

## SPSO decision report

**Case:** 201103552, Business Stream Ltd  
**Sector:** Scottish Government and devolved administration  
**Subject:** incorrect billing  
**Outcome:** upheld, recommendations

### Summary

Mr C complained about the service he received from Business Stream, who supply water to his farm. In July 2011 Business Stream contacted Mr C to warn that his water consumption appeared to be higher than average. He then received a bill of over £2,600 for nearly 3.8 million litres of water. A week later this had increased by a further £400 after a second meter reading. It turned out that there was a leak, but there were no visible signs on the surface as the water was leaking directly on top of a field drain. Mr C later discovered that Business Stream had not read the meter since December 2009. He was unhappy and felt that, had they done so, the leak would have been discovered sooner.

Business Stream accepted that they had not read the meter in line with their licence conditions. Mr C then proposed that they prioritise readings where they are missed, and that they share the consequences of their failure to read his meter appropriately. Although we agreed that the customer must bear some responsibility we found that, had Business Stream read the meter sooner, they could have identified the leak earlier and stopped the situation getting worse. We upheld Mr C's complaints.

### Recommendations

We recommended that Business Stream:

- apologise to Mr C for failing to read the meter;
- consider changing their system so that when an actual meter reading is not completed either a subsequent attempt is made or the next scheduled estimated read is changed to an actual one so that potential problems can be identified sooner; and
- reconsider Mr C's proposals in the light of their failure to read the meter.