

Waterline

2012



- Water Saving Tips
- Important information about your water services
- Win an iPad2!
See p18 for details



South Staffs Water

Welcome to Waterline!

In this edition, you will find useful information about your water services, including information about where we are investing the money we collect from water bills, services for customers who need extra help, how to keep your home safe from bogus callers and what to do if you're having difficulty paying your bill. There is also helpful advice on how to save water around the home.

There is plenty more information on our website at

www.south-staffs-water.co.uk

Contents

Still great value.....	page 3
Our charges	page 4
Difficulties paying your bill	page 5
Our customer promise	page 6
Repairing leaks	page 8
Saving water.....	page 10
Your questions answered	page 13
Bogus callers	page 16
Extra help if you need it	page 17
Win an iPad2.....	page 18
How to contact us	back page

Still great value!

Your water charges bill represents excellent value for money. Based on our average water supply charge and the average amount of water used by every household, your high-quality water costs around **0.1p a litre**. South Staffs Water customers pay one of the lowest average bills in England and Wales.

Comparison price of 1 litre of water with:



1 pint of milk 49p



1 loaf of bread 116p



1L of petrol 130.9p



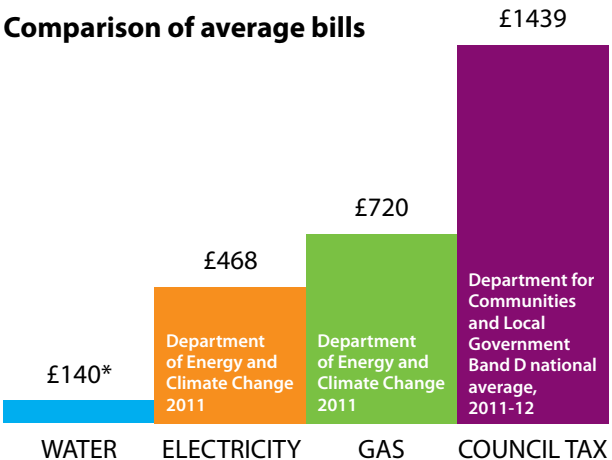
1L of SSW water 0.1p

examples obtained from a leading supermarket chain during January 2012

Bham average, 2012

Our average charge for delivering clean, high-quality water to your household is £140 per year, or less than 40p per day. This covers all the water you need for washing, cooking, drinking and cleaning. The water you use in your shower costs less than the electricity required to heat it!

Comparison of average bills



*Water supply charge only, excludes Severn Trent Water sewerage charges

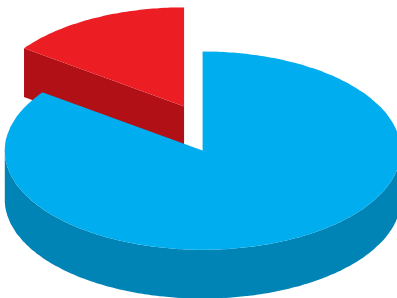
Our charges

You are likely to notice an increase in your water charges bill this year. On average our water charges have been increased by a little over 7%, which is 1.9% above inflation. Your bill also includes sewerage charges, which we collect on behalf of Severn Trent Water. Despite the increase, this combined water and sewerage bill is, on average, the cheapest in England and Wales.

The increase has been agreed with our regulator, Ofwat, which sets price limits to ensure water companies can maintain and improve services and meet water quality targets set by the European Union.

South Staffs Water has been serving customers in our area for more than 150 years and has a 6,000 km network. We continually need to repair and replace pipes to reduce leaks and improve services. We also need to maintain our other assets, such as reservoirs and pumping stations. This year, for example, we are investing almost £2 million at our major treatment works and nearly £7 million replacing mains throughout our region.

Breakdown of average water supply charge 2012-13



■ Maintaining and improving existing services	85%
■ Replacing mains and investment in new services	15%

Difficulties paying your bill

We understand that at times it may be difficult for you to pay your water bill. We have a number of ways to make it easier for you to keep up with your payments.

