



An Coimisiún
um Rialáil Fóntas
**Commission for
Regulation of Utilities**

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Commission for Regulation of Utilities

Information Note for Customers of Irish Water

19th December 2017

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CRU, Irish Water's Economic Regulator

The CER is now the CRU!

The Commission for Regulation of Utilities (CRU) is the new name for the Commission for Energy Regulation (CER). Our name has changed to better reflect the expanded powers and functions of the organisation as the CRU has a wide range of economic, customer protection and safety responsibilities in energy and water.

As economic regulator of Irish Water, the CRU is responsible for protecting the interests of water and wastewater customers, ensuring water services are delivered in a safe, secure and sustainable manner and that Irish Water operates in an economic and efficient way. For more information on the CRU's role in regulating Irish Water please see our website www.cru.ie

Purpose of this Information Note

The CRU is publishing this note to provide helpful information to Irish Water customers on the following key areas:

<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Who are Irish Water's Domestic Customers?
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ New Water Legislation – The Water Services Act 2017
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Irish Water's Refunds Project
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ The CRU's Irish Water Domestic Customer Handbook
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Irish Water's Vulnerable Customer Register
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Logging a Complaint with Irish Water
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ The First Fix Free Leak Repair Scheme
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Recent Publications, Upcoming Consultations, and Work Planned

This is the CRU's third Irish Water Customer Information Note. [Previous information notes](#) can be found by visiting the publications section of the CRU website at www.cru.ie.

The CRU publish such information notes from time to time, and we will continue to develop our approach to reporting information we feel will benefit Irish Water customers.

Who are Irish Water's Domestic Customers?

What do we mean by 'Customers' of Irish Water? Irish Water is responsible for the development and delivery of water and wastewater services to homes and businesses across the country. The Water Services (No. 2) Act 2013 defines a customer in relation to the provision of water services, as *"the occupier of the premises in respect of which the water services are provided"*. In other words, a person is legally defined as a customer of Irish Water if he/she is occupying a property which is connected to the public water main network and/or sewerage system. This means if you receive water from the public main and/or your wastewater enters the public sewerage system, you are considered a customer of Irish Water and are therefore entitled to quality service. A Domestic Customer is a household customer, who uses water services for domestic purposes rather than for business purposes.

New Water Legislation – The Water Services Act 2017

On the 17th November 2017 new water legislation passed in the form of the Water Services Act 2017. This new legislation impacts customers of Irish Water in a number of ways. The key areas of customer interest are summarised below.

How does the Water Services Act 2017 affect customers of Irish Water?

- Domestic customers who paid any or all of their water charges shall be refunded in full for the sum they paid to Irish Water. Refunds are discussed in more detail on page 4 of this Information Note.
- Direct water charges for domestic customers have been discontinued. Domestic Customers will now only have to pay for water services if their water usage exceeds a **'threshold amount'**. A threshold amount in relation to water usage is a limit, which if exceeded, will result in a customer incurring a charge for usage above this threshold. In other words if a customer's water usage is not above the 'threshold amount' a customer will not have to pay any water charges. The threshold amount will be decided by the Minister for Housing Planning and Local Government having first reviewed and considered a report to be provided to the Minister by the CRU (see 'New legislation and the role of the CRU' below).
- Customers with larger households (those with five or more permanent occupants) will be able to apply for **allowances** against charging for water service usage above the threshold amount.
- Where a resident who ordinarily resides in a customer's dwelling (household) has a **medical need** (and meet certain criteria to be defined by the Minister), the

customer will be able to apply for an **exemption** from paying charges for water services where the threshold amount has been exceeded.

New legislation and the role of the CRU

- The legislation requires the CRU to carry out a review to assess the rate of demand for water services provided to dwellings over a 12-month period. The CRU has commenced the process of reviewing and analysing domestic customer water consumption in order to determine average rate of demand per Irish household, and average individual consumption in Ireland. The CRU will then furnish a report on the CRU's findings of the review to the Minister for Housing Planning and Local Government. The Minister will use the information provided by the CRU to set the '**threshold amount**' (a charge will apply to usage over this amount from 2019 onwards) and the '**allowance amount**' (that larger households can avail of). Legislation states that the threshold amount shall be calculated by multiplying the average consumption at a customer's dwelling (once determined) by 1.7.
- The CRU currently provides an independent complaint resolution service to customers of Irish Water. The new legislation strengthens the CRU's role in complaint handling; in addition to its current complaint resolution function the CRU will now be required to investigate customer complaints regarding refunds and also complaints in relation to allowances and exemptions. As a result of the new legislation the CRU must also provide a dispute resolution service for customers in relation to new or modified connections to Irish Water's water and wastewater network.

