

**Minutes of the twenty first meeting of the Customer Forum on 10 October 2013
at The George Hotel, Edinburgh**

Attendees: Peter Peacock (Chair)
Fiona Ballantyne
Cowan Ervine
Sarah Hendry
Jo Dow
Sue Walker
Bob Wilson

In attendance: Rosemary Greenhill, Policy Analyst
Andrea Mancini, Water Industry Commission for Scotland
Nelly Maublanc, Consumer Futures
Donna Very, Project Co-ordinator

Chairman's opening remarks

The Chairman welcomed everyone and opened the 21st meeting of the Customer Forum.

1. Apologies for absence

Agnes Robson, who was attending an event for the Forum in London.

2. Minutes of previous meeting

The Forum agreed that the minutes were an accurate record of the last meeting.

3. Oral update on current issues and events

The Chair updated the Forum on recent activities.

The Chair had recently attended a stakeholder liaison meeting which had included representatives from Citizens Advice Scotland (CAS). The meeting had been called primarily to discuss the future of the Forum and whether it should transfer to CAS. Following the meeting, CAS would consider whether it would be happy to host the Forum and will inform stakeholders.

As previously agreed, the Chair has asked John McLaren from the Centre for Public Policy for Regions and Danny Phillips Associates to provide the Forum with an update on the reports they submitted to the Forum earlier on in the year. These reports would provide the Forum with an update on changes that have impacted household budgets and analysis on CPI v RPI.

The Chair and Rosemary Greenhill had met with DWQR at their request to discuss the issue of lead in water supplies. The meeting had been very interesting and DWQR were developing thinking on extending actions from the existing regulations which were due to tighten restrictions on levels of lead in water in any event to potentially move on to make Scotland lead free. DWQR would be keen to have the Forum's input on this subject. The Chair thought this matter was likely to arise as a pressure on Scottish Water in seeking to agree the priorities for the settlement period and it would be possible for the forum to explore this further during that process.

Members from the Forum had attended an Annual Water conference in Glasgow the previous day. The speakers included Douglas Millican from Scottish Water. Mr Millican had provided a very positive message on customer input and the journey Scottish Water had made since it was established. He announced the intention to deliver real term reductions in prices during the 2015-21 period, making public what the Forum was already aware of from engagement with Scottish Water. He further signalled priority action and a planned £120million allocation to eliminate sewage flooding. Gordon Hughes, Chairman of the Water Industry Commission for Scotland, gave an interesting presentation on long term affordability of water in GB against a historic background of significantly rising price levels and the need to, long term, increasingly manage increased investment in line with customer priorities as other regulatory pressures eased.

4. Discussions

The Forum used the rest of the meeting to reflect on recent discussions with Scottish Water and other stakeholders, and in light of what was now understood to be emerging from the draft Scottish Water business plan. The Forum identified a number of issues within areas for engagement with Scottish Water in the upcoming negotiations and which would be important to customers. A private note of those discussions will be developed for further refinement as a result of future Forum discussions to form the Forum's negotiating brief for meetings with Scottish Water. The Chair indicated that he thought the time was now approaching when the Engagement Committee would need to take the lead in discussions directly with Scottish Water, following the negotiating brief being formed by the Forum, with regular feedback to the Forum at normal meetings to reflect on negotiating stances in the light of experience.

The Chair undertook to brief the Chief Executive of the WICS on the direction of travel and the key areas of interest for the Forum, in order to establish that they remained within the parameters set by the WICS.

Closing remarks

The Chair thanked attendees and closed the meeting.