

17 June 2014

**Memorandum of Understanding between the Competition and Markets Authority and the Water Services Regulation Authority– concurrent competition powers**

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## Foreword

The changes to the United Kingdom's competition law system, introduced under the Enterprise and Regulatory Reform Act 2013 and in force from April 2014, are designed to improve the effectiveness of competition law enforcement in this country.

The CMA has competition law powers which apply across the whole economy. Sectoral regulators such as Ofwat may exercise the competition law powers to enforce the prohibitions on anti-competitive agreements and on abuse of a dominant position, and to make market investigation references, concurrently with the CMA in those sectors for which they have responsibility.

The Enterprise and Regulatory Reform Act 2013 has introduced a number of changes to improve the working of these concurrency provisions and to enable closer working between the CMA and sectoral regulators.

The CMA and the sectoral regulators have already demonstrated their commitment to making the concurrency framework more effective through the establishment of the UK Competition Network (UKCN). This represents an enhanced forum for cooperation which will enable closer working with the objective of more consistent and effective use of competition powers across all sectors. In their statement of intent in December 2013, the members of the UKCN affirmed:

*"The mission of the UKCN will be to promote competition for the benefit of consumers and to prevent anti-competitive behaviour both through facilitating use of competition powers and development of pro-competitive regulatory frameworks, as appropriate."*<sup>1</sup>

This Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) represents a further stage in the process of co-operation between the CMA and the regulators, setting out more practical detail on how the CMA and Ofwat will work together within the framework of competition law<sup>2</sup>.

The main purpose of this MoU is to establish an understanding between the CMA and Ofwat as to how this closer working will work in practice. It draws on the legislation which sets out the formal framework for how concurrency will operate and also,

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<sup>1</sup> UK Competition Network, *Statement of Intent*, 2 December 2013.

<sup>2</sup> This Memorandum of Understanding does not relate to "regulatory appeals" – that is, the separate role that the CMA has in considering appeals against, or references relating to, proposed direct regulatory action by sectoral regulators under the sectoral statutes. This is a separate role, to be undertaken by the CMA panel, and the CMA is committed to ensuring that its co-operation with Ofwat - whether under this Memorandum of Understanding (and under comparable Memoranda of Understanding agreed with other sectoral regulators), through the UK Competition Network, or otherwise in connection with their concurrent powers - will not impair the impartiality and fairness of the CMA's conduct of such regulatory appeals (or indeed of market or merger investigations undertaken by the CMA panel).

importantly, sets out our bilateral commitment to look for opportunities to work together, including within the framework of the UKCN, to promote competition for the benefit of consumers. We shall do this by the sharing of expertise, information, ideas and experience and each of us will commit to doing this efficiently and with a mutual regard for each other's statutory position and strategic objectives.

Water and sewerage markets are in the process of liberalisation, with the aim of fostering more competitive markets for the benefit of current and future customers. As markets evolve, competition enforcement under the Competition Act 1998 and review of markets under the Enterprise Act 2002 will be increasingly important tools to enable the development of effective competition in the sector.

We believe that this Memorandum of Understanding offers a valuable basis for that co-operation, in the interests of the CMA, Ofwat, the water and sewerage industry in England and Wales and, most importantly of all, the consumers.

**Alex Chisholm**  
**CEO, CMA**

**Cathryn Ross**  
**CEO, Ofwat**

## **Memorandum of Understanding between the Competition and Markets Authority and the Water Services Regulation Authority**

