

27th March 2009

Dear Sir,

In relation to your OFGEM document 'Direct Debit Arrangements', which invites response from interested parties, I wonder if I could bring the following example to your attention - from the perspective of a consumer.

I am the chairman of a property management company. Our electrical supplier is Atlantic Electric and Gas. Our account is paid by direct debit, and our consumption is a very regular 49 units per day (being the supply to a sewage treatment plant which is in constant use).

It came to my attention that the account was running at a very high level of credit in late 2007. The electricity statement of 23rd Oct 2007 showed our account in credit by £1023.91. After the Winter, when a statement was received for the period ending 7th May 2008, showing a credit of £973.19, I decided to act.

I phoned Atlantic Electric on 15th May 2008 and asked that the outstanding balance be refunded, and that they would be shown as a debtor on our yearly company accounts if this was not done. I was told that a refund would not be possible until an accurate meter reading had been taken. This was arranged for 2nd June 2008, and it prompted a revised statement to be sent for the period 03/04/2006 to 07/05/2008 which showed an actual balance of £1757.67 'to be carried forward as payment towards future bills'.

Eventually, £1587.67 was refunded to our bank account on 20th June 2008. In a letter of 16th June 2008, Atlantic Electric also stated that the monthly payment amount would be reduced from £170 per month to £100 per month.

Currently our account is again running at an inappropriately high credit level of £590.80 (27th Feb 2009) which is apparently based on an actual meter reading. This will prompt me, yet again, to contact Customer Services and request a refund.

I would also ask for clarification on the position regarding meter readings. Presumably the supplier is under an obligation to read the meter in order to produce an accurate bill. Is the consumer under any obligation at all to provide a meter reading, and what incentive is offered to the consumer for the effort and inconvenience involved in doing so?

Yours sincerely,

James Insell.

Chairman - High Trees Stable Block Management Ltd.