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WHY SMALL CAN BE BEAUTIFUL WHEN CHOOSING ENERGY SUPPLIERS

Consumers will welcome news that small energy suppliers are challenging their bigger rivals with market beating plans. The move will give more choice, especially for those looking for an alternative to the big six energy suppliers who dominate the market.

Two challengers - OVO Energy and First:Utility - have launched highly competitive online energy plans. OVO's plan averages out at £978 a year^[1], while First:Utility's plan is market beating, averaging out at £967 a year^[1]. This makes it £16 cheaper than EDF Energy's online energy plan, which costs £983 a year on average^[1] and is the cheapest plan offered by one of the big six.

First:Utility's plan is available in 12 out of 14 energy regions and, unlike its other plans, does not require consumers to have a smart meter installed. In the remaining two regions, its smart meter online plan is available and it has just announced that it is dropping the price on this too. OVO's plan is a fixed price plan, which means that customers will continue to benefit even if prices go up during the duration of the plan. However, there is an exit penalty attached.

Will Marples, energy expert at uSwitch.com, says: "This is the first time that a 'challenger' energy provider has gone head-to-head with major suppliers on price and beaten them. This is because their size works in their favour – they are quick and nimble and able to react to falling wholesale prices quicker than their bigger rivals. It's good news for those consumers who have been looking for a viable alternative to the big six, but who are concerned about paying more for their energy as a result.

“Although small and relatively new, both OVO and First:Utility are setting out to differentiate themselves. First:Utility was the first supplier to offer all customers the chance to get a smart meter installed, putting householders in greater control of their energy usage. And now they are positioning themselves as the UK’s cheapest provider too. This is exactly the type of challenge the market needs and consumers will now be watching with interest to see how other suppliers respond.

“With winter on the way households should be looking to cut the cost of their energy. If they want to benefit from the cheapest prices they must move to an online energy plan – it’s a simple step to take, just move to dual fuel, pay by direct debit and sign up to an online plan. You don’t even have to stick with a traditional supplier any more if you don’t want to.”

Supplier	Online Plan Name	Online Plan
First:Utility	iSave	£967*
OVO Energy	New Energy	£978
EDF Energy	Online Version 5	£983**
E.ON	FixOnline3	£984
British Gas	WebSaver 4 Dual Fuel	£994
Scottish and Southern Energy	Go Direct	£1017***
npower	Web 16 Dual Fuel	£1,019
ScottishPower	Online Energy Saver 6	£1,037

Based on a medium user consuming 3,300kWh of electricity and 20,500kWh of gas, averaged across all regions.

*First:Utility plan only available in 12 regions

**EDF Energy plan only available in 10 regions

***SSE is offering a joining bonus of up to £40 off energy bills until 18 October 2009. This has not been included in the average annual bill size.

For more information visit www.uSwitch.com or call 0800 093 06 07

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Notes to editors:

1. Based on a medium user consuming 3,300 kWh electricity and 20,500 kWh gas a year, with bill sizes averaged across all regions (10 regions for EDF Energy and 12 regions for First:Utility) for a dual fuel online plan paying by monthly direct debit.

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