

# SCOUT ASSOCIATION CAMPAIGN TEAM

## APRIL 2009 MEMBER BRIEFING DOCUMENT



Date: 03/04/09

### THE 'STOP THE RAIN TAX' CAMPAIGN: APRIL 2009 UPDATE

#### The Story So Far....

If this is the first briefing you have received relating to changes in surface water drainage charges, you may wish to look at our previous briefings [here](#).

These give you the background information on charges for surface area water drainage and our actions so far in campaigning on this issue.

#### Early Day Motion 985

Last month we asked you to encourage your MP to sign Early Day Motion 985, tabled on our behalf by John Battle MP. At the time of writing, 67 MPs have signed the motion, showing their support for a social tariff for community and voluntary groups. You can view the content of the Early Day Motion and see which MPs have signed it [here](#). If your MP has not signed the motion, please follow the link to a sample email and ask them to do so [here](#). The number of MPs that sign the motion indicates the level of support for our campaign, so it is important that we obtain as many signatures as possible.

#### Questions in Parliament: Scout Representatives Speak Out

On Thursday 2 April 2009 this issue was raised in parliament in questions to the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs. Several MPs put our points to the minister responsible, Huw Irranca-Davies, about the impact of these water charges on Scout groups including members of our All Party Parliamentary Group on Scouting. You can read the full transcript of the questions [here](#). These came from MPs from

across the house, showing the widespread support our campaign has gained. The Minister responded to these questions sympathetically, stating of current discussions about water prices:

"I welcome the pressure that has been brought to bear and the representations that have been made. As I have said, we are not out of the woods: we need to ensure that the 12 months produces an appropriate review, so that all the groups that have been mentioned are not hit disproportionately. I will keep my eye on the matter"

We will be holding Mr Irranca-Davies, who also revealed his links with Scouting during the questions, to account on his promise to make sure groups including Scouting are not hit "disproportionately" by these charges.

#### Meeting with Ofwat

During March we met with Ofwat to discuss our concerns and our proposal for the introduction of a social tariff.

We pressed them on the impact these charges will have on the income of local Scout Groups and what they intend to do to help ensure that water charges are fair and affordable for all their customers. We told them how many Scout Groups would have to limit their activities or sell their properties if they had to pay these costs for water.

Ofwat's role is to ensure that no discrimination in charges for water exists and that charges are fair and affordable for all customers. We believe that to charge a local Scout hut for water drainage in the same manner as a large multinational company such as a Sainsbury's superstore

... page 1 of 2

#### The Scout Association

Gilwell Park Chingford London E4 7QW Tel + 44 (0)20 8433 7100 Fax + 44 (0)20 8433 7103 email [scout.association@scout.org.uk](mailto:scout.association@scout.org.uk) [www.scouts.org.uk](http://www.scouts.org.uk)

Patron HM The Queen President HRH The Duke of Kent Founder Robert Baden-Powell OM Chief Scout Peter Duncan

Incorporated by Royal Charter Charity No. 306101

which this scheme now does (as both would be classed as business properties), does discriminate against community and voluntary groups. Despite the evidence of the damage these charges could do to Scouting, Ofwat are not sympathetic to the need to address these problems. Instead, they persist in stating that water prices are a matter for water companies, and they can only approve or reject charges. However, the water companies are only bringing in these charges because Ofwat have told them that they should.

The Government guidance to Ofwat regarding its policies issued in August 2008 clearly states that **it should itself** conduct impact assessments on the policies it proposes. We asked them whether they had undertaken any research into the potential impact on charities and voluntary groups of their recommendation of site area charging. It appears they have not done so. Instead, they have tried to pass the responsibility for this onto the water companies themselves.

Given the problems caused by these charges, we asked Ofwat to meet with the water companies and community and voluntary groups to try to break the deadlock over how to set acceptable charges for water services. However,

Ofwat have refused to organise such a meeting and so the deadlock continues.

## The Water Companies – Their Response

At the beginning of March, we wrote to the water companies asking for feedback on our proposal for a social tariff. The responses from water companies show Ofwat has refused to approve several different forms of charging schemes that would help community and voluntary groups. Their responses show the information the water companies are being given gives them only one option: to charge by site area.

## Action with Other Groups

We are in contact with other organisations that are being affected by this issue, including the Church of England and the Rugby Football Union and other Sports Associations. We will continue to work alongside them in the coming weeks and months to ensure that a loud and united voice from across all those groups affected by these charges for the need for change.

## How You Can Help In April?

We are collating information on the activities and services that would have to make way to fund these potential increases in water bills. Therefore, we need your examples of what you will have to cut from your local Group's programme if your water bill rises by around £500 per year. To do this, please complete the short survey that you can find [here](#). Please forward this link to others, so that we can build up a bigger picture of the potential impact of these charges.

Thank you for your help with this campaign. We can already see how by working together we are making progress in representing Scouting's perspective on this issue. Your contribution to this is vital and much appreciated.

Stella Creasy  
Head of Public Affairs and Campaigns  
The Scout Association  
020 8433 7215  
[stella.creasy@scout.org.uk](mailto:stella.creasy@scout.org.uk)

### The Scout Association

Gilwell Park Chingford London E4 7QW Tel + 44 (0)20 8433 7100 Fax + 44 (0)20 8433 7103 email [scout.association@scout.org.uk](mailto:scout.association@scout.org.uk) [www.scouts.org.uk](http://www.scouts.org.uk)

Patron HM The Queen President HRH The Duke of Kent Founder Robert Baden-Powell OM Chief Scout Peter Duncan

Incorporated by Royal Charter Charity No. 306101