

Wholesaler Retailer Guidance

I am a non-household customer. How does this affect the way WATRS will consider my case?

On 1 April 2017, the water market changed for most non-household customers.

Eligible businesses, charities and public sector customers are no longer restricted to buying retail water services from their regional water company. In England, such customers are free to choose their water retailer. In Wales this is the case where the business uses more than 50 million litres of water a year.

This means that all retail customers in England and many in Wales no longer have a direct relationship with their regional water and sewerage company (the wholesaler). The wholesaler is still responsible for providing the supply and the water and sewerage network, but retail customers only have a relationship with their water retail company.

What impact does this have for WATRS?

WATRS can **only** deal with disputes that arise between parties who have a direct relationship with one another. For retail customers, this means that they can only refer a dispute to WATRS about their retailer. This applies even where the underlying cause of the dispute is due to something that the wholesaler did or failed to do.

For example, if you have a complaint about not being awarded a leakage allowance, you cannot bring a claim to WATRS about the leakage allowance policy itself, as this is set by the wholesaler. However, you may be able to bring a claim to WATRS about the way in which the retailer put across the application for a leakage allowance and/or whether it adequately challenged the wholesaler's decision on your behalf. The retailer should do all that it reasonably can to represent your case to the wholesaler.

What can a WATRS adjudicator consider?

- The accuracy of bills that the retailer provided you with;
- How well the retailer has liaised with the wholesaler on your behalf and how well they kept you informed;
- The way in which the retailer handled your complaint, including how fully they answered your questions and how well they resolved the problem for you;
- How well the retailer has advocated on your behalf in its contact with the wholesaler, for example in requesting the granting of a leakage allowance.

What can a WATRS adjudicator not consider?

- WATRS cannot direct a wholesaler to take any action whatsoever;
- The wholesaler cannot be directed to reach a different outcome in relation to a decision it has made, for example, in deciding to refuse a surface water drainage rebate;
- An adjudicator cannot remove charges applied by the wholesaler that appear on your bills.

As a WATRS adjudicator can only consider the actions of retailers and cannot consider the actions of wholesalers, you should only bring a case to WATRS if you are unhappy with your retailer and their actions.