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23<sup>rd</sup> October 2020

Dear Mr Blagrove,

Re: Microbusiness Strategic Review: Policy Consultation

We welcome the opportunity to respond to this consultation on Ofgem's Microbusiness Strategic Review. Smart Energy GB is the national non-profit campaign tasked with engaging consumers in the smart meter rollout. Smart Energy GB supports the policy proposals as outlined and would welcome opportunities to support on awareness raising activities alongside leading consumer groups.

We are aware that the non-domestic sector has been significantly disrupted due to Covid-19. In our Microbusiness tracker, a survey of 336 GB microbusinesses, 76% agreed that Covid-19 has had a negative impact on their business so far and 72% expect Covid-19 to have had a negative impact on their business by the time the crisis is over. <sup>1</sup> It is right that Ofgem are progressing with proposals to improve the experience for micro businesses in this sector in these unprecedented times.

Our ongoing research on microbusinesses and third-party intermediaries aligns with the poor experience described within the consultation. We are pleased that our campaign has been extended to raise awareness of smart meters and their benefits amongst this audience. The installation of a smart meters will provide microbusinesses greater control over their business' energy spend; providing access to usage data and sending automatic readings for accurate billing. The installation of a smart meter will support microbusinesses to engage further with the market, supported by the proposed improvements that Ofgem have outlined in this consultation. We would like to note, as highlighted in our previous response to the Strategic review of the microbusiness retail market, that not all suppliers provide the free access to their usage data or offer the installation at no additional cost. We would urge Ofgem to examine this issue as this is a barrier to uptake.

We would welcome opportunities to share our campaign insights in support of activities to provide greater information to microbusinesses about the retail energy market.

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<sup>1</sup> Savanta Coronavirus Data Tracker: GB Businesses, Wave 13, fieldwork during 18<sup>th</sup> to the 29<sup>th</sup> September via an online survey



Our live microbusiness campaign is multifaceted, utilising trade press and radio as our core marketing channels however, we are exploring the efficacy of social media to target this audience. Most recently, on the 13<sup>th</sup> October we launched a PR campaign, which seeks to raise the awareness of smart meters for all small businesses but in particular, the hospitality sector in the run up to Christmas. Our Press Office have partnered with Energy Saving Trust to develop 1-2-page guide of tailored, actionable advice for each sector for ongoing publication. The Partnerships team is reaching a range of microbusinesses through Broadchurch business organisations, membership and trade organisation and businesses services. Finally, our Public Affairs and Policy teams will continue to engage with stakeholders and government on microbusinesses, and will host an event in partnership with Business Green at the end of October. We are in the midst of planning our engagement next year, with the intention of raising further awareness and positive sentiment.

We firmly support efforts to increase information and resource provision for businesses and therefore welcome Ofgem's proposal to achieve this alongside leading consumer groups. We would welcome opportunities to support on this activity, such as providing complementary messaging, and offer any insight that may be valuable.

If you have any questions about this response, or would like any additional information, please contact Ellice Mansfield at [Ellice.Mansfield@smartenergygb.org](mailto:Ellice.Mansfield@smartenergygb.org)

Yours sincerely,

Iagan MacNeil  
Head of Policy

