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## **ANOTHER DRAIN ON HOUSEHOLD BUDGETS AS OFWAT REVEALS WATER PRICE HIKES**

- **Water bills set to rise by 5.7% or £20 a year on average from 1st April 2012<sup>[1]</sup>**
- **Average annual bill for water and sewerage will increase to £376 in 2012 from £356 in 2011<sup>[1]</sup>**
- **Utility nightmare: while energy prices come down by £34 a year<sup>[2]</sup>, water will go up by £20 a year, leaving households just £14 better off**
- **Moving to a water meter could save households £54 a year<sup>[3]</sup>.**

Ofwat's announcement today that the average water bill will rise by 5.7% to £20 in April will be a blow to consumers and will wring many tightened household budgets dry, warns [uSwitch.com](http://uSwitch.com), the independent price comparison and switching service.

**Ann Robinson, Director of Consumer Policy at [uSwitch.com](http://uSwitch.com), says:** "Yet again the relentless drain on our finances will leave households fighting for air. Energy prices have only just fallen by £34 or 2.6% and consumers are already seeing the benefit washed away by this £20 or 6% hike in water rates. The price increase may seem like a drop in the ocean, but it will add to the pressure that consumers are under and will erode the breathing space afforded by the recent small fall in energy bills.

"Consumers might not have the option of switching to a cheaper water supplier, but they do have the option of moving to a water meter, which could save them £54 a year. As a rule of thumb, if there are more bedrooms than people in a household then a water meter could be more cost effective. Consumers can also use the free [uSwitch.com](http://uSwitch.com) water calculator to find out if being on a meter could save them money.

"With the cost of household bills spiralling, there really is no point paying more than you have to. You might not be able to save much off your water bill, but you can cut the cost of other household bills, such as gas, electricity, home phone and broadband, substantially by shopping

around for a better deal. This could help you to relieve the pressure on your household's budget.”

### **Pros and cons of being on a water meter:**

- If you are on a meter you pay for what you use, therefore cutting back on the amount you use will save you money.
- If you switch to a water meter and find that you are not saving money or are unhappy with the change, you can switch back to unmeasured charging within 12 months.
- The general rule of thumb: if there are less people in your house than bedrooms (e.g. two people living in a four bedroom family home) then you could save money by switching to a water meter.
- For larger families, being on a water meter may not be cost effective as your water consumption may be high. Customers living in compulsory metering areas will need support in regulating and reducing consumption.

**For more information visit [www.uSwitch.com](http://www.uSwitch.com) or call 0800 093 06 07**

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#### **For more information please contact:**

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#### **Notes to editors:**

1. Ofwat announcement: [http://www.ofwat.gov.uk/mediacentre/pressnotices2008/prs\\_pn0112bills](http://www.ofwat.gov.uk/mediacentre/pressnotices2008/prs_pn0112bills)
2. Based on a medium user customer using 3,300 kWh of electricity and 16,500 kWh of gas, on a standard dual fuel plan, paying quarterly by cash or cheque with bill sizes averaged across all big six suppliers and all regions.
3. Source: Ofwat 'Average household bills 2011-2012':  
[http://www.ofwat.gov.uk/consumerissues/chargesbills/prs\\_inf\\_charges2011-12.pdf](http://www.ofwat.gov.uk/consumerissues/chargesbills/prs_inf_charges2011-12.pdf);

#### **About us**

uSwitch.com is a free, impartial, online and telephone-based comparison and switching service, helping consumers compare prices on gas, electricity, water, heating cover, home telephone, broadband, digital television, mobile phones and personal finance products including mortgages, credit cards, current accounts and insurance. In 2010 uSwitch.com celebrated ten years of saving customers money.

uSwitch.com is the first comparison website to achieve the Plain English Campaign's Internet Crystal Mark, which is recognised as a standard that a website has clear language, is accessible and easy to use, and has been tested on a sample of its users.

uSwitch.com is dedicated to helping consumers save money whether they have internet access or not. It offers a dedicated call centre, manned by uSwitch customer service representatives, as well as a freepost 'Send us your bill' service, whereby customers can post their latest energy bills with their telephone number to FREEPOST USWITCH, to get a free call back from a dedicated customer services representative. The service is also available via fax, email and post. Consumers should fax 0203 214 8417, email [CustomerServices@uswitch.com](mailto:CustomerServices@uswitch.com) or write to Customer Services, uSwitch.com, Centro 3, 19 Mandela Street, London, NW1 0DU with their postcode and usage details.

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