



**Under embargo until: 00.02hrs Tuesday 20<sup>th</sup> September, 2011**

## **USWITCH.COM WELCOMES ENERGY MINISTER'S TOUGH NEW STANCE**

uSwitch.com welcomes Chris Huhne's announcement that Ofgem, the energy regulator, is to be given more teeth and that energy customers will see their rights boosted.

**Ann Robinson, Director of Consumer Policy at [uSwitch.com](http://uSwitch.com), says:** "In a year of double price hikes and soaring fuel poverty, consumers need Ofgem to champion their cause. The hard hitting and meaningful measures announced by Chris Huhne today will allow Ofgem to take its gloves off and will make it even easier for consumers to reject price rises by shopping around for a better deal. In a year when prices have increased by £224 or 21%<sup>[1]</sup> this is just the kind of ammunition that consumers need.

"The main measures to simplify tariffs, bills and annual statements will be very hard to achieve without Ofgem being given additional powers to stop companies from blocking these consumer-friendly moves. We also welcome the fact that Ofgem wants to speed up the switching process to three weeks. This will go some way to reassuring consumers and to building trust and confidence in the switching process.

"However, it's also important that consumers feel that their current supplier is giving them a fair deal and the best way of achieving this is by highlighting the cheapest deals on bills. Once consumers see the savings available it should prompt many more to help themselves by taking advantage of more competitive prices, whether from their existing or a new supplier.

"The warm home discount is welcome, but with almost 7 million households now in fuel poverty<sup>[2]</sup> helping 600,000 just doesn't go far enough. However, overall this announcement is good news for consumers."

## Average household energy bills:

	Jan 2008	Jan 2009	Jan 2010	Oct 2010	July 2011	November 2011
<b>British Gas</b>	£821	£1,176	£1,066	£1,030	£1,096	£1,286
	-	↑ 43% or £355	↓ 9.4% or £110	↓ 3.4% or £36	↑ 6.4% or £66	↑ 17.3% or £190
<b>EDF Energy</b>	£814	£1,083	£1,061	£1,037	£1,118	£1,241
	-	↑ 33% or £269	↓ 2% or £22	↓ 2.3% or £24	↑ 7.8% or £81	↑ 11.0% or £123
<b>E.ON</b>	£813	£1,156	£1,095	£1,061	£1,123	£1,293
	-	↑ 42% or £343	↓ 5.3% or £61	↓ 3.1% or £34	↑ 5.8% or £62	↑ 15.1% or £170
<b>npower</b>	£828	£1,186	£1,150	£1,095	£1,149	£1,282
	-	↑ 43% or £358	↓ 3% or £36	↓ 4.8% or £55	↑ 4.9% or £54	↑ 11.6% or £133
<b>Scottish Power</b>	£853	£1,201	£1,195	£1,152	£1,211	£1,391
	-	↑ 41% or £348	↓ 0.5% or £6	↓ 3.6% or £43	↑ 5.1% or £59	↑ 14.9% or £180
<b>SSE</b>	£782	£1,118	£1,057	£1,038	£1,094	£1,265
	-	↑ 43% or £336	↓ 5.5% or £61	↓ 1.8% or £19	↑ 5.4% or £56	↑ 15.6% or £171
<b>Average</b>	<b>£819</b>	<b>£1,153</b>	<b>£1,104</b>	<b>£1,069</b>	<b>£1,132</b>	<b>£1,293</b>
	-	↑ 41% or £334	↓ 4.2% or £49	↓ 3.2% or £35	↑ 5.9% or £63	↑ 14.2% or £161

Source: uSwitch.com

Based on a medium user consuming 3,300kWh electricity and 16,500kWh gas a year on a standard plan paying on receipt of bill with bill sizes averaged across all regions.

For more information visit [www.uSwitch.com](http://www.uSwitch.com) or call 0800 093 06 07

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### Notes to editors:

1. Based on a medium user customer using 3,300 kWh of electricity and 16,500 kWh of gas, on a standard Dual Fuel plan, paying quarterly by cash or cheque with bill sizes averaged across all suppliers and all regions.
2. BERR previously estimated that for every 1% increase in gas and electricity bills, a further 40,000 households are plunged into fuel poverty. Total fuel poverty numbers come from research conducted by YouGov on behalf of uSwitch.com. Total sample size was 2,323 adults with bill paying responsibility for their household. Fieldwork was undertaken 12<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup> April 2011. The survey was carried out online. The figures were weighted and representative of all GB adults (aged 18+). The groups identified as in fuel poverty were calculated by cross referencing type of household and social grade (ABC1 classified as middle class, C2DE classified as working class) with net monthly household income and average monthly energy spend. Respondents who answered "Don't Know" or "Prefer not to say" have been excluded from fuel poverty calculations. Fuel poverty calculation = Monthly energy bill divided by net monthly income. Those who were spending 10% or more of their net monthly income on energy bills are classified as being in fuel poverty. The research showed 6.3 million or 24% of all households could be classed as fuel poor. The 14.2% overall increase will add 572,800 households.

**About us**

uSwitch.com is a free, impartial, online and telephone-based comparison and switching service, helping consumers compare prices on gas, electricity, water, heating cover, home telephone, broadband, digital television, mobile phones and personal finance products including mortgages, credit cards, current accounts and insurance. In 2010 uSwitch.com celebrated ten years of saving customers money.

uSwitch.com is the first comparison website to achieve the Plain English Campaign's Internet Crystal Mark, which is recognised as a standard that a website has clear language, is accessible and easy to use, and has been tested on a sample of its users.

uSwitch.com is dedicated to helping consumers save money whether they have internet access or not. It offers a dedicated call centre, manned by uSwitch customer service representatives, as well as a freepost 'Send us your bill' service, whereby customers can post their latest energy bills with their telephone number to FREEPOST USWITCH, to get a free call back from a dedicated customer services representative. The service is also available via fax, email and post. Consumers should fax 0203 214 8417, email [CustomerServices@uswitch.com](mailto:CustomerServices@uswitch.com) or write to Customer Services, uSwitch.com, Centro 3, 19 Mandela Street, London, NW1 0DU with their postcode and usage details.

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