Most importantly, if you can't pay the bill, **please call us straightaway FREE on 0800 09 30 610** – don't delay in contacting us. We may be able to help by agreeing with you a weekly, fortnightly or monthly payment plan. If you are in exceptional hardship, we also have a charitable trust that may be able to help. You may also find it helpful to speak to your local Citizens Advice Bureau or Money Advice Centre. There are a number of ways you can pay which may help you to budget more easily. These include:

- **Direct Debit** – call us on **0845 60 70 456** to set one up. For further details about Direct Debit, see p13.
- **Debit or credit card** – payment by this method is available 24 hours a day by calling **0845 60 70 456**. Please note, there is an administration charge for paying by credit card.
- **By cash via PayPoint** – we can give you a payment card through which you can make a payment at any PayPoint outlet. You can find details of your nearest PayPoint outlet on your bill or via a link on our website, www.south-staffs-water.co.uk

If you have not told us about problems you may have with paying the bill and your payments are overdue, we will call you or send you a letter. If you still don't pay, we may issue a claim through the county court to recover the charges and this will add legal costs to your bill. Other options include attachment of earnings, charging orders on the property or we may even appoint a debt collection agency.

For these reasons it is very important that customers with difficulties **contact us without delay.**

Our customer promise

Our priority is to provide our customers with high-quality water, customer service and information. Improving customer care is an important part of our work to ensure that our customers get the levels of service they expect and deserve.

We will always try to get things right first time, but unfortunately sometimes we make mistakes, or things go wrong which affect your services.

We have a Guaranteed Standards of Service (GSS) scheme, which is defined by our regulator, Ofwat, which is intended to compensate customers if we fail to meet a set of minimum standards. Our customer promise, however, goes beyond the GSS scheme and was developed in consultation with customers so we can be sure it reflects your priorities.

Our customer service promise is designed to ensure that we are responsive, reliable and respectful in all of our interactions with customers. It sets standards for our employees to follow when dealing with our customers and the general public in the following areas:

- Answering your telephone calls, letters, faxes and emails
- Dealing with comments, complaints and compliments
- Seeing us in person
- Keeping customers informed
- Standards of workmanship
- Company vehicles

Full details of our customer service promise can be found on our website at: www.south-staffs-water.co.uk

Under the GSS scheme, we promise to give you:

- £20 if we do not meet guidelines for making, keeping and cancelling appointments.
- £20 or £50 depending on your type of premises, if we do not meet guidelines for:
 - Notifying you about planned work that will interrupt your supply for four hours or more
 - Restoring your supply in an emergency situation such as a burst main.
- £30 if we do not respond to a written complaint or bill enquiry within ten working days of its receipt.
- £30 if we do not tell you within five working days that we cannot accept your request for a change of payment method.

Consumer Council for Water (CCWater)

CCWater provides an independent service representing the interests of customers. We meet CCWater regularly to discuss our business plans, customer issues and complaints.

If you have a complaint or dispute that we are unable to resolve directly with you, then CCWater can investigate to help reach an agreement.

You can contact them on **0845 702 3953** or **0121 345 1017**, or visit their website, www.ccwater.org.uk

Their postal address is: **Consumer Council for Water (Central), 1st Floor, Victoria Square House, Victoria Square, Birmingham B2 4AJ.**

More information on our guaranteed standards is in our 'Code of Practice for Domestic Customers' on our website

Repairing leaks

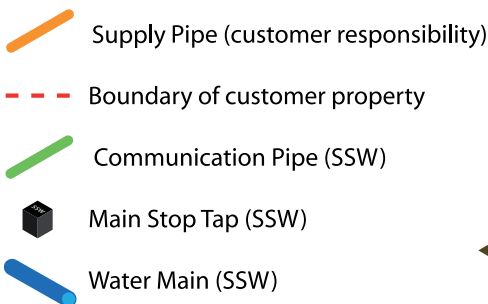
We have a duty to prevent wasting water through leaks. As part of this work, this year we are spending nearly £7 million replacing mains in our 6,000 km network.