It is important to note that details relating to charges for customers whose demand exceeds the threshold have not yet been determined. These include the level at which the threshold amount will be set, what charge may apply, how the charging structure will work etc. These will be decided in 2018. The charging regime will be subject to a public consultation process before it can be approved by the CRU. Further information will be published as soon as available.

Establishment of New Bodies

The new legislation establishes two new bodies; The Water Forum and The Water Advisory Body. The Water Forum will advise the Minister in relation to Government water policy and have regard to water conservation, rural water services and the interests of the customers of Irish Water. The Water Advisory Body will advise the Minister on the measures needed to improve the transparency and accountability of Irish Water and will provide quarterly reports to a Committee who in turn will report to Dáil Éireann. The Minister shall appoint an employee of the CRU as a member of the

Water Advisory Body and the CRU shall engage with both the Water Advisory Body and the Water Forum as required.

Irish Water's Refunds Project

Domestic customers who paid any or all of their water charges shall be refunded in full for the sum they paid to Irish Water. Refunds will be issued via cheque in the name of the account holder as registered on Irish Water's system. The refund process has commenced and will take place over a number of months. Customers are encouraged to ensure their details are up to date and to contact Irish Water if their address or personal details have changed.

Irish Water can be contacted on:

Callsave 1850 448 448 or +353 1 707 2824,

Lines Open: Monday to Friday 9am to 5:30pm.

Further information on Irish Water's refunds project can be found on Irish Water's website www.water.ie/for-home/refunds/.

The CRU's Irish Water Domestic Customer Handbook

The CRU Domestic Customer Handbook places requirements on Irish Water in terms of the levels of customer service and customer protection measures Irish Water must implement. The Handbook details the requirements including how Irish Water must communicate with customers, how Irish Water must assist vulnerable customers and how Irish Water must handle complaints. The Handbook details Codes of Practice in the following areas: Customer Communications, Metering, Billing, Customer Complaints, Vulnerable Customers and Network Operations. Irish Water's Customer Service Charter is also included in the Handbook and details the guaranteed service standards customers should expect to receive when dealing with Irish Water. If Irish Water fail to meet any of these **charter commitments**, a customer will be entitled to a charter payment of €10. The CRU is currently reviewing the handbook to reflect new legislation (The Water Services Act 2017) and intends to conduct a full review of the handbook in 2018 to make sure the handbook remains relevant for consumers and fit for purpose. To view or learn more about the Handbook please visit our website www.cru.ie or click [here](#)¹.

¹ <https://www.cru.ie/professional/water-2/monitoring-reporting/#irish-water-customer-handbook>

Irish Water's Vulnerable Customer Register

The Customer Handbook places requirements on Irish Water in relation to protecting vulnerable customers including the requirement for Irish Water to establish and maintain a vulnerable customer register.

Who are Irish Water's Vulnerable Customers?

A vulnerable customer is a 'Priority Service Customer' and/or a 'Special Service Customer' and defined by the CRU as follows:

- a) **Priority Service Customer** – a person who is critically dependant on water for his or her medical needs, or
- b) **Special Service Customer** – a person who for reasons that may include advanced age (66 or over) or physical (mobility issues), sensory, intellectual or mental health reasons requires additional support communicating with, or receiving services from, Irish Water.

What is the Vulnerable Customer Register?

The vulnerable customer register helps Irish Water to assist customers during various events such as during water supply outages, water supply interruptions and when water is unfit for human consumption. A recent example of the benefits of the register was seen in Louth and Meath when a water treatment plant outage occurred and led to water supply interruptions affecting thousands of people living in these areas. In this case the register allowed Irish Water to easily identify vulnerable customers affected by this supply interruption and Irish Water was able to offer assistance such as delivering bottled water to their properties. The Vulnerable Customer Register is also important in that it allows Irish Water to be aware of a vulnerable customer's circumstances when assisting or communicating with them; for example a person may be visually impaired or have difficulty hearing.

