



The voice for water consumers
Llais defnyddwyr dŵr

Water Voice Ad Hoc Accountability Session Action plan response

South East Water

Monday 2nd February 2026

Delivered by Taylor McKenzie
Research & Energy Saving Trust

Version: Update with South East
Action plan response – 11.03.26

ccw.org.uk

Contents page



Our findings alongside South East Water's response from their Action Plan

Q1. Actions overview

Actions in detail "You said" / "We did" / South East response

Page 3

Page 4

Q2. Actions overview

Actions in detail "You said" / "We did" / South East response

Page 17

Page 18

Q3. Actions overview

Actions in detail "You said" / "We did" / South East response

Page 24

Page 25

Please note: This report includes a summary of what our community said on the night, alongside South East Water's official response. A more detailed report has been published on the CCW website and can be found by [clicking this link](#)

Q1. Actions

Rebuilding trust through better communication



The voice for water consumers
Llais defnyddwyr dŵr

Q1. Breaking trust with changing communication

“From the outset, inconsistent and conflicting updates led customers to lose trust in the information South East Water was providing. This mistrust made it harder for people to know what was going on and what guidance to rely on about supply restoration, water delivery (particularly for vulnerable customers). The impact was felt across the wider community with significant traffic congestion caused by queues for access to the water stations. There was no consistency in what the message was or who was delivering it. What specific steps are South East Water taking to ensure that, in future outages, communications are consistent and fit-for-purpose? How will you rebuild customer trust in your companies' communications?”

- a) Review how communications are delivered to ensure messages reach vulnerable customers and those without internet access, including people not currently on the Priority Services Register.
- b) Continue and strengthen collaboration with local authorities, including sharing and using lists to support deliveries and welfare checks for vulnerable customers.
- c) Explore and improve door-knocking and welfare check approaches, particularly for elderly South East Water customers / those on priority service register and those unable to collect water.
- d) Maintain and expand use of the Priority Services Register, including delivering bottled water to the door for customers who cannot collect water.
- e) Improve the way bottled water is delivered to all customers, reducing reliance on customers travelling to water stations.
- f) Review the use of bottled water, including whether alternatives (such as trucking water in) could reduce the need for customer travel.
- g) Progress use of technology, including the app currently in beta testing, to support clearer communications and information sharing.
- h) Confirm that businesses and households will receive compensation, in line with statutory payment in lieu.
- i) Be open to customer preferences on who delivers messages, including visible leadership and trusted spokespeople.
- j) Commission a truly independent review, with actions completed within three months and the report made visible once produced.

Supporting the vulnerable and offline customers

Breaking trust with changing communication (Q1. Actions a, b, c & d combined)



The voice for water consumers
Llais defnyddwyr dŵr

“From the outset, inconsistent and conflicting updates led customers to lose trust in the information South East Water was providing. This mistrust made it harder for people to know what was going on and what guidance to rely on about supply restoration, water delivery (particularly for vulnerable customers). The impact was felt across the wider community with significant traffic congestion caused by queues for access to the water stations. There was no consistency in what the message was or who was delivering it. What specific steps are South East Water taking to ensure that, in future outages, communications are consistent and fit-for-purpose? How will you rebuild customer trust in your companies' communications?”

“You said” (Community member actions)	“We did” (South East Response on the night)	“We will do in the future” (South East Response on the night)	What is the ‘Ideal’ South East response? (In the eyes of our community)	Timescale
<p>Digital messages don't reach everyone - especially vulnerable customers and those without internet access. Community members asked how South East Water will reach offline community members, work with local partners, and check in on elderly or vulnerable people.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sent targeted communications to their customers already identified as vulnerable, including those on the Priority Services Register. • Put arrangements in place for nominated representatives to act on behalf of vulnerable customers. • Delivered bottled water to vulnerable households and remote locations where risks were identified. • Asked customers to check on neighbours 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with local authorities and community partners to strengthen non-digital communication routes, including doorstep welfare checks where appropriate. • Expand the use of offline support and local distribution networks to reach customers without internet access. • Develop a more proactive, pre-emptive approach to water deliveries for vulnerable customers during future incidents. 	<p>Community members want clearer detail and reassurance, particularly that no one is missed, before they can accept these actions go far enough, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What a proactive approach looks like in practice (e.g. triggers, thresholds, timing). • A clear list of offline communication methods that will be used (e.g. door knocking, phone calls, printed notices, community hubs). • How South East Water will strengthen and formalise partnerships with local authorities and community organisations to ensure vulnerable customers are consistently reached. 	<p>Within the next 3 months.</p>



Rebuilding trust depends on how well vulnerable and offline Community members are supported in practice.

