

Yesterday the Fine Gael and Labour government announced a fresh start for the Irish Water project.

Today I spoke on the motion and you can watch my speech by scrolling down below.

The central objective of this reboot is to ensure that the charging structure is both affordable and clear, and to give certainty to people on this point until 1 January 2019.

Charging

All children will be free from charging.

A single adult household will be charged €160 with a €100 water conservation rebate from the state each year. Net annual cost - €60.

A two adult or more household will be charged €260 with a €100 water conservation rebate from the state each year. Net annual cost - €160.

All charges will be capped, with charging beginning 1 January 2015 and ending 1 January 2019. Billing will be quarterly in arrears, with the first bills arriving in April 2015.

The €100 rebate can be claimed from the second quarter in 2015, and will be paid out in September 2015.

Those who have registered with Irish Water already do not need to make any changes. Those who have not registered can do so on-line from today and on the phone from 24th November 2014. PPS numbers will no longer be handled by Irish Water and numbers already provided will be destroyed.

Payment will be made as easy as possible and the Post Office will facilitate an easy payments system for those who cannot afford to pay the quarterly charges in one go.

Landlords where tenants do not pay their water charge will be able to deduct the tenants' charge from their deposit.

Metering programme

The roll out of water metres will continue. If consumption on a metred basis is cheaper for a household than the capped charge then a rebate will be given. The new metred price is €3.70 per 1000 litres. It is estimated that 70% of households will do better on a meter.

Where there are leaks Irish Water will fix the first leak for free.

Metering will ensure the detection of leaks which is essential for improving a system where 50% of water is lost underground. It will also be important for conservation and for the majority of households will mean cheaper bills.

Governance

The existing legislation is being changed so that any future government will have to hold a referendum if they are considering privatising Irish Water.

The Board of Irish Water is being stood down and a new board under the parent company Ervia is being set up. Six of the board positions are new and will be appointed through the state boards public appointments process.

A 60 person public advisory forum will be established to advise Irish Water. Members of this forum will be selected in the same way as the membership of the Constitutional Convention.

Those who do not pay

Those who will not pay their water bills will still be liable for the full charge, households will not receive the water conservation rebate (€100), and will have a late payment surcharge added to their bill (€30 for single adult households, €60 for all others). This total amount will be attached to properties as a liability.