### **Purpose of this Memorandum of Understanding**

- 1 This Memorandum of Understanding (“MoU”) sets out working arrangements between the Competition and Markets Authority (“CMA”) and the Water Services Regulation Authority (“Ofwat”) in relation to:
  - (a) their concurrent powers to apply the prohibitions on agreements that prevent, restrict or distort competition and on the abuse of a dominant position, under the Chapter I prohibition and the Chapter II prohibition of the Competition Act 1998 and under Article 101 and Article 102 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union – referred to in this MoU as the “competition prohibitions”; and
  - (b) their concurrent powers to undertake market studies, and to make market investigation references to the chair of the CMA for the constitution of a CMA group to conduct an in-depth market investigation into single or multiple markets for goods or services in the United Kingdom under the Enterprise Act 2002 – referred to in this MoU as the “market provisions”in the water and sewerage sector.
- 2 This MoU is not legally binding.
- 3 This MoU is to be read alongside other material concerning the relations between the CMA and Ofwat, including: the Water Industry Act 1991; the Competition Act 1998; the Enterprise Act 2002; the Enterprise and Regulatory Reform Act 2013; The Competition Act 1998 (Concurrency) Regulations 2014 and the CMA’s Guidance on concurrent application of competition law to regulated industries. This MoU supplements and does not supplant that material.
- 4 The arrangements covered by this MoU are, wherever possible, set out in terms providing sufficient flexibility for the relationship between the sectoral regulators and the CMA to develop in the light of experience. The CMA and Ofwat commit to review these arrangements from time to time to evaluate their continuing fitness for purpose. Such review can be initiated at the request of the CMA, Ofwat or a member of the UK Competition Network. This MoU may only be revised by agreement between the CMA and Ofwat.
- 5 Nothing in this MoU applies in relation to the functions of the CMA in its separate role of considering appeals against, or references related, to proposed action by the sectoral regulators under the sectoral statutes. The CMA and Ofwat

acknowledge the importance of maintaining the CMA's impartiality and fairness in carrying out those functions, and indeed of market or merger investigations undertaken by the CMA panel.

## **Context**

- 6 This MoU operates within the framework of the legislative provisions referred to in paragraph 1 and the concurrent powers of Ofwat under section 31 of the Water Industry Act 1991 any applicable sector specific legislation from time to time.

## ***Role of the CMA***

- 7 The CMA is a non-ministerial department, established under the Enterprise and Regulatory Reform Act 2013.
- 8 The CMA works to promote competition for the benefit of consumers, both within and outside the UK, to make markets work well for consumers, businesses and the economy.
- 9 The CMA's statutory responsibilities, in so far as relevant to the matters that are the subject of this MoU, include:
- (a) investigating where there may be breaches of the competition prohibitions and;
  - (b) conducting market studies and market investigations where there may be competition and consumer problems
- 10 In connection with its statutory responsibilities, the CMA will co-operate with sectoral regulators to promote effective competition and support the use of their powers, including their powers to apply the competition prohibitions, in the interests of competition for the benefit of consumers.

## ***Role of Ofwat***

- 11 Ofwat is a non-ministerial department established under the Water Industry Act 1991. Ofwat is the independent economic regulator of the water and sewerage industry in England and Wales. Ofwat is responsible for regulating the sectors, acting independently of the industry, government and other stakeholders, while working within the government policy framework. Ofwat's duties include protecting the interests of consumers, wherever appropriate by promoting effective competition. Ofwat is designated as a national competition authority under Article 35 of EU Regulation 1/2003 and has powers to enforce the competition prohibitions in the Competition Act 1998 and Articles 101 and 102 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, in relation to commercial activities connected with the supply of water or securing a supply of water or with the provision or securing of sewerage services.

## Aims

- 12 The Enterprise and Regulatory Reform Act 2013, as well as establishing the CMA, made provision for the better working of the CMA's and the sector regulators' concurrent powers in the regulated sectors; specifically, the Act

“strengthens the role of the CMA and enhances the emphasis on early and proper consideration of the use of anti-trust powers (under Part 1 of the CA 1998 [i.e. the competition prohibitions]) by the sector regulators”<sup>3</sup>

- 13 It is one of the strategic goals of the CMA, announced on its establishment on 1 October 2013, to extend the frontiers of competition into new areas, including by working with sectoral regulators to ensure fuller use of competition law and policy in sectoral markets.<sup>4</sup>

- 14 The Government's strategic steer to the CMA, issued on 1 October 2013, says that “the CMA should engage in a broad strategic dialogue with the regulators and look for opportunities to promote effective competition”<sup>5</sup>.

- 15 The sector regulators and the CMA, working together in new UK Competition Network established in 2013 (with Monitor having observer status), have declared that:

“The mission of the UKCN will be to promote competition for the benefit of consumers and to prevent anti-competitive behaviour both through facilitating use of competition powers and development of pro-competitive regulatory frameworks, as appropriate.”<sup>6</sup>

- 16 The CMA and Ofwat seek to use their powers to achieve more competitive outcomes in the water and sewerage industry in England and Wales for the benefit of consumers so as to make markets in the water and sewerage sectors in England and Wales work well for consumers of water and sewerage services, businesses in the sector and businesses that use those services and the economy in which those services play an essential part. It is the view of the CMA and the sector regulators that such competitive outcomes can be achieved by various tools, including their competition law powers under the competition prohibitions, the market provisions and merger control, but also through other

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<sup>3</sup> Enterprise and Regulatory Reform Act 2013 Explanatory Notes, paragraph 370.