“We all become vulnerable when the water supply is off for more than one day” South East community member

Supporting the vulnerable and offline customers

Breaking trust with changing communication (Q1. Actions a, b, c & d combined)



The voice for water consumers
Llais defnyddwyr dŵr

Please find the response from South East Water's Action Plan below (Page 1 of 2) Timescale

South East Water are committed to strengthening our responses to incidents as such we have the following actions taking place:

Planned interruptions

If we're planning to interrupt your water supply for more than four hours, we'll tell you in writing at least 48 hours before the interruption starts. If we don't, we'll automatically pay you compensation. We'll also restore your water supply when we said we would, or earlier if possible. If we don't, we'll automatically pay you compensation, plus another automatic payment for every continuous 12 hour period that your supply is not restored. We'll make these payments within 20 working days of when your water supply is returned, or of the date we failed to give you notice or restore your supply on time.

Unplanned interruption

If there's an unplanned interruption, for example, because a water pipe has burst, we'll provide you with an estimated time of when your water will return as soon as possible. This can be found using our AquAlerter portal aqualerter.southeastwater.co.uk or by phoning 0333 000 0002. We'll restore your supply within 12 hours of us finding out about the interruption. If we don't restore your supply within this time, we'll automatically pay you compensation, plus another automatic payment for every 12 continuous hours that your supply is still not restored. We'll make these payments within 20 working days of when your water supply is returned.*

* The response continues onto the next slide

Within the next 3 months

Supporting the vulnerable and offline customers

Breaking trust with changing communication (Q1. Actions a, b, c & d combined)



The voice for water consumers
Llais defnyddwyr dŵr

Please find the response from South East Water's Action Plan below (Page 2 of 2) Timescale

- We are sending out a digital exclusion campaign to all customers where we only have an address on our system in order to gather more contact information where possible
- We are organising an Alternate Water sprint in Kent, presently planned for May 2026, specifically designed to agree detailed ways of working and partnerships going forwards. This work will define the necessary triggers, thresholds and timings to ensure our response is prompt and effective before an incident escalates.
- We will reiterate and strengthen our standard practices, which already include contact methods such as letter, SMS, phone calls and visiting in person if no other form of contact is successful.
- We are working with local resilience forum groups (LRF's) where they support us with implementing doorstep welfare checks during an incident where appropriate.
- With regards vulnerable customers, to ensure they are consistently reached, we will work with local authorities and community partners to formalise and strengthen our agreements. As mentioned above, the Alternate Water sprint in May 2026 will be a crucial step in agreeing on formal partnership agreements and data sharing protocols.
- We are developing heat maps of community networks and local resilience partnerships, including local Parish Councils in rural communities, to collaborate with during incidents. This initiative will improve data accuracy in locating networks that can support customers and will ensure we can quickly adapt to contribute to coordinated community responses.
- We have organised a letter drop in coordination with KCUK and meetings have been held with the Red Cross, Macmillan and local hospitals to discuss collaborative opportunities.

Our BSI ISO Vulnerability Accreditation continuing assessment will be achieved in November 2026.

Our existing Vulnerability Strategy for 2025-2030 can be found here:

https://cdn.southeastwater.co.uk/Publications/Our_Vulnerability_Strategy_2025-2030/WEB_V1_SEW_Customer_Vulnerability_Strategy.pdf

Within the next 3 months

Emergency water provision, traffic & environmental impact



The voice for water consumers
Llais defnyddwyr dŵr

Breaking trust with changing communication (Q1. Actions e & f combined)

“From the outset, inconsistent and conflicting updates led Community members to lose trust in the information South East Water was providing. This mistrust made it harder for people to know what was going on and what guidance to rely on about supply restoration, water delivery (particularly for vulnerable Community members). The impact was felt across the wider community with significant traffic congestion caused by queues for access to the water stations. There was no consistency in what the message was or who was delivering it. What specific steps are South East Water taking to ensure that, in future outages, communications are consistent and fit-for-purpose? How will you rebuild customer trust in your companies' communications?”

