

## Your Which?



### Switch to beat energy suppliers

Behind the scenes, Mark is helping to build a better future for you



Parliament is a regular haunt for Mark

Mark McLaren might mix with high-profile public figures, but you may not have heard much about his work.

As a Principal Public Affairs Officer, Mark helps improve your rights by lobbying decision-makers.

He focuses on strengthening consumer protection in the housing, law and pensions markets, which means many hours of reading and negotiating.

And it can take years to see the results. Mark joined Which? in January 2007 but it will take three more years to see the success of one of his first projects, aimed at modernising legal services.

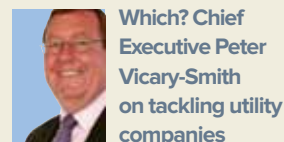
He says: 'When the Legal Services Act became law last October it represented at least eight years' work – and 48 mentions of Which? in Parliament – and it won't be implemented until 2011.'

Such work involves many players. Internally, he liaises

with policy teams on research and campaigns teams who gain support from the public, media and other campaigners. Externally, his discussions are with government officials, politicians and other interested parties, such as the Law Society.

In recent months, Mark has, for example, met with civil servants and MPs about the Pensions Bill, followed debates on regulating will writers and discussed implementing the Legal Services Act. And on housing he has worked on all sorts of areas, including estate agent standards and contracts, as well as new house building.

He says that our Move It! campaign will be a key issue in the coming months: 'Home information packs may be in place, but there's still much to do to make home buying and selling easier, quicker and cheaper for consumers.'



**Which? Chief Executive Peter Vicary-Smith** on tackling utility companies

In recent months, British Gas has been our most complained about company, with our legal team recording complaints about billing, engineers not turning up and the gaps in cover offered by its Homecare servicing.

But problems aren't only with British Gas. Watchdog Energywatch says the UK's 'big six' energy firms offer 'unacceptably poor' service. And recent rises in energy bills – often by more than 10 per cent – won't persuade you, the consumer, that this market works in your interests.

Which? will watch this sector closely in the coming months and demand change where needed. Meanwhile, you can beat bills and bad customer service by switching.

With our independent switching service – [www.switchwithwhich.co.uk](http://www.switchwithwhich.co.uk) – moving to a new supplier or tariff could save around £200 a year or more.

I switched recently, staying with my existing gas and electricity supplier E.ON but changing tariffs. I expect to save around £350 a year.

If more consumers switched, it would make companies more competitive. So if you want to make a stand, take ten minutes out of your day and switch.

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