

Minute of the 7th meeting of the Customer Forum
Held on 27th June 2012 in Glasgow

Present: Peter Peacock (Chair)

Cowan Ervine

Johanna Dow

Dr Susan Walker

Dr Sarah Hendry

Bob Wilson

Iain McTaggart

Apologies: Agnes Robson

In attendance: Trish McAuley (Deputy Director, Consumer Focus Scotland)

Mark Nolan (Project Co-ordinator)

Glen Buchanan (Water Policy Manager, Consumer Focus Scotland)

Belinda Oldfield (Scottish Water)(Item 4)

Fiona Templeton (Scottish Water)(Item 4)

Molly Finnegan (Scottish Water)(Item 4)

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 30th May 2012 were APPROVED.

Item 3 – Matter arising

The date for the Parliamentary event has been confirmed by the Scottish Parliament. The Chair also noted that he had still to meet with a representative of the Green MSPs to complete his engagement with the Scottish political parties.

Item 4 –Scottish Water

Scottish Water provided an update on its research programme to date.

The business surveys had been completed. The analysis is on-going however the initial findings suggested that over 80% of business customers are aware of who their licensed

provider is and that they are on metered supply. However, there is a 50/50 split on investment priorities.

Consumer panels have also been completed in the household sector. Year one of the household programme is now complete. Business panel activities are being scoped with Licensed Providers (LPs) and have been sent to them for consultation. SW is also proposing to host validation workshops on the outcome of the business surveys with LPs.

SW will also engage in a young customer programme and online panel activities for 18-25 year old non-bill payers.

SW will now progress to the second stage of the research programme and conduct research activities into specific areas such as pressure, flooding and environmental issues. SW is also keen to use focus groups to test out some of its big ideas such as the proposed national grid.

SW will come back to advise the Forum on the next stage of the customer engagement when it has a more detailed programme to discuss and expects to provide a summary of the entire engagement programme outcomes by late August.

Item 5 – Update on recent meetings

The chair participated in an interview with Utility Week who were interested in hearing about the Forum with a view to examining how it differs from the Customer Challenge Groups set up by Ofwat in England and Wales.

The chair also met with the Water Policy Team at Consumer Focus Scotland. (See Item 8).

Item 6 – Update on Ministers letter to WICS

The Forum noted it had been acknowledged in the letter. Although not a statutory body the Forum has now been identified as a part of the statutory process. This is helpful for the Forum's status, and also brought with it potential for an element of accountability.

The Forum discussed a number of aspects of the detail of the letter and potential implications for Scottish Water. It was agreed to invite SW to the next meeting to allow SW to explain what it believes the Ministerial letter means for it. Officials from the Scottish Government could also be invited to discuss from the Govt perspective.

Item 7 – Update on Customer Engagement Committee meeting

The agendas and minutes from the Engagement Committee meetings were circulated in advance of the meeting. The chair advised that the meetings had been open, frank and constructive. The next meeting is scheduled for 13th August.

Item 8 – Discussion on Forum customer validation work in conjunction with CFS

The Chair met with the Trisha McAuley and the Water Policy Team at Consumer Focus Scotland to update the team on the recent activities of the Forum and to seek advice for the Forum's customer engagement strategy as part of its plan to validate the customer research programme. It was agreed that Mark would meet with the team in the first instance to consider how to begin this work.

Item 9 – Proposed work with the independent consultant

The Forum noted this work and agreed for the Chair to discuss the scope of the work with Keith Harris, the independent assessor appointed by the WIC.

Item 10 – Paper on Ofwat Customer Challenge Groups

The Forum noted this paper.

Item 11 – WICS efficiency research

The Forum noted this paper. WICS suggested that Prof Saal could attend a future Forum meeting to discuss in more detail. The Chair will speak to Alan Sutherland in the first instance to consider at what stage in the research it would prove most beneficial to invite Prof Saal.

Item 12 – CFS Affordability research

Previous work on water affordability and debt issues in Scotland was published by Waterwatch Scotland in 2008. This is now dated and the Forum noted this work being carried out by CFS and looked forward to discussing the work when it is complete.

It was also suggested that Affordability issues were similar in other markets and that work had been carried out which was more up to date. One particular piece of work was done by the Child Poverty Action Group. Mark will speak to the policy team at CFS to see how relevant it could be and circulate to Forum members.

Item 13 – Date and venue of next meeting

Wednesday, 8th August 2012, CFS office, Glasgow

Item 14 – AOCB

Owing to the clash with the SW Board meeting on the last Wednesday of the month, and the difficulties this can cause for SW staff to attend Forum meetings, the Forum agreed to move its meeting to a different day. Monday afternoon was agreed by those present as an option and Mark will work towards Monday afternoon meetings for Forum meetings for the remainder of the year.