<sup>4</sup> Statement by Alex Chisholm, chief executive of the CMA, *CMA mission and strategy*, 1 October 2013.

<sup>5</sup> Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, *Strategic steer for the Competition and Markets Authority 2014-17*, in Annex 1 to its *Response to consultation on statement of specific priorities for the CMA*, 1 October 2013, paragraphs 6 and 9.

<sup>6</sup> UK Competition Network, *Statement of Intent*, 2 December 2013.

tools such as direct regulatory action including through enforcement of licence provisions (for example, in providing for third party access to networks) and liberalisation measures introduced under national and European Union legislation.

- 17 This MoU aims to further the attainment of these objectives, and to make the changes introduced by the Enterprise and Regulatory Reform Act 2013 work effectively, maximising the complementary skills of the CMA and the sectoral regulators, including through:
- (a) promoting co-operation and coordination between the CMA and Ofwat when dealing with cases of suspected anti-competitive behaviour for which they have concurrent powers;
  - (b) promoting co-operation and coordination between the CMA and Ofwat when dealing with market studies and market investigation references for which they have concurrent powers;
  - (c) facilitating the efficient and effective handling of cases of suspected anti-competitive behaviour within the water and sewerage services markets in England and Wales;
  - (d) avoiding duplication of activity, wherever possible; and
  - (e) ensuring transparency as to the respective roles of the CMA and Ofwat for individuals and consumers affected.



## **General co-operation**

- 18 In addition to the provisions for co-operation between the CMA and Ofwat specific to particular powers of the CMA and Ofwat, as set out in this MoU and elsewhere, the CMA and Ofwat are committed to the following general principles and practices for co-operation between themselves in respect of the sectors for which Ofwat has responsibility.
- 19 Officials of the CMA and Ofwat will meet and communicate, at appropriate levels of seniority, to discuss matters of mutual interest, both through the UK Competition Network and bilaterally. A framework for such meetings will, as far as possible, be determined in advance so as to ensure attendance at the appropriate level and expertise.
- 20 The CMA and Ofwat will always consult each other before exercising its powers on a case (including instigating a market study) where it appears that they have concurrent powers (which, for cases under the competition prohibitions, requires there to be reasonable grounds for suspecting an infringement of any of the competition prohibitions), even if the CMA and Ofwat do not go on to exercise their concurrent powers.
- 21 Where either the CMA or Ofwat exercises its concurrent powers, the CMA and Ofwat will, to the extent permitted by law, engage with each other in open dialogue and by sharing relevant information as appropriate.
- 22 The CMA and Ofwat will consult each other at an early stage on any issues that might have significant implications for the other.
- 23 Within the spirit of broader collaboration for the purposes of the promotion of competitive outcomes, the CMA and Ofwat will commit to discuss and share other relevant information, where legally permissible to do so, but subject to the need not to impair the impartiality and fairness of the CMA in carrying out the functions referred to in paragraph 5 of this MoU.

## **Part A – Co-operation in relation to the competition prohibitions (Competition Act 1998 and Articles 101 and 102)**

### **Case allocation**

#### ***Basis of allocation***

- 24 The CMA and Ofwat will endeavour to reach agreement on which authority will have jurisdiction to exercise its powers under the competition prohibitions in respect of any particular case, under regulation 4(2) of The Competition Act 1998 (Concurrency) Regulations 2014 – referred to in this MoU as the “Concurrency Regulations” - and they will do so in a spirit of constructiveness and co-operation, notwithstanding the CMA’s ultimate powers under regulations 5 and 8 of the Concurrency Regulations.
- 25 The basis for their determination of jurisdiction will be the general principle of which of them is better placed to exercise those powers, having regard to the factors set out in paragraph 3.22 of the CMA’s Guidance on concurrent application of competition law to regulated industries, referred to in this MoU as “the Guidance”. The CMA and Ofwat envisage that other factors may appear relevant in the light of practical experience and that, if so, such factors may be chosen to supplement or supplant the factors set out in paragraph 3.22 of the Guidance.

