

[REDACTED]

**Subject:** SMART Metering Implementation Programme - Accelerated Rollout

Dear Neil,

I hope that you can take into account UNISON's views on this topic even though I acknowledge that submissions were sought by 28 September 2010.

UNISON represents approximately 30 thousand members employed within the UK's Energy Industry. Most of these work for the big six companies and the majority of our members work as customer relations agents in call centres.

UNISON has been a consistent promoter of the transition towards a low carbon economy. We have argued for an energy industry much more reliant on renewables than on coal and oil (We do support investment in CCS.). We recognize that a fundamental part of our future energy infrastructure will involve smart meters capable of accurately measuring electricity generated by renewables including micro-generation. In time the whole UK transmission and distribution systems will also need to be upgraded to Smart Grid status.

Consequently UNISON supports the rollout of domestic smart meters in a way that places customers and industry workers first. Our members' experiences of meter installation generally tells us that it is essential that technical and health and safety standards must be maintained throughout. Regrettably in the past suppliers have made use of contractors paid on a bonus basis per unit installed. This led to meters being left in an unsafe condition with cases of cross polarity not uncommon.

Above all else it is essential that there are industry wide standards that all operators/installers must comply with. In addition there is a need for some independent supervision/regulation of the installation programme to ensure that corners are not being cut. Safety must always be the number one priority for both the installers and for the customers.

UNISON has also argued that a comprehensive public information and support service needs to be set up to provide impartial advice and information about the installation programme. Customers need adequate notice of what to expect and when. Clearly there is great scope for discontent and dispute between customers and installers. If the programme is to be accelerated then the need for this support becomes even more important.

Provided UNISON's concerns, as outlined here, can be fully met then an accelerated installation programme could be feasible.

Best wishes,



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