

1 Water Support Scheme Charges



In June 2012 the government issued guidelines to the water industry to help customers facing severe financial hardship.

What is the Water Support charge of £2 on my bill?

The Water Support charge directly funds our Water Support scheme which provides a 50% reduction to the water bills of customers who are facing severe financial hardship and need additional support.

The government (DEFRA) issued guidance to all water companies on how they should provide Social Tariffs to customers.

All water companies within England and Wales have introduced similar schemes. Most companies incorporate the charge within their standing charges. We have chosen to be transparent and open about this charge so customers can see exactly what they are paying for.

Is the charge compulsory or can you remove it if I request you to?

The charge is included within our Water Charges Scheme which is approved by our industry regulator, Ofwat. Therefore, it will not be removed from any customers water accounts unless they are accepted onto the scheme.

What is the legal basis of the charge?

The charge was introduced in accordance with S44 of the Flood and Water Management Act 2010.

The legislation needed to be supplemented by government guidance to advise water companies on how it should be implemented. This was provided by the Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) in their guidance of June 2012.

The main requirement of this guidance was that companies must obtain the “broad support” of their customers before implementing such a scheme.

The amount of the charge is based on customer research carried out by the Company prior to the introduction of the scheme in which approximately 75% of customers surveyed supported the charge. The level of support we received was deemed sufficient to implement the charge for the 2015/16 year.

We continue to track customers’ support by carrying out quarterly surveys.

Why wasn’t I contacted when you carried out your survey?

It is not practical to contact every customer, so in accordance with standard market research practice, we survey a sample of our customers (chosen at random) to represent the views of the majority.

It began with a series of workshops where groups of customers were questioned about our proposed scheme and gave their views on its introduction.

The output from these groups was used to design the Water Support scheme itself. This was then described in telephone interviews to approximately 600 customers. In which, approximately 75% gave their support to the scheme.

We continue to track customers support by carrying out quarterly surveys.

For further information contact the Customer Services team at
SES Water, London Road, Redhill RH1 1LJ
Tel 01737 772000 or Fax 01737 766807 www.seswater.co.uk

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How long has the charge been on my bill?

The Water Support Scheme has been running since 1 April 2014. However, the first year of the scheme was funded entirely by our shareholders, from our own profits.

This included providing a 25% discount on water charges to over 2,700 of our most vulnerable customers.

Our shareholders have also agreed to “underwrite” the scheme now it is receiving contributions from customers. Should there be a higher number of customers eligible to receive the charge, they will add in funding as necessary to make up the shortfall.

Will the charge increase next year?

The annual charge of £2 will remain the same throughout the next 5-year period (2015-2020.)

Will the charge increase after five years?

Any adjustments at that time are likely to reflect the movement in charges in the subsequent five-year period (to 2025). If inflation remains at its current low levels then there would be no need for it to increase noticeably, if at all.

Is it a charitable donation?

It is not a charitable donation as it forms part of our Water Charges Scheme. We acknowledge that it will directly fund the reduction of water charges for a group of customers who find them difficult to afford. The charge is included in our Water Charges Scheme as approved by our industry regulator, Ofwat.

Am I just paying for those that choose not to pay their water bills?

No, the scheme is targeted at those who find it difficult to pay their annual water charges. Those who choose not to pay are dealt with through a variety of debt recovery processes.

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