

A large, stylized teal wave graphic that spans across the middle of the page, partially overlapping the text below it. The wave has three distinct peaks and is rendered with a slight 3D effect using a darker teal shadow.

ccw

The voice for water consumers
Llais defnyddwyr dŵr

Consumer panels

EXPECTATIONS OF COMPANIES

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Overview

The aim of this document is to outline the expectations set on water companies by CCW in relation to the [Water Voice consumer panels](#) and the Accountability Sessions.

These expectations should be read in conjunction with the Terms of Reference for the Accountability Sessions and the [Ofwat consultation on the Consumer Involvement Rule](#).

Aim

The aim of the consumer panels is to provide water consumers with the opportunity to feed into their company's decision-making processes and to hold their water companies to account on areas that have a [material impact on consumer matters](#).¹ The consumer panels will do this in two ways:

1. Research – the panels will provide monthly consumer views on sentiment towards water companies and on topical issues.
2. Accountability Sessions – occurring twice a year, consumers will be able to hold their water companies to account on performance and customer service issues. Additional ad-hoc Accountability Sessions can be held should the panellists require them.

Research

CCW will publish the findings from the consumer panels' research on a monthly basis. We will discuss the findings with companies through our usual company engagement channels.

- CCW expects companies to engage with the research findings and triangulate them with other sources of information that they hold, to ensure that business decisions are based on consumer views.

In some instances, we anticipate that the consumer panels' research may uncover different findings to research that is done by companies.

- Where this occurs, we expect that companies work to understand what is driving these differences and hold constructive discussions with CCW about a way forward.

Accountability Sessions

The Accountability Sessions will focus on company performance and obtaining feedback on actions taken by the company to address consumer issues. They will enable consumers to be involved in company decisions that have a material impact on consumer interests, as stated in the Water Industry Act 1991, Section 35B.

The aim of the Accountability Sessions is to facilitate a two-way discussion where consumer panellists are empowered to raise concerns, ask questions and challenge

¹ Please refer to section 2.6.3 of Ofwat's Consultation on decisions that are likely to have a material impact.

water companies on areas of perceived poor performance and issues of interest. Panellists will be supported by insights obtained from the consumer panels' research and significant events that are relevant to their service provider.

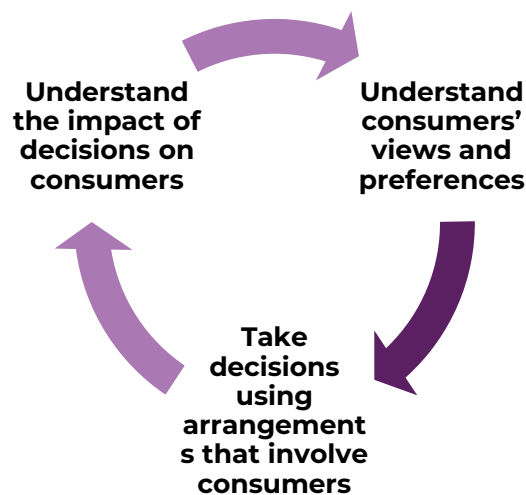
The [Ofwat consultation on the Consumer Involvement Rule](#) states that companies must:

- Make every effort for a senior representative to attend.
- Ensure that a summary of matters discussed at the sessions are shared with the company Board.

The consultation also states that companies should follow the cycle below to involve consumers in their decision making.

CCW will monitor how companies meet panellists' expectations and share progress updates and relevant information with Ofwat, to support Ofwat's efforts in monitoring the rule.

Figure 1. Cycle of consumer involvement²



Attendance

The Accountability Sessions will be held online at a time that is convenient to the majority of the consumer panellists.

Senior Executives of the water companies (e.g. CEOs, Directors of Customer Service, Water, Wastewater, Finance, etc.) are required to attend. Board members are also welcome. The sessions will be chaired by a member of the CCW Board and facilitated by the research agency.

- CCW expects companies to ensure that the right company representatives are available at the session so that they are able to fully address the questions and concerns raised by consumer panellists.

² Ofwat's consultation – Consumer Involvement Rule, August 2025

CCW will share a list of key themes that panellists want to discuss with the company one week ahead of the Accountability Sessions.

