

Look out for roadshow and gain M&S voucher

IF you want to make major savings on your energy bills - and get a free Marks & Spencer voucher into the bargain - then look out for a roadshow at your office soon.

From next month staff from Energy Supply will be at venues throughout the Manweb region to explain in detail about a special staff offer.

They will be able to answer queries about the new offer and if you decide to sign up, you could walk away with a free £10 voucher - plus making lots of savings on your energy bill.

The new combined offer means substantial savings in the first year, in addition to one point of contact and one bill. If you have already signed up to take

gas from Manweb, then don't worry, you won't lose out - you can still sign up for this special offer, and get your voucher.

Colin Harrison, Marketing Manager, said: "This is a straightforward offer, which I believe everybody will find easy to understand. Using roadshows in workplaces, and meeting people at their desks and in depots, means that we are taking the offer to everybody."

He added that it will help his teams if staff can bring in an energy bill which will show their reference numbers, so making the switch easier.

Look out for posters (with the fisherman logo as above) in your office explaining



when the roadshow will arrive at your workplace - and save yourself some money.

Combined bill gives consumers a boost

DOMESTIC consumers of electricity from Manweb will be the first in the UK to benefit from one energy bill.

The combined bill will offer consumers the convenience of one payment for both gas and electricity. It comes with the launch of the company's flagship Gas & Electricity

Offer - tipped as being the most important product development in the company's history.

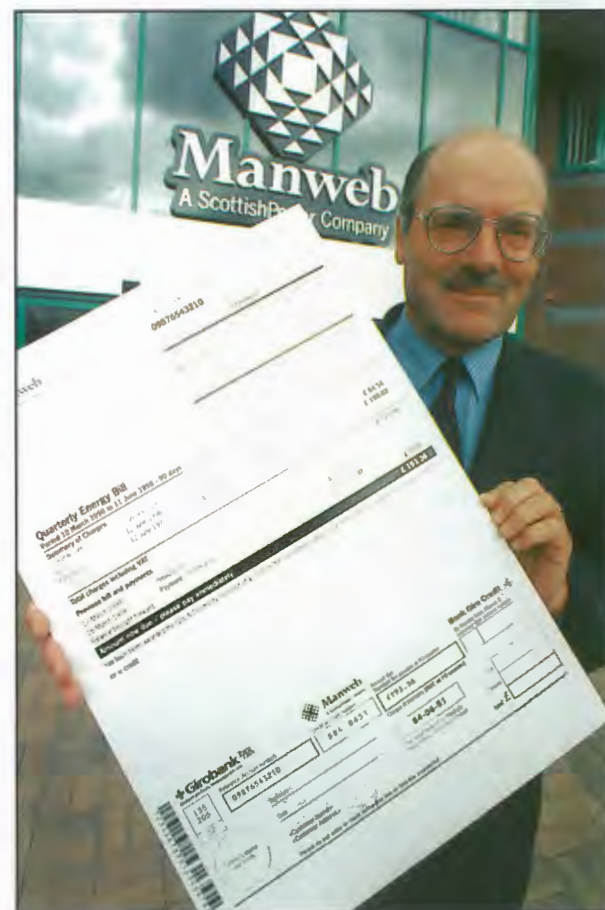
The Gas & Electricity Offer will provide customers with guaranteed substantial savings in the first year, in addition to one point of contact and one bill.

The new product, which will be promoted via a multimedia advertising campaign throughout Wales and north west England, is designed to provide existing and potential customers with a one stop shop for energy.

The company is first to market with the 'one bill' opportunity which is the result of a major two-year investment programme into information systems. Customers should be able to benefit from the single bill from December 1998 onwards.

Managing Director, Manweb, Bill Landels said: "The Gas & Electricity Offer is a modern product for a modern lifestyle and has been driven by our customers' needs and an increasingly dynamic market-place.

"We view the electricity market opening as an opportunity and we are ready to compete with the best products to keep our local customers and win new ones across the UK."



Manweb's Managing Director Bill Landels is pictured with a copy of the UK's first combined gas and electricity bill.

Deregulation dates

Manweb Deregulation dates showing main location (with postcodes):

September 1998

CH Chester, Mold, Holywell

December 1998

L 1-30 Liverpool, Kirby, Litherland
LL Llandudno, Ruthin, Porthmadog

March 1999

CW Crewe, Congleton, Nantwich
L 31-66 Liverpool, Kirby, Ormskirk
PR Preston, Chorley, Longridge
SY Shrewsbury, Machynlleth, Ellesmere
WA Warrington, Knutsford, St Helens

April 1999

ST Stoke-on-Trent, Stafford, Leek
TF Telford, Market Drayton.

Contact Xtra



AUGUST 1998

READY FOR CHALLENGE

By Manweb Managing Director Bill Landels

IN just a few days time, on September 14, Manweb will be facing one of its most important challenges ever - the opening of the domestic and small business electricity market in Chester.

This is a landmark day within our industry and the national spotlight will be turned upon Manweb as Chester is just one of four places in the country to open up to competition.

This is because only four companies, including ScottishPower and Manweb, have proved they are ready and able to open their markets and to compete elsewhere.

