



Dancing in the moonlight

Ballroom dancers perform beneath an art installation entitled *Museum of the Moon* by Luke Jerram in the Blackpool Tower Ballroom. It is part of the Lightpool Festival this weekend, a mixture of live performance and light-based art throughout the north-western town.

OLIVIERO TOSCANI/GETTY IMAGES

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Smart meter adverts can't say they are 'free', rules watchdog

Marketing of £200 units must change because costs are passed on in bills

By **Katie Morley**
CONSUMER AFFAIRS EDITOR

ADVERTS for the Government's smart meter roll-out have been wrongly claiming the meters are "free", advertising regulators have said.

The Daily Telegraph can reveal that the Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) has told Smart Energy GB, the industry body which produces the adverts, to stop making the claim in TV, radio and print adverts.

The smart meter roll-out was originally estimated to cost energy companies £11 billion, equivalent to around £200 per household, with providers expected to pass on the costs to customers through higher bills.

Energy companies have recently enforced a string of price increases, saying the cost of smart meters was a contributing factor.

The ASA said that because people would be paying for smart meters indirectly through their bills they were not a "genuine free offer", meaning they should not be described as free.

The case was resolved via a so-called "informal ruling", meaning Smart Energy GB avoided having the details of the case published on the ASA's website.

An ASA spokesman said: "The use of the term 'free' in ads can sometimes cause confusion for consumers and should not be used unless something is a genuine free offer. It's important consumers are not misled so, in

this case, the advertiser agreed to amend their ad.

"We recommend that they use the term 'at no extra cost' instead, because consumers will be paying for the smart meter in the same way that they already pay for their current meter, which means it is not technically 'free'."

Between April and August Smart Energy GB produced TV, radio and print adverts which the ASA said on Oct 10 must not appear again in their current form.

In August a smart meter advert appeared on TV urging consumers to "contact your energy supplier about getting your free smart meter".

Smart Energy GB also paid Kirsty Allsopp and Phil Spencer to front a smart meter PR campaign over the summer, which resulted in the publication of dozens of newspaper articles quoting the pair. Allsopp said: "Getting a smart meter is free and if we all got one, we could save Great Britain nearly £560 million a year."

From now on the official smart meter adverts will use the words "at no extra cost".

Richard Neudegg, head of regulation at uSwitch.com said: "While they do bring benefits such as more accurate bills and broader energy efficiency, we're all paying for smart meters so it is extremely important that consumer needs are prioritised throughout the roll-out."

A spokesman for Smart Energy GB said: "As a responsible advertiser, we always want to be crystal clear with our advertising."

"We were very happy to take on board the ASA's advice and help make the benefits of smart meters even clearer to consumers."

Ballet's historic leap in brown pointe shoes

By **Oscar Quine**

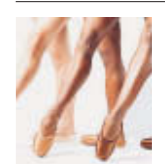
BROWN ballet shoes are to be made for the first time in the UK in a move hailed as "historic" for diversity.

Dancers from minority ethnic backgrounds can now get pointe shoes in both bronze and brown instead of traditional pink to match their skin tone. The footwear is made by Freed of London, Britain's oldest manufacturer of ballet kit.

Cassa Pancho, founder of Ballet Black, a company of black and minority ethnic dancers, said: "Although it may seem like a very small change to the outside world, I believe this is a historic moment... and another step forward for culturally diverse

dancers across the globe."

Dancers not catered for by standard pink shoes previously had to rely on "pancaking", using foundation or powder make-up on their



Dancers will be able to choose from traditional pink or the new brown and bronze shoes

shoes. A US company introduced two more colours last year, but overall the production of pointe shoes has seen little modernisation.

A spokesman for the Royal Ballet company hailed the development as "great news".