



ACS Submission: Smart Energy for Business

ACS (the Association of Convenience Stores) welcomes the opportunity to respond to Smart Energy GB's consultation on 'Smart Energy for Business'. ACS represents more than 33,500 local shops across the UK, many of whom are small independent shops run by individuals or families.

The nature of convenience retail, with long operating hours, intrinsic use of refrigeration and other equipment, means that energy costs are a significant burden. The costs of energy are a critical factor in the viability of a convenience store businesses and it is therefore crucial that convenience retailers receive accurate bills that smart meters provide.

Please see below for ACS' responses to the questions outlined in the consultation.

For the purpose of communicating with microbusinesses and ensuring they can selfidentify as such, do you agree the descriptor 'fewer than 10 employees (or their full time equivalent)', highlighted in chapter 2, is useful? If not, please explain why and share evidence to support your view.

We believe that consistency is crucial to ensure clarity in mass communications and therefore support the use of Ofgem's full microbusiness definition.

In chapter 3, do you agree with the obstacles that have been outlined? If not, or if you have further obstacles to add, please outline what these are and share evidence to support your view.

We agree with the obstacles outlined in chapter 3. Another potential obstacle is the current perception of the length of time it takes to install a smart meter. Convenience retailers are heavily reliant on refrigeration and other equipment and are consequently apprehensive about installation as it will result in downtime and in turn profit losses. We encourage Smart Energy GB to highlight the length of time it takes to install a smart meter to minimise perception that there it will result in a long period of down time.

A perceived obstacle that the consultation has neglected to clarify is whether the installation of a smart meter changes an existing contract. ACS encourages Smart Energy GB to provide further clarity on whether this is the case, as perception amongst businesses is that it is, which could prevent uptake on smart meter installation.

In chapter 4, thinking specifically about partnerships with organisations that can provide direct communications channels, do you agree this is a useful way to reach microbusinesses? Do you have any specific suggestions of organisations we should seek to work with?

We encourage Smart Energy GB to engage with trade associations who represent microbusinesses, including ourselves, the Association of Convenience stores, s the Federation of Small Business, and the National Federation of Retail Newsagents.

Trade associations provide direct communication channels with microbusiness; ACS communicates to members through a number of different resources, including trade press. Therefore we also encourage Smart Energy GB to communicate directly to microbusinesses through the trade press of relevant business sectors.

For further information please contact Julie Byers, ACS Public Affairs Assistant via email Julie.Byers@acs.org.uk or 01252 533008.