

Your which?

THE LATEST ON WHICH? AND OUR CAMPAIGNS

Spring clean your energy supplier



Which? chief executive Peter Vicary-Smith on consumer choice in the energy market

As spring beckons, it's tempting to put winter fuel worries to the back of your mind. But you should now be taking stock and considering whether your current energy supplier is really the best one for you.

Consumers should be able to exercise real choice over energy, and that's what Which? has been telling government and industry. Energy suppliers should be competing for your business by offering competitive deals and excellent customer service.

Our latest energy survey (p40) shows that average customer satisfaction for gas and electricity suppliers languishes at 43% – lower even than banks (which is hard to credit in the current climate) and down from 47% in our previous survey last October.

Switch and save

But you can exert control. Changing tariff or energy supplier through Which? Switch should get you better value – last year Which? Switch helped customers save an average of £257 on their annual energy bills, with some saving considerably more.

In the future, exercising this choice should mean more control over energy efficiency or even the source of energy heating your home – which is good news for both the environment and your household bills.

The launch of the Heat and Energy Saving Strategy by the government, which aims to significantly improve the energy efficiency of UK homes, is a welcome recognition of how important it is that you can take control of energy consumption.

Greater transparency

At Which? we recognise that there's still a long way to go to in challenging the vested interests of suppliers whose profits depend upon you burning energy. We continue to press the industry regulator Ofgem for decisive action following its recent probe into the UK energy markets.

We want to see simpler tariff structures, plain-language bills, fair and reasonable notice of price changes and greater transparency among the six dominant energy suppliers.

Which? will continue to talk to industry as well as contribute to Ofgem's proposals as they develop in the coming months. In the meantime, take action today – visit whichswitch.co.uk to find the best energy deal for you.

Which says

Stop misleading ads

Campaigning by Which? and others means that, by 2010, manufacturers will be unable to make certain health claims on foods that are high in fat, sugar or salt – such as 'good for your health' or 'source of vitamins'. From next year, the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) will have to approve any claims.

In our latest success, Kellogg's was criticised by the Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) after we complained about an advert for Nutri-Grain Soft Oaties chocolate chip cookies. The advert's claims included 'wholesome cookie goodness', 'made with oats and wheat, source of fibre, six B vitamins and iron'.

The ASA agreed that the advert was misleading as it referred only to ingredients that could suggest nutritional benefit, not to the fact that the cookies contain high levels of sugar and fat.

We're now lobbying to ensure that the criteria EFSA will use to judge future claims will be as tight as possible. Meanwhile, manufacturers should take the lead, giving consumers clear messages about exactly what they're eating.
Clare Corbett, campaigns project manager



Which? wins on Botox

ASA upholds our complaint about unlawful Botox ads

The Advertising Standards Authority has upheld our complaint about the unlawful advertising of Botox that we reported on in January (see p4). The ASA is now taking action against the companies and individuals responsible for the 244 adverts that our campaigns team found on eBay, and eBay has introduced a policy to tackle future advertising of prescription medicines. Jenny Driscoll, our health campaigner, said: 'Rules on advertising medicines, like Botox, are there to protect people.'

If companies don't follow these rules, the regulator must take action, so we are pleased that the ASA followed up our complaint.'