We work hard to detect leaks ourselves, but your help is invaluable. If you spot a leak, please call us **FREE** on **0800 389 10 11** or complete the form on our website: **www.south-staffs-water.co.uk**.

There are many ways in which leaks can be detected. You may notice one or all of the following:

- Water standing or flowing in the verge, footpath or roadway.
- Damp areas on the ground in dry weather, or lush vegetation during hot periods.
- If you are on a meter, you may notice an unusually high meter reading.

We are responsible for fixing leaks on our pipework, namely the water mains and communication pipes. As the property owner, you are responsible for leaks on all internal pipework and fittings, including the supply pipe (see diagram opposite).

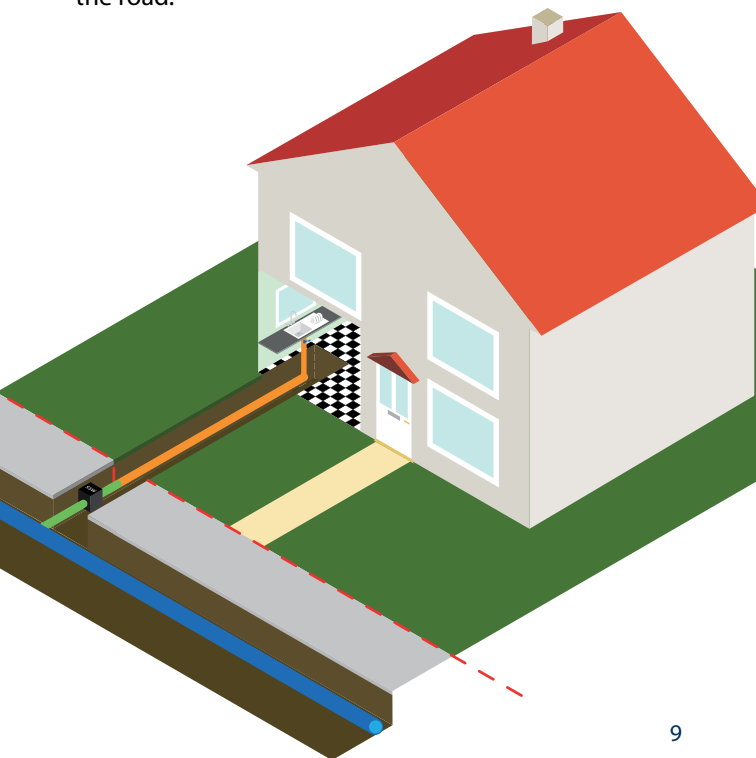


Please note: this diagram is for illustrative purposes only. Actual conditions may vary.

If you have a leak on your supply pipe, we may offer either a **free repair service** or a contribution of up to £300 towards the complete replacement of the supply pipe. This is a once only offer. Please download our leaflet 'Leaks and your responsibilities' from our website, www.south-staffs-water.co.uk or for more information call **0845 345 1422**.

We will check all leaks that are reported and ensure that they are repaired in order of priority. At certain times, for example after a cold snap in winter, when there are lots of bursts and leaks, this might mean that smaller leaks will take longer to repair.

Sometimes there may be a delay in fixing a leak if it is situated on a busy road or junction, as we may have to contact the local authority for permission to work in the road.



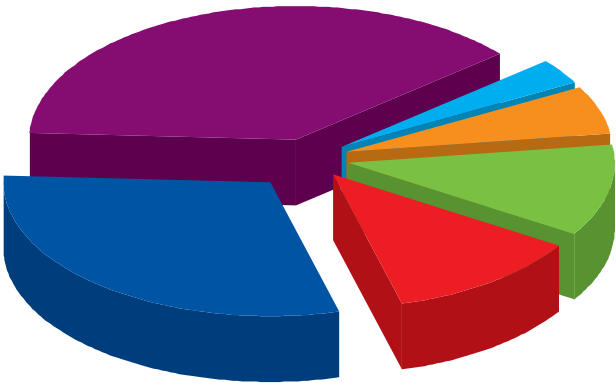
Saving water







It's generally agreed that the fairest way to pay for your water is according to how much you use – just like with electricity and gas. If your supply is metered, saving water can also help you to save money. Even if you are not metered, cutting down on the amount of hot water you use will save you the cost of heating that water. This will also lower your carbon footprint and benefit the environment as well as your pocket!