#### ***Procedure for allocation***

- 26 Each of the CMA and Ofwat will, in respect of matters in the water and sewerage sectors in England and Wales, where it has formed the view that there are reasonable grounds for suspecting that one of the competition prohibitions has been infringed (the “reasonable suspicion test” under section 25 of the Competition Act 1998), on the basis of information in its possession (whether received by way of complaint or otherwise), provide to the other sufficient information to enable the other to understand the basis on which it has formed that view (whether or not it proposes to exercise concurrent powers) and for there to be an informed discussion on which authority (if any) is best placed to proceed in respect of the case. It must provide this information in a timely manner and, in all cases, within ten working days after it has formed that view that the reasonable suspicion test has been met. Nothing in this paragraph prevents discussions about the case taking place between the CMA and Ofwat prior to such a view having been formed, in so far as such discussions are permitted by law.
- 27 Any agreement between the CMA and Ofwat as to which authority will have jurisdiction, as provided for in regulation 4(2) of the Concurrency Regulations, will be reached as soon as possible and in any event no later than one month from the date of passing of information from one authority to the other under

- paragraph 26. Within seven working days from the date of passing the relevant information under paragraph 26, the recipient of such information will write to the authority which has passed it that information setting out its initial view on the case and how it might be allocated and identifying further information it requires. Both parties will endeavour to reach agreement within the specified timescale. If agreement is, for whatever reason, not reached within two months after the earlier of the CMA or Ofwat first receiving sufficient information to enable it to form the view that there are reasonable grounds for suspecting that one of the competition prohibitions has been infringed then, other than in exceptional circumstances (which shall be set out in writing) the procedure set out in regulation 5 of the Concurrency Regulations will be initiated.
- 28 The procedure for agreeing the transfer of a case that is already in progress from the CMA to Ofwat, or from Ofwat to the CMA, is as set out in regulation 7 of the Concurrency Regulations and in paragraph 3.32 of the Guidance.
- 29 The procedure for the CMA to direct the transfer to itself from Ofwat of a case that is already in progress is as set out in regulation 8 of the Concurrency Regulations.

### ***Implications of allocation***

- 30 Any agreement or determination as to jurisdiction, under regulations 4, 5, 7 or 8 of the Concurrency Regulations, shall be notified to the person who has provided the information resulting in the case (for example, the person making a complaint), and so far as appropriate and lawful to any other affected person, by the authority which has jurisdiction, as soon as reasonably practicable.
- 31 The determination of jurisdiction is a determination of which of the CMA and Ofwat has legal responsibility for the investigation of the case and for any decisions made under the competition prohibitions arising from it and will be publicly identified as having such responsibility. The CMA and Ofwat envisage that, whatever that determination may be in any particular case, they and their officials will work co-operatively with each other on the case as appropriate, pooling their expertise including in the ways described in paragraphs 44 to 53 of this MoU and in paragraphs 3.33 to 3.35 of the Guidance.

### **Sharing information**

#### ***Principles of information sharing***

- 32 The effective sharing of information between the CMA and Ofwat is fundamental to the successful exercise of their concurrent competition powers. It is needed both for the appropriate allocation of cases, as described in paragraphs 24 and 25 of this MoU, and for the successful handling of cases once allocated to make

optimal use of the complementary experience and expertise of the two authorities.

- 33 The CMA and Ofwat are committed, in addition to their legal obligations to share information (set out in regulation 9 of the Concurrency Regulations), to open dialogue and continuing liaison, both bilaterally and through the UK Competition Network, with a view not only to handling specific cases but to promoting competition, for the benefit of consumers in the water and sewerage sectors in England and Wales.

***Information sharing mechanism – general liaison***

- 34 The CMA and Ofwat recognise the importance of meeting regularly to share information on matters relevant to competition in the water and sewerage sectors in England and Wales, and to keep each other abreast of relevant work which they are considering or currently undertaking.

- 35 The CMA and Ofwat will meet regularly at all levels, bilaterally and through the UK Competition Network.

- 36 The CMA and Ofwat will each designate in its organisation a relationship manager at official level to take responsibility for relations between the two authorities. In each authority, the relationship manager's responsibilities will include (but not be limited to):

(a) maintaining an overview of joint projects between the two authorities and matters of mutual interest;

(b) maintaining an overview of the authority's contacts from all areas of joint working and mutual interest; and

(c) holding meetings with the relationship manager in the other authority from time to time (whether bilaterally or in the context of the UK Competition Network) to identify potential new issues with a view to circulating information to appropriate individuals within each organisation.

