

SPSO decision report

Case: 201604321, Business Stream
Sector: water
Subject: charging method / calculation
Outcome: upheld, recommendations

Summary

Mr C complained about Business Stream regarding a request he made for a burst allowance (an allowance made against sewerage charges when water is lost because of a burst pipe) following an increase in his water bill due to a leak. Mr C explained that the leak was outside his property boundary, on a pipe that both he and his neighbour believed had been disconnected many years ago when the property was separated.

Business Stream refused Mr C's request, stating that, to be eligible for a burst allowance from Scottish Water, a customer must have a waste water connection, which Mr C's property did not.

On investigation, we confirmed with Scottish Water that this was not correct. Scottish Water confirmed that burst allowances could be granted to reduce supply charges, regardless of whether a customer had a waste water connection. We found that Business Stream had failed to recognise this error despite many opportunities to do so in response to both Mr C and our enquiries.

We also found that, as they did not consider the request would be successful, Business Stream chose not to submit it to Scottish Water for their consideration. We considered this to be unreasonable in the circumstances, as this was a decision for Scottish Water to make. For these reasons, we upheld Mr C's complaint.

Recommendations

We recommended that Business Stream:

- apologise to Mr C for the failings identified;
- submit Mr C's request for a burst allowance to Scottish Water for their consideration;
- review their burst allowance policy to ensure it is clear to staff when requests should be submitted to Scottish Water; and
- audit a sample of recent allowance requests to ensure that they have been appropriately processed and evidence the outcome.