



UK Home Energy Conservation Association (HECA) Response to BERR Consultation on Energy Billing and Metering – Changing Consumer Behaviour:

1. Introduction to UK HECA

- 1.1 The UK Home Energy Conservation Association (UK HECA), previously the National HECA Forum, supports and represents local authority energy officers working to reduce the domestic carbon footprint and tackle fuel poverty. It comprises officers from the 379 Energy Conservation Authorities across the ten regional and devolved HECA fora in England and Wales, with the Northern Ireland HECA Forum and the Scottish HECA Officers' Network as associate members.

2. General Comments

- 2.1 UK HECA recognises that Smart Meters and the Real Time Display Units would provide significant benefits to the customer and should be introduced fairly rapidly in a set time period. It is easily implementable particularly in new build. Large refurbishment programmes would need to be coordinated with the relevant housing provider.

Some key questions that UK HECA would wish to raise are:

- How do you determine the need for the replacement of a meter?
- When does the useful life of a meter end?
- What maintenance does the meter require if any?
- If a meter is faulty are they being replaced free of charge?

3. Customers Benefits

- 3.1 Section 5 refers to the provision of historical information to the customer. Although a good idea theoretically historical data might not be an accurate representation of the usage in the household as it is not weather corrected and any change in circumstance or behaviour i.e., energy efficiency improvements, would not be outlined. Costs of fuel would not be taken into account when producing such comparisons.
- 3.2 In addition a customer might have long periods of estimated reads, which will give an inaccurate picture to the customer. Smart metering will however be very useful in such situations particularly for the vulnerable households.
- 3.3 In response to Section 5.4 advice and information on corrected data would be very useful to help customers achieve behavioural change.

- 3.4 Additional energy efficiency information is very useful for the customer to encourage them to obtain further information on energy efficiency. They could be signposted to the Local Energy Advice network on their free phone number –0800 512 012 as they are managed by the Energy Saving Trust and are able to advise customers on a local level specific to where a customer lives. They also run various schemes that the customer might benefit from.
- 3.5 The Governments approach to the introduction of smart meters and the real time display units (RTD's) would allow a phased approach to the installation while allowing carbon savings to be achieved in the interim through other clip on devices like the 'Electrotec', being installed to existing meters and allowing customers to monitor their energy use and bring about behavioural change.
- 3.6 In response to the Governments policy options on the introduction of smart meters, given their benefits, it is not a case of whether the government should mandate them only for businesses and taking no further action but rather when and how it is going to introduce them. More consideration also needs to be given to customers on prepayment meters who although are more conscious of their energy use, would find the additional costs of smart meters and RTD units difficult to meet.

4. Conclusions

- 4.1 UK HECA is of the opinion that the Governments proposal to introduce smart meters and the RTD units are a very good way achieving behavioural change and energy savings for the customers and carbon savings for the Utilities. It is important to consider the most cost effective way forward for all customers including those on prepayment meters. Consideration needs to be given as to whether Utilities can bear the costs of the installation in vulnerable households, under the CERT 2008 – 2011's new criteria related to behavioural change. Installing the meters if requested from May 2008 for the two-year period could achieve significant carbon savings and behavioural change. Consideration would however need to be given on how these are being publicised and if the utilities can meet the demand. In addition what are the future costs for introducing the data management features, enabled to be run on the TV's or personal computers of households.

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