

**Minute of the 5<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Customer Forum**  
**Held on 25<sup>th</sup> April 2012 in Stirling**

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**Present:** Peter Peacock (Chair)

Cowan Ervine

Johanna Dow

Agnes Robson

Dr Susan Walker

**Apologies:** Dr Sarah Hendry

Bob Wilson

Iain McTaggart

Trish McAuley (Deputy Director, Consumer Focus Scotland)

**In attendance:** Mark Nolan (Project Co-ordinator)

Douglas Millican (Scottish Water)(Item 5)

Belinda Oldfield (Scottish Water)(Item 5)

Fiona Templeton (Scottish Water)(Item 5)

Rob Sheldon (Accent)(Item 5)

Prof Gordon Hughes (WICS)(Item 6)

**Chair's opening remarks**

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

**Item 1 – Apologies**

Apologies were NOTED.

**Item 2 – Minutes of the last meeting**

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 28<sup>th</sup> March 2012 were APPROVED.

**Item 3 – Matter arising**

The Forum expressed its disappointment at the BIS decision to abolish Consumer Focus and noted that while there may be implications for the Forum's future administration these were matters that could be addressed when the detailed implications of the proposed changes became clearer..

The Chair also explained that the Ministerial Objectives had been delayed. A decision on when these will go out to consultation should be made in the next few days and an update should hopefully be possible at the next meeting.

Members also shared their thoughts on the visit to the Turret WTW in Crieff and how it contrasted with Glencorse WTW in Edinburgh. All agreed this was beneficial, demonstrating the types of treatment works that have to be maintained and how they can be altered and added to, to meet demands on the network.

Members also discussed the Accent Stated Preference Survey. Those who had participated agreed that it was very sophisticated and complex and took some time to complete. Concern was expressed as to how this might affect the validity of the results. All agreed that it was necessary to raise this with Scottish Water and Accent later in the meeting. It was agreed that those who had completed the exercise should provide a note of their thoughts on the experience.

#### **Item 4 – Discussion on Scottish Water’s Strategic Vision**

There was a general feeling that this was not bad as a first iteration. However, some of the language used is internal jargon and the choices presented required further refinement. There is also a need to clarify if the document is a public document, in which case, consultation on Scottish Water’s vision should not be included, as this is an internal matter. Clarification is also needed on the type of audience the document is aimed at even if it is not a public document. It also lacks any specific reference to non-domestic customers and the fact their expectations, particularly from a business perspective, could be very different. The Forum agreed to provide more detailed feedback in due course, specifically on the issue of what it is likely and reasonably customers would expect in 25 years time. The Forum welcomed their involvement in the process of developing the strategic vision and noted the matter would be subject to a number of other discussions during its development.

#### **Item 5 – Scottish Water/ Accent Presentation**

Scottish Water and Accent gave a presentation on the views emerging from their customer engagement programme. SW confirmed that the process started in the autumn of 2011. Since then customers have been contacted in many different ways. The information has provided SW with an insight into its customers’ views on service levels, the customer experience when dealing with SW and customer priorities for investment in the future.

In response to Forum queries Accent confirmed that the findings from the stated preference questionnaire do not constitute absolute service levels looked at but provide a means of ascertaining customers relative priorities for services and service improvement, using price as a means of helping test commitment to possible priorities. The next step is to test and seek to validate the findings in focus groups.

Accent also advised that in the stated preference survey work, every participant is presented with a different package of options.

#### **Item 6 – Prof Gordon Hughes**

The Chair welcomed Gordon Hughes to the Forum. This was the first time that Forum had met with the WICS chairman.

In the course of a lively and wide-ranging discussion Prof Hughes and the Forum explored issues around – the strengths and weaknesses of using stated preference survey techniques; the general willingness of customers to pay; the impact of statutory regulation on costs;

efficiency within the industry and potential further efficiency gains in line with general efficiency improvements in the economy (total factor productivity); the concerns of the UK regulators at the abolition of Consumer Focus and the implications for necessary customer advocacy; capital investment programmes and the extent to which Scottish Water is or may become involved in capital spend to meet local issues, but which may not strictly be Scottish water's legal responsibility; the success in delivering from the Licenced Providers in the competitive retail market.

**Item 7 – Dates and venue of next meeting**

The next meeting will be on Wednesday 30<sup>th</sup> May 2012, at 1pm. The venue will be confirmed at a later date.

**Item 8 – AOCB**

None

Approved 30 MAY 2012