

Zesa gears for pre-payment meter project

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A typical prepaid electricity meter.

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ZESA Holdings has embarked on a pilot project to install pre-payment meters at strategic places as it gears up for the massive installation of pre-payment meters countrywide estimated to cost millions of dollars.

The power utility is waiting for the State Procurement Board to award the tender to a company that will supply 600 000 pre-payment meters. Zesa spokesperson, Mr Fullard Gwasira, said in response to questions from

Chronicle yesterday that as a pilot project, pre-payment meters were being installed at strategic places as Zesa gears up for this massive exercise.

“This exercise we are doing is meant to complement the service provider that will be awarded the tender by the State Procurement Board once the process of selecting a provider has been finalised,” Mr Gwasira said.

He said the pre-payment meters will enable customers to manage their electricity consumption thereby controlling their costs. Mr Gwasira said the new system will improve electricity consumers’ budgeting.

He said once the State Procurement Board awards the tender to supply the pre-payment meters, the new system will be rolled out countrywide.

“A small number of the improved and advanced version of the pre-payment meters is being installed at strategic sites to check on the preparedness of the power utility for the countrywide rollout exercise that will be embarked on once the relevant formalities of engaging a service provider are completed.

“The exercise will cover the whole country,” Mr Gwasira said.

In Bulawayo households in suburbs such as Luveve, Cowdray Park, Thorngrove and Paddenhurst already have pre-payment meters. The pre-payment meters are also being installed at city flats such as Hiran Court at the corner of Fife Street and First Avenue under the pilot project.

A resident of Luveve, who only identified himself as Mr Dube, said he had been using the pre-payment meter for the past two months and said he was now able to control his electricity consumption.

“I am now certain that I use the electricity that I need. I live alone and \$10 is enough for my electricity a month,” he said.

A tenant at Hiran Court in the city, Mr Daniel Mlambo, said with the new system, he will be able to pay the exact amount of the electricity he uses unlike the amounts based on estimates they were paying over the years.

“I wake up in the morning and go to work and the only appliance that is on is the geyser but

the amount that I have been paying is too much given that I hardly cook at home. For the past few months I have been sent bills based on estimates which ranged between \$45 to \$55 a month,” he said.

Mr Mlambo said the move to install pre-payment meters was therefore a very welcome development that will ensure consumers were not shortchanged.

He said the system will also encourage consumers to conserve power as they will be required to pay in advance for electricity.

However, a woman in the same flat who refused to be identified expressed scepticism over the new meters saying she would wait and see the benefits as past experiences with Zesa have taught her otherwise.

“For a long time there has been mistrust between us and Zesa, so I will just wait and see because there is always something amiss with each new system Zesa introduces.

“Zesa has to put its house in order and we hope this development will see reduced load shedding,” she said.

Her sentiments were shared by her neighbour who said the power company should give them assurances that the new system will improve service delivery.

In the past residents have raised concern over the power utility’s billing system which they said was in shambles.