Charter of Rights, Duties and Responsibilities

for Member - Owners of Lough Cumnel Group Water Scheme Co-op Ltd (KGWS)

AGM Adoption and Legal Context

This Charter is adopted by resolution at a duly convened Annual General Meeting of the group water scheme. It operates alongside, and does not replace, the co-op's rules, constitution, and applicable legislation.

This Charter is informed by, and shall be interpreted consistently with:

- The Industrial and Provident Societies Acts 1893–2021 (or successor co-operative legislation);
- The Water Services Acts 2007–2025;
- The European Union (Drinking Water) Regulations (as amended);
- Guidance issued by Water Services Authorities and relevant sector bodies.

Where a conflict arises, statutory obligations and the co-op's registered rules shall prevail.

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1. Purpose and Principles

1.1 This Charter sets out the shared rights, duties, and responsibilities of member - owners of Lough Cumnel Group Water Scheme Co-Op Ltd ("KGWS").

1.2 A safe, reliable drinking water supply is an essential service. In a group water scheme, this service is provided on a community-owned, community-managed, and not-for-profit basis.

1.3 Every person connected to KGWS is both a user of the service and a joint owner of the enterprise. The long-term sustainability of the water supply depends on active participation, mutual respect, and collective responsibility.

1.4 This Charter reflects cooperative values, relevant water services legislation, and national drinking water quality standards. It is intended to guide good governance, informed decision-making, and fair treatment of all member - owners.

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2. Membership and Ownership

Rights of member - owners

2.1 Member - owners have the right to:

- Receive a drinking water supply that meets at a minimum, applicable quality and safety standards.
- Apply for and retain membership where their premises are within the scheme's area of supply, subject to the rules of KGWS.
- Participate in democratic decision-making through attendance, voice, and vote at General Meetings.

- Stand for election and serve on the board or committees of KGWS.
- Transparent governance, including access to rules, policies, and audited accounts.

Duties and Responsibilities of Member - Owners

2.2 Member - owners have a responsibility to:

- Familiarise themselves with and comply with the rules, policies, and decisions adopted by KGWS.
- Engage constructively in the democratic life of the scheme, including attendance at meetings and standing for election where possible.
- Act in good faith toward fellow member - owners and those managing the scheme on their behalf.

2.3 Failure of member - owners to comply with their duties and responsibilities may result in restriction, disconnection or refusal of supply.

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3. Safety and Wholesomeness of Water

Rights of Member - Owners

3.1 Member - owners have the right to expect that:

- Drinking water supplied KGWS is wholesome, clean, and at a minimum compliant with national and EU drinking water regulations.
- Appropriate treatment systems are installed, operated, and maintained using cost-effective and sustainable solutions.
- They are promptly informed of any potential risk to human health and advised of necessary precautions.

Duties and Responsibilities of Member - Owners

3.2 Member - owners share responsibility for protecting public health by:

- Heeding boil water notices or other instructions issued by KGWS.
- Reporting concerns about water quality, contamination, leaks, or unusual changes in supply without delay to KGWS employees or board members.

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4. Quality Assurance and Risk Management

4.1 Member - owners are entitled to expect that KGWS shall operate a structured Quality Assurance system, based on recognised risk-management principles, to identify and control hazards from source to tap.

Rights of Member - Owners

4.2 Member - owners have the right to assurance that such systems are actively implemented, reviewed, and improved.

Duties and Responsibilities of Member - Owners

4.3 Member - owners have a duty to cooperate with inspections, monitoring, and remedial works necessary to maintain compliance and protect the integrity of the supply.

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5. Source Protection

Rights of Member - Owners

5.1 Member - owners are entitled to expect that all reasonable measures are taken to protect the scheme's water source(s) from pollution and degradation.

Duties and Responsibilities of Member - Owners

5.2 Member - owners, individually and collectively, must:

- Avoid any activity that may endanger the water source or its catchment.
- Properly maintain septic tanks and wastewater systems.
- Ensure that agricultural, commercial, or domestic activities comply with environmental protection requirements.
- Report suspected pollution incidents immediately to the Board or its agents.

