Irish Water
Customer Information Note
15 September 2016

The Commission for Energy Regulation (the CER) has an important legal role to protect the interests of Irish Water customers and inform them of the schemes in place to ensure that Irish Water meets required customer service levels.

In July 2016 new legislation was enacted which suspended Irish Water charges for domestic water services until 31st March 2017. During this time an Expert Commission established by the Government will examine and review the funding of Irish Water for domestic services. However, those served by the Irish Water network remain Irish Water customers. Therefore, the CER is publishing this note to provide Irish Water customers with important information that is of benefit to them during this suspension period. This includes information on services provided by Irish Water, and the standards Irish Water must adhere to in developing its services to customers.

CER – Irish Water's Economic Regulator

Following the enactment of legislation in 2014, the CER became the economic regulator of Irish Water. This means that the CER works to ensure that:

- the interests of water customers are protected;
- water and wastewater services are delivered safely, securely and sustainably; and
- Irish Water operates in an efficient manner.

This Customer Information Note is for Irish Water customers and explains the CER's work areas relating to:

- Irish Water's progress to deliver customer service standards;
- the CER's complaint resolution service;
- how the CER measures Irish Water's performance in customer service;
- the First Fix Leak Repair Scheme which customers can avail of and;
- water usage information

Irish Water Customer Service

Irish Water Customer Handbook

In 2014 the CER published the Irish Water Customer Handbook, outlining the required levels of customer service Irish Water must include in their Customer Charter, Codes of Practice and Terms & Conditions of supply. The Customer Handbook contains services requirements in areas such as the way in which Irish Water communicate with their customers and handle complaints. It also contains service requirements on how they engage with their vulnerable customers, and customers generally on water network operations and metering.

The Customer Handbook contains 353 specific service requirements and the CER monitors Irish Water's implementation of these. Irish water has made good progress to date with 91% of the Customer Handbook requirements implemented compared to 73% in September 2015.

There are currently 31 requirements remaining for implementation, 22 of which relate to non-domestic customers. The majority of these non-domestic requirements relate to billing and complaints, meter installation and testing. The CER will continue to monitor Irish Water's implementation of the Customer Handbook and expects good progress to continue until 100% implementation is achieved. Table 1 (appendix) provides an overview of remaining Customer Handbook requirements and Table 2 (appendix) shows Irish Water's progress to date.

For more detailed information please see [Irish Water's Customer Handbook](#) on the CER's website.

Irish Water's Customer Charter

Part of the Customer Handbook includes a requirement for Irish Water to implement a Customer Charter which includes areas such as providing information to customers affected by supply interruptions; remedy of damage to property during meter installation and responding to customer complaints. The Customer Charter outlines Irish Water's minimum service standard guarantees; if any of these are not met Irish Water will compensate customers with a €10 payment for each instance.

Complaints Resolution Service

Where customers have an issue with the service they receive from Irish Water and wish to make a complaint, they should contact Irish Water for a resolution. If after making a complaint to Irish Water, customers are not satisfied with the outcome, the CER operates an independent complaints resolution service so they can raise a complaint with us. To avail of this service however customers must first complete the complaints process with Irish Water. This is the same service and process that the CER provides to electricity and gas customers.

The CER Customer Care Team (CCT) logged 650 Irish Water contacts in 2015, a decrease of 19% from the number of Irish Water contacts logged in 2014. In 2015, there were 16 Irish Water complex complaints[1] closed by the CCT the majority of which centred on meter issues, mostly regarding the installation of the actual water meter.

Customers can contact the CER Customer Care Team by:

Calling us on: 1890 404 404

Emailing us at: customercare@cer.ie

Writing to us at: Customer Care Team

                       Commission for Energy Regulation

                       P.O. Box 11934, Dublin 24

For more information on our complaints resolution service please see the customer complaints section of our website.

Irish Water's Performance Assessment

Irish Water's Performance Assessment

Following consultation, the CER is currently considering the appropriate key performance indicators for Irish Water's Performance Assessment. The CER intends to monitor Irish Water's performance and progress on a range of customer service metrics, such as Irish Water's response to complaints, the ease of telephone contact and the speed of response. Once these metrics are in place and reported on, the CER will compare Irish Water with other utilities in Ireland and in other countries, to ensure Irish Water offers the highest possible customer service. A similar approach is taken for electricity and gas network

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[1] Complex Complaints are complaints formally escalated to the CER and require a full investigation.

operators in Ireland. For more information on this consultation please see [Irish Water's Performance Assessment](#) on the CER's website.

