

SPSO decision report

Case: 201203974, Scottish Water
Sector: water
Subject: policy/administration
Outcome: some upheld, no recommendations

Summary

Mrs C made a number of complaints about Scottish Water. Firstly, she complained that they were incorrectly treating a pipe in her garden as a combined sewer pipe (in which domestic sewage is mixed with rainwater from roofs and paved surfaces, and transported to be treated). She also complained that they had refused to remove the pipe and her neighbour's connection to it, despite having no record of when and whether the connection had been approved. We obtained independent advice on the complaints from one of our water advisers, who said that the evidence indicated that it was reasonable for Scottish Water to say that the relevant pipe was a public combined sewer. In view of this, they were entitled to decide that they would not remove the pipe or the neighbour's connection to it.

Mrs C also complained that Scottish Water allowed untreated sewage and water drainage from another neighbour's property to accumulate in an emergency drainage chamber on her land. She provided photographs showing water and sewage in the manhole chamber. Our water adviser said that Scottish Water had a duty to maintain this and to ensure that any blockages were cleared. We found that, when Mrs C raised this with Scottish Water, they had confirmed this to be their responsibility, and fixed the problem. She also told us that they had caused flooding in her garden by allowing surface water from another property to enter a soakaway (a pit into which water flows and drains away). However, we found that they had no control over this. We did not uphold either of these complaints.

Mrs C also complained that Scottish Water carried out work on her land whilst she was on holiday, without giving the required notice. We found that Scottish Water had agreed the work with her, and had given her notice that contractors had been asked to carry it out. There was no evidence that the contractors carried out additional work that had not been agreed.

Finally, Mrs C complained that Scottish Water did not respond to her complaint promptly, and we found that they had delayed in concluding their investigation, so we upheld this aspect of the complaint. However, as they had already apologised to Mrs C for this we did not make any recommendations.