

**While the number of complaints against water companies has gone down for five years in a row, water companies are not complacent. Companies are determined to reduce the number of complaints and improve complaint handling further, and are working with stakeholders to deliver a binding resolution for customers for those cases which reach deadlock at the end of the current process.**

When things go wrong, customers expect their water and wastewater suppliers to respond to complaints quickly and fairly - and the current arrangements work well in the large majority of cases. The company has the first opportunity to put things right, with customers being able to ask the Consumer Council for Water, or Ofwat in some limited cases, for assistance if necessary to reach a satisfactory resolution.

However, in a small number of cases, these standard arrangements aren't enough, so water companies, Ofwat and the Consumer Council for Water are working together to develop an additional alternative dispute resolution scheme that will mean that customers will have a final opportunity to resolve their complaint without having to go to court.

The new scheme will provide a clear and independent way of resolving complaints that have reached a deadlock under the current arrangements, and may in future also provide a more appropriate vehicle for resolving some complaints that are currently handled by Ofwat.

It is expected that the additional scheme will be introduced by the industry next year, and further details will be available in due course.