

## Wholesale electricity and gas price trends

In December 2021, the cost of wholesale gas prices rose to an all-time historic high. On 21 December, gas was being traded at a record £4.71 per therm; which compares to a historic normal of around 50 pence per therm. The latest gas price spike was ignited by concerns over Russia's gas exports to Western Europe, and worries about a possible Russian/Ukrainian conflict.

The cost of wholesale electricity also unfortunately increased in December to historic highs (€250 per MWh - up 22% since November 2021, or 326% when compared to December 2020). This increase was also on the back of higher wholesale gas costs; as gas is the fuel used by the majority of electricity power stations.

Unfortunately at this point in time, due to these geopolitical concerns, there does not seem to be any immediate signs that the cost of energy will begin to fall.

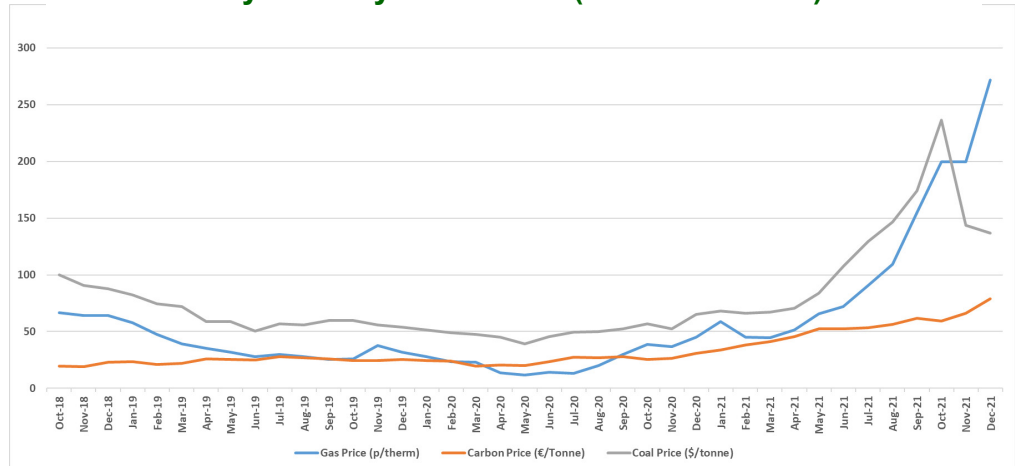
It is important that households do access the help and support that is available. The government offers several schemes:

- the winter fuel payment is available to people born on or before 26 September 1955 and automatically gives you up to £300 a year;
- cold weather payments are available to people on benefits when the average temperature drops below zero; and
- Emergency Fuel Payment Scheme provides a one-off support to households (further details can be found at [www.brysongroup.org/news/emergency-fuel-payment-scheme](http://www.brysongroup.org/news/emergency-fuel-payment-scheme) ).

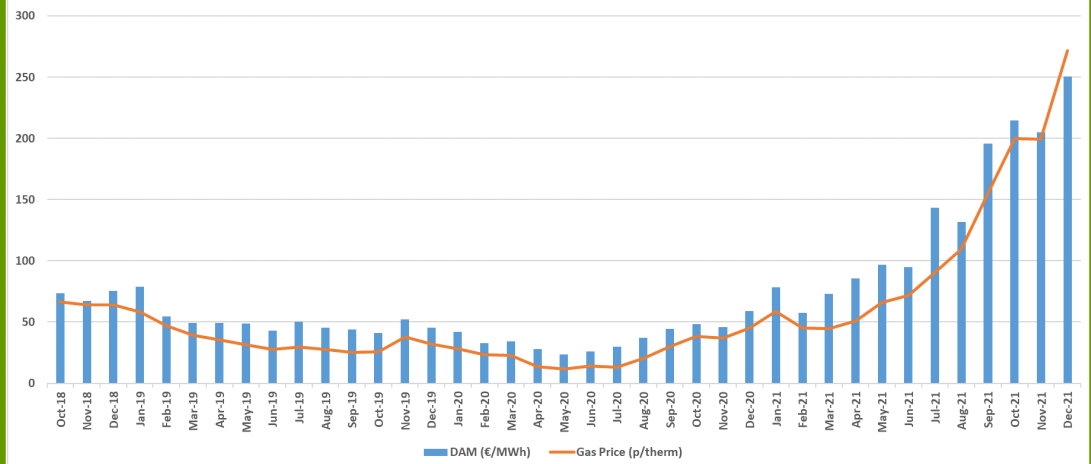
In addition, the Department for Communities has announced a further Energy Payment Support Scheme ([www.communities-ni.gov.uk/node/55966](http://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/node/55966)) that will provide a one-off payment of £200 to people in receipt of specified benefits.

Anyone who is worried about paying for their energy bill should contact their supplier as soon as possible, to access the support available. There are also a number of agencies who can provide free and independent advice, including Advice NI, Money and Pensions Service and Christians Against Poverty.

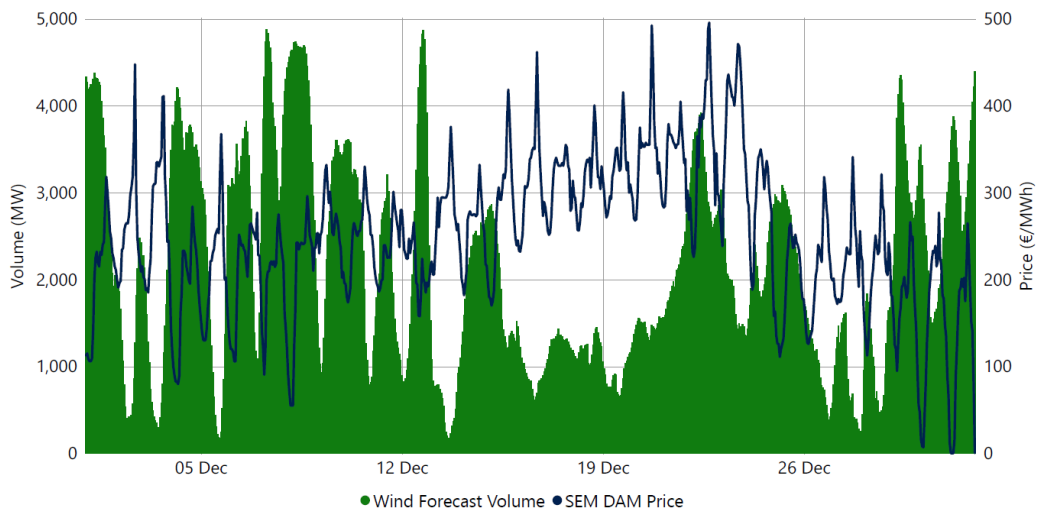
## Key Monthly Fuel Costs (Oct 18 - Dec 21)



## Day Ahead Market (DAM) and Gas Prices (Oct 18 - Dec 21)



## Wind Generation (December 21)



## Best Practice Framework (BPF) programme

We have published our Approach document for the Best Practice Framework (BPF) programme. The purpose of this document is to give stakeholders the opportunity to provide their feedback on our proposed approach to the delivery, content, monitoring and reporting for the BPF programme. The proposals include the development of a new mandatory Code of Practice for consumers in vulnerable circumstances which will apply to both regulated utility suppliers and network companies.

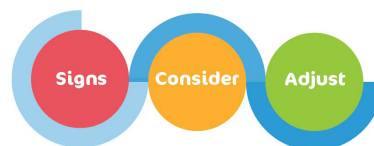
[Best Practice Framework programme](#)

## Phoenix Natural Gas: Meeting the needs of all customers

Vulnerability can mean different things to different people, but recognising the importance of providing the best possible standards of service and meeting the needs of all customers, Phoenix Natural Gas has developed a new Vulnerability Training initiative to ensure all colleagues are equipped to provide vulnerable consumers with any help or assistance they need when accessing the company's services.

The Phoenix Natural Gas 'Signs, Consider, Adjust' training programme has been delivered to more than 100 colleagues across the business, ensuring its customer-facing teams are fully prepared to meet the needs of all customers and can offer any additional support that a customer with a vulnerability may require. This includes customers with transient and fixed vulnerabilities, such as communication barriers, hearing or sight impairments, mobility difficulties and temporary changes of personal circumstance.

Complementing its new training and vulnerability toolkit, Phoenix Natural Gas has also identified Vulnerability Champions within its business who can provide additional help and support for customers and colleagues and ensure that any reasonable adjustments are made to provide the best possible experience for a vulnerable consumer any time they interact with Phoenix Natural Gas.



Meeting the needs  
of every customer



The development of the 'Signs, Consider, Adjust' training is one element of the company's Vulnerability Strategy which has been designed to ensure the delivery of an inclusive service to all consumers, while recognising the needs of vulnerable individuals and having the flexibility to tailor services to meet those needs. The new strategy further builds on the company's existing accreditations which include being JAM (Just a Minute) Card and Dementia Friendly.

Speaking about the company's investment in vulnerability support, Maria Campkin, Operational Support Manager at Phoenix Natural Gas said: "We are passionate about delivering the best possible standards of service which means taking the time to understand and cater for different consumer needs. We continually look at ways to improve and adjust our services to ensure positive outcomes for all consumers and we work closely with the Utility Regulator to support the goals of its Consumer Protection Programme."

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# STAFF PROFILE

## Sarah Maybin Legal Advisor in Corporate Affairs



I have worked as a Legal Advisor since joining the Utility Regulator in late February 2019. I have been involved in a wide variety of matters across the Utility Regulator directorates. My advices have spanned from everything from governance matters to commercial and regulatory law to data protection issues.

I hold a Law (Eng/NI) LLB (Hons) degree from the University of Dundee. When I left University, I did a short stint in India on a Dfid scheme as a volunteer with Raleigh. It was a great experience, working with volunteers from the UK and India in a remote village in Karnataka. We worked on health, building and sanitation projects. My biggest memories are probably when an elephant entered our village one night and the amazing food the local people prepared for us such as masala dosa!

When I returned I studied for my Legal Practice qualification at Kaplan Law School in London, qualifying as a solicitor in London after a two year training contract and working in law since qualifying.

Outside of Utility Regulator, I enjoy running, travel and I am a keen explorer of artistic hobbies such as painting!

## Job Opportunities

As an economic regulator, our role is to enable, incentivise and hold electricity, gas, and water companies to account for providing the best levels of service to consumers in Northern Ireland.

Details about more [job opportunities](#) within the Utility Regulator are on our website.

## Consultations/News Update

During January we published the following consultations.

Please click on the link for further details:

- [Best Practice Consultation](#)
- [Reminder - Forward Work Programme Stakeholder meeting, 1 February 2022](#)
- [Consultation launched on SONI governance licence modifications](#)
- [Open letter to all electricity generation licence holders](#)
- [Consultation published on proposed electricity generation licence for Ballykeel Wind Farm Limited](#)