

## SPSO decision report

**Case:** 201403608, Business Stream  
**Sector:** water  
**Subject:** charging method / calculation  
**Outcome:** some upheld, recommendations

### Summary

Mr C owns a property that he lets out as holiday accommodation. The property is classed as non-domestic and is, therefore, liable for commercial water charges. In 2010, the property was identified as a gap site (premises that are receiving water services without being charged). Details of the property were passed to Business Stream in order to set up an account. This was done in September 2013 and an invoice was issued to Mr C for water services dating back to 2010.

Mr C complained that the charges had been issued without warning and were unreasonably high. He compared them to charges for a property that he owns in England which has much lower water bills. Despite a number of calls and letters to Business Stream, Mr C did not feel that they had explained their charges in a way that justified the amounts being charged.

We found that industry rules required Business Stream to contact Mr C within five working days of being passed his property's details. We were critical that it took them three and a half years to set up the account and issue the first invoice. Whilst we acknowledged that there was a large backlog of gap sites at the time and that procedures have since been changed to prevent similar delays, we recognised that Mr C was prevented from making certain decisions in terms of budgeting and choice of supplier as a result of the delay.

We were satisfied that, once Mr C's account had been set up, Business Stream took care to clearly explain the charges that were being applied.

### Recommendations

We recommended that Business Stream:

- refund ten percent of the full water and waste water charges for the property between specified dates in 2010 and 2013.