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OFGEM LOOKS TO BOOST THE CONSUMER'S VOICE

- **We set out for consultation our strategy for 2007-2012, maintaining our seven core themes.**
- **We have unveiled Consumer First - a programme to capture consumer input to the work of Ofgem.**
- **Ofgem expects to stay within its own price controls for the third successive year.**

Energy regulator Ofgem has launched a project to improve the way it takes consumers' interests into account in its decision making. The initiative was sparked by growing public awareness of issues such as smart metering, microgeneration and the rising cost of environmental programmes, all of which make the question of what matters to consumers more complex.

This latest demonstration of Ofgem's commitment to the consumer is part of its consultation on its Corporate Strategy published today. Commenting on the launch of the consultation Ofgem chairman Sir John Mogg said: "Ofgem's corporate strategy has been drawn up to cover a period when energy policy in Britain and across the rest of Europe is under profound review. UK energy policy will be largely determined by the March 2007 Energy White Paper, the Energy Bill and Climate Change Bill. The European Commission's Strategic Energy Review and its conclusions to the energy sector inquiries have opened up the possibility for significant strides to be made in Europe's energy policy.

"We will take account of all these factors during 2007 and ensure that we will continue to deliver for UK consumers."

The project – Consumer First – will start by assessing how well Ofgem understands what matters to consumers now. It will also look at the scope for getting direct consumer contributions to Ofgem's deliberations over policy on customer issues.

Ofgem's chief executive Alistair Buchanan said: "In Consumer First we are taking the initiative to compare our performance with best practice. With climate change rising up the agenda, the question of where the consumer interest lies may not be so straightforward. We need to make sure we are using the best available tools and techniques to help us understand and respond to consumers' priorities."

The corporate strategy keeps to the seven themes established last year. As well as the greater emphasis on consumer engagement this year Ofgem will step up its work on sustainability.

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Notes to the editor:

1. Comments on this consultation are expected by 26 February.

2. Ofgem is the Office of the Gas and Electricity Markets, which supports the Gas and Electricity Markets Authority, the regulator of the gas and electricity industries in Great Britain. Ofgem's aim is to bring choice and value to all gas and electricity customers by promoting competition and regulating monopolies. The Authority's powers are provided for under the Gas Act 1986 and the Electricity Act 1989, as amended by the Utilities Act 2000 as well as under the Competition Act 1998 and the Enterprise Act 2002.

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