

# Meeting of the Cross Party Group on Consumer Rights

4th of July 2023 - Held via Teams

## In attendance

Sioned Williams (SW)	Member of the Senedd, Chair
Mark Isherwood (MI)	Member of the Senedd
Peredur Owen Griffiths (POG)	Member of the Senedd
Lia Moutseloun (LM)	Consumer Council for Water
Rhodri Williams (RW)	Consumer Council for Water
Samantha James (SJ)	Dŵr Cymru
Lauren Kinsey	Dŵr Cymru
Tim Mouncer	WHICH?
David Beer	Transport Focus
Ryland Doyle	Mike Hedges MS Office
Catherine Drewett	Advertising Standards Authority
Simon Harris (SH)	Competition and Markets Authority - Wales Representative
David Roberts	Trading Standards Wales
Nicola Evans	Older People Wales
Lucien Wise	Jenny Rathbone Caseworker
Simon Hatch	Citizens Advice Cymru, Director
Alun Evans (AE)	Citizens Advice Cymru
Lindsey Kearton (LK)	Citizens Advice Cymru

## **AGM**

Sioned Williams MS, was re-elected as Chair after nomination from Peredur Owen Griffiths MS and seconded by Mark Isherwood MS.

Citizens Advice Cymru was re-elected as secretariat after nominations from Sioned Williams MS.

Financial Report of the group is being circulated to members of the CPG and sent to the Senedd after the meeting.

## **Introduction**

**SW** introduced the topic of the meeting which was water poverty and the single social tariff.

[Presentation](#) by Lia Moutselou, Senior Leader of Welsh Policy - Consumer Council for Water.

The [presentation](#) provided an update on the work of CCW, the current challenges facing households and future challenges. **LM** said that CCW is calling for a coordinated action on comprehensive and effective water affordability support measures, an example of this could be introducing a single assistance scheme in water. She expressed the need to streamline the eligibility criteria for support across locations and different utilities and end the postcode lottery associated with support.

## **Discussion**

**LM** opened the discussion expressing the need to ensure that assistance, support and information on water and other utilities is coordinated across the sector. **SH** asked whether water companies that have identified eligible consumers could share with other utility companies. He also raised the challenges around identifying eligible consumers in the water sector and sharing data to other utility companies to ensure that consumers do not have to make their case to each utility company.

**LM** acknowledged that data sharing is problematic and it has been an issue across various trials in the past. CCW's proposal is to target similar groups, those most in need. She added that the initial analysis of the proposal indicated that it is overlapping with customers in income poverty overall. She called for a cross-sector discussion on this

**SW** stated that the Welsh Government and UK Government know where people in income poverty are through different schemes. She questioned whether something could be done through a system - put in place by governments - that would not breach the commercial barriers around data sharing.

**SJ** referred to the powers through the digital economy act which allow utility companies to share data with the Department of Work and Pensions. Dŵr Cymru has started doing that for one of its social tariffs which is linked to customers who are in receipt of certain benefits by sharing around 2,000 records a month. She added that compliance with GDPR is a priority.

**SJ** provided a detailed overview of the support available from Dŵr Cymru including capping bills, HelpU - the main social tariff for low income households and WaterSure Wales.

**AE** raised the potential tension between moving people to a meter and controlling costs. He flagged whether lessons have been learned around supporting people to a more sustainable way of paying for water and to manage costs.

**SJ** responded noting that Dŵr Cymru provides advice to consumers on keeping water charges down. If people are unhappy with their meter they can revert back to unmeasured chargers.

**LM** suggested that incentivizing a swap to a water meter could be worth exploring, particularly those in single person households.

**LK** discussed the most recent data dashboard from Citizens Advice Cymru

English language link: <https://public.flourish.studio/story/1703447/>

Welsh language link: <https://public.flourish.studio/story/1732769/>

Due to time constraints there was no discussion on the presentation but **LK** encouraged members who had any questions to get in touch via email. The

'Households are living on empty - can social tariffs reduce the pressure?' as discussed during the meeting.

**SW** suggested that a future CPG meeting could concentrate on mortgages and highlighted that in the autumn it's expected to have a meeting on broadband with Nick Speed from BT. She thanked members for their attendance and contributions and ended the meeting.