How can you save water?

In today's home, we use water in lots of ways. Some are obvious, such as washing and flushing the toilet, while some are less obvious, such as dripping taps, car washing and watering the garden.

Average household water use



 Garden use and car washing	3%
 Dish washing	6%
 Other	11%
 Clothes washing	12%
 Toilet flushing	30%
 Bath / Shower / Handbasin	38%

There are lots of ways you can save water around the home or workplace many of these will save you money too, whether you have a water meter or not!

Here are our top tips:

Bathroom:

- Have a shower instead of a bath. A normal shower uses around 45 litres in five minutes, compared to 80 litres for a full bath. Even a five-minute power shower uses slightly less water than a bath and you will save on your energy bill too!
- If you have an older toilet, you can save water each time you flush by using a water-saving device in your cistern. We have teamed up with SaveWaterSaveMoney to provide these free of charge, just visit www.south-staffs-water.co.uk/FREE or call **0845 371 16 89**.
- Remember to turn the tap off while brushing your teeth – saving up to 12 litres of water per two-minute brush!

Kitchen:

- Wait until you have a full load for your dishwasher or washing machine, a full load uses less water and power than two half-loads.
- Don't wash dishes or vegetables under a running tap – use a bowl to save water and energy.
- Running the tap until it's cold enough for drinking wastes around 4 litres each time – store a bottle of water in the fridge, or collect the water that runs off and use it for watering plants.
- Save water and energy by only filling your kettle with the water you need each time.

Garden:

- Collect rainwater in a water butt and you could save up to 5,000 litres of water a year!
- Use a watering can rather than a hosepipe and don't water plants in direct sunlight.
- Use mulch on your flowerbeds to hold water and keep weeds down.
- Too much watering actually weakens a lawn – in the summer let your grass grow a little longer between cutting and it will survive better without water in a dry spell.

Your property:

- Replace washers in dripping taps straightaway – a drip every second wastes 4 litres of water per day.
- Regularly check your stop tap to check it isn't leaking and that it will operate if you need to use it in an emergency.
- If you suspect you have a leak, have it checked and repaired immediately. Not only will it save water, but it will prevent potential damage to your property.
- Don't forget to check your pipes are lagged in winter, particularly in unheated parts of the home such as lofts and garages.

**For more water saving ideas
for your home or business,
look on our website:
www.south-staffs-water.co.uk**

Your questions answered...

Billing

I don't have a meter; how is my bill calculated?

The charges for unmetered customers are all based on the Rateable Value (RV) of your property. The RV was last set by local authorities in 1990 and is the figure which was used by them to calculate rates, prior to Council Tax. Details of the RV of your property can be found on your water services bill.

What's the easiest way to pay my bill?

Direct Debit - The easiest way to pay your bill is by Direct Debit, which is free of charge. If you are an unmetered customer, you can choose to pay yearly, half-yearly, or in eight monthly instalments. If you are metered, you can choose between quarterly or monthly payments. You can also choose from three payment dates: 1st, 14th or 21st of the month. To set up a Direct Debit, please call us on **0845 60 70 456**. Right now you could win an iPad2 or High Street Shopping Vouchers if you sign up for Direct Debit payments. See page 18.

Online - If you would like to pay your bill online, using a debit card, you can use the BillPay service, run by Santander Bank. You do not need to be a customer of Santander to use this service and it is free of charge. This service is available via our website at www.south-staffs-water.co.uk

Details of all other payment options can be found on the back of your water services bill.

Why is my bill higher than my neighbour's?

If you are both metered, then it's simply that more water is being used by your household. If you don't have a meter, then your charges are based on the RV of your property (see page 13) and your RV may be higher than your neighbour's, or they may have a meter and be billed based on the amount of water they use.