Why should I register?

Registering ensures, that in the event of an issue with regard to water supply that Irish Water will contact you or a nominated carer/family member to provide information on the relevant issue and advise of and/or make available alternative water supply arrangements. The register enables Irish Water to assist those most in need and to ensure that the provision of a safe and clean water supply is prioritised for vulnerable customers.

How can I register?

If you would like to register yourself or a family member/friend as a vulnerable customer (having obtained his/her permission) please click the following link <https://www.water.ie/support/vulnerable-user/> to be linked to Irish Water's Vulnerable

Customer Registration Form. Alternatively you may contact Irish Water directly on **Callsave 1850 448 448** (lines open Monday to Friday, from 9am - 5:30pm).

Irish Water's Vulnerable Customer Code of Practice, along with all of Irish Water's other Domestic Codes of Practice can be found on Irish Water's website, <https://www.water.ie/our-customer-commitment/>.

Logging a Complaint with Irish Water

If you have an issue with the service you receive from Irish Water, you can log a complaint directly with Irish Water. Details on how to log a complaint with Irish Water and information on the complaints process in detail can be found on Irish Water's website www.water.ie or by [clicking here](#).

Irish Water is required to respond to a customer complaint within **5 working days** with a resolution to the complaint or a plan outlining the steps required to achieve a resolution, under normal conditions.

Irish Water is required to regularly report to the CRU on the number and type of complaints it receives.

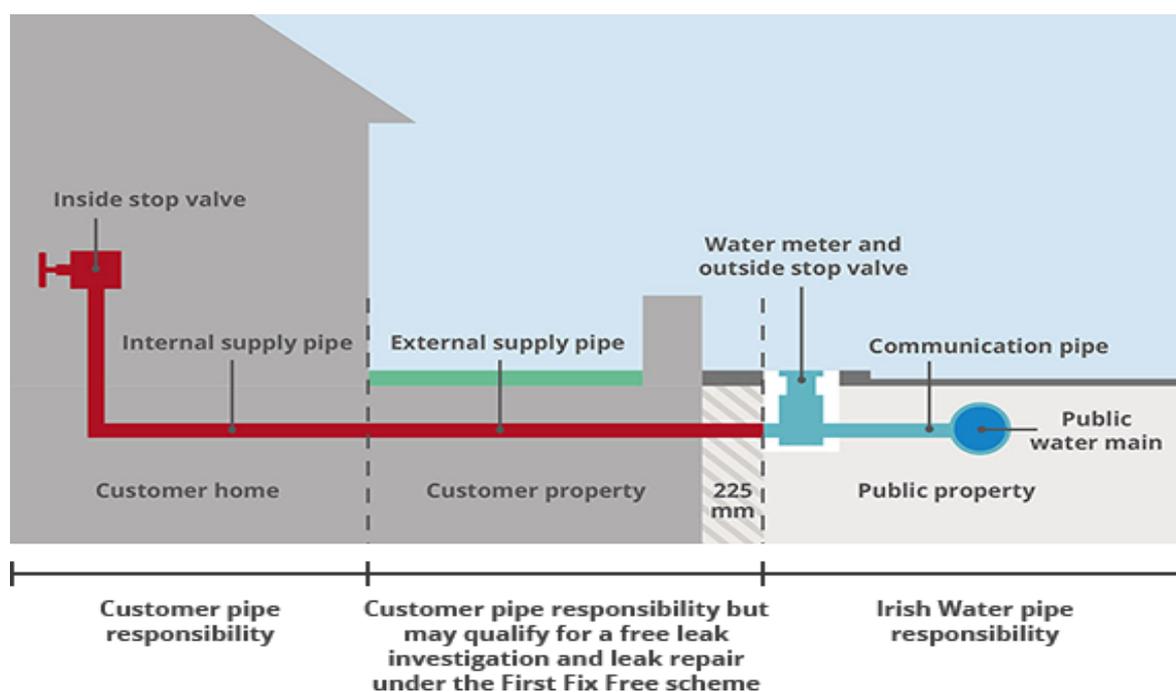
The CRU's Customer Care Team

The CRU provides an independent complaint resolution service to customers of Irish Water. If having completed Irish Water's complaints process you remain unsatisfied you can then refer your complaint to the CRU's Customer Care Team. This service is similar to the dispute resolution service which the CRU offer to Electricity and Gas customers. Following investigation the CRU has the power to direct Irish Water to resolve the complaint in a set fashion if the complaint is upheld. Full details on the CRU's complaints service can be found on the '**Make a Complaint**' section of our website www.cru.ie or by [clicking here](#). You can contact the CRU's dedicated customer complaints team by:



