

Smart Meter Connectivity and Associated Issues

Dear Andrew,

Thank you for forwarding the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero's reply (MCB2024/10668) to your email (AM34750). His comprehensive response is welcomed. However, it does raise several issues:

1. The DCC must endeavour to provide WAN coverage to all premises where it is practicable and cost proportionate, and seek to increase the overall level of coverage. We have no way of knowing whether such efforts are being made as the DCC does not accept correspondence from members of the general public. **Perhaps the Department could let us know what the DCC is doing specifically for us here, or direct the DCC to contact us?**
2. The SoS urges us to contact energy suppliers to discuss options. We have been doing so for some time without success; our experience is that suppliers simply shrug their shoulders and point to poor WAN connectivity. When pressed, suppliers do offer some customers T2 and, in some cases, T3 aerials. **In the majority of cases they do not work and their lack of effectiveness provides further evidence that WAN coverage does not extend to a large part of the Upper Deverills and that nothing is being done to address the shortfall.**
3. It is heartening to hear that DCC is developing new WAN coverage solutions, including utilising internet-connected Consumer Access Devices (CAD) and that the Department launched a consultation on proposals to develop that solution some eighteen months ago. When will findings be published? Given residents in the Deverills now have improved broadband services this would be an effective option. **We would be delighted to take part in any trials DCC is intending to set up or, indeed, to become a pilot for a national solution: would you please extend our offer to the SoS (as we are unable to communicate with the DCC directly).**
4. With regard to the RTS switch-off next year, those of us with Economy 7 and similar tariffs look forward to hearing from energy suppliers regarding appropriate future metering solutions, in furtherance of their contractual obligations. **So far we have seen no evidence of any such approaches.** We are grateful for the SoS's advice to contact energy suppliers and will share it with our community.
5. One answer for those coming off RTS is to install a 'pre-set' smart meter. This seems an admirably simple solution – so much so that, surely, it could also be rolled out to non RTS-affected consumers, such as those with no WAN connectivity. **Would you be able to confirm that this option is being considered by the department?**

6. Those of us who wish to avail ourselves of the Smart Energy Guarantee (SEG) have consistently been told by suppliers that we need a functioning smart meter (presumably one that connects to the WAN). But the SoS's reply states that this is not a requirement – an MPAN meter capable of taking half-hourly measurements is all that is needed. Indeed, one resident who installed solar panels recently is now providing manual meter readings. Energy suppliers in our experience are not aware of this, or choose not to communicate it to customers unless formal complaints are made. **We would be grateful if the Department could remind suppliers of this option and to communicate it to customers.**

7. We are advised to contact our energy suppliers to elicit a variety of information regarding smart meters and their functionality. It again feels that the consumers in the Upper Deverills, not the suppliers nor DCC nor, indeed, the Department, are being asked to do all the work regarding the functionality and connectivity of smart meters, risk management vis-à-vis the RTS switch off and technical solutions to gain access to the SEG. **Could the department let us know what it is doing to remove the de facto obligation on WAN-disadvantaged consumers to secure access to smart-meter enabled benefits?**

Upper Deverills Smart Meter Action Group
28 August 2024