

Government response: Smart meters – the smart choice

They are being installed across Great Britain as a part of a national upgrade to our energy system.

Smart meters put people in control of their energy use by showing them how much energy they use in pounds and pence via an easy to understand In-Home Display.

With accurate information at their fingertips, consumers can easily understand how they can make small changes to the way they use energy in order to use less and save money on their bills. This information can help them choose a better tariff or switch supplier, increasing their savings even further.

Smart meters also communicate directly with your energy supplier meaning you will get accurate bills and only pay for what you use without the hassle of providing meter readings yourself or taking time out of your day to let the meter reader in.

Consumers with smart pre-payment meters will be able to top up directly online, through an app or at the local shop. No more keys or cards, making it much more convenient. The prepay in-home display will have an easy-to-understand screen that will show how much credit is left. So no more late-night dashes out to top up your energy balance.

Smart meters are the building blocks of a smarter energy system fit for the 21st century.

Over 11 million meters are already empowering consumers to reap the rewards of a smarter energy system – with 400,000 more meters benefitting homes and businesses every month. 8 out of 10 of those with a smart meter would recommend them to friends and family.

In the future, consumers will be able to choose for their new smart household gadgets and appliances to talk to their smart meter and help reduce their household bills. For example, your smart washing machine can automatically run at the cheapest time of the day, directed by information coming through your smart meter.

The government is committed to every home and small business being offered a smart meter by end 2020 – you can choose whether to have one or not. There are clear standards of conduct, overseen by energy regulator Ofgem, that require suppliers to treat consumers fairly and not mislead them when marketing the benefits of smart meters to their customers.

What are the benefits of smart meters?

- smart meters put consumers in control of their energy use, so they can save money on their bills – those savings will be worth more than £1.2 billion a year by 2030
- they provide easier, accurate billing and will help consumers choose the best deal for them
- no more estimated billing – something we only seem to tolerate in utilities – no more having to crawl under the stairs or to take time out of your day to provide manual readings to your supplier
- smart meters are set to be the cornerstone of the smart energy system of the future, potentially saving Great Britain up to £40 billion between now and 2050

What do energy consumers who already have smart meters think?

- 82% of people with smart meters say they have a better idea of their energy costs
- 8 out of 10 people with smart meters say they would recommend them to friends or family
- 90% of people with a smart meter say they are satisfied with the installation process
- hundreds of thousands of energy consumers are choosing to have smart meters in their homes every month

Myths

Myth 1: Smart meters stop people from switching and lock them into one supplier

Fact: That is simply untrue. All consumers can switch whenever they want. In fact households with smart meters are more likely to switch than those who don't have one, with 23% of people with smart meters switching in the last year, versus 17% without a smart meter. [\(1\)](#)

Myth 2: Smart meters don't really help you save money

Fact: Not true. More than 80% of people with smart meters have taken steps to reduce their energy use and as a result, cut their bills. [\(2\)](#) It is estimated smart meters will take £300 million off consumer's bills in 2020, rising to more than £1.2 billion per year by 2030 – an average annual saving of £47 per household. [\(3\)](#) 8 in 10 consumers with a smart meter would recommend one to family and friends. [\(4\)](#)

Myth 3: People are being forced to have smart meters installed

Fact: Not true. Those customers who want to benefit from having a smart meter can have one installed at no extra cost, but installing a smart meter is always the customer's choice and people have the right to say no.

Myth 4: Suppliers are bullying consumers into having a smart meter installed

Fact: Ofgem has made it clear suppliers must treat customers fairly and their communications must be complete, accurate and not misleading. Ofgem will take up complaints with energy suppliers for customers who feel they are being bullied or coerced into getting a smart meter.

Myth 5: Smart meters can be hacked and are a safety hazard in the home

Fact: Smart meters are secure, with a security system developed by leading experts in industry and government including GCHQ's National Cyber Security Centre.

Smart meter installations are also making British homes safer. In 2017, over a quarter of a million safety issues, unrelated to the smart meter installation, were identified by smart meter installers, as a result of free visual safety checks, helping to protect households across Great Britain.

Myth 6: Suppliers are installing 'dumb' meters that fail when you switch supplier

Fact: All smart meters offer the same smart functions to customers. Some first generation smart meters may lose some smart functionality if consumers switch but 93% of those installed remain unaffected. This issue is only temporary however and all smart meters will retain their full capabilities when they are enrolled into the national wireless smart meter network. This upgrade will begin early in 2019 and will happen automatically without the consumer needing to do anything.

Myth 7: Consumers with poor mobile signal can't get a smart meter

Fact: By the end of the year more than 95% of households will have signal, rising to 99.25% by the end of 2020 – meaning that almost every household who wants one will be able to have a smart meter.

Myth 8: Suppliers aren't making enough progress on the rollout of smart meters

Fact: Over 400,000 smart meters are being installed every month and 11 million are already operating across Great Britain. Ofgem holds suppliers to account to ensure they are meeting their obligations to roll out smart meters and can fine energy companies for missing targets.

Myth 9: Smart meters can turn off your fridge without you knowing

Fact: No they can't. It will always be up to consumers to decide when to use their appliances. In the future smart meters will allow consumers to be rewarded when they use appliances at times when energy is cheaper.

Myth 10: Smart meters mean suppliers can charge higher prices without you knowing

Fact: Energy suppliers can only charge prices customers have agreed to – and that won't change. Customers with smart meters can access tariffs that allow them to get cheaper prices at times when demand is low – but it will always be the customer's choice.

