

Modification proposal:	Supply Point Administration Agreement (SPAA) Change Proposal (CP) 08/114 (CP08/114): Telephone Service Provision for Agreed and Disputed Reads		
Decision:	The Authority ¹ directs that this proposal be made ²		
Target audience:	SPAA Parties and other interested parties		
Date of publication:	17 October 2008	Implementation Date:	November 2008

Background to the modification proposal

The Procedure for Agreement of Change of Supplier Reading and the Resolution of Disputed Change of Supplier Readings (the "procedure") in SPAA Schedule 11, sets out the requirements for resolving any issues that may arise related to meter readings when a customer changes their supplier. The "agreement of change of supplier reading process" is used when an actual or estimated change of supplier meter read has not been provided by the Gas Transporter (GT). The "resolution of disputed change of supplier readings process" can be initiated when either the supplier or the customer disputes a change of supplier meter read.

The procedure sets out requirements for one supplier (the "initiating supplier") to resolve a change of supplier meter read problem with the other supplier (the "associated supplier"). This communication is typically done electronically. However, in some circumstances electronic communication does not quickly lead to the identification of an acceptable change of supplier meter read. In these circumstances suppliers are required by the procedure to seek to identify the change of supplier meter read through telephone contact. Under the procedure, suppliers are required to provide a reasonable telephony enquiry service during working hours, to facilitate resolution. The intention behind using a telephone service at this stage of the process is to prevent the possibility of email flows being passed back and forwards without resolution.

Current telephone enquiry services offered by suppliers differ in the hours which they operate. These variations are seen to negatively affect the suppliers' ability to effectively resolve problems with change of supplier meter reads. These problems can delay customers receiving accurate opening and closing bills when they change supplier.

The modification proposal

This Change Proposal was raised by British Gas in July 2008 and seeks to establish a minimum level of service provision for telephone enquiry services related to the resolution of agreed and disputed reads. The modification recognises that Parties may have different definitions of what constitutes a reasonable service.

As part of the discussions the original modification was amended so that the definition of 'normal business days' was removed, given the potential ambiguity, and replaced with 'Working Day' in line with the definition of 'Working Day' as set out in SPAA Schedule 11.

¹ The terms 'the Authority', 'Ofgem' and 'we' are used interchangeably in this document. Ofgem is the Office of the Gas and Electricity Markets Authority.

² This document is notice of the reasons for this decision as required by section 38A of the Gas Act 1986.

Specifically, the modification requires domestic suppliers to:

"...offer an effective telephone enquiry service to other industry parties between the hours of 9am to 12pm and 2pm to 5pm, UK time, on all working days. This is a minimum service provision, and does not prevent suppliers from offering a telephone enquiry service at other times as well."

The Change Report indicates that the Change Proposal received unanimous support and therefore 100% of the weighted votes cast by relevant parties. The threshold for a change proposal being accepted is 65%. No further comments were provided by parties in relation to this Change Proposal.

The Authority's decision

The Authority has considered the issues raised by the Change Proposal and has taken into account responses to the SPAA consultation and the views of the subsequent SPAA Change Board held on 21 August 2008. The Change Declaration and Change Report were issued to Ofgem on 15 September 2008 following the elapse of the SPAA appeal window. The Authority has concluded that:

1. implementation of the change proposal will better facilitate the achievement of the relevant objectives of the SPAA³; and
2. consenting for the change to be made is consistent with the Authority's principal objective and statutory duties⁴.

Reasons for the Authority's decision

We agree with the modification proposer that the Change Proposal will better meet relevant objective SLC 30.6(a) "the development, maintenance and operation of an efficient, coordinated and economical change of supplier process". Please note that unless we have directly stated otherwise we consider the proposal to be neutral against the aims of the relevant code objectives.

Introducing minimum service levels for the provision of telephone enquiry services will help to shorten the timeline for the resolution of agreed and disputed read issues. The additional clarity provided by the Change Proposal on telephone enquiry service levels should support the process for resolving problems with change of supplier meter reads. We therefore consider that it will allow for improvements in the timely provision of opening and closing change of supplier bills to domestic customers and the customer's experience of the transfer process in general.

³ As set out in Standard Condition 34 (4) of the Gas Suppliers Licence, see: http://epr.ofgem.gov.uk/document_fetch.php?documentid=4257

⁴ The Authority's statutory duties are wider than matters which the Panel must take into consideration and are detailed mainly in the Gas Act 1986.

Decision notice

In accordance with Standard Condition 30 of the Gas Suppliers Licence, the Authority, hereby directs that SPAA Change Proposal 08/114: *Telephone Service Provision for Agreed and Disputed Reads* be made.



Ian Marlee

Director, Trading Arrangements

Signed on behalf of the Authority and authorised for that purpose.