- 37 The existence of relationship managers does not in any way preclude direct communication between other staff at the CMA and Ofwat.

***Information sharing mechanism – handling specific cases***

- 38 The procedures for information sharing for the purpose of case allocation shall be as set out in paragraphs 32 to 43 of this MoU.

- 39 When either the CMA or Ofwat is exercising its powers in respect of the competition prohibitions in a particular case in the water and sewerage sectors

in England and Wales, or when either of them (or another authority) is contemplating doing so, each of them will share with the other any of the following information in its possession (to the extent permitted by law and subject to the confidentiality obligations in paragraphs 42 and 43 of this MoU):

- (a) as a minimum, the matters referred to in regulation 9 of the Concurrency Regulations, and in paragraph 3.49 of the Guidance, complying with the time limits specified in paragraph 3.49;
  - (b) other information which it reasonably believes to be relevant or helpful to the other in the conduct of the case; and
  - (c) in the case of the authority which is exercising the powers, reports to the other (and, to the extent permitted by law, to the UK Competition Network) on the progress of the case of sufficient frequency and detail to enable the other to be appropriately informed; the means and frequency of such reporting will be decided on a case by case basis and in the light of experience as this enhanced framework of collaboration and its supporting arrangements develop over time.
- 40 The CMA will maintain a classified database of cases under the competition prohibitions in the regulated sectors, accessible by its own officials and, to the extent permitted by law, accessible by all members of the UK Competition Network, with a view to having a body of know-how that will help ensure the effective and consistent application of competition law in the regulated sectors. The CMA and Ofwat will, to the extent permitted by law, contribute information to that in the way best calculated to achieve that objective.
- 41 In any event, the CMA will report on cases in the regulated sectors under the competition prohibitions in the annual concurrency report which it is required under statute to issue. Further provisions on the annual concurrency report are in paragraphs 54 to 56 of this MoU

***Information sharing – confidentiality constraints***

- 42 Any disclosure of information under paragraphs 32 to 41 of this MoU, and any use by the recipient of such information, shall only be to the extent permitted by law, including by reference to the provisions of Part 9 of the Enterprise Act 2002.
- 43 In addition to the constraints under paragraph 42 of this MoU, any information which came into the possession of any of the CMA, its predecessor bodies, Ofwat or any other public authority as a direct or indirect result of having been provided in the context of an application for leniency under any of the competition prohibitions or obtained as a result of investigative measures resulting from the sharing of leniency information between the CMA and Ofwat,

may not be used for any purpose other than the application and enforcement of the competition prohibitions or the cartel offence under section 188 of the Enterprise Act 2002. Where the submission of such information to either of the CMA or Ofwat affords or might, under certain conditions, have afforded the applicant, its subsidiaries or its employees protection from sanctions (including a reduction in penalties) under the leniency programme operated by that authority, the passing of that information to the other authority shall not result in that other authority affording to the applicant any lesser protection. This is without prejudice to the use that may be made by the CMA or Ofwat of information received from other sources.

### **Pooling resources**

- 44 The CMA and Ofwat will endeavour, so far as is reasonably practicable and permitted by law, to share their resources with each other in the interests of the effective enforcement of competition law in the water and sewerage sectors in England and Wales, and more generally the promotion of competition for the benefit of consumers, and to ensure that their resources and expertise are used most efficiently for that purpose. This is subject to the proviso that, as stated in paragraph 5, this does not apply in relation to the functions of the CMA in its role of considering appeals against, or references related to, proposed action by the sectoral regulators under the sectoral statutes.
- 45 As a consequence, where it has been agreed or determined that one of the authorities is to have formal jurisdiction in a case that authority will, to the extent that there are the necessary resources, receive appropriate practical assistance and support from the other in the handling of the case.
- 46 Such support and assistance may include the provision of training or practical know-how and expertise by one authority to the other where appropriate to enable the authority with jurisdiction in the case to carry out its statutory functions effectively (for example in relation to conduct of site visits).

