

Can smart meters make us greener?

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The UK government wants every home to have one by 2020, but might the new generation of electricity meters help to change people's attitudes to climate change?

An academic at The University of Nottingham is to argue that providing information about saved carbon emissions through the new [smart meters](#) could be more effective in persuading consumers to changing their behaviour than by demonstrating savings on their bills alone.

Dr. Alexa Spence, an academic in the University's School of Psychology and a research fellow at The University of Nottingham-based Horizon Digital Economy Research hub, is an expert in public perceptions of [climate change](#) and energy issues.

She will be speaking at the two-day international conference Energy and People: Futures, Complexity and Challenges, jointly hosted by the UK Energy Research Center (UKERC) and the Environmental Change Institute at Oxford University and running from Tuesday September 20

to Wednesday September 21.

Dr. Spence is due to begin a study examining the impact that smart meters will have on people's perceptions of climate change. She said: "Providing customers with information on saved carbon emissions on these devices may be useful in helping to make climate change real and empowering people to make a difference.

"While people may be primarily concerned about energy prices, this is likely to encourage only certain changes in behavior. Psychology theory suggests that talking about energy savings in terms of the environment may encourage people to undertake a broader range of sustainable behaviors."

Smart meters are a new type of electricity meter that can remotely communicate with energy companies to provide accurate meter readings without the need for someone to come and physically read the meter. As bills are accurate it cuts out estimated bills or the potential for over or underpaying.

Dr. Spence will be one of a number of energy and climate change specialists presenting at the conference this week, which aims to examine the complex relationship between energy and people, including the impact future energy practices will have on communities around the world. It will examine the links between society and energy use, particularly in the transition to a secure, affordable and low-carbon energy system.

Other papers being delivered at the conference will centre on topics including: whether people have a Jekyll and Hyde personality when acting pro-environmentally to save energy in the home compared to the workplace; a controversial proposal for [energy](#) charging whereby customers are limited to a maximum power they can draw at any one

time; and the global impacts surrounding the increasing demand for transport biofuels.

Provided by University of Nottingham

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