Metering

Will I be better off on a water meter?

You can stay in control of your bills by having a **FREE** water meter fitted, since you will only pay for what you use, rather than paying a bill based on the Rateable Value of your property. To find out whether you might gain from a meter, download our guide to metering from our website at www.south-staffs-water.co.uk or call us on **0845 45 67 063** for more information, or to request a copy of the guide.

If you opt for a meter, should you decide at any time during the first 12 months after having a meter fitted that you would rather pay bills based on Rateable Value, then you can revert to doing so at no charge.

I have received an estimated bill. Can I pay the actual amount owed?

Yes, simply call us on **0845 60 70 456** with your meter reading, or send it to us via our website at www.south-staffs-water.co.uk. We will then send you a new bill. We recommend that you check your meter regularly to monitor household usage and to alert you to any potential leaks on your supply.

Moving house and other household queries

What should I do if I am moving home?

Metered properties – We will need a meter reading from your property on the day that you move out. Please give us at least seven working days' notice if you would like us to take a meter reading; alternatively, you can read the meter yourself and contact us with the meter reading. You can also complete our online form to record your meter reading at www.south-staffs-water.co.uk. If you are moving into a property with a meter, please call us with the meter reading taken on the day you move in, or give us seven working days' notice of the date you are moving in and we will take a reading for you.

Unmetered properties – Please let us know the date you are moving out, your forwarding address and, if possible, the new owner's details. If you are moving into a home without a meter, tell us the date you move in and your previous address. **Please note that we now have a policy of installing meters in all suitable properties on change of occupier and we will contact you directly about this.**

The contact number for all queries about moving home is **0845 60 70 456**, or you can fill out the change of address form on our website.

I think there may be a leak on my water supply, whose responsibility is it?

That depends where the leak is located. For a full explanation of responsibilities, see pages 8–9 of this leaflet.

Visit our website for the answers to more questions: www.south-staffs-water.co.uk or you can call us on **0845 60 70 456**.

Bogus callers

Please be careful when answering the door to anyone you do not know. Unfortunately, bogus callers have been known to pose as water company, or other utility company, officials to try to gain access to people's homes.

All of our employees and contractors carry identity cards displaying their photograph. They will produce this if they visit your home for any reason and you can call us on **0800 389 10 11** to make sure they are who they say they are.

For extra peace of mind, you can register a password with us, which our employees will use to help identify themselves if they call at your home. Call us on **0845 60 70 456** to register, or download an application form from our website at www.south-staffs-water.co.uk.

If you are in any doubt, do not let visitors into your home.

If you suspect anyone of being a bogus caller, call and report it to your local police, or Crimestoppers on **0800 555 111**.



Are you eligible for reduced bills through the WaterSure scheme? See the opposite page or visit our website.

Extra help if you need it

We offer a range of FREE services that may help you, or someone you know with their water services.

WaterSure

If you have a water meter in your home, you could be eligible for reduced charges. In order to qualify for the WaterSure scheme, a member of your family must receive certain benefits or tax credit and either have three or more children under the age of 19, or a member of the family must be suffering from one of a number of medical conditions that means they need to use more water than normal.

Nominee service

If a friend or relative helps you with your affairs, we can send a bill directly to them provided you have given us authorisation. This nominated person will not be held responsible for payments due.

Our dialysis register

If you, or a member of your household, is receiving dialysis, please call **0800 389 10 11** to be placed on our dialysis register. This will ensure that you are given priority notification of any planned interruptions to supply and additional support during any emergency interruption to supply.

Help with communications

All correspondence and bills can be sent in Braille, large print, on CD or can be read out over the phone to you.

For more about these services, call us on 0845 60 70 456 or visit our website at: www.south-staffs-water.co.uk

Win an iPad2!*

You could win one of ten iPad2s or a shopping spree when you sign up for Direct Debit payments!



Paying by Direct Debit is the easiest and most convenient way of paying your water bills. You need never miss a payment and it's free to use.

