



**OFGEM CONSULTATION
ELECTRICITY DISTRIBUTION PRICE CONTROL REVIEW
INITIAL CONSULTATION DOCUMENT REF 32/08**

INTRODUCTION

Unite is the largest trade union in the UK and has approximately 8,000 members employed throughout the DNOs in Scotland, England and Wales. Our members are employed as Overhead Lines persons; Jointers; Fitters; Electricians and Riggers i.e., mainly industrial staff, and their concerns relate to the need for an increase in training of Craft and Technician Apprentices; Personal Development programmes; reduction in levels of management and the need to give a better service to their customers.

Apprentice/Technician Apprenticeships

The vast majority of DNOs do not undertake training programmes for Craft or Technician Apprentices.

Scottish and Southern, CE Electric, United Utilities – training is minimal to non existent

Scottish Power, EDF, Central Networks – carry out training but to an insufficient level and they do not train to full Craft/Technical Apprenticeship level

The only exception is Western Power Distribution which is an excellent example to British Industry. They have their own training school for training adult and craft apprentices and also run personal development programmes for their staff. Our Union wants Ofgem to introduce some form of financial incentive to reward those companies that train staff and financially penalise those companies that do not.

Personal Development Programmes

The productivity in most of the DNOs needs to be substantially improved by better utilisation of staff i.e., the introduction of Technician grades in companies' pay structures. This issue needs to be addressed by Ofgem in order to give better service and value for money to the Customer.



Levels of Management

The levels of Management in the DNOs should be examined and a survey should be carried out by Ofgem to compare management structure in each company. Most of the DNOs still have Management structures that relate back to when the industry was nationalised. Our Union believes that the levels of management are too high and we could reduce the cost of the service that the DNOs are providing to the customer.

Health and Safety

There are some DNOs that have excellent Health and Safety records, but the level of fatalities in EDF has reached concerning levels. Once again in our view this is due to over bureaucratic management, lack of focus on safety by supervision and a lack of effective responsibility being given to staff at all levels in order that they can work as a team and ensure a safe working environment.

Metering

Our Union is of the view that Smart Metering should be left with the suppliers, however we are meeting our senior Shop Stewards in the Metering section of the industry in the next few weeks and we would like to give notice that we will follow this up with a more detailed view about the implications of Smart Metering which we will make to OFGEM as well as to the Department of Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform.