

Response to the Utility Regulators consultation on the options for co-ordinating the relinquishing of firmus energy's supply exclusivity in the ten towns area.

Question 1 - Do respondents agree that the current staggered market opening timetable presents potential difficulties and confusion for customers in understanding the different tariffs across the same sectors in different towns? What impact, if any, do respondents consider this could have on the development of competition in the ten towns area?

Response

The number of customers affected by this is low and we do not consider that the staggered timetable would present any significant difficulties for those customers.

Question 2 - Do respondents consider that under the current arrangements there is potential for confusion for customers in understanding which sectors in which towns are open to competition? If so what is the impact on the different sectors and on how suppliers advertise?

Response

As one of the affected customers we understand the implications of the changes and would be of the opinion that all those affected would have a similar understanding.

Question 3 - What are the views of respondents on the choice of network codes and associated costs? What considerations are most pertinent for switching system implementation and the associated costs?

Response

The potential savings through competitive pricing from the introduction of competition could outweigh the costs associated with the implementation of the changes. This is particularly relevant to Ballymena as they are the first to be affected by the proposed opening of the market.

Question 4 – Which option do respondents consider presents the best alternative, based on considerations of minimal costs, least confusion for customers and availing of effective competition at the earliest possible opportunity for customers? What arguments are there (based on cost, market clarity and competition considerations) for the alternative options? Is there an alternative option not presented in this paper or a refinement of one of the options that might be more optimal?

Response

We consider Option 1 to be the best alternative for Ballymena as this would offer the earliest opportunity for competition in April 2011.