

Sinn Féin's position remains that we want the water service to be free to domestic users, and under the control of democratically accountable local authorities who already have the experienced staff and know-how. We are therefore opposed to the introduction of domestic water charges, and would therefore propose to the Regulator that he recommend that no charges be introduced at the end of the Consultation process.

We believe that the introduction of water charges at a time when hard-pressed taxpayers are already struggling will push many further into poverty. We are therefore opposed to the metering programme to be followed by the issuing of water charges. We are also concerned about the establishment of Irish Water as a subsidiary of An Bord Gáis, a company which the Irish Government intends to sell off.

While the Government stated that Irish Water would lead to savings in the order of €2 billion, we have seen the initial start up costs escalate, with the necessity to fund Irish Water from various sources. Costs so far include:

- Initial start up costs of €185 million
- That Includes €85 million on consultancy
- Metering will cost €540 million over three years
- Local authorities and state have picked up tab for leaks caused by installation
- Irish Water received €240 from exchequer for capital works
- It received €540 million loan from National Pension Reserve Fund
- It will receive another subvention of €486 million from Local Government Fund

The bulk of the money allocated to Irish Water is being spent on installing meters and on new management/staffing structure and on consultancy.

Taxpayers will not only have to pay water charges, but the Local Property Tax, which will contribute €530 million to the Local Government Fund in 2014, is being used to provide €486 million to subvent Irish Water.

If charges do proceed, we would call for:

- The introduction of a waiver system for those unable to meet bills
- That water not be cut off or pressure reduced due to non-payment.

- That special consideration be given to the charging of disable people and families with autistic children given their particular needs in relation to water use.