

Dear Sirs

On 28th June you published your consultation document "Third Party Intermediaries: exploration of market issues and options". As a director of a firm of TPI's I read this with interest and it seems to be a well balanced and informative paper.

We started life in 1984 as a firm of energy and design consultants working in the non-domestic sectors, and then dropped the M & E design in the early 90's and focussed solely upon energy management. Prior to deregulation, the checking of the most appropriate electricity tariffs, and associated issues was a small but important part of our work, and we always charged a fixed fee for our services. With the deregulation of the markets in the mid 90's we were well placed to provide a service to some of our clients in relation to procurement, and this remained a small part of our work for some time. However, over the past 10 years we have developed our Utility Bureau Service to a far greater extent, and feel able to provide a response that we trust will be of value. Note that we charge a fixed fee for our services which is paid by the consumer directly to us with no commission taken from suppliers.

1. All TPI's get paid in some way, some directly by the consumer and some indirectly via the supplier, and some a mix of both. We strongly believe that all suppliers should be instructed to print on their supply invoices the amount paid as commission to TPI's, whether this be £0 or more, and that it is made clear that the consumer is the one paying. In our experience, many consumers believe that TPI services (predominantly provided by brokers) are free. In this simple way, consumers can see the fees paid and may would be surprised, if not shocked, at some of the commissions that their TPI receives.

2. A Code of Practice for TPI's should be set up, with a light touch as you suggest, but administered by an impartial organisation. We have reviewed UIA's offering but believe that their fees are way too high and unjustified, and their own Terms and Conditions are totally unacceptable in some areas. Any accreditation should not be too onerous, over-expensive nor too time consuming (as has been proven with QA)

Regards

Martin Talbot, M.Sc., C.Eng., MEI, MCIBSE
Director
Clifford Talbot Partnership
13 High Street
Thornbury
Bristol
BS35 2AE