

Reform of Water and Sewerage Services in Northern Ireland

The Government has decided that, in principle, domestic customers should be charged directly for their water and sewerage services. The charges will provide a reliable source of finance for much needed investment in water and sewerage services.

On 11 March 2003, a major public consultation on [The Reform of Water and Sewerage Services in Northern Ireland](#) was launched. The consultation seeks your views on:

- How domestic water and sewerage charges should be calculated;
- How the arrangements for delivering water and sewerage services should be reformed; and
- How consumers' interests should be represented and protected.

You can get a copy of the full consultation document by telephoning or writing to the [Water Reform Unit](#), or from the Water Reform website. Full contact details can be found at the end of this leaflet.

A series of public meetings will also take place during April and May 2003. Look out for details of the venue and time in your local press.

The following are answers to some questions you may already wish to ask.

When will water charges be introduced?

It is likely that households will start to pay some level of water charges from 1 April 2006. Consumers in England, Scotland and Wales already pay directly for their water and sewerage services.

How much will I have to pay?

The level of charge will be influenced by the costs of water and sewerage services and by the basis on which the charge is set. If water charges were introduced today, the average household would have to pay around £350 to £400 per year to cover the cost of the existing service. Without reform this would continue to rise as investment levels increased. However, the actual bill for each individual household could be significantly higher or lower than the average. A cost saving programme will be necessary to keep charges to affordable levels.

Will I have to pay for the full costs of the water and sewerage services I receive from 1 April 2006?

The level of water and sewerage charges that householders will be required to pay has not been decided yet. Charges might be phased in over a number of years to ease the immediate impact on householders.

Do I not already pay a water charge as part of my rates bill?

No. The Regional Rate is a local tax that forms part of the overall revenues available to the Northern Ireland Executive to fund public services such as health, education and transport. Rate revenues are not earmarked for any particular service, and your rates bill does not include a direct charge for water and sewerage services.

Will assistance be available for low income customers and pensioners?

We want to hear how you think we should protect vulnerable groups under the new charging arrangements.

Will there be discounts for those on low incomes?

We want to hear views on this, but any discounts would have to be paid for either by other consumers or at a cost to other public services.

Will my water supply be metered?

Metering of domestic water supplies was specifically ruled out by the Northern Ireland Executive in 2002. There are no plans to reverse this decision but we will listen to any proposals to reconsider this option.

How will the new arrangements for water and sewerage delivery affect me?

We are introducing these reforms so that the people of Northern Ireland:

- Benefit from sustained investment in water and sewerage services;
- Pay a fair and affordable charge for the services they receive;
- Have a more meaningful say in how water and sewerage services are managed and delivered.

Contact Details

Copies of the full consultation document, [The Reform of Water and Sewerage Services in Northern Ireland](#), or a summary, can be obtained from:

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An audio-tape version is also available and other accessible formats may be provided on request.

All consultation documents and further information on Water Reform can be obtained from the Water Reform website:

www.waterreformni.gov.uk

your
invitation
to take part

