



Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy Committee

House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA

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Sarwjit Sambhi
Chief Executive, British Gas
Millstream
Maidenhead Road
Windsor
SL4 5GD

11th February 2020

Dear Sarwjit,

Further to your decision to increase the minimum top-up amount for customers on pay-as-you-go tariffs to £5 and to end your contract with PayPoint, I am writing to express concern about how this could impact your most vulnerable consumers. This decision risks leaving thousands of households in financial hardship unable to meet the minimum spend for this essential service. I am also concerned that the reduced network will make it more difficult for customers, especially those with mobility issues, disabilities or living in remote and rural areas, to access a nearby terminal to top-up their energy meter.

I would therefore appreciate a prompt response to the following questions:

1. What is the rationale behind your decision to increase the minimum top-up for fuel payments from £1 to £5 and to remove customer access to PayPoint terminals?
2. How does British Gas' decision align with the approach of the other 'Big Six' energy companies?
3. What proportion of the average pre-payment purchase made between £1 and £5 does the transaction cost constitute?
4. How much money will British Gas save from this decision? What will British Gas be doing with the savings?
5. What assessment was undertaken on how the decision to increase the minimum top-up payment will impact your most vulnerable customers?
6. What will the reduction in access to top-up terminals mean for customers with mobility issues, disabilities or those living in remote and rural areas? Has British Gas made any assessment of how far it would expect people to reasonably travel?
7. How will you be monitoring the impacts of the increased minimum top-up payment and reduction of top-up terminals on your consumers? What support are you providing to impacted customers?
8. To what extent is increasing the minimum top-up payment and reducing the number of top-up terminals commensurate with trying to reduce the risk of self-disconnection and self-rationing?
9. How is your roll-out of smart pre-payment meters progressing? What proportion of your pre-pay customers have had smart meters installed?
10. What is British Gas doing to speed up the roll out of smart pre-payment meters?

*Yours,
Rachel Reeves*

Rachel Reeves MP

Chair-elect of the Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy Committee