

Response from petitioner, Cllr Sam Swash, to Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Climate Change and Rural Affairs' correspondence via the Senedd Petitions' Committee

The Cabinet Secretary's response restates a position that residents of mobile home sites have heard many times: that disputes about the resale of water are a "*private matter*". This position is wholly inadequate. It leaves residents exposed to excessive charges with no realistic means of redress. The purpose of this petition is to highlight why the status quo is failing and why Government action is urgently required.

Context

Willow Park in Mancot, Flintshire, is a mobile home site of 159 households, the majority of which are occupied by retirees on fixed incomes. For several years, residents have been charged up to £68 a month for water by the site owner – nearly double the national average.

Suspecting that the excessive charges were linked to significant leakage from the sites aged drainage infrastructure, the Residents' Association submitted multiple Environmental Regulations (EIR) requests to Welsh Water. The responses suggest that around 5 million gallons of water are being lost on the site each year due to leaks. Welsh Water has repeatedly asked the site owner to carry out repairs, with little effect.

To gather further evidence, over 40 residents of the park paid to install private water meters and collected usage data over six months. This showed the average charge should have been £16 a month. When combined with information from Welsh Water, this indicates that residents have collectively paid over £370,000 in the last five years for water they did not use.

This is not just a financial injustice. At a time when the sustainable use of water is a national priority, allowing millions of gallons to be wasted through unrepaired leaks represents serious and unnecessary environmental harm.

This evidence demonstrates both the seriousness of the problem and the inadequacy of the Government's current position.

On the claim that this is a "*private matter*"

To characterise the situation as merely a private dispute is reductive and effectively abdicates responsibility. It leaves residents with no remedy other than expensive legal action.

In practice, this means asking a group of pensioners to take on a large national company in court. Legal advice obtained by residents suggests that this could cost upwards of £20,000 – a sum beyond their means. To suggest that this outcome is acceptable, as the Cabinet Secretary has done, is profoundly unfair given the inequality of arms.

On Ofwat's 'requirements'

The Cabinet Secretary refers to Ofwat's rules, which require resellers to apportion charges by a prescribed method and not make a profit. At Willow Park, as on many other unmetered mobile home sites, the prescribed method used is to divide the total bill equally between the number of homes on the site.

This system utterly fails to protect residents from being charged for leaks. Provided that the site owner does not make a profit, they can simply pass the cost of leaks onto residents. In fact, this arrangement perversely incentivises site owners not to invest in maintaining or upgrading water infrastructure, since the costs of leakage are recoverable from residents under these requirements.

On the right to ask water companies to investigate

Residents have already exercised this right. Welsh Water has investigated, confirmed the existence of leaks, and requested that the site owners carry out repairs. Yet the leaks remain unresolved, and the excessive charges continue, as they have done for years. The Cabinet Secretary's reassurance therefore provides no meaningful remedy.

Conclusion

The present system is failing residents of mobile home sites across Wales who find themselves in this invidious position. The Welsh Government's position on this matter is clearly untenable.

The Petitions Committee should press the Cabinet Secretary to take responsibility and explore meaningful solutions, whether through primary legislation or through updated model standards for mobile home sites (I am happy to provide detailed explanations on how both mechanisms could be used, as I have already done so to staff of the Committee).

Without such action, residents will remain unfairly overcharged for water they have not used, with no practical means of redress.