



The Consumer Council

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Ref: PD20010809

Kevin O'Neill
Utility Regulator
Queens House
14 Queen Street
BELFAST
BT1 6ER

Dear Kevin,

Re: Acquisition of NIE plc, NIE Powerteam and allied businesses by ESBNI Ltd

The Consumer Council is a Non-Departmental Public Body set up in legislation to safeguard the interests of all consumers, and particularly the vulnerable and disadvantaged. The Consumer Council is an independent organisation which operates to promote and protect the consumer interest.

We welcome the opportunity to respond to this consultation on the acquisition of NIE plc, NIE Powerteam and allied businesses by ESBNI Ltd.

With fuel poverty levels in Northern Ireland at 44 per cent, many households are struggling to adequately heat their home, it is important that the regulatory structures as well as supply, generation and distribution and transmission companies look to minimise the cost of energy to consumers.

The Consumer Council agrees that specific changes to the licence are required to ensure that the necessary protection is provided to electricity consumers in Northern Ireland. It is important that NIE plc, NIE Powerteam and allied businesses continue to operate in the interests of all consumers.

The Consumer Council believes it is important the commercial measures outlined are upheld to ensure the interests of consumers are recognised and the delivery of DETI's Strategic Energy Framework remains at the forefront of future investment. Investment should be treated equally between ESB networks and NIE.

The Consumer Council would like any changes to the licence to focus on:

- Protecting electricity consumers in Northern Ireland;
- Building confidence by improving transparency in the electricity market;
- Ensuring operation of the business activities are both economically efficient and effective for all consumers; and
- Bringing benefits to all consumers, this will ultimately be passed through as lower final prices.

I hope that these comments are helpful and are given due consideration. Please contact me if you require any clarification.

Yours Sincerely,

Andrew Murray
Senior Consumer Affairs Officer