Plus, if you sign up for Direct Debit payments **before 13th August 2012**, we'll enter you into a free prize draw on 24th September 2012, provided you still have your Direct Debit in place. You could win either **one of 10 iPad2s** or the equivalent value in High Street Shopping Vouchers!*

Customers who already pay by Direct Debit need not worry as they will automatically be entered unless they choose not to take part. See our website for more information **www.south-staffs-water.co.uk**

You can choose from a number of plans. If you are an unmetered customer you can choose from yearly, half-yearly or eight monthly instalments. Metered customers can opt between quarterly and 12 monthly payments. As well as the plan, you also have a choice of three payment dates: 1st, 14th or 21st of the month.

To set up Direct Debit payments, please call us on **0845 60 70 456**.

*See opposite page for terms and conditions.

Terms and conditions:

By taking part in this prize draw, entrants agree to accept and be bound by the terms and conditions listed below:

- The promoter of this prize draw is South Staffordshire Water plc, Green Lane, Walsall, WS2 7PD (“South Staffs Water” or the “Promoter”).
- Entry into this prize draw is only open to South Staffs Water’s water supply customers signed up to pay by Direct Debit for the period 13 August 2012 to 24 September 2012.
- Employees of South Staffs Water or any associated company, and members of their immediate families, will not be eligible to enter the prize draw.
- There are 10 prizes in total, consisting of either an iPad2 or, at the option of the winner, the equivalent value (at the time of drawing) in ‘Love to Shop’ vouchers.
- Prizes are non-transferrable and no cash alternative will be offered.
- Winners will be selected at random on 28 September 2012 by an independent judge, whose decision shall be final.
- Winners will be notified in writing by the Promoter to their billing address by 5 October 2012 with instructions on how to claim their prize.
- If the Promoter cannot contact a winner or has not received confirmation from a winner that they intend to redeem their prize in accordance with the instructions provided by the Promoter, the Promoter reserves the right to re-draw a winner for each prize and thereafter until the earlier of (a) a winner on these terms providing confirmation that they intend to redeem their prize or (b) 2 November 2012.
- The Promoter reserves the right not to award a prize (and to select an alternative winner) if the Promoter is aware or has reasonable grounds to believe that a winner is not eligible.
- Prize redemption must occur between 5 October 2012 and 2 November 2012.
- Acceptance of a prize indicates that you acknowledge and agree that neither South Staffs Water nor any of its employees, agents or subcontractors shall have any liability to you whatsoever in connection with your use of your prize, provided that nothing in these terms and conditions shall exclude or limit the liability of any party for personal injury or death caused by negligence or for anything else which cannot be excluded or limited by law.
- If you do not wish to take part, please notify us by visiting our website at www.south-staffs-water.co.uk or write to us at South Staffs Water, Green Lane, Walsall, WS2 7PD and we will omit your details from the prize draw.
- In the event of any dispute regarding these terms and conditions, conduct, results and all other matters relating to this competition, the decision of South Staffs Water shall be final and no correspondence or discussion shall be entered into.
- Any personal data relating to entrants will be used solely in accordance with current UK data protection legislation and will not be disclosed to a third party without the individual’s prior consent.

Did you know?

You can find the answers to most commonly asked questions on our website?

www.south-staffs-water.co.uk

How to contact us

Please keep these contact details handy in case you need to contact us at any time

Billing & general account enquiries

Billing & account line.....0845 60 70 456

Difficulty paying?.....0800 09 30 610

Water meter applications0845 45 67 063

Water issues

Problems with your water & water main leaks0800 389 10 11

Other useful South Staffs Water numbers

Minicom Textphone.....01922 61 80 25

Check a caller is genuine.....0800 389 10 11

Fax.....01922 61 62 39

Other organisations

Crimestoppers.....0800 555 111

Severn Trent Water, for sewer & drainage issues.....0800 783 44 44

Opening hours - General Account Enquiries
7am – 8pm Mon-Fri , 8am – 1pm Sat

Opening hours - Supply Problems
7 days per week

South Staffs Water, Green Lane, Walsall, WS2 7PD