I wrote to you last month about the changes which are taking place, changes which I want each of us, within Manweb, to take advantage of to ensure that we stay firmly at the front of the competition.

We have led the way so far in ensuring that all the complex systems which will be needed to operate in a fully competitive market are ready and fully tested.

We've passed our tests with flying colours. We now need to lead the way in making sure that we retain as many of our customers as

possible and to gain new ones.

We will start to win new electricity customers in the other areas which are opening. Our neighbours, Norweb, MEB and Swalec, aren't opening up to competition for another few months but we have begun marketing.

What I would ask everyone in Manweb to do is to give your best every day in the service you provide to our customers and to each other: it's your efforts, not systems, that will count.

I know that many of you already know

much about the new competitive market - after all, many of you have been working on different projects leading up to this major change.

However, you may well have some queries about what's happening in other parts of the company.

This booklet will help provide those answers and let you know how you can actually save yourself some money - and get a free Marks and Spencer voucher - by signing up for our new Gas & Electricity Offer.

Polly Wolly Doodle man is back on television for Manweb advertisement

ROBERT Horwell, who starred in the award-winning password ad campaign for Manweb, is back with a series of new TV commercials for the company promoting the Gas & Electricity Offer.

Actor Robert (pictured right) first hit the headlines last year in the ad for the Manweb password security scheme, designed to help customers identify meter readers on the doorstep.

Robert still gets messages on his answer phone from friends shouting Polly Wolly Doodle. He has developed quite an affinity for Manweb and this will be his ninth commercial for the company.

He said: "I think what makes the ads so successful is that my character is a likeable, ordinary chap, chatty, normal and easy to identify with. This time round though the set has been

developed to be a little out of the ordinary with giant screens and voice activated controls for the heating, lights and music. It's futuristic, but also believable!"

Playing football with his showbiz 'dad' on the hi-tech screen is child actor David Howard, who lives in Preston. With the strapline 'Manweb do more to make life easier', the latest TV campaign aims to raise awareness of the company's new one stop shop approach to energy provision for its domestic customers.

One combined bill for gas and electricity will be available from mid-December onwards as part of the many benefits available to customers who take the new Gas & Electricity Offer.

● STAFF OFFER - SEE PAGE FOUR.



Your questions on deregulation answered - see inside

Chris Wright writes

Chris Wright, Customer Services at Manweb, answers your questions in the first of a six-part series



Well-prepared... but Manweb's not resting on its laurels

IF you are anything like me the thought of another energy market opening up to competition will fill you with apprehension.

I hope for most of you the experience on gas has been a good one - for Manweb it has been a hugely exciting time - we now have over 90,000 gas customers on board. Gas from an electricity supplier - who would have thought it five years ago?

So now it's electricity's turn and we thought it would be good to explain what is going to happen and what it means for you.

Believe it or not, Manweb is welcoming electricity deregulation. It is a landmark development for our industry and we are well-prepared. In fact we are one of the best prepared electricity companies in the country. We are ready to compete for business for the first time, and we are relishing the challenge.

Stages

Why are we so well-prepared? Because we know our customers, we have been serving them for a long time and we are local.

We are not resting on our laurels though. We know there are some tough competitors out there who will be giving customers persuasive messages. We've done our homework and we know we are going to have to be better than ever to keep them.

You may be aware that like the gas market we are opening up to competition

in three stages over the next eight months - by postcodes in fact. The big plan is to have the whole market open by June 1999 and that means the industry has plenty of time to get it right.

If you have a CH postcode your area will be among the first in the UK to open up to competition - that's Chester, and areas around Mold and Holywell. All other postcodes in the Manweb area in Wales and north west England will open in further phases between December and March 1999.

Responsibility

Whatever the date, the important thing is to have as much relevant info as possible on all suppliers before making a choice.

We don't want to lose customers but we do recognise that we have a responsibility to inform them of all options.

Manweb has launched its flagship Gas & Electricity Offer with one bill, great savings, one point of contact.

Chris

Chris Wright.

Staff helpline Tel: (787) 714 4731
or post queries on
e-mail to HELP 1998

Questions and Answers

When does it all happen for Manweb?

From 14 September part of Manweb's area will be opened to competition from new suppliers. The first area open to competition will be homes in the Chester postcode area - which includes Mold, Holywell and Connah's Quay. Other parts - Liverpool city and most of north Wales - will open from December and the rest from March 1999. The first suppliers allowed to compete with Manweb will be Eastern Electricity, Yorkshire Electricity and British Gas. For small businesses all maximum-demand and half-hourly metered supplied customers will be able to choose their supplier from September, with the rest of the business market opening from December.

Are we ready?

ScottishPower and Manweb are readier than most companies for this major change. We have been preparing for it for some time and have led the way at a number of the trials of the complex computer systems which need to be in place. All the testing is now complete and we have had formal approval from our regulator Offer that everything is OK.

Will customers need new wires?

No - the same grid and Manweb's local network of wires and cables will be used. There is no installation work needed for customers.

How does it work?

Different suppliers will buy electricity from generators, rent space on the distribution network and bill customers for the supply of electricity. The rental charge made by the selected supplier will be included on the customer's electricity bill.

