



Meeting Notes

Consumer Bills and Communications Roundtable

Ninth meeting of the Consumer Bills and Communications Roundtable Group	Date and time of Meeting Location	1 st May 09:00 – 11:30 Ofgem, 9 Millbank
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The meeting note below lays out the main discussion points, agreements and action points for the ninth meeting of the Consumer Bills and Communications Roundtable Group (CBCRG).

Attendees

Anne Pardoe	- Citizens Advice
Sarah Colligan	- Npower
Gillian Cooper	- Consumer Focus
Paul Measday	- UK Power Networks
Matthew Preston	- Northern Power Grid
Patrick Whitehead	- DECC
Alun Rees	- Energy UK
Jemma Baker	- Ofgem (Chair)
Stew Horne	- Ofgem
Victoria Volossov	- Ofgem



Meeting Notes

Key discussion and action points

The group updated action points from previous meetings, heard the views of electricity distribution network operators on some information given on bills, and discussed the structure and content of the CBCRG activity report.

Please see below for more details.

Actions from previous meetings

- **Action – Outstanding EnergyUK** to send research on calorific value (BG)
- **Action – Outstanding: EnergyUK**, to find out how large and small suppliers package their communications, according to the table template contained in the minutes of 26 February
- **Action – Outstanding:** Purposes of supplier communications document: **Ofgem** to update the table setting out purposes to ensure it maps regulatory requirements to the content items.

The group's next 10th meeting will take place on 4 July 2013.

Consumer Bills and Communications Roundtable Group (CBCRG) 1 May 2013

1. Presentation of Distribution Network Operator representatives

Two representatives of Distribution Network Operators (DNOs) for electricity presented feedback on bill simplification and its potential impacts. Points raised were:

- The usefulness of the DNO's address on the bill
 - o The address of the DNO that currently appears on bills needs to be clearly labelled, so that consumers will not mistake it for their supplier's address. DNOs estimate that one fifth of calls they receive relate to such mistakes, up to about 50% on the weekends, when suppliers' help lines are closed.
 - o DNO representatives will explore DNOs' views on the necessity of DNO addresses on bills.
- How consumer friendly is the DNO information on bills? Do consumers know what a DNO is?
 - o DNO will explore bill simplification with gas DNOs. Two representatives could do a similar presentation at a future CBCRG.
 - o DNO representatives will feed back to the group information on the volume of misdirected calls to DNOs; and how recent local disconnections were handled, and if DNOs/ authorities/ the media other involved parties made reference to the rota disconnection number on bills; and to what extent other means such as text messages, Twitter, calls to vulnerable customers were used.

2. Standardisation of Terms

- Ofgem analysed the consistency of terms on different communications across the market. Ofgem found high consistency for terms such as bill, complaint, prepayment, cancellation fee and Terms and Conditions. Ofgem found low consistency for terms such as meter reading or kWh.
- The group agreed that for now, no more consumer research was necessary on the presentation of kilowatt hour. With the launch of smart metering, consumers will become more familiar with the term kilowatt hour, and its meaning.
- Standardisation of 'standing charge' and 'unit rate' would be helpful, further work is needed
- Ofgem will populate Standardisation of Terms table and highlight terms with low consistency across suppliers
- Consumer Focus will reach small suppliers and ask for feedback on the Standardisation of Terms list.
- EnergyUK will distribute the list of Terms for Standardisation to suppliers for review.

3. Calorific value: research plan

- Npower will present results of their research on calorific value at the 10th CBCRG meeting. The research will differentiate between paper and online customers, and customer demographics will be shown as part of the results.
- EnergyUK will send research on calorific value (BG)

4. CBCRG activity report

Energy UK is the penholder of the CBCRG activity report. The report will collate the group's recommendations to simplify supplier communications. It will also address how to incorporate standard terms and the Consumer Checklist developed by Consumer Futures.

Actions

- **Action DNO representatives:** explore DNOs' views on including DNO addresses on bills; liaise with gas DNOs about bill simplification. Inform the CBCRG about the volume of misdirected calls to DNOs; how recent local disconnections were handled, and if DNOs/ authorities/ the media other involved parties made reference to the rota disconnection number on bills; and to what extent other means such as text messages, Twitter, calls to vulnerable customers were used.
- **Action Ofgem:** populate Standardisation of Terms table and highlight terms with low consistency across suppliers
- **Action Consumer Focus:** ask small suppliers for feedback on the Standardisation of Terms list.
- **Action EnergyUK** to send list of Terms for Standardisation to suppliers
- **Action – EnergyUK** to send out an updated outline for the group report by 27 June
- **Action – Ofgem** Standardisation of terms: Ofgem will check if there is an existing list of terms for smart metering
 - There is a glossary in their 'Smart Metering Implementation Programme – Government Response to the Consultation on the second version of the Smart Metering Equipment Technical Specifications',¹ which could be a starting point for a list of terms. However, it would be DECC's decision to initiate this work.

1

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/68902/smart_meters_equipment_technical_spec_2_consultation_response_part_1.pdf