“You said” (Community member actions)	“We did” (South East Response on the night)	“We will do in the future” (South East Response on the night)	What is the ‘Ideal’ South East response? (In the eyes of our community)	Timescale
Improve the way bottled water is delivered to reduce reliance on customers travelling to water stations, including concerns about traffic congestion caused by queues, and review the use of bottled water, including whether alternatives (such as trucking water in) could reduce customer travel and how recycling is handled.	Confirmed that bottled water was delivered to some vulnerable customers and remote locations during the later January incident, where risks were identified.	No specific future commitments were set out during the session on reducing customer travel, addressing traffic impacts, alternative delivery methods, or recycling arrangements.	Clear justification for when bottled water is used <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduced reliance on customers travelling to collection point • Minimised traffic and congestion impacts • Committing to deliver bottled water to everyone during a prolonged outage • Consideration of alternatives where possible, and transparency on environmental impacts including the recycling of plastic bottles. • Working with local council to recycle bottles at collection points. • Confirmation / details on water delivery to vulnerable customers during the Nov/Dec outage 	By 1 st April 2026



How emergency water is communicated and delivered **directly affects trust**, traffic disruption, and environmental impact.

“It seems to me, with regards to communication, you didn’t really have a strategy and you lost the room” *South East community member*

Emergency water provision, traffic & environmental impact

Breaking trust with changing communication (Q 1. Actions e & f combined)



The voice for water consumers
Llais defnyddwyr dŵr

Please find the response from South East Water's Action Plan below

Timescale

At present South East Water have a large fleet of 12 tankers which we already utilise during major incidents to ship water from other locations to an affected region if water levels are low. For example, during the Pembury event the tankers moved 13 million litres of water. With mutual aid and contracted tankers we moved a total of 37m litres of water over two weeks.

As part of our ongoing plans we are further optimising the use of the tankers and working with third party contractors to bring in additional support vehicles when required, as part of this process we are reviewing the additional support vehicle requirements.

A sprint is in progress with regards locating optimal bottled water areas going forwards, traffic implications will also be considered during this process.

We are also looking to explore options with regards supporting our partners when it comes to recycling and collecting excess volumes of used plastic bottles. Ideally making use of existing infrastructure and services.

We can provide specific data regarding the deliveries completed, the data will include the deliveries, any percentage missed and the figures for GSS paid.

By 1st April 2026

Digital communication and rebuilding trust

Breaking trust with changing communication (Q1 Action g)



The voice for water consumers
Llais defnyddwyr dŵr

*“From the outset, inconsistent and conflicting updates led customers to lose trust in the information South East Water was providing. This mistrust made it harder for people to know what was going on and what guidance to rely on about supply restoration, water delivery (particularly for vulnerable customers). The impact was felt across the wider community with significant traffic congestion caused by queues for access to the water stations. There was no consistency in what the message was or who was delivering it. What specific steps are South East Water taking to ensure that, in future outages, **communications are consistent and fit-for-purpose**? How will you rebuild customer trust in your companies' communications?”*

“You said” (Community Member actions)	“We did” (South East Response on the night)	“We will do in the future” (South East Response on the night)	What is the ‘Ideal’ South East response? (In the eyes of our community)	Timescale
<p>Community members said that digital messages alone are not reliable during a major incident and questioned whether mass messaging actually helped people understand what was happening. They asked how technology would improve clarity, accuracy and trust and how it would work alongside non-digital communication.</p>	<p>South East Water stated that they had sent 1.2 million messages during the incident and referenced a customer communications app currently in beta testing.</p>	<p>South East Water said the app could be a useful tool for future communications</p>	<p>Community members want clarity on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • how the app would work during a live incident. Is this just for sharing information about how much bottled water is at each station or will it have other functions? • whether it would provide accurate, consistent and trusted updates, including social media • how South East Water would complement offline communication so that digital tools do not widen gaps or exclude Community members <p>Until this is clear, community members do not yet see technology as a solution to the communication failures experienced.</p>	<p>Within the next 3-6 months.</p>



When communication failed, trust collapsed – and the impact on Community members was immediate and prolonged.

