

Minute of the ninth meeting of the Customer Forum
Held on 17 September in Glasgow

Present: Peter Peacock (Chairman)

Johanna Dow

Cowan Ervine

Dr Sarah Hendry

Dr Susan Walker

Bob Wilson

Agnes Robson

In attendance: Douglas Millican, Scottish Water (item 6)

Belinda Oldfield, Scottish Water (item 6)

Alan Scott, Scottish Water (item 6)

Fiona Templeton, Scottish Water (item 6)

David Walters, Water Industry Commission for Scotland (item 8)

Ryan McRoberts, Water Policy Advocate, Consumer Focus

Donna Very (Project Co-ordinator)

Chairman's opening remarks

The Chairman welcomed Donna Very to the Forum. Donna is the new project co-ordinator and is on secondment from the Water Industry Commission for Scotland.

1. Apologies for absence

Iain McTaggart

2. Minute of previous meeting (08/12)

The Forum agreed the minute was an accurate record of the meeting subject to one minor amendment.

3. Summary of action points

The Forum noted that action points had been taken or covered under the agenda.

4. Oral update on current issues and events

The Chair updated the Forum on a recent meeting held with Alan Sutherland, Chief Executive of the Water Industry Commission for Scotland, (WICS). At this meeting the remit of the Forum was considered, among other matters updating WICS on Forum progress.

The Chair provided the Forum with an update on developments at Consumer Focus Scotland and the implications this may have on the Customer Forum. He had discussed with Trisha McAuley that at some point in the near future the implications of declining resources in CFS may make the need to float off the Forum as a free standing body more pressing.

The Forum discussed the response by Consumer Focus Scotland to the Scottish Government's proposals on "Investing in and Paying for your Water Services from 2015". In particular the Forum noted CFS was advocating a review of the use of Council Tax bandings as the means of distributing costs to households, and that this represented a substantial shift in current policy and is seen by CFS a long term issue which would, therefore, have no implication on the coming price determination. The Forum further noted CFS had supported the price period being extended to 6 yrs and this was a matter the Forum had yet to take a final view on. Further, the Forum noted CFS had argued for the potential of static or falling prices for consumers.

5. Update on Engagement Committee

The Forum noted the update of a very constructive meeting held by the Engagement Committee.

6. Update from Scottish Water – Scottish Water's report – "Listening to Customers"

Scottish Water provided the Forum with a draft copy of their report "Listening to Customers". Belinda Oldfield gave a presentation with a summary of the results from this report. The Forum found the report to be a very helpful document and hope that Scottish Water will consider publishing these results. The Forum pointed out that it had not been helpful to merge business customers with households within the results. The Forum felt that business customers (particularly larger businesses) and household could have very different priorities.

Scottish Water then gave a presentation on the draft format of their consultation materials for the 25 year strategic vision – customer consultation. The consultation would give the opportunity for customers and stakeholders to give their view regarding the future of water and wastewater services. Customers and stakeholders would be able to either complete a survey online or hard copy. Scottish Water asked the Forum to provide feedback on the 14 questions they intend to ask through their consultation. The Forum welcomed the developing approach to the presentation of the 25 yr vision.

7. Customer Engagement Strategy

The Forum discussed its own customer engagement research strategy and based on the results from Scottish Water's recent research and Consumer Focus Scotland's research, they felt they now had a better idea of what specific issues they would like considered. The Forum confirmed it would like to work independently from Scottish Water but will share thinking on the approach to be taken and their findings. A draft tender specification will be drawn up with the main focus being on value for money and willingness to pay. To give consultants a steer, the Forum will ask Scottish Water if a copy of their "Listening to Customers" report can be used as a starting point.

8. Presentation on Retail Competition

David Walters from the Water Industry Commission for Scotland, gave a interesting presentation on the introduction of Retail Competition in Scotland.

9. AOB

The Forum noted that the Parliamentary event will now take place early next year.

A date has still to be set for the WWTW.

The Customer Forum website is now live and a press release will be made early next week.

Closing remarks

The Chairman thanked everyone for their attendance. The next meeting will be held in Glasgow on 22 October at 1300hrs.
