

Dear Sir,

I understand that Gas and Electricity suppliers have until tomorrow 23rd Feb to submit proposals to Ofgem on how they will simplify pricing schemes, improve transparency and hence enable consumers to make fair comparisons. I wish to make a submission to Ofgem on this issue but it is not easy to determine from the Ofgem web site which is the right contact point.

I am writing to you on the basis that you are the contact point for the Draft Work Programme 2012-2013 that appears as though it may be the relevant part of Ofgem, but if your section is not the right part of Ofgem I apologise for any inconvenience but would ask you to immediately pass this email on to the appropriate manager in Ofgem.

It is good that action at long last is being taken to get rid of the ridiculously enormous range of gas and electricity tariffs, whose complexity and purpose has clearly been designed to prevent customers from making genuine cost comparisons between suppliers. An outrageous abuse of unrestricted marketing power that was so obvious it is inexplicable how a regulator or parliament could have failed to notice and take action for so long.

There needs to be some Standardisation of Contract Terms if consumers are to be enabled to make fair comparisons

There is another glaring marketing trick that should be addressed at the same time as too numerous tariff choices not directly comparable with each other, yet it does not seem to be under consideration. It is this. Retail consumer Gas and Electricity tariffs that come with terms and conditions that lock consumers into tariffs with penalties for early termination also come in a variety of different forms and combinations of gas, electricity, or gas plus electricity, with the start and end dates effectively randomised. All of this makes the choice of choosing the most cost advantageous supplier very difficult or even impossible to determine, as the various alternative attractive tariffs do not coincide in time, or may not continue to exist by the time a consumer's current contract expires without penalty.

As a consumer I can understand that suppliers want to have fixed term contracts so that they can match forward purchasing to customer demand. Therefore I think it would be mutually beneficial to suppliers and customers if all contracts and tariffs offered had to start and finish on the same day. Say for example 1st November, a good time for consumers to switch as the winter bills are the greatest concern. With a requirement that tariff details must be published on line 30 days before these contract dates.

This would mean that all consumers would know there is a day when they can switch suppliers without penalty, and that all tariffs for the period ahead from all the suppliers would be directly comparable, available, and start from this day. Thus fair comparisons could be made of the supplier offerings relative to individual household consumption levels of gas and electricity.

Without an arrangement like this, the market will still be corrupted by lock in penalties and tariffs that can not be compared on a like for like basis.

In good faith

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