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15 June 2009



Dear Contact Name

SCOUT WATER BILLS COULD TRIPLE FROM 2010: HELP STOP THE RAIN TAX!

Water regulator Ofwat has instructed water companies to use a new way of charging Scout Groups for draining the water that falls on their property. This could cost your local Scout Groups £500 a year or more, regardless of the amount of water used. Groups in the north-west of England have been hit already – bills for the rest of England and Wales will follow soon.

This tax on rain threatens Scout activities up and down the country. Without finding extra money to cover the cost, Groups will either have to cut their activities for young people or sell their properties. And it's not just Scouting that will be hit. Churches, village halls and community sports clubs also all face massive hikes in their water bills.

Time is running out. Unless Ofwat changes its guidance, Scout Groups across England and Wales will start receiving real water bills with these increased charges from next year. We need your help to get MPs and the Government to act. Sign up at scouts.org.uk/water, speak up by writing to Ofwat or show up to our lobby of Parliament on St Swithun's Day (15 July). Together, we can stop the rain tax.

Yours sincerely

Wayne Bulpitt
UK Chief Commissioner

*P.s. Hope to see you
on St Swithun's Day
at parliament!*

'As a result of Ofwat's action, I may have to explain to young Beaver Scouts that they could soon have to raid their piggy banks for an extra £5. It is not something I am looking forward to.'

'The only response left is to lobby our MPs to have this undemocratic change reversed. I am sure it is a challenge my colleagues will rise to.'

John Duley, County Commissioner for Bedfordshire

'There is clearly something wrong with bills increasing like that.'

Hilary Benn, Secretary of State for the Environment

THE SCOUT ASSOCIATION IS CALLING FOR...

1. An immediate end to the issuing of bills charged using this surface area water tariff for community and voluntary groups.
2. A social tariff to make water charges affordable for community and voluntary groups which is protected by law.
3. Reform of Ofwat's responsibilities so that they have a duty to ensure water services are affordable to all customers including community and voluntary groups.

JOIN OUR CAMPAIGN: scouts.org.uk/water



STOP THE RAIN TAX CAMPAIGN



OFWAT'S RAIN TAX: SCOUT GROUPS COULD OWE AN EXTRA £500 A YEAR FROM 2010

WHAT IS CAUSING THE INCREASE IN SCOUT WATER BILLS?

Currently, surface water drainage charges for non-domestic properties are calculated based on the rateable value of a property. This means voluntary and community groups are often exempt from charges. However, Ofwat have changed their guidance to water companies to state that these charges should be calculated on a 'site area' method. Under this scheme, if your local Scout Group has a property with a roof, or even an area of tarmac, it will now be charged for any rain that falls onto the premises and drains into the water system.

WHERE IN THE UK IS THIS A PROBLEM?

This new way of charging for water drainage services will cover water services in England and Wales only. Ofwat's guidance is for all bills for non-domestic properties issued from 2010. This way of charging for surface area drainage has already been introduced in the north-west. It has led to massive increases in water bills for community and voluntary groups.

WHAT ARE WE BASING THIS ON?

Evidence gathered by The Scout Association, the Central Council of Physical Recreation and Action with Communities in Rural England shows the cost of paying this new charge can represent 25-30% of these groups' total income.

HOW CAN WE REDUCE THE COST OF OUR WATER BILLS?

The only method of avoiding these charges is to build a soakaway or implement rainwater recycling. A Scout Association survey found only half of Scout properties had the space or money to install a soakaway. 88% of Scout Groups say they would consider rainwater recycling but again space and funding are problematic. Furthermore, as some Scout buildings are not used during holiday periods, there is a danger the recycling facility could overflow if there is heavy rainfall.

WHY ST SWITHUN'S DAY?

According to the proverb, if it rains on St Swithun's Day it will rain continuously for 40 more days. Under the new charges, this amount of rain over 40 days falling on the roofs of Scout huts would generate a major cost to local Scout Groups. We are organising a day of action in Parliament on 15 July to draw attention to how unfair this is. You can sign up to take part at scouts.org.uk/water

Real examples of bills received by community and voluntary groups in the north-west so far:

- **Bowling club in Carlisle**
– rise from £95 to £1,233, an increase of 1,300%
- **Scout hut in Cheshire**
– rise from £40 to £563, an increase of 1,407%
- **Village hall in Cheshire**
– rise from £54 to £2,580 by 2010, an increase of 4,777%

SIGN UP

Join the Scout raintax campaign by registering your details at scouts.org.uk/water

SPEAK UP

Write to Ofwat yourself to tell them how their unfair charges will impact on your Scout Group. Email the Chief Executive Regina Finn directly at regina.finn@ofwat.gsi.gov.uk

SHOW UP

Turn up and take part in the mass Scout lobby at the House of Commons on St Swithun's Day, 15 July 2009. Go to central lobby, ask to speak to your local MP and urge them to support our campaign. Email water@scout.org.uk if you can attend

STOP THE RAIN TAX: HOW YOU CAN HELP

If you don't want to see cuts to Scouting in your local area to pay these bills then you need to take action:

SIGN UP

Join the Scout rain tax campaign by registering your details at www.scouts.org.uk/water

SPEAK UP

Write to Ofwat yourself to tell them how their unfair charges will impact on your local Scout Group. Email the Chief Executive Regina Finn directly at regina.finn@ofwat.gsi.gov.uk or c/o Ofwat, Centre City Tower, 7 Hill Street, Birmingham, B5 4UA.

SHOW UP

Turn up and take part in our Scout lobby of Parliament on St Swithun's Day, 15 July 2009. Or speak to your MP and get them to support our campaign. Please email the Campaigns Team at water@scout.org.uk if you are able to take part in this event.