

Paul Newman

Subject: Response to Consultation on DPCR5

Dear Rachel,

Response to Consultation on DPCR5

I am writing on behalf of the Major Energy Users' Council (MEUC) in response to your consultation on DPCR5. We have made our members aware of the consultation and several may well respond individually. Their direct experiences are likely to be crucial in considering the issues relating to connections and customer relationships.

Throughout the consultation process, which commenced over a year ago, you made it clear that the DNOs should liaise and seek the views of customers and customer representatives. We find it disappointing how few of them have actually done so and fear it doesn't augur well for their approach in the future.

We are regularly contacted by members who have met a bureaucratic wall or been obstructive and seek help from MEUC in expediting connections.

Whilst your approach to provide competition and impose penalty payments on DNOs for their failings is laudable, unless there is a fundamental change in attitude by the companies themselves to customers' needs we fear that little will change. Even where there is consideration of the customer at DNO management level, we remain concerned such enlightenment doesn't always reach customer-facing staff.

Organisations that have a regular requirement for new connections may welcome competition but we see difficulties in promoting this to those, particularly industrial companies, whose primary need will be to get a single connection or upgrade to what they already have. Frequently the issue is related to the age or unreliability of the existing network or just inadequate capacity. We have one member, whose supply has been affected by housing developments nearby. It is difficult to see how your proposals will help that. Only a general change of attitude and improved customer focus will produce the results needed.

To comment directly upon your connections and incentives proposals (Chapter 10), we can agree with the thrust of your policy. Industrial customers will find the penalties inadequate but will probably accept them as a starting point and agree that a mechanism should be developed to ramp them up (Question 2).

Issues such as guaranteed standards of performance payments (Chapter 15) are difficult to reconcile against the costs that an industrial organisation may have to incur and as a result many may find what is proposed irrelevant. What should help the situation however would be to improve the level of reporting to include shorter term power cuts and sudden voltage dips. A voltage dip of just milliseconds may well cause motors to trip. Whilst it may be a simple matter to restart them for little cost regular occurrences at a particular site should be identified and investigated.

The current policy of government is putting emphasis upon renewable generation, much of it to be connected to the DNO networks and talks about new technologies still to be developed. We must assume that we will have to live with what we have for many years to come. Our concern is that much of it is over 50 years old must not be allowed to become less reliable.

Yours sincerely

Hugh Conway

For Major Energy Users' Council (MEUC)

