

Don't pay - Protest - Organise

The 3 things YOU have to do to defeat the water charges

There is massive opposition across the country to the government's attempt to impose water charges on us. Not least because we already pay for water through our taxes. This is simply yet another austerity tax. We have put up with years of austerity, cutbacks and extra taxes – all imposed on us to pay off the gambling debts of bankers and financial speculators. Hundreds of thousands of people are now saying 'No More!'

People also realise that this is an attempt to prepare our water service for privatisation, which will ultimately end in multinational companies owning it, charging us exorbitant prices and making super profits.

But we don't have to accept this new charge. We CAN defeat it. To achieve that, there are a few things which we will all have to do:



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WATER

REFUSE TO PAY

Hundreds of thousands of households have refused to register with Irish Water. Whether you have chosen to return the form unopened, ignore it, tear it up or even if you have filled it in and returned it, when the bill arrives in January, **do not pay**. If enough of us refuse to pay, the government will have no alternative but to scrap their plans.

Remember:

-They cannot disconnect your water. They are threatening that they will reduce the flow to a trickle, but to do this they have to fit a device to your stopcock. It is very

easy to either prevent them from doing this or to remove the device. An organised campaign can make it impossible for them to carry out this threat.

-They cannot deduct the charge from your social welfare or from your wages as they did with the property tax. Because the primary reason for imposing the water charge is to privatise the service, they are very unlikely to change the law to allow Revenue to deduct this charge. That would make it impossible for them to sell the service.

-They may take non-payers to court to try to get a judgement for payment. But they cannot take hundreds of thousands of people to court, especially due to the fact that the Irish court system is overloaded and has difficulty, even now, handling civil cases. And if they do take anyone to court, we must all be ready to protest in our thousands outside any court hearings.

Read our water charge FAQ at wsm.ie/water-charge-faq

-There is no point in waiting until after the next election in the hope that whatever government is elected will abolish the charge. If we pay now, the charge will be established by the time of the next election. Before the last election, both Fine Gael and Labour said they were opposed to the introduction of both the property tax and the water charge. We all know what happened when they got elected. If enough of us refuse to pay, whatever party or parties are in government will have no option but to abolish the charge.

PROTEST

The key to defeating the government is non-payment. To give everyone the confidence to join in the refusal to pay, and to let the government know that we are serious and determined, large public protests are very important. There are several campaign groups protesting against the charge. Take part in national and local protests called against the charge. Use those protests to make contact with other people opposing the charge in your area. Talk to people and try to convince them that refusal to pay the charge is the way to win.

ORGANISE

The water charge will not be defeated by political parties or organisations, by trade unions or by community groups - although all have important parts to play - it will be defeated by ordinary people, people just like you. And every single individual has a part to play. We did not manage to defeat the property tax because not enough of us stuck with non-payment, and not enough of us got out and protested so the government was able to change the law to give Revenue the power to deduct it from our incomes.

Let's not let that happen again. We should each consider ourselves an 'organiser' of the fight against this charge. If we are refusing to pay, it is in our interest to convince our neighbours, workmates and family members that they too should refuse to pay. It is also in our interest to convince others to join the protests against the charge.

In many communities, people have organised against and resisted the installation of water meters. If they haven't been installed in your area yet, this may be something you and your neighbours could do. Find out what campaign groups are organised in your area. If there isn't one, maybe you and your neighbours could call a meeting and set one up.

If we don't oppose it, we can't defeat it

There are, of course, no guarantees. Of course, the possibility exists that the government will attempt to take people to court over non-payment. Of course, the possibility exists that water pressure will be reduced and that the law could be changed to allow water cutoffs. Of course, the possibility exists that we could lose and ultimately end up having to pay the bills anyway.

But all those 'possibilities' presume that we lose, that we fail to get enough people together to effectively resist these charges. Each of us now has a choice - do nothing and the charge is introduced and the water system is eventually privatised OR refuse to pay and join your neighbours in building a campaign of opposition capable of defeating the charge and dealing a blow to the government.

This leaflet has been produced by the Workers Solidarity Movement (wsm.ie)
We cannot answer all the questions people might have about the water charge on one leaflet so we have produced an FAQ which is available at www.wsm.ie/water-charge-faq. If you have any queries, hopefully you will find the answer there. If you don't, please leave your question in a comment and we will try to answer it.