

SPSO decision report

Case: 201200041, Business Stream Ltd
Sector: water
Subject: leakage
Outcome: not upheld, action taken by body to remedy, no recommendations

Summary

Mr C complained about a lack of assistance from Business Stream when he attempted to investigate a suspected water leak at his farm. Mr C found wet ground in one of his fields in July 2011 and contacted Business Stream to ask someone to come and investigate this, as although he had already tried to do so himself, he was having problems lifting the heavy meter chamber lid. (The lid had been used deliberately to protect the meter from farm vehicles.) Business Stream passed on his request to Scottish Water, but Scottish Water did not visit. Mr C later received a large water bill, indicating that he had a leak. He did not consider that he should be liable for the full amount.

We did not uphold Mr C's complaints. Our investigation found that it was Mr C's responsibility to identify and repair leaks in the pipework on his land. Mr C had already suspected there was a leak and employed a plumber to investigate. Based on their findings, however, they had incorrectly concluded that there was no leak.

When Business Stream passed on Mr C's request for a visit, Scottish Water had declined to go to his farm, as they took the view that Mr C should have no cause to access the meter chamber. No-one told Mr C this, however. Although we considered that it was for Scottish Water to decide whether to visit him, we were disappointed to note that Business Stream did not tell Mr C that Scottish Water had decided not to do so. We acknowledged that, had he known this, he and his plumber might have made further efforts to investigate the potential leak or to access the meter to take readings. We did not, however, find that Business Stream's communication failure was significant in terms of the overall delay in identifying the leak and considered the goodwill gesture that they had already offered Mr C to be reasonable.