

Study announced on heating homes with supercomputer heat waste

On 16 January, the University of Edinburgh announced that a [£2.6mn feasibility study](#), led by the geothermal company TownRock Energy, will examine how the water in old mine workings near the University of Edinburgh's Advanced Computing Facility (ACF) could be used to heat people's homes.

According to the University of Edinburgh, the ACF currently releases up to 70GWh of excess heat per year. This figure is expected to rise to 272GWh once the UK Government's next-generation Exascale supercomputer is installed at the University. By capturing the excess heat up to a maximum temperature of 40°C and transferring it into the mine water, it can then be transported by the natural ground water flow in the mine workings and made available to heat people's homes via heat pump technology. If the study is successful, the University of Edinburgh states that up to seven million households could have their heating needs met this way.

Developments in the OCS League, late January 2024

Professor Stephen Littlechild

On Friday, Which? published its ratings of best energy suppliers for 2024, the latest in an annual series. It now combines the results of an extensive survey of some 9,000 customers and Which's own assessment of each company's performance on customer service, support, complaints and smart metering. Results overall are about 3 percentage points (here 3%) up on last year, from an average of 61% to 64%.

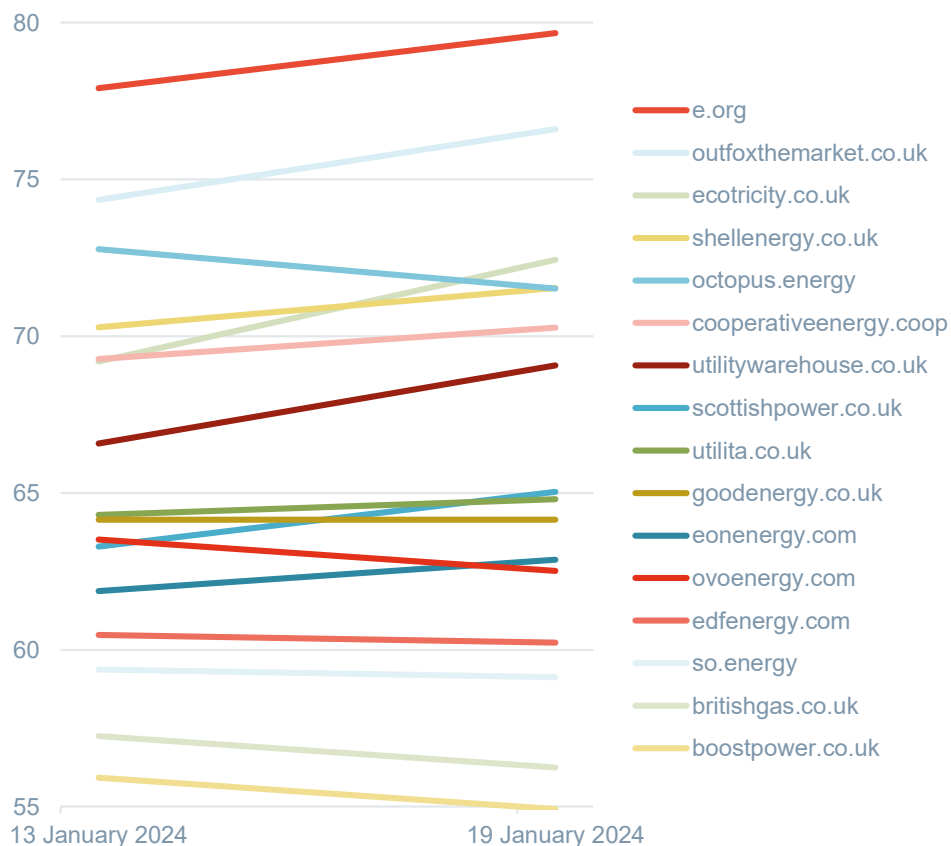
Last year 3 companies (Ecotricity, Good Energy and Outfox the Market) had no customer score, and hence no overall score, because the customer sample yielded fewer than 50 responses. This year only Good Energy lacked the requisite number. My guess is that customers would rather know what fewer customers thought than get no indication of customer response and no overall score. I have therefore estimated the missing overall scores using a regression on Which's own assessment scores.

Top this year are Utility Warehouse, Octopus Energy and Ecotricity, bottom are So Energy, Boost and British Gas. The main gainers this year compared to last are Ecotricity (+13%), Utility Warehouse (+10%), Outfox the Market (+9%) and Scottish Power and E (both +7%). Main losers are Ovo Energy (-9%), Octopus Energy (-5%) and Boost and British Gas (both -4%).

Figure 1 shows the impact on the Overall Customer Score (OCS) league. E and Outfox the Market are shooting out ahead in a widely spaced first division. Ecotricity has leapt into third place. Octopus Energy, for years the leader, is pushed down into fourth equal with Shell Energy, followed by Cooperative Energy and Utility Warehouse.

Scottish Power, perhaps surprisingly, rises to head the central division, narrowly ahead of Utilita and Good Energy. They in turn are ahead of rising E.ON Energy and declining Ovo Energy. EDF Energy and So Energy lie below. By some distance at the bottom, and declining further, are British Gas and Boost.

Figure 1: OCS League 13 - 19 Jan 2024



Source: Professor Stephen Littlechild