

Going Off Grid: Energy Resilience in uncertain times

We're all being affected by the coronavirus in one form or another – with one recent development the news that energy firms are drawing up crisis plans “amid fears of loss of 80% of staff.”¹

First and foremost, I hope you're keeping safe and well despite the ongoing disruption. These are uncertain times for everybody as we try to follow the best advice, keep safe, and focus on the wellbeing of families, friends and colleagues.

Based on our earlier contingency planning, Consultus International Group invoked its own Contingency & Business Continuity Plans. We're continuing to monitor government guidelines relating to the risk assessment, health and wellbeing of our people - and are continuing to deliver services while protecting customers and partners wherever possible. We've made necessary adjustments.

My second thought is that it can take a crisis like the current pandemic to make us reflect seriously on our current set-ups, and how fragile some systems and services may be. This week, alongside regularly updated advice, the government is scrambling to announce financial packages and other support to help businesses and individuals, amidst calls to do more. The coronavirus is tipping normal life on its head.

Energy is clearly an essential utility, one that business, government, civil society and citizens all depend on. Energy security, energy resilience, are critical. And the virus may be putting that at risk, at least in terms of traditional networks and bigger energy users.

For domestic users and those citizens most likely to be hit by a lockdown, the moneysavingexpert.com site is reporting that “Topping up prepaid energy may be difficult if self-isolating, but some firms will help.”²

For consumers and smaller businesses, energy prices are at a three-year low, partly driven by that big cut in oil prices and, earlier, by falling demand for energy, first in China, the initial epicentre of the pandemic.

This means the potential for switching to better deals, perhaps lower cost long-term deals, something that could help the smaller independent retailers, bars, cafes and other businesses that are being hit hard by the virus and are experiencing severe financial pressures. Switching may help, and we're encouraging such businesses to contact our sister company Assured Energy - <https://www.assured.energy/>

So what about impacts and implications for larger commercial users, for whom energy may be a necessity? Problems could be looming. As The Guardian newspaper reported, for energy networks and suppliers, "Nonessential work on power lines and gas pipes could be put back and extra workers hired" – with possible knock-on effects for supplies. "The UK's regional energy networks held talks last week with government ministers, senior officials and the energy regulator over plans to maintain the energy system's power lines and gas pipes if 80% of their staff are unable to work."³

The newspaper adds that "network bosses have agreed to postpone all nonessential maintenance on the UK's critical energy infrastructure after the government warned that up to four-fifths of Britons could be infected by the Covid-19 virus over the coming months."

So energy resilience is again moving up the agenda: how can you assure your electricity supplies? It's something we've been talking about at Consultus for a long time. Indeed, alternative energy generation (AEG) and the so-called 'private wire revolution' are already happening – for some, at least. The benefits are well known. And what this pandemic is showing is that those benefits extend way beyond simply insulating an enterprise from rising energy prices or market volatility. It's about achieving true resilience - energy security – by utilising your own localised energy grid. If you find yourself with a bit of time over the next few days, download and take a look at our [Energy Resilience](#) flyer.⁴

So that's just a few thoughts and observations, from me, on the current situation. While the coronavirus pandemic may eventually pass, even if it takes months and even more disruption than we're seeing today, I've a feeling that issues around energy resilience are simply not going to go away.

*A world-class consulting partner for energy and utilities, Consultus was named **Most Trusted Consultancy (Large Customers)** at the TELCA awards 2019.*

¹ <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2020/mar/17/energy-firms-draw-up-crisis-plans-amid-fears-of-loss-of-80-of-staff>

² <https://www.moneysavingexpert.com/news/2020/03/uk-coronavirus-help-and-your-rights/#energy>

³ <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2020/mar/17/energy-firms-draw-up-crisis-plans-amid-fears-of-loss-of-80-of-staff>

⁴ https://www.consultus.group/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Energy_Resilience.pdf

Contact information:

+44 (0)330 221 9899

✉ info@consultus.com

