

28 MAR 2007

info@waterwatchscotland.org
www.waterwatchscotland.org

27 March 2007

Ms Katherine Russell
Water Industry Commission
Ochil House
Stirling
FK7 7XE

Dear Katherine

Approach to the 2010-14 Price Review

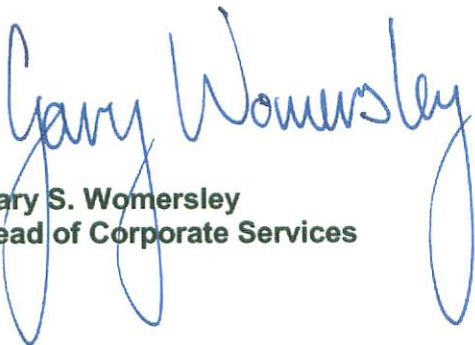
Please find enclosed, Waterwatch Scotland response to your above named consultation.

You will no doubt note the positive nature of the response, particularly with regards to Customer Engagement.

As you are aware, Waterwatch Scotland already has a Panel/Committee structure in place which meets both with general public/customers as specific stakeholder groups.

If there is any way that Waterwatch Scotland can assist or facilitate in any aspect of your future plans, please do not hesitate to raise this with me. Otherwise, we look forward to working closely throughout the process.

Yours sincerely



Gary S. Womersley
Head of Corporate Services

Response to the Water Industry Commission's Consultation on its Approach to the 2010-14 Price Review

March 2007

Introduction

Waterwatch Scotland (WWS) is the national complaints handling authority for all customers of Scottish Water and consumer representative body for the water industry in Scotland.

Our role is to:

- Investigate complaints
- Represent customers' interests and views
- Influence policy
- Inform and advise

From the 1st April 2006, Waterwatch Scotland replaced the former Water Customer Consultation Panels. Waterwatch Scotland is independent of Scottish Water and other agencies, including the Water Industry Commission for Scotland. As a result of the Water Services etc. (Scotland) Act 2005, our current role and remit has been strengthened.

Overall Approach

1. WWS welcomes this early consultation on the Water Industry Commission's (WICs) approach to the 2010-14 price review.
2. WWS supports the WIC's commitment to work in partnership with co-regulators, WWS, Scottish Water and the Scottish Executive.
3. This first consultation document, which should be commended for its clarity, sets out in an accessible way the key stages of what is a long, complex and technically demanding process. Such early notice of the main stages of the review will give stakeholder groups the necessary time to prepare to consider the various proposals, as they emerge.
4. WWS looks forward to working closely and in a cooperative way with the WICS and other stakeholders throughout the process, representing the views and interests of customers.

Customer and Other Stakeholder Involvement

5. WWS notes the importance of using a variety of means by which customer and other stakeholder views may be ingathered.
6. Communication through an upgraded website is an important component; however this should not be a one way process. WWS recommends that there should be a facility built into the website for users to send in questions and comments, and for staff at the WICS to acknowledge comments and answer questions clearly and promptly.

7. WWS welcomes the use of stakeholder information days that cover a specific issue and are timed around key events. WWS believes it would be beneficial to hold information days across Scotland, and not confine these to city locations.
8. WWS underlines the importance of engaging not only household and business customers, but community groups, voluntary organisations and other more short lived 'communities of interest' that may arise and coalesce around a particular issue during the course of the price review consultation.
9. Further thought should be given to the format of the information days. Whilst the publication of a short paper in advance might be helpful for some, others will wish to attend and receive a fully verbal briefing. WWS supports efforts to encourage participation and interaction between representatives of the WICS and members of the public on these days, and suggests that in addition to, or as part of, the information days 'Citizens' Jury' or 'Focus Group' methods are explored.

Coverage of Issues

10. Without wishing to preclude the emergence of other themes as the review proceeds, the list of key issues identified in the paper is comprehensive.

Proposed Timeline

11. A particular strength of this consultation paper is its clarity with respect to key dates and events in the process. WWS underlines the importance of ensuring that 12 week consultation periods are extended appropriately if they fall across holiday periods such as Christmas, Easter and summer.