“We didn’t know what information we could trust”
South East community member

Digital communication and rebuilding trust

Breaking trust with changing communication (Q1 Action g)



The voice for water consumers
Llais defnyddwyr dŵr

Please find the response from South East Water's Action Plan below

Timescale

Our industry-leading service update tool, AquAlerter, provides live updates on supply interruptions across the South East Water supply area. Customers can sign up for SMS alerts and stay notified 24/7 with our live map, as well as view bottled water station locations, check water hardness and report leaks.

If there is a problem with a customers water supply, we may also issue updates via:

- Text messages
- Social media
- Emails
- News bulletins on regional media (e.g. BBC / ITV)

If there is an interruption to the water supply and we have a customers mobile phone number, we will issue updates directly via our text message service. If we do not have a customers mobile phone number, we can be contacted on 0333 000 0001 to update account details or via the 'My Account' portal.

As there are different reasons why your water supply might be interrupted, we will make sure that the updates that we give you are helpful, timely, relevant and as frequent as possible.

AquAlerter presently provides capability to reach customers for whom we have a mobile phone number. Typically AquAlerter covers around two-thirds of our customer base.

Digital customers are also able to view incident updates via the 'My Account' portal when logged in.

In terms of non-digital customers, we will work with local and regional media to provide briefings, media statements and spokespeople to reach customers that are digitally excluded. In addition to this we also utilise door to door methods for alternate water deliveries where customers have neither a mobile phone number or landline registered in our system.

As part of our ongoing processes we are continuously reviewing customer contact information to ensure that mobile phone numbers and non-digital contact details are up to date.

We are also investigating SMS capacity to ensure that in the event of a widespread incident customers remain informed.

Within the next 3-6 months

Compensation for households and businesses

Breaking trust with changing communication (Q1 Action h)



The voice for water consumers
Llais defnyddwyr dŵr

*“From the outset, inconsistent and conflicting updates led customers to lose trust in the information South East Water was providing. This mistrust made it harder for people to know what was going on and what guidance to rely on about supply restoration, water delivery (particularly for vulnerable customers). The impact was felt across the wider community with significant traffic congestion caused by queues for access to the water stations. There was no consistency in what the message was or who was delivering it. What specific steps are South East Water taking to ensure that, in future outages, communications are consistent and fit-for-purpose? **How will you rebuild customer trust** in your companies' communications?”*

“You said” (Community Member actions)	“We did” (South East Response on the night)	“We will do in the future” (South East Response on the night)	What is the ‘Ideal’ South East response? (In the eyes of our community)	Timescale
Community members said that being without water for an extended period had a significant impact on daily life and on businesses. They asked for clear confirmation that households and businesses affected by the incident would receive compensation.	South East Water confirmed during the session that compensation* would be paid to affected households and businesses.	South East Water stated that compensation* would be paid in line with statutory payment in lieu.	Community members want: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • clear information on who will receive compensation • clarity on how and when payments will be made • reassurance that customers do not need to take additional steps to receive what they are entitled to 	By 1 st April 2026

**Compensation payments are made in line with statutory requirements. You can read more about the Guaranteed Standards Scheme (GSS) on the CCW website.*

[What standards are guaranteed by water and sewerage companies? - CCW](#)



Community members sought clear confirmation on compensation for households and businesses affected.

“How are you going to A) compensate loss of water and B) resolve these complaints to, you know, build the trust effectively?” *South East community member*

Compensation for households and businesses

Breaking trust with changing communication (Q1 Action h)



The voice for water consumers
Llais defnyddwyr dŵr

Please find the response from South East Water's Action Plan below

Timescale

South East Water have a Code of Practice already in place with regards to statutory payments, we will review the content to ensure the application to the water account is clear.

When requesting refunds, customers are already able to connect to their online "My Account" and request a refund to their bank account.

