



**For immediate release: Monday 7<sup>th</sup> November, 2011**

### **FINAL ENERGY PRICE HIKE STRIKES ON THURSDAY**

- **The last energy price hike comes into effect on Thursday (10<sup>th</sup> November) – when EDF Energy increases its prices by 15.4% or £101 for gas and 4.5% or £21 for electricity<sup>[1]</sup>**
- **Across the board, the big six have increased their prices twice within a year causing bills to rocket from £1,069 to £1,293 - a 21% or £224 increase<sup>[2]</sup>**
- **Almost nine in ten households - 89% or 23 million - will ration their energy use this winter to save on bills - 4 million or 16% more than last year<sup>[3]</sup>**
- **87% of people are worried about the cost of their energy bills as they head towards the winter months - 26% more than last year<sup>[4]</sup>.**

The last energy price rise comes into effect this Thursday (10<sup>th</sup> November) when EDF Energy increases its prices by 15.4% or £101 for gas and 4.5% or £21 for electricity. The increase brings to an end a year of misery for consumers where energy bills rocketed by 21% or £224 on average.

With the average household now facing an energy bill of £1,293 a year<sup>[2]</sup>, the number living in fuel poverty has rocketed to an incredible 6.9 million<sup>[5]</sup>. And this price rise misery could be made worse by another cold winter - 87% of people are worried about the cost of their energy bills as they head towards the winter months – more than a quarter (26%) more than last year<sup>[3]</sup>.

Worryingly, almost nine in ten households - 89% or 23 million - will ration their energy use to save on bills this year - 4 million or 16% more than last year<sup>[4]</sup>. Last winter over half of all households (55%) risked their health or well-being by going without heating at some point to keep their energy costs down<sup>[3]</sup> and this figure looks set to rise as consumers struggle with rising energy bills.

**Ann Robinson, Director of Consumer Policy at [uSwitch.com](http://uSwitch.com), says:** “As we brace ourselves for another cold winter, the vast majority of British households are facing the reality of

substantially higher energy prices. Two price hikes from all the big six suppliers will put a significant strain on family finances and many will be forced to ration their energy use in order to keep a lid on bills. Almost 7 million households are now in fuel poverty, but the alarming fact is that many more will have to go without heating to keep bills down.

“With the cold nights starting to set in, I would urge consumers to act now to reduce their bills. We must all start thinking about and managing our energy usage and there are two key steps to this - use less energy by making your home more energy efficient and pay less for the energy you do use. By improving energy efficiency and ensuring they are on the most competitive plan for them, hopefully households can keep their winter fuel bills manageable without resorting to drastic and potentially dangerous measures.”

#### Average bill sizes:

Supplier	Oct 2010	New bill size
British Gas	£1,030	£1,286
EDF Energy	£1,037	£1,241
E.ON	£1,061	£1,293
npower	£1,095	£1,282
SSE	£1,038	£1,265
ScottishPower	£1,152	£1,391
<b>Average</b>	<b>£1,069</b>	<b>£1,293</b>

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**

**-Ends-**

#### For more information please contact:

Katherine Cooper, uSwitch.com on 0207 802 2961 or [katherinecooper@uswitch.com](mailto:katherinecooper@uswitch.com)

Beth Murray, Lansons Communications on 0207 566 9728 or [bethm@lansons.com](mailto:bethm@lansons.com)

#### Notes to editors:

1. Based on a medium user customer using 3,300 kWh of electricity and 16,500 kWh of gas, on an EDF Energy standard Dual Fuel plan, paying quarterly by cash or cheque with bill sizes averaged across all regions.
2. 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 all big six suppliers and all regions.
3. Based on research carried out in September 2011 with the uSwitch.com Consumer Opinion Panel amongst 2,295 adults with bill paying responsibility for gas and electricity in their household. Research about the previous winter was also conducted with the uSwitch.com Consumer Opinion Panel amongst 1,557 respondents between 27<sup>th</sup> December, 2010 and 3<sup>rd</sup> January, 2011. When asked: 'Are you planning to cut back on the amount of energy you use to make your bills cheaper?' 64.5% said 'I am already doing this' and 24% said 'Yes, I am planning to'. 89% of 26 million households (ONS) is 23,140,000. In 2010, 73% of households responded "I am already doing this" and 'Yes, I am planning to'. 89% - 73% = 16%. 16% of 26 million households is 4,160,000.
4. See point 3 above. When asked: 'Are you worried about the cost of your energy bills as we head towards the winter months when energy use will increase?' 86.9% of respondents said 'yes'. In 2010, 61% of respondents said 'yes'. 87% - 61% = 26%. 26% of 26 million households (ONS) is 6,760,000.

5. 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 568,000 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.

uSwitch.com is owned by Forward Internet Group Limited, a privately funded collection of internet-based businesses focused on consumer engagement and innovation.