



# ccw

The voice for water consumers  
Y corff sy'n rhoi llais i ddefnyddwyr dŵr

## Forward Work Programme for England and Wales 2020-23

Securing a safe, reliable service,  
and a fair deal for water consumers

[ccwater.org.uk](https://ccwater.org.uk)



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# Chair's Introduction

## Welcome from our Chair

**It's a pleasure to welcome you to our Forward Work Programme for April 2020 to 2023. This provides the blueprint for our work over the next three years to achieve our mission of securing a safe, reliable service and fair deal for water consumers across England and Wales.**

Fulfilling that mission depends on us ensuring the water industry overcomes some of the enormous challenges posed by our growing population and increasingly volatile climate. More extreme weather in the form of droughts and periods of intense rainfall will ramp up the pressure on our water and sewerage network. Consumers expect water companies to be equipped to deal with these challenges – whatever the weather. Innovation holds the key to companies being able to stay one-step ahead of climate pressures, while ensuring these services remain affordable for current and future generations. That's why over the next three years we'll be talking to the industry about embracing innovative solutions to reduce leakage, keep our taps running and eradicate sewer flooding.

All of this must be delivered at a fair price for consumers who remain sceptical of whether water companies are providing real value. Only six out of ten households believe what they pay for water and sewerage services is fair. We want to see the industry change that perception. We believe companies can achieve this by improving the way they engage with their consumers. That should include regularly telling people how they are spending their money to improve the services they care about and protect the environment. These form just some of our strategic ambitions and campaigns, which you can read a summary of [on page 4](#).

None of these campaigns will distract us from our statutory duties which remain at the heart of our day-to-day work.

These include making sure consumers in a wide range of vulnerable circumstances get the support they need, when they need it. We're proud of the progress we've helped the industry to make in this area – but there is still much more to be done. Over the next three years we'll push companies to go above and beyond the commitments they have made to expand support. You can read more about the full range of our statutory duties on our website [here](#).

Households and businesses will also be able to rely on us to keep fighting their corner when a water company or retailer fails to resolve their complaint. Every year we handle thousands of complaints and work tirelessly to make sure companies put things right for consumers. But we want to see companies getting things right first time – without the need for us to step in. Using the wealth of intelligence we gather from handling complaints, we'll challenge companies to fix their failures and improve their customer service.

Whether we are successful or not will rely in no small part on the strength of our partnerships with water companies, retailers, regulators, UK and Welsh Governments and water consumers themselves. Consumers still see an important role for an organisation like ours, something they made clear in our recent research. They also created a list of the activities they want us to focus on, which you can read [here](#).

As we head into a new decade we believe our 3-year plan sets us on a course to deliver these and much more for consumers.



**Robert Light**  
Chair, CCW

## Our mission - Securing a safe, reliable service and a fair deal for water consumers

### Our strategic ambitions

#### Fair charges that everyone can afford

##### What this means for household and business consumers

- Balancing fair and affordable bills with investment and maintenance.
- Efficient, high quality services, now and in the future.
- Consistent help for consumers who struggle with their bill, based on need not postcode.
- Smooth bill changes that avoid sudden large increases/decreases.

##### Measures to test success (in brief)

- Consumers' perception of fairness of charges and value for money improves.
- Price Review affordability commitments are met.
- Companies contribute financially to social tariffs.

#### Outstanding services that are always delivered right first time

##### What this means for household and business consumers

- Excellent service for consumers, that reflect consumers' views and experiences with zero tolerance of failure.
- Fixing the key root causes of household and business complaints and poor service.
- Increased innovation in services for consumers.
- Effective services for consumers in vulnerable circumstances.
- Services that deliver wider social benefits.

##### Measures to test success (in brief)

- Water companies make at least a 5% reduction in billing complaints.
- Year on year reduction in non-household complaints to CCW.
- Consumers report they got the help they needed, esp. after major incidents.
- Overall complaint process is improved.
- Our consumer satisfaction compares well with best of similar organisations.

#### A safe, reliable service now and for the future

##### What this means for household and business consumers

- Reliable water and wastewater services.
- Water industry manages the known challenges and prepares for the unknown challenges of our changing climate.
- Effective incident management by companies to minimise the impact on consumers.
- Reduced leakage.
- Increased awareness of the value of water.