In the case of non-digital customers, payments will be made directly to their account with no action required. The customer would need to contact our call centre to specify they would require a refund and to specify which bank account they would like the payment made.

By April 1st
2026



The voice for water consumers
Llais defnyddwyr dŵr

Leadership visibility and trusted spokespeople

Breaking trust with changing communication (Q1 Action i)

*“From the outset, inconsistent and conflicting updates led customers to lose trust in the information South East Water was providing. This mistrust made it harder for people to know what was going on and what guidance to rely on about supply restoration, water delivery (particularly for vulnerable customers). The impact was felt across the wider community with significant traffic congestion caused by queues for access to the water stations. **There was no consistency in what the message was or who was delivering it.** What specific steps are South East Water taking to ensure that, in future outages, communications are consistent and fit-for-purpose? How will you rebuild customer trust in your companies' communications?”*

“You said” (Community Member actions)	“We did” (South East Response on the night)	“We will do in the future” (South East Response on the night)	What is the ‘Ideal’ South East response? (In the eyes of our community)	Timescale
Community members said trust was undermined by inconsistent messaging and a lack of visible leadership. They felt that senior leaders should have been front and centre during the incident and asked who would be responsible for delivering messages in future outages.	South East Water acknowledged the concern and said they were open to hearing customer preferences on who delivers messages.	South East Water said they were open to customer views on leadership visibility and spokesperson roles. No communication solutions were explicitly described during the session.	Community members want: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear expectations about when senior leadership will be publicly visible during incidents • Consistency in who speaks on behalf of the company • Messages that are credible, accountable, and delivered by people with authority Without defined roles or commitments, community members remain concerned that this issue could recur.	Within one month.



Community members questioned the lack of visible leadership and clear ownership of communication during the incident.

“I think we expect the leader to be front and centre, to build trust” South East community member

Leadership visibility and trusted spokespeople

Breaking trust with changing communication (Q1 Action i)



The voice for water consumers
Llais defnyddwyr dŵr

Please find the response from South East Water's Action Plan below	Timescale
<p>As part of South East Water's ongoing review process, procedures and protocols for communications during incidents will be updated as appropriate following independent reviews of our customer engagement.</p>	<p>Within 1 Month.</p>



The voice for water consumers
Llais defnyddwyr dŵr

Independent review and follow-through

Breaking trust with changing communication (Q1 Action j)

“From the outset, inconsistent and conflicting updates led customers to lose trust in the information South East Water was providing. This mistrust made it harder for people to know what was going on and what guidance to rely on about supply restoration, water delivery (particularly for vulnerable customers). The impact was felt across the wider community with significant traffic congestion caused by queues for access to the water stations. There was no consistency in what the message was or who was delivering it. What specific steps are South East Water taking to ensure that, in future outages, communications are consistent and fit-for-purpose? How will you rebuild customer trust in your companies' communications?”

“You said” (Community Member actions)	“We did” (South East Response on the night)	“We will do in the future” (South East Response on the night)	What is the ‘Ideal’ South East response? (In the eyes of our community)	Timescale
Community members said that restoring trust requires independent scrutiny , not an internal or company-led review. They wanted assurance that lessons would be learned, acted on, and made public.	South East Water committed to commissioning a review and stated that actions would be completed within three months, with the report made visible once produced.	South East Water said they would complete the review, act on its findings, and provide visibility of the report.	Community members want: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • clarity on who will conduct the review and how independence will be guaranteed • transparency on the scope of the review and how actions will be enforced • reassurance that findings will lead to real change, not just recommendations Until these details are confirmed, confidence in the review process remains limited.	Within the next 3 months.



Community members called for an independent review and clear follow-through on actions.

“So why would you have a non-exec director doing that? I don't agree with that at all. I think it should be put it out to one of the big four and do it like that” South East community member

Independent review and follow-through

Breaking trust with changing communication (Q1 Action j)



The voice for water consumers
Llais defnyddwyr dŵr

Please find the response from South East Water's Action Plan below

Timescale

A review has been commissioned by the South East Water Board and is being led by an Independent Non-Executive Director.

Independent External Experts have been appointed to conduct the review.

