

SPSO decision report

Case: 201902531, Castle Water Ltd
Sector: Water
Subject: Leakage
Decision: upheld, no recommendations

Summary

C complained that Castle Water Ltd did not reasonably handle matters related to a water leak. C operated a bed and breakfast business from their home (the premises). Castle Water Ltd were appointed as the Licensed Provider for water and waste water services at the premises.

Scottish Water fitted a water meter to the pipework supplying the premises so that water usage could be measured for commercial water charges. C subsequently received water bills that were disproportionately high for the number of residents and guests in the premises. Following a number of attempts to speak to someone at Castle Water Ltd, C was eventually able to raise their concerns around four months after the meter was fitted.

A representative of Castle Water Ltd attended the premises and it was established that there was likely a leak on the pipework between the meter and the premises. C was advised that this pipework was their responsibility and that they would need to appoint a contractor to locate and repair the leak. Ultimately, C's contractor replaced the full length of pipe from the premises to the meter at a cost of over £10,000.00. Whilst no leak was found, the water usage dropped to an acceptable level following the works.

In replacing the pipework, the contractor found that a length of narrower pipe had been used to connect the meter to the premises' pipework. C said that, had Scottish Water made them aware that the narrower pipework had been used, the contractor could have passed a similarly narrow pipe through the existing supply pipe, negating the need to excavate the ground and saving C a substantial amount of money.

C attempted to recover the cost of the excavation works from Scottish Water through Castle Water Ltd. C complained that Castle Water Ltd failed to reasonably assist them to do so. C also complained that the staff failed to adequately communicate with them regarding their water account and the issues relating to the leak.

We found that Castle Water Ltd took reasonable steps to assist C to resolve the leak problem and represented C's side of the matter appropriately when dealing with Scottish Water. We found that their actions in relation to the leak and C's account were entirely reasonable once the presence of a leak was identified. However, we found that C faced unreasonable delays initially when attempting to query their high water bills with Castle Water Ltd and that this contributed to an overall delay in the leak being fixed. Whilst we were critical of this, we recognised that Castle Water Ltd had already acknowledged and apologised for the poor service C received in this regard and had taken reasonable action to put matters right. We upheld C's complaint but made no further recommendations.