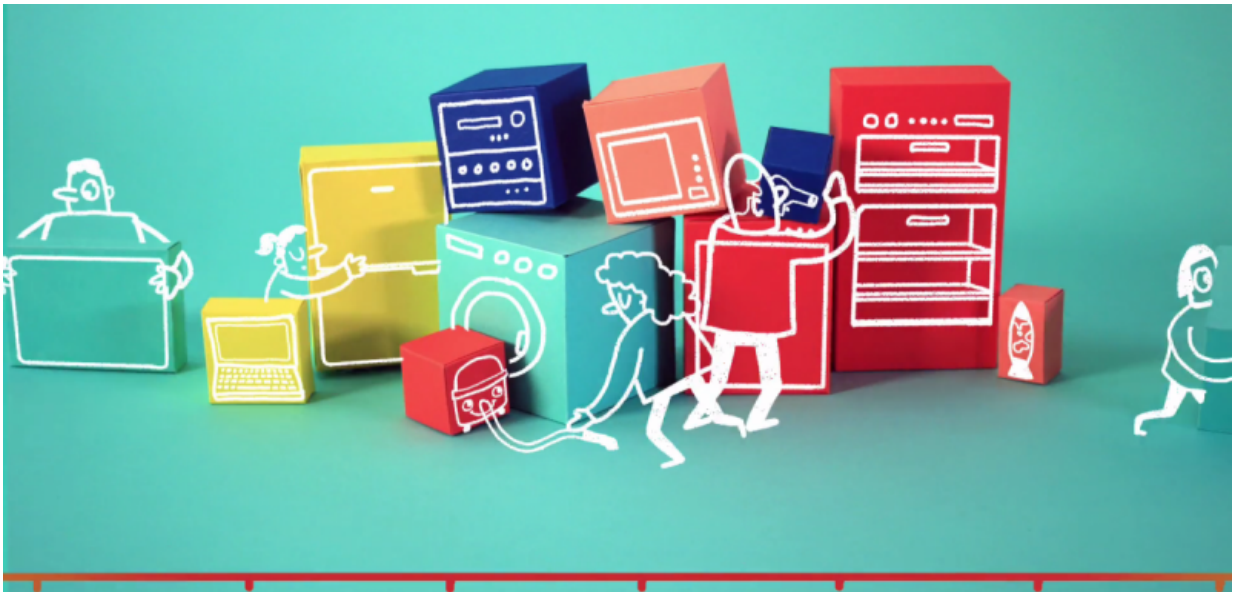


# Helping to bring energy prices down and keep the lights on

May 16 2016

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Researchers at the University of Oxford have launched a five-year programme to investigate ways of relieving peak demands on the UK's electricity grid that also might make energy bills cheaper too.

Peak demand is posing an increasing challenge to the UK's electricity system. A government commission set up to look at the UK's future needs for nationally significant infrastructure recently reported that up to £8.1bn could be saved if we became 'smarter' about electricity, including

use of electricity at down times rather than at peak times. In the first study of its kind, thousands of Britons are invited to log their activities in a 24-hour diary so researchers can identify patterns of electricity usage in the home. They also want to know if there are acceptable ways of shifting or reducing demand outside of peak times.

The METER project launched today with the release of a short online animation called Power People It explains how by changing patterns of use, we would make our energy system less expensive, more secure and more sustainable. The film says that at times of peak demand, households make up half of the nation's [electricity usage](#). Until now, little has been known about what appliances and activities lead to the high demand during the most critical periods.

'We are inviting thousands of UK households to fit a special electricity meter and to record activities for one day only, using a diary or a smartphone app. These data will tell us for the first time what people are doing at the times when national demand peaks. We also want to find out whether people are willing to be more flexible about the timing of when they use it and how best they can be supported in this,' said Deputy Director of Energy Research and Principal Investigator of METER at the University's Environmental Change Institute, Dr Phil Grunewald.

The researchers need the public to take part in the online survey at [www.energy-use.org](http://www.energy-use.org) . Those taking part will receive an electricity recorder to install in their home, as well as a personal activity leaflet and will also get the chance to have their names entered into a draw to win a year's free electricity.

Dr Grunewald commented: 'This is an exciting opportunity for everyone to get a picture of their own electricity use, while contributing towards the big challenge of making sure that our sustainable energy future will also be secure and affordable.'

Professor Jim Watson, Director of the UK Energy Research Centre, which is a partner organisation for the METER project, said: 'We still don't know enough about the social, economic and behavioural drivers of [electricity](#) consumption in our homes. This exciting new project will significantly improve knowledge about the opportunities and limits to change, and help us identify new approaches to shifting or reducing consumption.'

Provided by University of Oxford

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