

NEWS RELEASE**November 26, 2009****Scotland's water watchdog gives cautious welcome to
WICS' charging plans**

Waterwatch Scotland (WWS), the independent consumer watchdog for the country's water industry, has broadly welcomed the Water Industry Commission for Scotland's announcement that water prices in Scotland are to be kept below the level of inflation until 2015. WWS, however, sounded a note of caution warning that any price freeze should not result in poorer customer service or hamper much-needed infrastructure investment.

Responding to the Water Industry Commission for Scotland's (WICS) Final Determination on Water Charges 2010-15, WWS' Chief Executive Gary Womersley said that Waterwatch Scotland was happy to see that key priorities championed by the watchdog had been included in the final determination, particularly public health improvements and water efficiency measures.

"External sewer flooding and leakage have been among issues raised by WWS in the past. We are therefore pleased to see that Scottish Water has been tasked with reducing leakage rates by one-third by 2014 and that WICS appears to be endeavouring to investigate ways of reducing the volume of groundwater unnecessarily entering the sewage system. This is a good start at tackling external sewage flooding. News that £7 million is to be set aside for domestic metering trials is also encouraging and WWS looks forward to working with other industry stakeholders on the pilot.

"WWS is well aware after years of under-investment, the water industry has taken great strides to bring the country's water infrastructure up to date. However, that does not mean we will ease the pressure. Much still needs to be done before Scottish Water can match the levels of customer service provided by top-performing companies in England and Wales, so we really would urge WICS to engage further with us to ensure domestic and business customers' priorities are fully realised.

"Affordability continues to be an issue too and WWS will continue to lobby for affordable water charges."

-ENDS-

Notes to Editors

To seek an interview with Waterwatch Scotland, please contact John Macgill or Andrew Ritchie on 0131 556 0050 (including out of hours)

Waterwatch Scotland (WWS) is the national complaints handling authority for all domestic and non-domestic water customers and customer representative body for the water industry in Scotland.

WWS is independent of Scottish Water, government and other water/sewerage service providers. Its role is to:

- Investigate Complaints
- Represent Customers' Views & Interests
- Influence Policy
- Inform & Advise

WWS' responsibility for second-tier complaints handling means that WWS can take forward individual customer grievances against Scottish Water or other providers.

WWS can also make statutory recommendations to Scottish Ministers, Scottish Water and other service providers, and industry regulators: Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA), Drinking Water Quality Regulator (DWQR) and the Water Industry Commission for Scotland (WICS).

From time to time, WWS receives complaints which are of such importance or have a public-interest impact beyond the specific complaint itself, that WWS will issue a formal report on the complaint and greater issues raised.

In addition to the making of such formal reports and the findings and recommendations made, a key role of WWS is to continue to work to ensure that such recommendations are adopted in the interest of customers to mitigate and prevent future occurrences.

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