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18 January 2024

Jonathan Brearley
Regulator
Ofgem

By email: StandingCharges@ofgem.gov.uk

Dear Jonathan,

Review of Standing Charges

The National Pensioners Convention welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the Ofgem review of Standing Charges on behalf of older people across the UK.

Standing Charges have recently taken off in terms of increases. This charge has to be paid even before we use a unit of energy which itself has doubled over the last year; with the consequence that older people struggling to pay bills then use less energy for warmth and heating food.

As a personal example, my daily Standing Charge is nearly three times the daily charge for electricity, which is an absurd and unacceptable situation. To be able to pay that bill, I, like the majority of older people, have to make choices.

Standing Charges are supposed to be a contribution towards maintenance and meter reading. My meter has not been read (except by me) for over a year. When it is read, it is by a private company paid for by my energy provider and very clearly I am contributing to that company's and the energy provider's profits.

Whilst many of us may understand the global pressures on access to fuel, there must be more transparency on the contracts signed and how that is the best deal for customers.

The whole energy system needs to be rationalised and a commitment to sustainable and renewable sources of energy undertaken with much more positivity than is currently being displayed. It also needs to be publicly owned and publicly accountable so that customers have a say in how energy is produced, priced and delivered.

Energy for All would pave the way for change. Every household having a basic level of energy free according to their needs. Coupled with rationalisation, this would improve the quality of life for everyone.

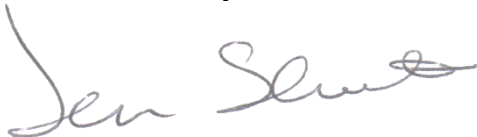
The NPC would wish to see Standing Charges abolished, although we understand there has to be a balance. First of all, protection must be given to those with health needs and using life enhancing equipment. Secondly, older people and those on the lowest incomes must be protected from the extraneous costs of Standing Charges. As it stands, those who use less energy are paying more – this cannot be right.

With energy providers continuing to make huge profits for their shareholders, it is time that customers had some pay back after inflationary hikes in charges at their highest in decades. A standard percentage reduction in accordance with overall profits would be a alternative.

All across the country, we see lights in empty buildings overnight. Whilst an element of that is security, are there really any justifiable reasons for multi-storey buildings to be polluting the skyline? Is there a case for a surcharge on such buildings that could then be passed on to domestic customers?

We look forward to seeing how Ofgem manages the issue of Standing Charges to ensure that customers are treated fairly in the light of the current cost of living environment.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Jan Shortt', with a stylized, cursive script.

Jan Shortt
General Secretary