

Nick Timothy MP  
House of Commons  
London  
SW1A 0AA

From:  
Sarah Cardell  
*Chief Executive*

Our Ref: MP001543

1 April 2026

Dear Mr Timothy

Thank you for your letter of 25 March 2026 in relation to concerns raised by your constituents about the effect that the conflict in the Middle East has had on the price of heating oil.

The CMA is acutely aware that the ongoing conflict in the Middle East is driving up wholesale prices for key commodities, which will naturally feed through into higher costs for households. In these circumstances, it is more important than ever that effective competition helps minimise price increases, consumer rights are protected, and that firms do not exploit the situation through unjustified price increases that go beyond genuine cost pressures.

The CMA does not regulate prices, but we are using the full range of our powers, identifying whether there is evidence that competition or consumer law has been broken, and closely monitoring pricing pressures in areas most exposed to volatility.

We understand the rising price of heating oil is causing particular concern and potential hardship for customers who, as you note, are often vulnerable. We also recognise that many heating oil distributors are likely to have faced significant pressures from rising wholesale costs and increases in demand, both of which may impact price levels and volatility.

However, we have also received several concerning reports from consumers who rely on heating oil about their experiences. Many of these are consistent with the issues raised in your letter. We are grateful for the additional information which you have sent us and we will consider this carefully as part of two major pieces of work we have launched into the heating oil sector.

## Heating oil consumer protection action

On 11 March 2026, we announced we were writing to several heating oil distributors and intermediaries to gather evidence on whether the distributors' practices may give rise to consumer protection law concerns. The press release announcing this piece of work is available at this link [here](#). As you will see, our focus is on:

- allegations from customers that heating oil orders placed before the conflict began (at a cheaper price) were cancelled with customers then being offered new quotes at significantly increased prices; and
- price increases for automated deliveries (triggered when the fuel in a tank drops to a certain level).

While it should not be assumed that any businesses have broken consumer protection law, if potential breaches are identified, we will not hesitate to launch enforcement action. The CMA is at the initial stage of this review and the duration of this work will depend on the evidence collected – responses to our information requests were due before the end of March.

## Heating oil market study

On 20 March 2026, we launched a [market study into the retail supply of heating oil](#) for domestic use in the UK, which will enable us to examine in detail how the market is working as a whole, using statutory powers to formally request information from businesses. Recognising the issues faced by off grid energy customers, we will identify any problems in this area and consider potential solutions which could be used to inform future regulation.

The market study will focus on:

- The number of suppliers in different parts of the UK, including how this impacts choice and prices paid by consumers;
- Underlying causes of recent increases in heating oil prices and whether they reflect genuine cost pressures;
- Conduct from suppliers to decide whether additional consumer protection regulation is needed; and
- Whether there is sufficient price transparency for consumers.

You can find more detail in the [Statement of Scope](#), on which we are inviting comments by 8 April. We will be working at pace to issue findings within three months, much faster

than the statutory time limit of 12 months in recognition of the importance of this work to consumers.

I hope this provides assurance that we are treating this matter with the utmost urgency, moving quickly to understand and respond to concerns, and ensuring heating oil customers are being treated fairly. Your correspondence has been passed to the respective teams to help inform their work.

Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any further questions. We will keep you updated as our work progresses.

Yours sincerely,



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