##### Measures to test success (in brief)

- Resilience to drought planning and assumptions improve.
- Help for worst served consumers.
- Price Review sewer flooding commitments are met.
- Price Review interruptions to water supply commitments are met.
- Our expectations are in companies' climate change adaption reports.

### Our campaigns to get the water sector to:

Improve water regulation for consumers

Create excellent, accessible and affordable services for all

Get the basics right for water consumers

Ensure water and sewerage services are fit for the future

**Cost** - Our work for 2020-21 will cost each water bill payer about 22p per year; giving water consumers advice, help and representation when they need it.

# Our measures to test success in full

**These measures aim to improve the service and experience household consumers and business customers receive. Some ensure our monitoring and challenge role is used to keep water companies on track to achieve their performance commitments.**

Others aim to show our influence with companies and retailers in making a change for the better. We will review them in 2023 to assess how far we have achieved our Strategic Ambitions.

## Fair charges that everyone can afford

### Indicators of success

- ✓ Consumers' views for each water company on the perception of fairness of charges and value for money has an improving trend in our Water Matters survey.
- ✓ Each water company is at least on track to meet their Price Review 2019 commitments on affordability with a view to eradicating water poverty.
- ✓ Companies contribute financially to social tariffs as a step towards eradicating water poverty.

## Outstanding services that are always delivered right first time

### Indicators of success

- ✓ Each water company makes at least a 5% reduction in billing complaints in the context of the water company's complaints reducing overall.
- ✓ There is a year on year reduction in non-household complaints to CCW, in the context of retailer complaints reducing overall.
- ✓ All consumers (including those in vulnerable circumstances) get the support they need from water companies when they need it and, in particular, during major incidents.
- ✓ The overall complaint process is improved and consumers are increasingly satisfied with resolution achieved.
- ✓ Consumer satisfaction meets or exceeds our targets and compares favourably with the best of similar organisations in other sectors.

## A safe, reliable service now and for the future

### Indicators of success

- ✓ Drought plans improve to help build resilience and there are no serious restrictions on using water<sup>1</sup>.
- ✓ Consumers who are the worst served are identified and plan to improve actioned.
- ✓ Each water company is on track to meet its performance commitment on internal sewer flooding, working towards zero internal sewer flooding by 2040.
- ✓ Each water company is on track to meet its interruptions to water supply performance commitment.
- ✓ Each water company reflects our expectations in their climate change adaption reports.

<sup>1</sup> By 'serious restrictions' we mean Level 4 situations, such as standpipes being deployed.

# Our campaigns to help deliver our strategic ambitions

These campaigns show what we will focus on and where we will influence, with the aim of delivering tangible change on these issues.

Headline Ambition	Campaigns to get water sector to	Campaign Aims
Fair charges that everyone can afford	<b>Improve water regulation for consumers</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improving how the price review works for consumers, involving a lessons learnt review; improving how incentives work for consumers and involving consumers in price setting.</li> </ul>
	<b>Create excellent, accessible and affordable services for all</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improving water company performance by aiding those who are poorly performing by sharing good practice on affordability and vulnerability (including temporary vulnerability).</li> <li>Influencing social tariff guidance development.</li> <li>Improving the Guaranteed Standards Scheme (GSS) by calling for a comprehensive review.</li> <li>Reviewing companies' overall debt recovery processes.</li> </ul>
Outstanding services that are always delivered right first time	<b>Get the basics right for water consumers</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improve water company performance by repeatedly publicising poor performing companies and retailers on key consumer issues, including complaints levels, leakage rates, water supply interruptions and sewer flooding through publications, such as our new Water Mark<sup>2</sup> report.</li> <li>Work with the industry and Ofwat to improve the complaints process for consumers.</li> <li>Fix the root causes of billing complaints, including when consumers repeatedly have problems.</li> <li>Speed up performance improvements to the business customer retail market in England.</li> <li>Ensuring lessons have been learnt from major water incidents.</li> </ul>
A safe and reliable service now and for the future	<b>Ensure water and sewerage services are fit for the future</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Challenging to ensure performance commitments on resilience (including leakage) and the environment are on track so the system works now and is fit for the future.</li> <li>Increasing our own and consumer involvement in regional water resource planning.</li> <li>Challenging the effectiveness of companies' climate change adaptation plans from a consumer perspective.</li> <li>Encouraging the development of a future drainage system that is fit for future needs.</li> <li>Promoting the value of water, and in doing so encourage consumers to use their water services responsibly.</li> </ul>

<sup>2</sup> Water Mark will compare company performance over a number of metrics, such as consumer satisfaction with service.

