

Dear Mr Hunt,

I have been invited to share my experience as a consumer as per the attached emails.

I was not previously aware of the Review, but my recent experience of switching energy supplier has persuaded me to do so.

I currently in a fixed contract with Scottish Power and tied in to 1st January 2013. I am keen to engage in the market and secure what I consider to be the best deal at all times. I will suffer an approximate £60 early termination fee should I switch supplier before 1st January. I have always been fully aware of this, was happy to accept to the clause and have every intention of seeing out the contract. In previous years I had had bad experiences of switching supplier for a perceived low tariff, only to find later that I had drifted on to much worse tariff. I now consider myself to have a good understanding of the amount of energy I consume and I believe I have a reasonable understanding of the ins and outs of various suppliers and their tariffs.

Knowing that the process of switching supplier takes 30-45 days, I started "shopping around" for a new energy deal in late November. I spotted what I considered to be a good deal but was warned by a well-known consumer website that this particular was likely to be withdrawn imminently. Armed with the facts, I signed up to Npower on Sunday 25th November, thinking that about 36 days would be ok, seeing as that period included Christmas, and if not, given plenty of notice, Scottish Power and Npower could surely be persuaded to delay the switch a day or two so I could avoid the penalty. Sure enough, Npower's tariff that I had signed up to was withdrawn by the following day, Monday 26th November. I felt pretty happy that I had secured this particular deal.

On my first contact with Npower about a week after making the switch, I requested them not to switch before 1st January. I was told it was not possible to do this, as it was another organisation who chose the date. Nor was it possible for me to contact this organisation to request a particular date.

Sure enough, I was phoned by Scottish Power only today, who were interested in trying to retain my custom. I asked about which date I was due to be switched. I was told it will be the 29th December, 3 days from the end on the contract. I will therefore pay the £60 penalty negating roughly 3 months' worth of savings I expect to make through switching, because I will be switched 3 days before my agreement with Scottish Power - a date which was chosen for me and which I have no effective control over, other than being told "switching can typically take 30-45 days"

This is merely £60 worth of irritation to me, along with a feeling that the system is "designed" like this - to be to for the advantage of the suppliers at the cost of the consumer. For the less well-off customer, the implications are far more serious - potentially locking them in to less competitive tariffs, to their cost.

Interestingly, neither Npower nor Scottish Power have emailed me to inform me of the date of switching, which is just 9 days away, with Christmas inbetween.

With my experience as detailed above, I welcome the proposals in Section 9 of the Consultation paper, particularly 9.5, 9.6 and 9.7, as I believe these measures would effectively remove the particular barrier to competition that I have encountered.

