Briefing for the Public Petitions Committee

Petition Number: PE1793
Main Petitioner: Gordon Walker
Subject: Alleviation of water poverty

Calls on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government remove water and sewerage charges from all households in Scotland on a low income or benefits.

Background

Unmetered water and waste water charges for households in Scotland are based on the council tax band for each home. The average annual combined charge for 2020/21 is £372 per household. Charges apply to every home which has a connection to the public water supply, the public waste water network, or both. A number of reductions and exemptions for water and waste water services are available, these are:

- **Single occupancy**: any single person household will receive a reduction of up to 25% on the unmetered household charges
- **Council tax reduction**: any household in receipt of a council tax reduction will receive a discount of up to 25% on the unmetered household charges
- **All members of a household are exempt from paying council tax**: households with no occupants eligible for council tax, e.g. flats fully occupied by students, are exempt from paying water and waste water charges.

A very small number of homes in Scotland have metered charges, which are made up of a fixed charge, volumetric charge and a property and roads drainage charge. No reductions or exemptions apply to metered charges.

The level of charges, and the wider charging system for domestic water and waste water services in Scotland, is reviewed roughly every five years in a process known as the Strategic Review of Charges, which is led by the Water Industry Commission for Scotland (WICS) – working to objectives set by Scottish Ministers. The strategic review for charges covering the period 2021-2026 is currently ongoing.
Scottish Government Action

The Scottish Government has not considered the removal of water and sewerage charges from low-income households in Scotland. As part of the Strategic Review of Charges for 2021-2025, the Scottish Government is currently consulting on the final draft the Principles of Charges and Ministerial Objectives, which includes exemptions from and reductions to water and waste water charges.

Scottish Parliament Action

The Scottish Parliament has not considered the removal of water and sewerage charges from low-income households in Scotland.

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March 2020

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