## Other projects during 2020-21

**In addition to our campaigns and activities that deliver for household and business consumers, we will also carry out other activities, often on a one-off basis. For example, in response to Government or regulator initiatives, or to improve the running of the organisation.**

During 2020-21, we anticipate moving to a new office within the Government Hubs in Cardiff and Birmingham, which aims to provide savings overall to the public sector. We are planning to make changes to our Board and Committee structures in 2020/21. This is, however, subject to public consultation and Ministerial approvals.

# Hearing from Water Consumers – our research programme

**Our research helps tell us what is important to household and business consumers. We gather information each year so we can constantly review what we need to do as a result of the consumer insight gained from our research.**

During 2019-20 we started trialling a consumer community to help us gather consumers' views in a simpler way for certain topics. We are going to develop this during 2020-21.

**Our plans are below but are subject to change:**

Research that supports our delivery:	2020 - 21	2021 - 22	2022 - 23	2023 & beyond
<b>Tracking research</b>				
<b>Water Matters</b> – our extensive yearly household consumer research, which provides a comprehensive view of consumers' positions on water and sewerage issues, including on value for money and satisfaction with service.	●	●	●	●
<b>Testing the Waters</b> – our large scale survey of business customers in England and Wales to measure how they feel about water and sewerage issues that affect them, including value for money, while gauging their perceptions of the water industry.	●		●	●
<b>Price Review research</b>				
Understanding the needs of consumers in the company business planning process.	●			
PR24 research – research in preparation for the next price-setting process.		●	●	
<b>Research with consumers via an our new online community</b>				
	●	●	●	●
<b>Environmental research</b>				
To explore consumer views on the environment, including the water environment and their expectations of how water companies should manage their operations and tackle environmental challenges, both now and in the longer term.	●			
<b>Publish our supplementary insight reports gained from our understanding of research</b>				
This includes our highlights report, which each year will focus on an area of consumer detriment as revealed by the data, such as value for money, or what the industry can do to positively change perceptions.	●	●	●	●



# An overview of our business as usual core functions and statutory responsibilities

There are some 'business as usual' activities, such as informing consumers about water issues that we will continue to do. Some of these are listed below. More information on our legal duties is here on our website.

## Statutory requirements of CCW:

- Help household & business (non-household) consumers with enquiries and complaints; and publishing information about water companies' complaint handling.
- Help disadvantaged consumers, such as those in vulnerable circumstances or in rural areas.
- Represent the interests of consumers supplied by new entrants to the market.

## Be consulted on:

- Charges schemes.
- Some retail market activity.
- Draft regulations about the supply of water to a water undertaker by a person other than a water undertaker.
- Licence changes as a result of consumer redress schemes.
- The UK and Welsh Governments' charging guidance and strategic priorities.

## Keep under review information about consumer matters such as:

- Promoting industry openness, including getting companies to explain profits in a consumer friendly way.
- Helping consumers during compulsory metering programmes.
- Monitoring company progress in meeting performance commitments.
- Challenging the companies or retailers in public on water consumer issues.
- Responding to consultations on issues that could affect water consumers.



# How we contribute to the achievement of Defra and Welsh Government's (WG) objectives for the water sector

## Our work with the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

We ensure we play our part in helping the UK Government deliver its objectives in its 25-year environment plan, and in particular on its two over-arching priorities of protecting consumers and securing long-term resilience.

