

# General Election 2015: Public Energy

Privatised energy costs each household £158 per year. In a recent poll, 68% of the UK population said they want a public energy system that is not-for-profit. Instead, most of the political parties prescribe extra competition as a remedy to our energy problems and high bills. After more than 20 years, it is evident this doesn't work and that we need a new system.

## How can I engage with local candidates during the election?

At election time, politicians often make grand promises they have no intention of keeping. We can't believe what they say - but questioning them can let them know there are things we are not prepared to tolerate - now, or after the election. Fuel poverty is one of those things! There are a number of different ways you can make your voice heard during election time. You could:

- attend your local hustings and ask a question,
- ask a question when they are canvassing in your local area,
- write a letter to your local paper,
- write a letter or email to your local candidates.

Local hustings are one of the easiest ways to challenge your candidates and keep them on their toes. Please turn over for a suggested question about what they intend to do about renationalising our energy system, and for some extra background information in case you want to challenge their reply. If it's convenient, it can be good to gather some information about your local area or you might want to mention your own situation or a friend's!

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# QUESTION:

Given that 68% of the population support publicly owned energy that is not run for profit, would you support demands to renationalise the Big Six energy companies, and encourage city-run power and energy co-operatives?

## Competition does not bring down the bills:

- The privatisation of the UK's energy industry caused an astronomical increase in UK energy bills. Average household energy bills in the UK have risen by 109% since 2005 and energy prices have risen eight times faster than average earnings since 2010. The pitiful 5-10% price reductions now offered by the Big Six are an insult when wholesale gas prices have halved.
- Switching is not an option for many people in social housing, or if you don't have good English or a computer. And it eats up our time. It is estimated between 33-40% of customers do not move to cheaper tariffs when they switch. All the prices are too high!

## Why should we go through all this just to line shareholders' pockets?

- While our energy system is governed by the principle of maximising profits, billions of pounds will be transferred from hard-pressed households into the pockets of distant shareholders and corporate executives. In 2013, the Big Six paid out £8.5 billion in interest and dividends. A nationalized industry could invest that money in a cleaner, more sustainable energy system that would help save the climate and would bring lower bills.
- Non-profit energy co-operatives are starting up all over the country based on renewable energy, but the pricing system and the grid are rigged against them.
- Cities and countries all over the world are moving to take utilities - power, and also water - back into their own hands and away from those who see these vital life- resources as just another way to make a profit. Citizens of Hamburg in Germany voted for the city to buy back the electricity grid in 2014, in a referendum.