

Utilita response to Ofgem final order (SMETS 2)

Friday 27 November, 2020

We have been left shocked and disappointed at the tone of Ofgem's press release – which they chose not to share with us prior to publication.

To say we have been “failing to act on smart meters” is grossly unfair – we have led the way, installing the first smart meter in Britain in 2005, many years before the national rollout began.

More than 90% of our customers are smart meter installed – roughly double the industry average.

Our customers are the most smart-engaged in Britain.

Let's be clear: our decision to continue to install first generation meters is a moral one made solely with the best interests of our customers at heart.

Forcing PAYG (Pay As You Go) customers – tens of thousands of whom are vulnerable – to use unproven SMETS2 meters, which have major connectivity issues across large swathes of the north of England, and are clearly not user friendly, is unjustified.

SMETS2 is unproved at the transaction volume we operate at – we are now recording 25 top ups per second at peak times.

We have invested heavily in our tech infrastructure to the point we deliver a best-in-class service. The many benefits of our investment have given hundreds of thousands of our customers added comfort, particularly during the coronavirus pandemic.

Last month alone, more than 50,000 customers gave themselves an account credit when they needed help during the pandemic, via our tried and tested SMETS1 meter functionality that meets our customers' needs very well.

We also refute the suggestion SMETS1 hinders competition. We exchange thousands of customers every week with no loss of functionality.

As Ofgem is well aware, our concerns over SMETS2 meters are around the robustness and reliability of the systems for PAYG customers and reduced functionality.

We have made several suggestions, based on our considerable knowledge of operating smart PAYG since 2005. But we have not been listened to.

We have always sought to act in the best interest of customers and have delivered a market leading service for the last decade.

And we will continue to do so.