

Guidance on external electricity supplier access to Thameswey Energy networks

Introduction

The Electricity and Gas (Internal Markets) Regulations 2011 introduced new obligations on licence exempt distribution and supply undertakings such as Thameswey Energy, including a duty to facilitate alternative supplier access to their electricity networks.

If a customer wishes to switch electricity supplier

Thameswey's obligations begin when a customer expresses an interest in being supplied by an alternative supplier. The expression of interest must be conveyed to Thameswey in writing and with evidence that at least one third party supplier is willing to supply the customer. This expression of interest may include confirmation that a customer has already entered into a contract with a third party supplier (or such confirmation may come later).

Under the Regulations a new supplier (licensed or exempt) will be required to start supplying a premises within 21 days of the day after the contract with a new supplier was entered into (or after the cooling off period of up to 14 days has expired).

The Regulations specify exceptions to this rule:

- Thameswey Energy will be able to prevent a customer from switching if the customer has a fixed term contract which has not expired, or has not paid all outstanding debts in relation to their energy supply;
- where the customer is taking supply through Thameswey Energy and a new supplier is unable to start supplying because a connection or metering arrangement is required and has not yet been made, the obligation on suppliers to switch customers within three weeks will be subject to this being resolved.

Before taking action to initiate a switch of supplier and in particular before entering into a new supply contract, customers should be fully aware of the possible costs associated with such a switch.

These will differ from case to case but may include:

Metering costs

- Any costs associated with the early termination of existing energy contracts between the customer and their current supplier. In some circumstances the exempt supplier may object to a transfer where a long-term contract is in place

Any connection costs reasonably incurred

Other costs – e.g. Thamesway Energy may add use of system charges to the overall bill or any costs associated with providing information requested by the customer about the steps that would need to be taken to increase capacity on the network.

Under the Regulations, these costs are to be met by customers and not Thamesway Energy (although external suppliers may agree to meet some or all of these costs).

Customers contemplating a switch to an alternative supplier may therefore wish to obtain confirmation of these costs (and who will be responsible for meeting them) before agreeing a contract with an alternative supplier.

Customers of Thamesway Energy wishing to consider obtaining a supply from an alternative supplier can find a list of licensed suppliers on the Ofgem website.

Comparison websites also exist which list alternative external suppliers but prices quoted on these sites may not, however, be wholly applicable for a supply to a network such as Thamesway Energy's as they are unlikely to reflect the use of system charge that will apply to a supply over our network or other costs that may apply in relation to an alternative supplier.

The industry regulator, Ofgem, publishes advice for consumers on the right to switch.

Customers of Thamesway Energy who do switch supply may choose to make further changes of supplier. This could include a switch back to a supply from Thamesway Energy from whom the consumer received their original supply of electricity (although there is no obligation on Thamesway Energy to resume a supply).

If a customer decides that, taking all of these factors into account, they do wish to switch supplier, they must register that intention with Thamesway Energy by means of a written expression of interest that includes evidence that at least one external supplier is willing to offer a supply.