

SPSO decision report



Case: 201903741, Scottish Water
Sector: Water
Subject: Communication / consultation
Decision: not upheld, no recommendations

Summary

C operated a bed and breakfast business from their home (the premises) and a number of years ago was identified as a gap site (a property where commercial activity is being conducted and should, therefore, be liable for commercial water charges, but that has not yet been registered for commercial water services). Scottish Water installed a water meter on pipework outside the premises so that C's water consumption could be measured for commercial water charges. As they had not chosen one, a licensed provider was appointed to manage C's water account.

Following installation of the meter, C began to receive water bills that were disproportionately high for the number of residents and guests in the premises. Investigations by their licensed provider established that there was likely a leak between the meter and the premises. The location of the presumed leak meant that it was C's responsibility to locate and repair it. C appointed a contractor to undertake this work. The contractor ultimately decided to lay a new supply pipe from the premises to the meter at a cost to C of more than £10,000.00. In doing so, they did not encounter the original supply pipe and no leaks were identified. However, following the work, C's water consumption fell to a normal level.

C subsequently learned that a lot of the work carried out by the contractor had been unnecessary. Scottish Water had previously replaced their communication pipe with a narrower pipe, which was connected to C's original larger supply pipe. C contended that the work carried out by Scottish Water had caused the leak. C also considered that, had Scottish Water informed them that they had installed a narrower pipe, the contractor would have been able to slide a similarly sized pipe through the original larger pipe, negating the need to excavate the ground and saving a substantial amount of money.

C complained that they had incurred substantial financial losses as a result of Scottish Water's work and lack of communication. They considered that Scottish Water should, therefore, make a significant contribution towards the costs they incurred.

We found that Scottish Water communicated reasonably with C regarding the gap site process and the installation of the meter. We did not consider there to be a particular need for Scottish Water to advise C that they had used a narrower pipe when they changed the communication pipe some years previously. We were also satisfied that Scottish Water reasonably investigated C's concerns regarding the leak. We found that their conclusions and decision not to cover C's costs were demonstrably based on information gathered during their investigation. A full leak allowance was paid and we found this to be reasonable in the circumstances. We did not uphold C's complaints.