First Fix Leak Repair Scheme

In 2015 the CER approved Irish Water's First Fix Leak Repair Scheme and a budget was set aside for this. Under this scheme, Irish Water fixes leaks for domestic customers free of charge. Irish Water has now been fixing leaks under the scheme for over a year and has estimated savings of over 48 million litres of drinking water per day.

The water metering programme for domestic customers formed an integral part of the First Fix Leak Repair Scheme. As meters are fitted with a constant flow alarm facility, Irish Water are able to identify leaks more efficiently. The constant flow alarm is activated when there is a constant flow of water of 6 litres per hour or more of water at a property throughout a 48 hour period. Irish Water will then notify the customer and offer them a free leak investigation.

Upon investigation, if there is a leak identified on the external supply pipe, Irish Water will offer to repair this leak free of charge, subject to the terms and conditions of the scheme. For more information please see [Irish Water's First Fix Leak Repair Scheme](#) on Irish Water's website.

Over 14,000 repairs have now been carried out from identification of leaks through the scheme. Irish Water continues to engage with customers issuing leak notification letters followed by 1st, 2nd and 3rd reminders to encourage customers to engage with the scheme. The scheme is of significant benefit to customers by conserving water which reduces the costs associated with producing water.

Water Conservation & Usage

Under the Customer Handbook and the CER's Water Charges Plan Decision, Irish Water provides water usage data to the CER on a regular basis. The data provided so far shows that approximately 40% of metered customers conserved enough water so that their water bills were below that of the price caps of €160 and €260. Irish Water provides a facility on its website which allows customers to log in and check their water usage. To access this facility please see Irish Water's website www.water.ie

In 2014 Irish Water estimated water use by children to be 21,000 litres per year per child. The data provided by Irish Water to date indicates that this estimate is broadly accurate although usage would need to be monitored for a longer period of time in order to draw firm conclusions on this.

For further information on any of the topics above, please visit our website at www.cer.ie

Appendix

Irish Water Customer Handbook Service Requirements for Implementation			
Customer Handbook Requirements	**Domestic Customers**	**Non-Domestic Customers**	**No. requirements remaining**
Provide Customer Read on Bill	✓		1
Provide Consumption Graph on Bill	✓		1
Provide Water Supply Zone on Bill	✓		1
Appropriate ID Cards (IW/Contractor/LA)	✓	✓	2
Customer Asset Flooding (Irish Water attend within 4 hrs)	✓	✓	2
Reduced Water Pressure (Irish Water investigate within 5 days)	✓	✓	2
Specific Pipework Ownership Query	✓	✓	2
Group Water Scheme Guidance	✓	✓	2
Provide Connection Charges Info	✓	✓	2
Provide Non-Domestic Meter Testing Service		✓	3
Provide Billing and Complaints Service for all Non-Domestic Customers		✓	9
Provide Non-Domestic Meter Installation Info		✓	4
Total requirements			**31**

Table 1

Irish Water Customer Handbook Implementation Progress					
	Total no. of requirements	Implemented September 2015		Total Implemented to date	
Domestic Requirements					
General Obligations	10	10	100%	10	100%
Charter	9	6	67%	9	100%
Communications	50	33	66%	47	94%
Metering	11	11	100%	11	100%
Billing	74	70	95%	71	96%
Vulnerable Customers	40	22	55%	40	100%
Network Operations	9	3	33%	6	67%
Complaint Handling	18	18	100%	18	100%
T&Cs	22	22	100%	22	100%
TOTAL DOMESTIC	*243*	*195*		*234*	
Non-Domestic Requirements					
Communications	39	15	38%	33	85%
Metering	11	1	9%	4	36%
Billing	33	33	100%	33	100%
Network Operations	9	2	22%	6	67%
Complaint Handling	18	12	67%	12	67%
TOTAL NON DOMESTIC	*110*	*63*		*88*	
Total Requirements	**353**	**258**	**73%**	**322**	**91%**

Table 2.