

# DIOCESAN SECRETARY

Derek S Hurton



DH/ES

11th March 2008

To:- Churchwardens  
PCC Treasurers

Dear Churchwarden/Treasurer

United Utilities may have been in touch with you about imposing changes to their charges for Surface Water and Highways Drainage from 1 April 2008. Where they make this change, they will, in future, charge churches under their non-household tariff and this is likely to result in substantial increases in the charge for many churches.

I have taken this issue up with United Utilities, and it has also been raised separately in the House of Commons and with Ofwat, the Water Industry Regulator. Ofwat have however agreed with United Utilities that places of worship can be treated in the same way as other customers' premises. I will continue to lobby on this issue, but there seems little immediate likelihood of changing United Utilities' stance on charging.

However, surface water from many churches and churchyards either soaks directly into the ground or enters drainage ditches. If this is the case, the PCC can claim a proportionate reduction in the charge. This requires the PCC to complete a claim to United Utilities including providing a diagram showing where surface water drains to. Further information on this is contained in United Utilities' leaflet "Surface Water Drainage - Non Domestic Customers" which can be obtained through their customer helpline on 0845746 1100.

We have already had a number of cases in which churches are being asked to pay a drainage charge when their surface water does not drain into the public sewer. It is therefore worth checking the basis of the charge being proposed by United Utilities and considering making a claim for a reduction. Given United Utilities current administrative problems the process may not run smoothly. I would be grateful to hear of any problems you encounter with United Utilities in this respect.

Yours sincerely

**Derek Hurton**

cc The Archdeacons  
Rural Deans and Lay Chairs  
Brian Cook  
Geoff Hine  
Neil Barrett

**We aim to respond to correspondence within ten working days of receipt**

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