Defra's priorities as outlined in its priorities and objectives for Ofwat	How our Strategic Ambitions align with Defra's priorities statement
<b>Protecting customers</b> - the water sector to go further to identify and meet the needs of customers who are struggling to afford their charges.	Fair charges that everyone can afford.
<b>Assistance</b> - companies to improve the availability, quality, promotion and uptake of support to low income and other vulnerable household customers.	Helping consumers in vulnerable circumstances (statutory duty).
<b>Securing long-term resilience</b> - the water sector should plan, invest and operate to meet the needs of current and future customers, in a way which offers best value for money over the long term.	A safe, reliable service now and for the future. Fair charges that everyone can afford.
<b>Small Business</b> - water companies should have an enhanced focus on the needs of small business customers that may struggle to access the best deals.	Outstanding services that are always delivered right first time.
<b>Making Markets Work</b> - the sector should drive innovation and achieve efficiencies in a way that takes account of the need to further: (i) the long-term resilience of water & wastewater systems/ services; and / or (ii) the protection of vulnerable customers.	Fair charges that everyone can afford. Helping consumers in vulnerable circumstances (statutory duty).
<b>Water supply</b> - the sector should further a reduction in the long-term risk to water supply resilience from drought and other factors, including through new supply solutions, demand management and increased water trading.	A safe, reliable service now and for the future.
<b>Wastewater</b> - companies should improve planning and investment to meet the wastewater needs of current and future customers.	A safe, reliable service now and for the future.
<b>Resilience</b> - water companies should make sure that they assess the resilience of their system and infrastructure against the full range of potential hazards and threats and take proportionate steps to improve resilience where required.	A safe, reliable service now and for the future.
<b>Resilience</b> - companies should further the resilience of ecosystems that underpin water & wastewater systems, by encouraging the sustainable use of natural capital & by having appropriate regard to the wider costs & benefits to the economy, society & the environment.	A safe, reliable service now and for the future.

# Our organisation - what we cost

## Our work with the Welsh Government (WG)

In Wales, we work with the Welsh Government to ensure we play our part in helping it deliver the Well-being and Future Generations Act, the Environment (Wales) Act, and in making Wales a fair, green and prosperous place.

In the next few years, we will work closely with the Government and companies in Wales on the commencement of the Wales Act 2017 provisions, which will realign the water industry regulatory boundaries in Wales from wholly or mainly to Wales-only and England-only. We will work with WG on the development of its revised Water Strategy for Wales.

Welsh Government's priorities as outlined in its Strategic Priorities and Objectives statement for Ofwat	How our Strategic Ambitions align with WG's priorities statement
<b>Affordability</b> - improve the value for money of water and sewerage services, having regard to resilience and service over the long term; social tariffs to be available for those who struggle to pay.	Fair charges that everyone can afford.
<b>Innovation</b> - seek new ways of delivering services for customers and the environment more efficiently.	Outstanding services that are always delivered right first time. A safe, reliable service now and for the future.
<b>Long Term</b> – consider the balance between short term and long term and the need to safeguard longer-term affordability, resilience and performance.	A safe, reliable service now and for the future.
<b>Markets and Competition</b> - approach is consistent with WG policy on retail and upstream competition.	Outstanding services that are always delivered right first time.
<b>Resilience</b> – consider resilience in relation to long-term and short-term challenges.	A safe, reliable service now and for the future.
<b>Strong customer focus</b> – engage with customers and consider different customer needs including those in vulnerable circumstances.	Integral to all 3 Strategic Ambitions.
<b>Sustainable management of natural resources</b> – including a more integrated approach to managing our natural resources; encouraging sustainable and efficient use of water resources, encouraging leakage reduction and consumption; manage waste water and surface water in an integrated and sustainable way.	A safe, reliable service now and for the future.

**Our work for 2020-21 will cost each water bill payer about 22p per year. This cost gives all water consumers in England and Wales access to advice, help and representation when they need it, and allows us to raise consumer issues with Governments, regulators and water companies.**

For each financial year, CCW's budget is fully funded from the licence fee, collected from each water company and retailer in England and Wales. The licence fee is not raised for non-cash costs such as depreciation.

For 2020-21 we raised our licence fee by a modest £116k (2%) in line with the estimated inflation (CPIH). Our licence fee will be £5.898 million in 2020-21. During the year we anticipate incurring one-off costs relating to office moves to Government hub buildings in Birmingham and Cardiff.

# ccw

The voice for water consumers

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