

Westminster Energy, Environment & Transport Forum Keynote Seminar
Lowering the cost of energy bills in the UK: competition, consumer engagement
and changing energy habits

Timing: Morning, Thursday, 10th October 2013

Venue: Sixty One Whitehall, London SW1A 2ET

Agenda subject to change



WESTMINSTER ENERGY
ENVIRONMENT &
TRANSPORT FORUM

- 8.30 - 9.00 Registration and coffee
- 9.00 - 9.05 **Chairman's opening remarks**
Julian O'Halloran, Presenter, BBC Radio 4
- 9.05 - 9.35 **'Ensuring a better deal for energy consumers'**
Is the Government's strategy on track for all consumers to get the cheapest available energy tariff from their supplier by the summer of 2014? What is the thinking behind the 'four core' tariff model and how will it work in practice? How are concerns that the model could create an uncompetitive market being viewed in government and are measures being considered to offset this?
Rt Hon Gregory Barker MP, Minister of State, Department of Energy and Climate Change
Questions and comments from the floor
- 9.35 - 10.05 **Switching tariffs and supplier, public engagement and supporting vulnerable consumers**
The Government's strategy supports Ofgem's proposals requiring 'suppliers to provide, on relevant customer communications, personalised estimates of the savings to be made from moving to the supplier's cheapest tariff'. Is this the most effective way of helping consumers who haven't switched before to do so? What other information or guidance would aid this process? Are provisions in the strategy adequate to help both domestic and non-domestic consumers switch between suppliers, as well as tariffs? What more can be done to support small and medium sized businesses, particularly those from energy intensive industries, which are facing rising energy bills year on year? Do the support measures for vulnerable consumers go far enough? What more is required from Government and industry to ensure that vulnerable consumers are kept informed of the possible energy savings that they can make?
Peter Smith, External Affairs Manager, National Energy Action
Alex Fergusson, Senior Policy Advisor, CBI
Hannah Mummery, Principal Policy Advocate - Small Business, Consumer Futures
- 10.05 - 10.15 **A best practice case study: meeting the practical challenges in switching between tariffs and suppliers**
What are the biggest practical challenges that consumers face when seeking to switch between energy tariffs and suppliers? What best practices should consumers follow in order to overcome such challenges? Are current channels of information concerning the process of switching reaching consumers? What more is required to effectively engage consumers on switching and finding the best prices available?
Steve Weller, Chief Executive Officer, uSwitch
- 10.15 - 10.40 Questions and comments from the floor with **Peter Smith**, External Affairs Manager, National Energy Action; **Alex Fergusson**, Senior Policy Advisor, CBI; **Hannah Mummery**, Principal Policy Advocate - Small Business, Consumer Futures and **Steve Weller**, Chief Executive Officer, uSwitch
- 10.40 - 11.00 **'Explaining energy prices - why Government and industry need to work together'**
Sara Vaughan, Director of Strategy and Regulation, E.ON UK
Questions and comments from the floor
- 11.00 - 11.05 **Chairman's closing remarks**
Julian O'Halloran, Presenter, BBC Radio 4
- 11.05 - 11.35 Coffee
- 11.35 - 11.40 **Chairman's opening remarks**
Robert Freer, Engineer; and Journalist, Science in Parliament
- 11.40 - 12.30 **Wider issues and opportunities - constraints on suppliers, energy efficiency and microgeneration**
Taking into account wholesale energy price rises, an increase in the demand for energy and the cost of new infrastructure, how constrained are the UK's leading energy suppliers in setting their pricing strategies? Beyond simplifying tariffs and making switching more straightforward, what are the alternative policy, consumer and business approaches that could be taken to lower energy bills in the UK? In the long term, would consumers be better off in investing in energy efficiency schemes such as smart metering and the Green Deal to reduce their energy bills? As the Government seeks to tackle fuel poverty - and having recently just published a framework for future action - what contribution can the Green Deal realistically make in this area of work? Should UK energy policy follow that of other European countries and set targets for a reduction in energy demand rather than attempting to ensure consumers pay the cheapest prices on offer? To what extent would this approach be of benefit to the consumer? What prospects are there for the wider take-up of microgeneration technologies and what is their potential in reducing the cost of the average energy bill? How real, and what is the scale of the opportunities that they present to consumers in terms of the potential to sell surplus energy and become a source of income? What steps could be taken to increase the accessibility of these technologies for consumers in the face of issues such as high upfront costs?
Dr Monica Giulietti, Associate Professor of Global Energy, Warwick Business School, University of Warwick
Andy Deacon, Director of Delivery, Energy Saving Trust
Jeremy Chang, Legal Director, Pinsent Masons
Merlin Hyman, Chief Executive, Regen SW
Questions and comments from the floor
- 12.30 - 12.55 **The ongoing 'Retail Market Review' and the future of energy regulation**
Maxine Frerk, Partner, Retail Markets and Research, Ofgem
Questions and comments from the floor
- 12.55 - 13.00 **Chairman's and Westminster Energy, Environment & Transport Forum closing remarks**
Robert Freer, Engineer; and Journalist, Science in Parliament
Michael Ryan, Deputy Editor, Westminster Energy, Environment & Transport Forum