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6. Conservation and Sustainable Use

Rights of Member - Owners

6.1 Member - owners have a right to expect that KGWS actively pursues leakage reduction, efficient operation, and long-term sustainability of the water resource.

Duties and Responsibilities of Member - Owners

6.2 Member - owners have a responsibility to:

- Use water efficiently and avoid waste.
- Monitor their own usage, including checking meters and internal plumbing.
- Comply with conservation measures during periods of scarcity or drought.
- Report visible leaks or bursts on the distribution network immediately to KGWS employees or board members.

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7. Water Supply Standards

Quantity and Continuity

7.1 Except in exceptional circumstances, member - owners are entitled to a continuous supply sufficient to meet reasonable domestic needs.

Pressure and Interruptions

7.2 KGWS shall endeavour to provide adequate pressure, recognising that variations may occur due to topography or system design or scarcity of raw water.

7.3 Member - owners have the right to advance notice, where practicable, of planned interruptions for maintenance or upgrades.

7.4 Member - owners must make reasonable allowances for emergency interruptions and cooperate with measures required to restore supply.

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8. Financial Stewardship

Rights of Member - Owners

8.1 As joint owners of the enterprise, member - owners have the right to:

- Sound and prudent financial management that supports the long-term viability of KGWS.
- Equitable charging structures, typically reflecting usage.
- Participation in decisions on fees, charges, capital works, and major investments. - Consideration and confidentiality in cases of genuine financial hardship.

Duties and Responsibilities of Member - Owners

8.2 Member - owners have a responsibility to:

- Pay charges and fees agreed by the membership.
- Recognise that fees fund the operation, maintenance, and renewal of assets owned collectively.
- Engage constructively with the Board where financial difficulties arise, at the earliest opportunity.

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9. Information and Transparency

Rights of Member - Owners

9.1 Member - owners are entitled to timely, accurate, and relevant information regarding:

- Water quality and treatment processes.
- Planned works or disruptions.
- Governance decisions and policy changes.

Duties and Responsibilities of Member - Owners

9.2 Member - owners have a duty to read, consider, and respond responsibly to information provided by KGWS.

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10. Complaints and Dispute Resolution

10.1 Member - owners have the right to:

- Raise concerns or complaints without fear of discrimination or reprisal.
- Have complaints acknowledged, investigated, and responded to within a reasonable timeframe.
- Be treated with courtesy and respect throughout the process.

10.2 Member - owners have a responsibility to:

- Use the agreed complaints procedure.
- Engage respectfully and constructively in efforts to resolve disputes.

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11. KGWS Property and Connections

Rights of Member - Owners

11.1 All infrastructure forming part of the water scheme is collectively owned by KGWS. Member - owners have a right to expect that these assets are properly maintained and protected.

11.2 Member - owners are entitled to reasonable reinstatement where their property is disturbed due to authorised works on the scheme.

Duties and Responsibilities of Member - Owners

11.3 Member - owners must:

- Not interfere with, damage, or tamper with KGWS property.
- Allow reasonable access for inspection, maintenance, repair, or replacement of KGWS assets.
- Not provide unauthorised connections or supply to third parties.
- Notify KGWS of the sale or transfer of any property connected to the scheme.
- Notify KGWS if they gain knowledge of any interference with scheme property.
- Notify KGWS if they gain knowledge of any unauthorised connections or supply.

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12. Collective Commitment

12.1 This Charter reflects the shared understanding that KGWS is a member-owned enterprise providing an essential public service.

12.2 Member - owners are not passive recipients of water services, but joint custodians of a shared asset with legal, financial, and environmental responsibilities.

12.3 By adopting and upholding this Charter, member - owners commit to:

- Acting in accordance with co-operative principles;
- Protecting public health and the environment;
- Supporting good governance and financial sustainability;
- Ensuring KGWS remains viable for current and future generations.

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