First Fix Free Leak Repair Scheme

This scheme was first approved by the CRU in 2015. Under this scheme, Irish Water assists customers by notifying them of a suspected leak occurring within the boundary of their property. Following investigation by Irish Water, leaks which are identified on the **external supply pipe** serving a property will be offered a free leak repair. Please Note: The scheme does not apply to leaks within a property. The image below shows the location of the external supply pipe.



How to avail of this First Fix Scheme

You are eligible, subject to the terms and conditions of the scheme, for a First Fix Free leak repair if you are a domestic customer and have:

- A confirmed leak on your external supply pipe
- A water meter installed on your property
- A working and accessible inside stop valve
- Registered with Irish Water

For more information and to register for the scheme please click visit Irish Water's website <https://www.water.ie/for-home/first-fix/>.

Irish Water estimates that over **48 million litres of drinking water per day has been saved** as a result of First Fix repairs, with a total of 42,832 leak investigations undertaken and 8,097 repairs completed by the end of Q2 2017.

Recent Publications, Upcoming Consultations, and Work Planned.

Recent Publications

Since the publication of our last customer information note in January 2017, the CRU have published the following documents on our website:

Irish Water's Capital Investment Outputs 2016 (June 2017)

This document provides an overview of Irish Water's progress in delivering its capital investment plan (its plan for investment in projects) in the period 2014 to 2016. It presents a summary of key outputs and results delivered by Irish Water to the end of 2016. The document (reference CER/17/120) can be viewed directly by clicking [here](#) or by visiting the publications section of our website at www.cru.ie.

Irish Water Performance Assessment - CRU Commentary No 1 (August 2017)

This paper summarises and provides observations on Irish Water's performance to date against a framework of 19 key performance metrics covering; customer service, environmental performance, water supply - quality of service, security of water supply and sewerage service. The CRU intend to monitor Irish Water's performance against these metrics over time and publish periodic progress reports. To view this document (reference CER/17/257) please visit the publications section of our website www.cru.ie or click [here](#).

Establishing Irish Water's Non-Domestic Tariff Framework – CRU Information Note (October 2017)

This Information Note, prepared by the CRU, provides an update on the project to establish Irish Water's Non-Domestic Tariff Framework and follows the Information Note published by the CRU in October 2016. To view this document (reference CRU/17/287) please visit the publications section of our website www.cru.ie or click [here](#).

Establishing Irish Water's Connection Charging Policy – CRU Information Note (October 2017)

The CRU published this note to advise the public on important information relating to the establishment of Irish Water's Connection Charging Policy. The Information Note outlines the CRU's plans to consult on this new Irish Water Connection Charging Policy. This document (reference CRU/17/287) can be viewed by visiting the publications section of our website www.cru.ie or by clicking [here](#).

Irish Water's Non-Domestic Customer Handbook - Code of Practice on Billing (November 2017) – Consultation Paper

This consultation sets out the CRU's proposed amendments to strengthen the standards of service Irish Water is obliged to provide when billing its non-domestic customers. The proposed amendments are set out in the existing Billing Code of Practice (Section 7) of the Non-Domestic Customer Handbook. To view the CRU consultation paper (CRU/17/321) please visit the publications section of our website www.cru.ie or click [here](#). Likewise the accompanying proposed amendments (CRU/17/322) can be viewed [here](#).

Upcoming Public Consultations

Public consultation is a process by which the public's input on important matters affecting them is sought. Obtaining public feedback via consultations can improve the effectiveness and transparency of CRU decisions. Below is information on two Irish Water customer related policy proposals that the CRU will be reviewing and seeking the public's view on.

