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The Scout Association
Gilwell Park
Chingford
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19 January 2009

Your letter of: 5 January 2009

Received on: 7 January 2009

Our ref: 41258896

Dear Ms Creasy

Thank you for your recent letter.

I was sorry to read of your concerns over proposals by some water companies to charge community groups for surface water drainage. I can understand how frustrating and perhaps worrying this must be for you and hopefully I can clarify our position.

We have raised surface water drainage charges for a considerable number of years and I would assume that the majority of your properties in the area we serve already pay for this service. Our charge for surface water drainage is not based on the surface area of the property and unlike some of the other water companies in the United Kingdom we have two different ways of raising the charge. For properties that do not have a meter the charge is included in the fixed sewerage standing charge and for metered properties it is included in the volumetric charge.

There are some properties where surface water does not drain into the public sewer, for example, properties whose surface water may drain to a soakaway, stream or river. In these cases we would (subject to acceptance of an application) offer a rebate on the sewerage charges.

We are aware that Ofwat (our regulator) would prefer to charge for surface water drainage on the non-permeable surface area of a property. Some water companies have subsequently changed their basis of charging and this means that their charges have been re-distributed with some customers having higher bills and others seeing reductions. In general, churches, chapels and charities have now found themselves being charged for surface area when many were not paying any sewerage charges previously. This issue does not affect us, partly because we already charge churches, chapels and charities for sewerage and partly because we have no current plans to change the way we charge.

glas
Glas Cymru Cyfyngedig

We welcome correspondence in Welsh and English
Rydym yn croesawu gohebiaeth yn y Gymraeg neu yn Saesneg

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Whilst Ofwat has asked that we consider the prospect of moving to area based charging we are not convinced that it is appropriate. However we are (as obliged by Ofwat) reviewing the schemes currently in use at two of the other water companies so we cannot say for definite that we would not change. But we can say that we currently do not have any plans to do so and no decision to change our existing charging basis will be made until after the review is completed.

If we do make a decision or are 'required' by Ofwat to change then they (i.e. Ofwat) would still require us to treat all customer classes the same. This means that we would not be able to reduce your charges because you are a charitable organisation. If site area charging was introduced then the option to reduce your charges would be to look at ways of reducing or removing the areas draining to sewers e.g. soakaways.

Thank you for bringing this matter to my attention and should you require any further assistance regarding the above please do not hesitate to contact us.

I have enclosed a copy of our two booklets 'Our commitment to you' and 'How we handle your complaints', which you may find useful.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Nigel Annett', written in a cursive style.

Nigel Annett
Managing Director