Independent Park Home Advisory Service (2021) Ltd

Guidance – Water & Sewage Supply to a Park Home

Water and sewage arrangements on residential park home sites in England and Wales are covered by a mix of general utility law, consumer protection law, and the specific Mobile Homes Act 1983 (as amended).

1. Legal Duties on the Park Owner

- **Supply Obligation**: The site owner must ensure that residents have a proper and safe supply of water and adequate drainage/sewage disposal.
  - This is usually set out in the site licence issued by the local authority under the Caravan Sites and Control of Development Act 1960.
  - The local authority's Model Standards for Park Home Sites 2008 also state that every pitch must be provided with a suitable water supply and drainage connected to a public sewer or a properly maintained private system.

2. Charging Rules

- If the park owner resells water or sewerage services to residents (i.e. buys from the water company and bills residents):
  - They must follow Ofwat's "rules on resale" (Water Resale Order 2006).
  - This means:
    - They cannot charge more than the amount they themselves are charged by the water company (no profit).
    - They must apportion fairly (usually by meter, or if no meters, a fair and transparent method such as per person in a household).
    - They can add a small administration fee (currently capped at £5 per bill or £10 per year).
  - If residents are directly billed by the water company, the site owner plays no role in the charging.

3. Transparency & Information

- The park owner must provide a written breakdown of how charges are calculated if asked.
- Residents have the right to see copies of the water/sewage bills from the supplier.

4. Disputes & Enforcement

- If you think you're being overcharged, you can:
  - Raise the matter directly with the site owner.
  - Contact Ofwat (the regulator) who can investigate water resale disputes.
  - In some cases, disputes can be taken to the First-tier Tribunal (Property Chamber) under the Mobile Homes Act, especially if charges are rolled into pitch fees.

- For supply failure (e.g. low pressure, interrupted water, or sewage not maintained), you can contact your local authority, since they enforce site licence conditions.

If you believe you're being overcharged for water/sewage on your park home site here's a step-by-step guide you can follow:

1. Check How You Are Billed

- Direct billing (from the water company): you pay the water company directly → no resale rules apply.
- Resale billing (through the site owner): you pay the site owner for water/sewage → resale rules apply (Water Resale Order 2006).

Most park home sites use resale billing.

2. Ask for Evidence

- Write to the site owner and request:
  - A copy of the water/sewage bill from the supplier.
  - A breakdown of how charges have been apportioned to residents.
  - Confirmation of any administration fee added (must not exceed £5 per bill or £10 per year).

You are legally entitled to see this information.

3. Compare Charges

- Check the supplier's bill against what you've been charged.
- Make sure:
  - The total of all residents' charges does not exceed the supplier's bill (plus capped admin).
  - The method of splitting is fair and reasonable (meter readings if available, or an agreed method such as per home).

4. Challenge the Site Owner

- If charges look inflated or unfair:
  - Write formally (keep copies).
  - State that under the Water Resale Order 2006 they cannot profit from resale.
  - Ask for the bill to be corrected and any overpayment refunded.

5. Escalate if Needed

- If the owner refuses to comply:
  - Contact Ofwat (the water regulator). They have powers to enforce the resale rules and order refunds.
  - If the issue relates to the site licence conditions (e.g. supply interruptions, sewage not properly maintained), contact your local authority licensing team.

6. Tribunal Option

- If water/sewage is being charged via the pitch fee rather than as a separate bill, you can challenge it at the First-tier Tribunal (Property Chamber).
- The Tribunal can order reductions or repayments if charges are unlawful.

7. Keep Records

- Keep copies of all bills, letters, and correspondence.
- Note dates of supply problems (e.g. interruptions, overflows).
- Records strengthen your case with Ofwat, the local authority, or a tribunal.

8. Regulations Relating to Water Pressure Supplied

There are regulations on the minimum pressure of mains water supply, which also applies to park home sites if the supply comes from the public mains.

Water Pressure Regulations

a. Water Industry Act 1991

- Under Section 65, water companies must provide a “constant supply of wholesome water at sufficient pressure” to every communication pipe connected to their mains.
- “Sufficient pressure” is defined in regulations.

b. Guaranteed Standards Scheme (GSS)

- The Guaranteed Standards Scheme (Ofwat, 2008, updated 2017) sets the legal minimum:
    - Minimum standard: 10 metres head (1 bar) of pressure at the boundary stop tap.
    - This is enough to fill a storage tank in a house roof about 10m above ground.
- If pressure falls below this for at least 1 hour on two occasions within a 28-day period, the water company must pay compensation (£25 per incident to the customer, usually).

c. Park Home Sites

- If homes are supplied directly by the water company the above standard applies to each home.
- If homes are supplied via the park owner’s private distribution system:
    - The water company only guarantees pressure to the site boundary.
    - It is the site owner’s responsibility (under the site licence and Model Standards for Park Homes 2008) to ensure that the water supply inside the site is maintained properly.
    - If low pressure is due to faulty or undersized internal pipes/pumps, the park owner must fix it.

d. Enforcement

- If your pressure is consistently low:

- First, report it to the water company. They can test the pressure at the site boundary.
- If the problem is inside the park, the local authority (site licensing team) can require the park owner to remedy it.
- For persistent non-compliance, residents may escalate through the First-tier Tribunal or local Environmental Health team (if it amounts to a public health issue).

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