

4. Written Responses – Questions

The Government's Proposal

1) Do you agree, in principle, that vacant non-household properties should be charged for water, sewerage and drainage services?

Yes No

However, although we agree in principle to charges for empty properties, it is important to recognise the challenges that will be faced as a result.

The introduction of these charges could incentivise regeneration – as properties are brought back into use. However, it is a concern that the charges could lead to a higher number of disconnections, and that, where properties are disconnected the cost of reconnection may act as a barrier to bringing the property back into use.

2) Do you agree that water and sewerage charges for vacant properties should be the same as those for occupied properties regardless of the reason for the vacant status?

Yes No

Consideration should be given to exemptions for properties currently being actively marketed for sale or lease. If these properties are not given exemption there may be an inclination towards disconnecting services. In the long-run this could make lease or re-sale more difficult. If exemption was granted for a limited period (i.e. 6 months) this may help to encourage property owners to secure alternative arrangements before the exemption period expires, thus encouraging economic growth whereby properties are brought back into use.

In addition, where a property does not have a water meter fitted this should be encouraged. If a vacant non-metered property, is liable for the same charge as an occupied non-metered property, there is no incentive to reduce consumption.

In order to reduce consumption in empty properties, and thereby promote sustainability, consideration could be given to the installation of meters at discounted rates for empty properties.

Charges – Drainage Services

3) Do you agree that drainage charges should be the same as those for occupied properties?

Yes No

As noted at Question 2 above – would suggest exemption for properties currently being actively marketed for sale or lease.

Timetable for introduction

4) Do you agree that the current exemption should be removed from 1 April 2017?

Yes No

Agree that, provided arrangements are finalised Autumn 2015, 1 April 2017 is a reasonable timescale for removal of the current exemption.