energy usage and behaviour with many potentially compromising their comfort, health and well-being in an attempt to keep a lid on their bills.

"The impact on consumers has to be given equal footing and I would urge the Government to now provide clarity on the cost of this reform to households in pounds, shillings and pence. Consumers need to understand where their bills are heading so that they can start to adapt accordingly."

For more information visit www.uSwitch.com or call 0800 093 06 07

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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 standard dual fuel plan, paying quarterly by cash or cheque with bill sizes averaged across all big six suppliers and all regions. In 2004, the average dual fuel energy bill was £522, today it is £1,252.

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 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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