### ***Secondments of staff***

- 47 One means of the practical assistance and support that might be given, as referred to in paragraph 44 of this MoU, is the secondment of staff, in accordance with regulation 10 of the Concurrency Regulations and paragraphs 3.33 and 3.34] of the Guidance.
- 48 The CMA and Ofwat are fully committed to the idea of secondments for this purpose, and will endeavour to meet each other's requests for secondments to the extent that they are appropriate and resources permit; this may include making provision for any secondee to be available to work for part of his or her time at his or her existing employer during the course of the secondment, for example on such cases that are in progress.

- 49 Requests for secondments should be made by the relationship manager of one authority to the relationship manager of the other, setting out the following information:
- (a) the number of secondees required;
  - (b) the period for which each one is required;
  - (c) the level of seniority of each one;
  - (d) the nature of the expertise or experience of each one;
  - (e) the proposed payment arrangements;
  - (f) a brief explanation of why the requirement or requirements cannot adequately be met by deployment of staff from within the requesting authority.
- 50 To the extent that the recipient of a request for a secondment made under paragraph 49 of this MoU refuses that request or accedes to it on terms that are materially different from those requested, the recipient shall give reasons.
- 51 The CMA and Ofwat undertake to develop appropriate arrangements for the pooling and secondment of staff including agreement of financial and other terms. Such arrangements will have regard to the resource constraints of both parties and such calls for staff, therefore, will be made in reasonable time and with sufficient warning to enable appropriate resource planning, management of other work commitments and appropriate sign-off procedures within each authority.

***Other mutual support***

- 52 In addition to means of mutual support such as information sharing and secondments of staff, the CMA and Ofwat are fully committed to providing each other with more informal forms of support to enable them to carry out their competition law functions in relation to the water and sewerage sectors in England and Wales – in each case to the extent that it is appropriate and permitted by law, and that resources permit - including (but not limited to):
- (a) answering specific queries from time to time;
  - (b) providing information or advice on a specific sector or market, or an area of competition law or policy; and
  - (c) providing training on a specific sector or market, or an area of competition law or policy.

- 53 Such support may be requested and provided in connection with a specific case or with the promotion of competition more generally. In this regard, both the CMA and Ofwat will act reasonably, including by providing sufficient time and information for requests for support to be responded to fully and effectively and for the relevant staff to be engaged.

### **Annual concurrency report**

- 54 The CMA is required by statute to publish a report every year, starting after its first year of operation in 2014-15<sup>7</sup>, containing an assessment of how the concurrency arrangements between the CMA and the sectoral regulators, as regards both the competition prohibitions and the market provisions, have operated during the year. This MoU refers to that report as the “annual concurrency report”. There is further provision on the annual concurrency report in paragraphs 3.55 to 3.62 of the Guidance.
- 55 The CMA will consult, and cooperate with, Ofwat and with other sectoral regulators in preparing the annual concurrency report. In connection with this, the CMA will:
- (a) prepare a draft of the annual concurrency report that it will send to Ofwat and other sectoral regulators seeking comments or suggestions on the content or conclusions of the annual concurrency report and giving them adequate time to comment or make suggestions;
  - (b) take account of any comments or suggestions it receives from Ofwat and other sectoral regulators and the CMA may seek further clarification on those comments or suggestions as appropriate;
  - (c) prepare a final version of the annual concurrency report for publication that takes account of its consultation of Ofwat and other sectoral regulators as appropriate; and
  - (d) make the annual concurrency report available on the CMA webpages.
- 56 Ofwat will co-operate with the CMA in the preparation of the annual concurrency report including (but not limited to) by way of:
- (a) providing information and data on general market conditions and on the application of the competition prohibitions and the market provisions in the water and sewerage sectors in England and Wales;
  - (b) responding to requests for information and data; and

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<sup>7</sup> Enterprise and Regulatory Reform Act 2013 Schedule 4 paragraph 16.



- (c) providing to the CMA any comments and suggestions it may have in connection with the process described in paragraph 55 of this MoU,

in each case promptly so as to facilitate the timely production and publication of the annual concurrency report.

### **Choice of instrument – competition prohibition or direct regulation by licence enforcement**

57 As a result of legislative changes introduced by Schedule 14 to the Enterprise and Regulatory Reform Act 2013<sup>8</sup>, Ofwat is required by sections 19(1A) and 22A(13) of the Water Industry Act 1991, to “consider whether it would be more appropriate to proceed under the Competition Act 1998” before exercising its direct regulatory powers of enforcement in relation to statutory or other requirements which are enforceable by Ofwat under section 18 of the Water Industry Act 1991 or licence contravention by relevant companies.

