

# SCOUT ASSOCIATION CAMPAIGN TEAM

## MARCH 2009 MEMBER BRIEFING DOCUMENT



Date: 05/03/09

### THE 'STOP THE RAIN TAX' CAMPAIGN: MARCH 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.

#### Newsflash! United Utilities Revert to Rateable Values

Last month we reported that United Utilities (the water company serving the North West of England) agreed to freeze water bills for next year so that Scout Groups would not see any further increase in their costs until a longer term solution can be agreed. Since then, United Utilities have now secured agreement from Ofwat to revert back to charging on rateable values for community and voluntary group properties including Scout Group buildings for the financial year 2009/10. We welcome this development and hope other water companies will follow suit by suspending any further charges until a long term solution to this problem can be identified.

#### Newsflash: Minister Speaks Out On Rain Tax!

Speaking about surface water charging, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) Minister Huw Irranca-Davies told The Guardian "Where you have small organisations dependent on voluntary donations,

the collection plate or small incomes, the charges should be applied with minimal impact." You can read the full article [here](#).

The Scout Association welcome the Minister's comments because he recognised the problem caused by these charges and the need for a resolution of these issues. However, as yet there have been no long term solutions proposed for the problem of how to charge community and voluntary groups fairly for their water services.

#### Telling Ofwat To Take Action

The Scout Association argue it is vital Ofwat listen to the widespread concern about this issue and take action to address not only the affordability of surface area water charges but also the cost of water services for community and voluntary groups as a whole. We believe this is best achieved through the introduction of a new category of customer for water services- community and voluntary groups- and the introduction of a social tariff regime within this category that will enable

If you have not written to Ofwat already, please help us by contacting their Chief Executive to explain the impact surface water charging will have on your group, and the need for the introduction of a social tariff to ensure those Groups that are least able to pay are not penalised for the rain that happens to fall on their roof. A sample letter which you can cut and paste is available [here](#).

You can email their Chief Executive Regina Finn directly on [regina.finn@ofwat.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:regina.finn@ofwat.gsi.gov.uk) or write to her c/o Ofwat, Centre City Tower, 7 Hill Street, Birmingham, B5 4UA

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#### The Scout Association

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## How You Can Help In March?

Please write to your local MP and ask him or her to help us make the case for the social tariff for community and voluntary groups by signing Early Day Motion 985. More information on Early Day Motions can be found [here](#); they provide a useful opportunity for MPs to express public support for something. The text of this Early Day Motion is as follows:

"This house notes the enormous contribution Scout Groups and other voluntary organisations make to helping local communities; notes with dismay the water regulator Ofwat's decision to change the way water companies charge small charities and community groups for surface water run-off and the impact this will have on the financial future of these organizations that rely on fundraising and member subscriptions for income, and are therefore particularly ill-placed to afford the huge increase in bills as a result; considers that this highlights the need to protect the ability of such organizations and the communities they serve to access water services and therefore calls on Ofwat to support The Scout Association's call for a social tariff regime for community and voluntary groups by enabling such a pricing system to be used by water companies."

You can find a sample email to send to your MP asking them to do this [here](#).

Thank you for your help with this campaign. We can already see how by working together we are making an impact on this issue. Your contribution to this is vital and much appreciated.

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