



Damian Hinds
MP for East Hampshire

News release

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For immediate release

South East Water to Begin Compulsory Metering

Following recent correspondence between Damian Hinds and South East Water, it has been announced that the company will this year begin a programme for the eventual compulsory metering of all customers.

The programme is scheduled to reach East Hampshire by 2013/14.

The plan was confirmed in a letter to Damian outlining the company's "Water Resources Management Plan" for the next 25 years. In it South East Water also commit themselves to further leakage detection and efficiency works as well as a general review of their infrastructure.

South East Water say they anticipate 90% of customers would be billed by water meters by 2020 and said that such a programme was necessary to "manage demand" in response to climate change and population growth in the south east.

Damian Hinds was sent the plans after he had written to the Chairman of South East Water, Gordon Maxwell, some months ago asking if there were plans for such a programme in East Hampshire and what steps would be taken to make sure low-income families were not left with massive increases in their bills.

In an earlier letter to Damian, Managing Director Paul Butler said they were considering a number of ways to help lower income families adjust to any change in their billing arrangements.

Damian Hinds said

"I have been concerned about the possibility of compulsory metering in East Hampshire for some time now. This prompted me to write to South East Water last November to discover what their plans were.

Analysis suggests that those most likely to see bills increase are bigger families on smaller incomes. I will be looking to South East Water to demonstrate a crystal-clear commitment that such families will have every consideration given to them, and I am encouraged by early signs. "

In their most recent letter South East Water promise "considerable advance customer and community communication and engagement, which has already begun."

They state that they are working with Ofwat to develop payment plans for customers who will have difficulty meeting a suddenly increased bill, including allowing the impact of any bill increase to be spread over at least two years.

Damian Hinds continued

“I am very concerned about the impact of compulsory metering on families with low incomes, especially in these very difficult times. Last year I tabled a Parliamentary Question on the effects of these programmes on different income groups, and in June we are expecting a Government White Paper which will look at how social tariffs can mitigate the effects of compulsory metering. I will be scrutinising the White Paper closely and continue to strongly encourage South East Water to have comprehensive help available to families who will be hardest hit by this programme.”

ENDS

Notes to editors:

The southeast region of England, including East Hampshire, was classified as an area of ‘serious water stress’ by the Environment Agency. This means that companies can institute a range of measures to manage resources including compulsory metering programmes.

41% of South East Water customers are currently on a water meter.

South East Water only supplies drinking water in East Hampshire, sewage and waste water services are supplied by Southern Water.

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