58 The Explanatory Notes to the legislation explain that this provision

“enhances the emphasis on early and proper consideration of the use of anti-trust powers (under Part 1 of the CA 1998<sup>9</sup>) by the sector regulators”<sup>10</sup>.

59 The Government had previously indicated that the policy intention is to :

strengthen the primacy of general competition law, so that the Sector Regulators are required to consider whether the use of their CA98 powers is more appropriate before using their sectoral powers to promote competition.<sup>11</sup>

60 Under this provision, it is for Ofwat to determine, in any particular case, whether using its powers under the competition prohibitions would be more appropriate than exercising its licence enforcement powers.

61 The Guidance says that this determination will be made by the sectoral regulators “on a case-by-case basis”<sup>12</sup>. It may be that, in the light of experience accumulated over the coming months or years in applying this provision, it will be possible to develop more general principles that could serve as useful

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<sup>8</sup> Having effect from April 2014

<sup>9</sup> That is, the competition prohibitions.

<sup>10</sup> Enterprise and Regulatory Reform Act 2013 – Explanatory Notes, paragraph 370.

<sup>11</sup> BIS, *Growth, competition and the competition regime – Government response to consultation*, March 2012, paragraph 8.16.

<sup>12</sup> Paragraph 4.3.

guidance in future cases, perhaps through the forum of the UK Competition Network.

## **Part B – Co-operation in relation to the market provisions: market studies and market investigations (Enterprise Act 2002)**

### **How concurrency works under the market provisions**

- 62 Ofwat also has the power, concurrently with the CMA, to carry out market studies, to make market investigation references, agree undertakings in lieu of a reference and make recommendations to the Government in relation to the water and sewerage sectors in England and Wales under Part 4 of the Enterprise Act 2002 (as do other sectoral regulators in relation to the sectors for which they are responsible).
- 63 Under the Enterprise Act 2002, the CMA and Ofwat may, in relation to the water and sewerage sectors in England and Wales, undertake market studies, and may make market investigation references to the Chair of the CMA for the constitution of a CMA group to conduct an in-depth market investigation into single or multiple markets for goods or services in the United Kingdom. The purpose of these investigations is to examine the market(s) and (where required) implement appropriate remedies where the CMA determines that the structure of the market(s) or the conduct of the suppliers or customers is harming competition.
- 64 When making a reference, the CMA or Ofwat, as applicable, must have reasonable grounds for suspecting that any feature or combination of features of a market or markets in the United Kingdom prevents, restricts or distorts competition in relation to the supply or acquisition of any goods or services in the United Kingdom (or in a part of the United Kingdom).
- 65 The co-operation between the CMA and Ofwat provided for in this Part B shall not extend to conduct that could reasonably be expected to impair the impartiality or the fairness of the CMA panel in conducting market investigations.

### ***“Super-complaints”***

- 66 Section 11 of the Enterprise Act 2002 provides for a super-complaint to be made by a designated consumer body that any feature, or combination of features, of a market in the United Kingdom for goods or services is or appears to be significantly harming the interests of consumers.
- 67 Ofwat has a duty to respond to super-complaints made to it under the Enterprise Act 2002 if the complaint concerns the water and sewerage sectors in England and Wales

- 68 The coordination of the CMA's and the sectoral regulators' super-complaint duties will be based on policies agreed and applied through the UK Competition Network.

***Mutual consultation***

- 69 Ofwat and the CMA have a duty to consult each other before exercising concurrent functions under the market provisions.

**Sharing information**

- 70 The provisions of paragraphs 34 to 37, 39 (excluding 39(a) 40 and 41) of this MoU apply to information sharing under the market provisions as they do under the competition prohibitions.

**Pooling resources**

- 71 The provisions of paragraph 44 to 53 of this MoU apply to pooling resources under the market provisions as they do under the competition prohibitions.
- 72 Where the CMA and Ofwat intend to pool resources in order to exercise powers under the market provisions of the Enterprise Act 2002, they shall, at the outset of any such project, discuss the arrangements for how they will pool resources and work jointly.

**Annual concurrency report**

- 73 The provisions of paragraphs 54 to 56 of this MoU apply under the market provisions as they do under the competition prohibitions.