Other relevant stakeholders, including regulators for the water industry in England and Wales, and Chairs of the Independent Challenge Groups (ICGs) are also invited to observe the meeting. They can nominate a delegate to attend in their absence if they wish.

- CCW expects each company to respond when requested to establish a principal point of contact for the delivery of the Accountability and ad-hoc sessions.

Providing information

Prior to the Accountability Sessions, CCW will hold a briefing session with panellists to ensure that they have all of the information needed to have a constructive conversation with companies. This will also help them to prioritise what topics they would like to discuss with their company.

- Where required, CCW expects companies to provide balanced information to CCW in a timely manner to help navigate these discussions. Companies are not expected to attend the briefing sessions.
- Companies are expected to provide CCW with the information within 5 working days of being requested. This will likely be two weeks ahead of the briefing session.

Format of the sessions

- CCW expects the Accountability Sessions to be conversational between the panel members and water company representatives. As such, we do not expect the session to be presentation-heavy, although we understand that a slide may help explain certain areas of performance.
- CCW expects companies to keep communication jargon-free and accessible to all participants.

The discussion is expected to be transparent, respectful and honest. There is a Code of Conduct in the [Terms of Reference for the Accountability Sessions](#).

The sessions will be chaired by a CCW Board member and facilitated by a professional facilitator to ensure that the panels' questions are asked and suitably responded to. An agenda will be shared one week in advance and is to be followed to ensure a structured and focused discussion.

- The meetings will take place online.
- CCW expects consumer panellists to see their water company representatives appearing on an individual screen. It is expected that the company representatives will have a virtual branded background.

Creating meaningful action plans

- CCW expects companies to publish an action plan within 28 working days of the Accountability Sessions, setting out how they will address the issues that panellists raised at the session. The action plan must include:
 - Reference number
 - The date the action was raised
 - A description of the action
 - The action category (e.g. Service, Water or Waste)
 - The response from the company
 - Additional narrative if required
 - A deadline for when the action will be completed
 - The outcome of the action when it has been completed
 - The date the action was closed
- CCW expects the actions to include a deadline for completion which is reflective of their urgency, the resources required to implement them and the impact of doing so. The deadlines are expected to be achievable yet completed within an efficient timeframe. The working template for action plans can be found in the Appendix.
- CCW expects companies to share a draft of the action plan with them by working day 25.

Sharing progress on action plans

CCW will liaise with companies through its usual company engagement channels to monitor progress against the action plans.

- CCW expects to receive updates from companies on how they are progressing against the actions and when they are completed.
- The action plan will be shared with the consumer panellists ahead of the next Accountability Session, to demonstrate companies' progress on issues raised.

Accountability Sessions will be held every six months, giving panel members the opportunity to discuss company progress on the actions plans with their company.

- CCW expects companies to provide progress updates ahead of the pre-accountability briefing sessions so that CCW can update panellists in those sessions.

Companies are also encouraged to keep their own website up to date in terms of progress against the action plan.

Appendix

Example template of an action plan

PLACEHOLDER FOR COMPANY BRANDING & LOGO								
Accountability Sessions draft action plan- 25/26								
Type of action:					Deadline			
Information/clarification about actions that are already planned or have happened - see example 1					Timescale to be set by company, with agreement of the relevant panel. CCW to track progress at quarterly meetings and interim discussions. The action plan will be shared with the consumer panellists ahead of the next accountability session, to demonstrate companies' progress on issues raised.			
Change to local activity or approach - example 2								
Action #	Date Raised	Description of the action	Category	Company Response	Additional Narrative if required	Deadline	Outcome	Date closed
1	Date of panel meeting	Example 1: Significant new housing being developed in an area where the storm overflow frequently overflows. How can the company ensure that the storm overflow will not be triggered any more with this new housing development?	Storm Overflows	Example 1: Company is to provide clarity about how these issues have been considered already and explain what they can and cannot influence and list action item		Company sets timescale and panel challenges or agrees	Customers have new information about the decision that has been made	
2		Example 2: We have reviewed the company performance and notice that the company is not meeting its targets on Customer Measure for Experience (CMEX). The customer service for billing is an area that needs improving. What is the company doing to address this?	Billing	Company should explain the reasons for missing the CMEX target and agree with action items to address issue in a reasonable timeframe.		Company sets timescale and panel challenges or agrees	Customers have new information about the decision that has been made	



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