A new internal market will appear within Manweb as Power Systems now has to offer its service impartially to Energy Supply, as to any other supplier, and will be monitored through a licensing and compliance regime.

What do I do if a customer rings me and says they want to change supplier?

For a start, you need to stress to them the benefits of staying with Manweb, such as the good level of customer service, the way bills have been falling, and special services we have such as the Password scheme.

You could also outline the special Gas and Electricity Offer, which means they make savings on the energy costs in addition to one point of contact and one bill. If they do decide to change then the new supplier will inform us before they change, and we will send a final bill to the customer. A meter reading will be needed

Surely it's all about computers and customer service, it doesn't affect me?

It affects everybody at Manweb for in order for the company to stay competitive, we need to keep our present customers and also win new ones across the borders, as neighbouring areas open up to competition.

I don't work for Manweb any more, why should I be interested?

For Manweb to remain, we need to keep as many of our existing customers as possible and to win new ones across the borders of our traditional area - such as south Wales, Greater Manchester and Lancashire.

The opening of the gas markets has shown this is possible. The success of Manweb helps the regional economy - a report showed that the company puts almost £400 million into the north-west and north Wales, and supports around 7,000 jobs directly and indirectly.

Do I have to buy my electricity/gas from Manweb?

If you sign up for the Gas & Electricity Offer, you will make savings yourself - as well as getting a free Marks and Spencer voucher. See page 4 for more details.

What can I tell my neighbours?

Explain to them about the benefits of using a local company such as Manweb, with local call centres. They can also benefit from the Gas & Electricity Offer, with substantial savings in the first year.

Will lots of different meter readers be calling at my home?

Until the year 2000 your present meter reader will read the meter. After that all metering related activities - such as reading meters - opens up to competition.

Will Manweb exist any more after September?

Yes it will - Manweb is being promoted extensively at the moment in papers, radio and TV, as well as billboards in the region. Research has also shown that customers are happy with the name Manweb and that it should stay.

How come I'm talking to customers from outside the Manweb region?

As other companies get their systems tested, their markets will open up to competition. Manweb is aiming to win new customers across our traditional borders, in Greater Manchester, Lancashire, south Wales and parts of the Midlands. The rest of the country will be treated as ScottishPower customers.

How can we charge less for gas than British Gas, and they charge less for electricity than us - and why isn't there one price for the whole of the country?

Bills are currently made up of different charges including a generation cost for the power stations, a distribution cost for maintaining the network of cables which gets the electricity into homes, and a small portion of the cost of sending out bills and collecting money.

The most competitive companies will be looking for the cheapest sources of electricity and efficient ways to administer accounts.

All suppliers will be charged the same cost for transporting their electricity through existing wires and cables.

What if I already get gas and electricity from Manweb - can I benefit from the new offer?

Yes you can - look out for details of this offer when the roadshows come to an office near you. If you are a pensioner, then you can also make savings by signing up to the new offer.

Terms of a new trading system

THE opening of the market on September 14 is the end of a four year programme to develop and build a new trading system and is one of the largest IT projects ever started. There are many terms which may be unfamiliar to you - what do they mean?

Settlements - this system, at the heart of the whole process, allows suppliers to pay generators for the electricity their customers have used. From the start, it was laid down that existing meters and meter reading practices should stay.

In the present competitive market (for large users) complicated meters have been installed which record energy consumption every half hour.

The new Settlement system takes a normal meter reading and 'profiles' the consumption into usage into each half-hour period. This then allows the Settlement system to work out which supplier owes what to whom.

The PESs have built an electronic network to pass information around the industry to help make the system work smoothly. This in itself has been a major achievement.

MPAS - Manweb, in ensuring the new open market works, has a key responsibility in operating the Meter Point Administration Service (MPAS).

It contains details, such as whether the customer is domestic or business, to help suppliers offer the right product. The MPAS service is the focus of the Change of Supplier process with strict timetables of what needs to be done by when, such as getting meter readings.

Data Aggregator - this is a major task for the Metering Business, adding up the energy consumption for each supplier before submitting it to the settlement process.

The Metering Business keeps its role in meter operation and meter reading which remain largely unchanged except for much stricter controls on performance.

● In its role in making the market work within its area, Manweb has obligations to treat all suppliers the same and not to discriminate in favour of our own supply business.

Staff thoughts on the changeover

MANY Manweb people have been part of the massive team who have been working on the change programme. Here's a few of their thoughts about their time with the project.

MARTIN DEEHAN, Power Systems, Merseyside, who admits to a much greater knowledge of the social life of Glasgow, said: "I've more understanding of the differences in working practices between Manweb and ScottishPower."

GEOFF DENNETT, Power Systems, Cheshire, has been

pleasantly surprised by the Scottish weather. He added: "I've been able to see the company I work for outside my normal job context and I've seen the scale of the organisation - which many people don't."

ROBIN BRADSHAW, formerly with RPU, is the Regional Implementation Manager for Manweb. He said: "I've learned about the complexity of the 1998 trading arrangements and what it's like to work in a large environment."