1. Ofgem, '[Consumer engagement survey 2017](#)' (September 2017)
2. Smart Energy GB, '[Smart meters and energy usage: a survey of energy behaviour before and after upgrading to a smart meter](#)' (April 2017)
3. BEIS, '[Smart meter roll-out \(GB\): cost-benefit analysis](#)' (November 2016)
4. BEIS, '[Smart Meter Customer Experience Study 2016 to 2018](#)' (August 2017)

[Return to myths](#)

[International treaty: \[TS No.9/2018\] Minamata Convention on Mercury](#)

Published title:Minamata Convention on Mercury

[Research and analysis: African swine fever in pigs in China](#)

Updated: Added update 2 (31 August 2018).

Preliminary and updated outbreak assessments for African swine fever in the Liaoning region, north east China.

[Statistical data set: Effort](#)

statistics July 2018

Statistics on effort use in western waters are submitted to the European Commission on the 15 day of every month.

Data provided to the European Commission in accordance with Commission Regulation (EC) No 2103/2004 (a,b)

Crabs

Trip type	BSA(c)	ICES V-VI	ICES VII	ICES VIII
Effort deployed (kWdays)	–	275,062	208,264	–
Maximum allowable effort (d) (kWdays)				–
Uptake (%)	0%	39%	38%	n/a

Demersal

Trip type	BSA(c)	ICES V-VI	ICES VII	ICES VIII
Effort deployed (kWdays)	517,405	3,535,913	4,389,915	58,364
Maximum allowable effort (d) (kWdays)	3,061,485	24,017,229	25,786,266	218,406
Uptake (%)	17%	15%	17%	27%

Scallops

Trip type	BSA(c)	ICES V-VI	ICES VII	ICES VIII
Effort deployed (kWdays)	–	434,566	2,094,245	–
Maximum allowable effort (d) (f) (kWdays)	1,223	1,974,425	3,315,619	–
Uptake (%)	0%	22%	63%	n/a

Source: UK Fisheries Administrations

(a) The Western Waters comprise the nine sea areas described in Council Regulation (EC) No 1954/2003: ICES V-VI, ICES VII, ICES VIII, ICES IX, ICES X, CECAF 34.1.1, CECAF 34.1.2, CECAF 34.2.0, and the Biologically Sensitive Area (BSA), defined in Article 6.

(b) Regulated trips are those with target species listed by Council Regulation (EC) No 1954/2003, namely:

- Demersal species excluding those covered by Regulation (EEC) No 2347/2002
- Scallops
- Edible crab and spider crab

(c) Includes effort deployed on regulated trips in the Biologically Sensitive Area (BSA) by vessels over 10m in length, in accordance with Council Regulation (EC) No 1954/2003.

(d) The maximum allowable effort permitted in each sea area is set in Council Regulation (EC) No 1415/2004. The UK does not hold allocations of effort for areas ICES IX, ICES X, CECAF 34.1.1, CECAF 34.1.2, CECAF 34.2.0.”

e) Data provided to the European Commission in accordance with Commission Regulation

EC No 2103/2004 only contains validated data on the MMO systems

f) baseline includes any transfers from other member states

[Press release: Ash dieback found on three new host species of tree in the UK](#)

The [Forestry Commission](#) is urging industry to be vigilant for signs of ash dieback and report suspected sightings through its [Tree Alert](#) reporting system.

The call comes after three new tree and shrub species in the same family as ash (Oleaceae) tested positive for ash dieback (*Hymenoscyphus fraxineus*) infection at the [Westonbirt Arboretum](#), Gloucestershire.

The findings are unlikely to have a significant impact on the environment as the newly infected species are ornamental and are not widespread or native to the UK.

The infection was identified by staff at the arboretum on mock privet, narrow-leaved mock privet and white fringetree – ornamental trees and shrubs from the Mediterranean and North America. The species were found in close proximity to infected ash trees.

[Forest Research](#), Great Britain’s principal organisation for forestry and tree related research, is conducting further tests on the nature of the infection. This includes monitoring other species in the Oleaceae family for susceptibility to *H. fraxineus* infection. A number of these species have already been tested including Osmanthus and Lilac, but were found to be negative.

UK Chief Plant Health Officer, Professor Nicola Spence, said:

Since 2012, the Government has invested more than £6 million into ash dieback research. These findings highlight the importance of the Forestry Commission’s reporting system, Tree Alert, and of arboreta and other plant collections, which play crucial roles in

supporting the UK's world-leading plant health sector.

Landscapers, gardeners and tree practitioners should be vigilant for signs of ash dieback on these new host species, and report suspicious findings through Tree Alert.

Over the last five years the Government has invested in world-leading research to advance understanding of the biology and pathology of the disease, including sequencing the ash genome and the ash dieback fungus. It has also funded the world's largest screening trial for tolerant trees, raising the possibility of an ash breeding programme in the future.

In May the Environment Secretary launched the first [Tree Health Resilience Strategy](#) – the first major publication to come out of the [25-Year Environment Plan](#). The strategy sets out a new proactive approach to tree health, with landowners, charities, the public and government working together to take actions to build resilience against pests and diseases to protect the nation's trees.

As part of this approach, a new senior cross-industry Plant Health Alliance to strengthen biosecurity practices across industry has been established.

Arboreta also continue to play a critical role in supporting work on ash dieback. Research by [Forest Research](#) has identified over 30 different ash species being grown in the main arboreta of Britain which will be used in trials to assess tolerance of these species to ash dieback.

[Defra](#) and the [Forestry Commission](#) continue to work with landowners and local councils, as well as the plant health sector internationally, to share experiences, identify solutions and develop action plans to deal with the impacts of ash dieback.

To report a suspected case of ash dieback in any of these newly identified host species, visit the [Tree Alert](#) portal.