

2 March 2017

Open Water programme note: One month to go – retail market to open as planned on 1 April

Following the successful conclusion of the third Open Water assurance gateway, the Environment Secretary Andrea Leadsom has confirmed that the competitive water retail market for business, charities and public sector customers will open on 1 April 2017.

More than 1.2 million eligible business, charity and public sector customers are set to benefit from better service, increased value for money and improved water efficiency when the new market launches. It is estimated the industry shakeup will deliver up to £200 million worth of benefits to the economy and customers, including better service and choice.

Getting to this point has been the result of a huge amount of work across the industry and the Open Water programme. The assurance process has given Open Water partners confidence that all parties have made the required preparations and that the right foundations are in place for the market to open.

Having reviewed the findings of the assurance process, **Environment Secretary Andrea Leadsom said:**

“It’s great news over a million businesses – be that a car wash, factory or supermarket – will be able to find the best water deal that works for them from 1 April. Opening the market is an historic milestone and it’s right this Government is giving companies the same choice over their water retailer as they currently have for energy and other services.”

This is a significant milestone for the Open Water programme. Whilst there is still work to do to get us to April, partners are looking ahead to their roles in the new market and how we will continue to work together, and with the industry, to ensure that the market delivers for all eligible customers.

Commenting on this, **Ofwat CEO Cathryn Ross said:**

“In just a month, we will see the culmination of two years of incredibly hard work by not only Ofwat, Defra and MOSL, but also the water companies. It’s a tremendous result because over a million businesses, charity and public sector customers will

be able to choose a water retailer that best serves their needs, or simply negotiate a better deal with their current supplier. They can do this with the confidence that there are customer protections in place from day one and knowing that Ofwat will monitor the new market very closely.”

And **MOSL Chief Executive Ben Jeffs** said:

“We are looking forward to the market opening as planned on 1 April. This is a huge achievement by the entire industry, which has worked tirelessly to bring this to reality. Next week sees another milestone as we process the first ‘live’ switches in the new system so that customers can be registered with the correct retailer from day one. We are working with our members on the final preparations and, as the market operator, we look forward to supporting the industry as it evolves and adapts to the new competitive dynamic.”

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