

SCOUT ASSOCIATION CAMPAIGN TEAM

DECEMBER 2008 MEMBER BRIEFING DOCUMENT



Date: 01/12/08

THE 'STOP THE RAIN TAX' CAMPAIGN: DECEMBER 2008 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 the November briefing, which can be found [here](#).

In November, we asked members to fill in a survey to give us a better understanding of the impact that changes in surface water charges would have on Scout Groups across the country.

Reporting Back on our Survey...

Thank you to everyone who filled in the survey. Almost 300 Groups responded to highlight the impacts these charges are having and will have on our Movement. A third of respondents have premises 650m² or above, meaning they fall into the highest bracket for the rateable value of surface water drainage. Just over half (54%) of respondents also have a car park, while the vast majority (82%) have some surrounding space. These could both increase the area that these Groups are charged for, further increasing costs.

At present only 20% of Groups who responded have already had some form of charges levied. These Groups have reported an increase in water costs of between £60 and £600 a year, representing between 1% and 25% of their overall budgets. For example, 1st Weston and Weston Point Scout Group in Cheshire are now being charged £564 per annum by United Utilities, which, when added to their metered water charges, accounts for around one third of their total annual budget.

It is also not just Scout buildings that will be affected by these charges with sports clubs, village halls and religious buildings also affected. Penrith RUFC has seen its annual water costs rise from almost £700 to over £4,000 per annum, and St Luke's Church, North Thornaby will see costs soar from £70 to well over £600.

In our survey over two thirds of respondents had not heard about the charges. Whilst some water companies have not introduced charges yet, this could mean Groups are paying these costs or unaware of the need to budget for them. OFWAT, the Water Regulator, has ordered that all water companies will have to introduce these charges by 2010 so all Groups will have to pay them eventually.

We also asked Members about measures they could take to deal with the cause of charges such as soakaways and rainwater recycling. Many Groups would take action to improve the environmental impact of their buildings.

- Over half could have a soakaway dug. The main reasons given for this not being possible (39%) were a lack of space and the cost.
- 88% would consider rainwater recycling, but many said the cost of putting in such a system and the space needed was prohibitive. Furthermore, some Scout buildings are not used for long periods over holidays, meaning that capacities would have to be very high, or rainwater would have to overflow, possibly incurring a cost once again.

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The Scout Association

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What we are doing now

The Scout Association Public Affairs and Campaigns Team have been working with MPs and the Government to raise concerns about the impact of these charges on community groups. We are delighted to say that the Department for the Environment has now confirmed they are looking again at this issue and the guidelines that OFWAT have issued.

We will ensure that the information gained in our survey is shared with DEFRA and will be meeting with the Minister responsible on behalf of our Members shortly. We also want to make sure all MPs know about the impact of these charges on community organisations so that they can add their voice to calling for the charges to be removed and for help for groups to make their properties more environmentally friendly.

How you can help in December

Please help us by writing to your MP to ask them to raise this matter with DEFRA and calling for these charges to be scrapped. We have drafted a sample letter that you can send via email [here](#). This will automatically send your email to your local MP. If you would rather write your own letter you may wish to include the following points:

- An overview of what the charges are.
- The cost implication of these charges for your Group along with the percentage of your total budget this represents.
- What sort of activities may have to be scaled back in order to cover the increased costs.
- The fundraising that you already do and the challenge that meeting the additional cost would present.
- The willingness of Groups to act to improve the environmental impact of their buildings through using soakaways or rainwater recycling.
- Ask your MP to take the case to Jane Kennedy, the Minister for Farming and the Environment within DEFRA.

You can find out who your local MP is and how to contact them [here](#).

We now have over 100 members signed up to help campaign on this issue - if you want to join our campaign please email water@scout.org.uk to receive campaign updates. On behalf of The Scout Association I would like to thank you for your help – together we can and we are making a difference through this campaign.

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