

## Summary Note of Retail Market Opening Management Group meeting on 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2017

### Present

Sarah Hendry (Chair, Defra), Cathryn Ross (Ofwat), Ben Jeffs (MOSL), Richard Khaldi (Ofwat), Adam Cooper (Ofwat), Martin Silcock (MOSL), Helen Robinson-Gordon (Ofwat), Sebastian Catovsky (Defra), Jess Keedy (Defra), Sam Jackson (Defra, secretariat).

Apologies: Gillian Tanfield (Ofwat), Steve Lyon (MOSL)

### Programme update

The management group began with an assessment of the programme position in light of progress since Christmas. It was acknowledged that delivery dates for central market operating system releases had slipped. Programme Management Group reflected this in the risk register. Management group are satisfied that swift action by MOSL, working in collaboration with companies' technical teams, addresses this risk.

The programme status remains at Amber overall, although the group noted the successful delivery of the majority of milestones over the previous period. The management group will make their final assessment of programme status based on evidence presented at the February meeting. This precedes the conclusion of the letters of assurance process and accompanying advice from Defra to the Secretary of State to inform her decision on market opening. To provide additional re-assurance, management group will also consider risks that could occur over the first few months of market operations. The support of companies to help us identify priorities and how issues can be managed effectively will be required.

### Assurance of readiness

The group were given an important update from the independent Open Water assurance group. The assurance group have now indicated they will write to advise Defra that the market will be ready for the expected opening date of 1 April. They made underlying observations which were discussed by management group. Management group agreed that expected delivery of the remaining critical IT functionality must and will be complete. Ongoing effort is required from companies with regards to testing operational terms and in the execution of strategies to enhance data quality, the latter being particularly significant to minimise issues for customers once the market is open. Management group were pleased that the assurance group are confident that the market architecture, systems and processes to be in place for April fulfil their required functions.

### Engagement and customer awareness

One of the most significant achievements welcomed by management group is the launch of the national customer awareness raising campaign, steered by Water UK. It is hugely important that the whole industry comes together in using the material to amplify the

message, ensuring it reaches eligible customers. The group noted that Ofwat's business awareness survey found that around 30% of eligible companies knew of the upcoming market reforms, which provides a baseline for assessing the impact of awareness raising activity.

## The customer experience

At the last meeting, management group confirmed that the programme will take an approach that allows customers to switch to be supplied by an alternative retailer with effect from the day of market opening. The programme position and method of implementation have now been developed and shared with industry. The group are confident this will smooth the customer journey at market opening and provide for a positive initial experience of the new market.

The management group noted that as we get closer to the expected date of market opening, it is increasingly important that companies and programme partners focus on the quality of the full customer journey after market opening. Customer expectations regarding service and billing accuracy will increase and will need to be met. Discussions around how we best work together to achieve this will be held at the forthcoming CEO workshop and at other industry forums.