Establishing Irish Water's Connection Charging Policy

- **What's happening at the moment?** Under the Water Services (No. 2) Act 2013, and since the 1st January 2014, Irish Water has been responsible for charging for the cost of new or modified connections to the water and wastewater network. As directed by the CRU, Irish Water currently apply existing Local Authority connection charging policies and will continue to do so until such time as Irish Water has developed its own/new connection charging policy. This means that if you apply for a water/wastewater connection today, you will be charged the same as you would have been charged by your Local Authority on the 31st December 2013.
- **Why is a new policy required?** Existing charging arrangements are varied, complex and the charges differ greatly across the country. The new policy will aim to harmonise connection charges, improve equity and fairness, and provide clarity for all customers connecting to the network. The Policy will cover new water and wastewater connections for both domestic (homeowners, residential developers) and non-domestic (business) customers.
- **Why is the CRU consulting?** A new policy will represent a significant change from the current connection charging structure in Ireland, therefore the CRU will consult with the public to seek the public's view before we will make our final decision on policy approval.
- **Next Steps:** Irish Water is currently developing its proposals for this new Connection Charging Policy and the CRU hopes to commence the public consultation on Irish Water's proposals before year end. The CRU will consider all

the responses received to the received to the consultation before approving an enduring connection policy for Irish Water. An [Information Note](#) (CRU/17/286) relating to this consultation is published on the CRU’s website at www.cru.ie.

Establishing Irish Water’s Non-Domestic Tariff Framework (Business Customers)

- **What’s happening at the moment?** As directed by the CRU, Irish Water has continued to apply the existing non-domestic tariffs (charges for business customers) that were in place on 31 December 2013 and charged by the Local Authorities and Town Councils.
- **How will a new Charging Framework benefit customers?** Currently there are a wide range of non-domestic tariff levels, tariff categories, billing methodologies, billing arrangements and billing cycles applied across the country. The new Framework will introduce harmonised non-domestic tariffs, which will benefit non-domestic customers in terms of transparency, simplicity and equity.
- **Why is the CRU Consulting?** This Project will represent a significant change to the approach to the charging of non-domestic customers. The CRU will be seeking the public’s views on Irish Water’s proposals at each phase of the Project.
- **Next Steps:** Irish Water is currently developing its proposals for submission to the CRU. These will be consulted on in early 2018 as detailed in the [CRU’s Information Note](#) (CRU/17/287) which can be found in the publications section of the CRU website at www.cru.ie.

CRU Work Planned

Work Area	Description	Publication Type	When?
Water Services Innovation Fund	The first CRU report on the activities and outputs of projects approved to date under the Water Services Innovation Fund.	Report	December 2017
Establishing Irish Water’s Connection Charging Policy	Consulting on Irish Water’s Connection Charging proposals	Public Consultation - December 2017/January 2018 Decision Paper - 2018	

Irish Water's Allowed Revenue for 2019 (Extension of the Current Revenue Control)	Relates to the extension of the current Water Revenue Control period by one year to include 2019.	Information Paper - December 2017 Public Consultation and Decision Paper - Q1/Q2 2018	
Irish Water's Capital Investment Outputs	Details Irish Water's progression of capital investments relating to the first half of 2017.	Report	January 2018
Irish Water Monitoring Framework	Set's out how the CRU will monitor Irish Water's delivery of its Capital Investments on an enduring basis.	Information Paper	Q1 2018
Irish Water's Performance Assessment	Progress report on Irish Water's performance against a framework of 19 key performance metrics.	Report	Q1 2018
Irish Water Domestic Customer Handbook (Review)	Reviewing the existing handbook for household customers to ensure it remains fit for purpose and reflects current legislation.	Public Consultation	2018
Irish Water Non-Domestic Customer Handbook (Review)	Reviewing the existing handbook for business customers to ensure it remains fit for purpose and reflects current legislation.	Public Consultation	2018
Establishing Irish Water's Non-Domestic Tariff Framework	Consulting on Irish Water's non-domestic tariff design and transitional arrangements proposals.	Public Consultation and Decision Paper	2018

Where can I find out more? To receive e-mail notifications when these and other water related consultations, information notes and reports have been published, please visit our website www.cru.ie and sign up to our general mailing list. Alternatively, you may wish to visit the [publications](#) section of our website and search for your area of interest.