The review will be published in April, in addition we have commissioned a customer research insight project to further understand the impact on customers during recent outages and will act on the results once available.

Within next 3 months

Q2. Actions

Strengthening monitoring and system oversight



Q2. They Said (Drinking Water Inspectorate) Vs You Said (what caused the outage)

“You gave a detailed account of what happened at Pembury and why it happened. We then heard a different explanation from the Drinking Water Inspector. Why do the two accounts differ and who can we believe? What learnings from the Inspectors feedback are going to be actioned?”

- a) Explain clearly why South East Water’s view on foreseeability differs from the Drinking Water Inspectorate’s position, noting that the difference relates to foreseeability.
- b) Act on learning from the Inspectorate’s feedback, including closer and more frequent monitoring of coagulants.
- c) Maintain a second coagulant as an emergency back-up, already put in place.
- d) Install additional monitors over the next few months to improve water quality monitoring.
- e) Share learning from the incident with industry experts and across the wider industry, recognising the unusual nature of the issue.
- f) Commit to acting on any recommendations made by the Drinking Water Inspectorate.
- g) Use increased investment in the five-year plan, particularly around resilience, to address future risks.

Conflicting explanations and foreseeability

They Said (Drinking Water Inspectorate) Vs You Said (what caused the outage) (Q2 Action a & f combined)



“You gave a detailed account of what happened at Pembury and why it happened. We then heard a different explanation from the Drinking Water Inspector.

Why do the two accounts differ and who can we believe? What learnings from the Inspectors feedback are going to be actioned?”

“You said” (Community Member actions)	“We did” (South East Response on the night)	“We will do in the future” (South East Response on the night)	What is the ‘Ideal’ South East response? (In the eyes of our community)	Timescale
Community members said they were confused and concerned after hearing different explanations from South East Water and the Drinking Water Inspectorate. They questioned why the accounts differed , what should have been foreseen, and who they could trust .	South East Water said the difference related specifically to foreseeability . They stated they did not believe the incident was foreseeable in the way suggested by the Drinking Water Inspectorate.	South East Water said they would act on any recommendations made by the Drinking Water Inspectorate.	Community members want: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. a clear, plain-English explanation of why views differ 2. transparency about what should reasonably have been anticipated 3. confidence that regulatory feedback will be acted on and enforced, not disputed and set aside. 	<p>Plain-English explanation (Point 1): To be published within 1 month of receipt of the final DWI report.</p> <p>Transparency and regulatory action (Points 2 & 3): To be confirmed and communicated by 1 April 2026.</p>



Community members questioned why official accounts of the incident differed and sought clarity on what should have been foreseen.

“Why do the two accounts differ and who can we believe?” South East community member

Conflicting explanations and foreseeability

They Said (Drinking Water Inspectorate) Vs You Said (what caused the outage) (Q2 Action a & f combined)



Please find the response from South East Water's Action Plan below

Timescale

Once the Drinking Water Inspectorate (DWI) report is published, we will review and assess the findings and any recommendations. We will then publish our formal response and take all necessary action to comply with the findings.

Plain-English explanation (Point 1):

To be published within 1 month of receipt of the final DWI report.

Transparency and regulatory action (Points 2 & 3):

To be confirmed and communicated by 1 April 2026.

Monitoring, coagulants and operational controls

They Said (Drinking Water Inspectorate) Vs You Said (what caused the outage) (Q2 Action b, c & d combined)



The voice for water consumers
Llais defnyddwyr dŵr

“You gave a detailed account of what happened at Pembury and why it happened. We then heard a different explanation from the Drinking Water Inspector.

Why do the two accounts differ and who can we believe? What learnings from the Inspectors feedback are going to be actioned?”

“You said” (Community Member actions)	“We did” (South East Response on the night)	“We will do in the future” (South East Response on the night)	What is the ‘Ideal’ South East response? (In the eyes of our community)	Timescale
Community members said they expected constant and proactive monitoring of water treatment processes. They questioned how an issue of this nature was not identified sooner and asked what changes were being made to monitoring and back-up arrangements.	South East Water said: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a second coagulant had already been put in place as an emergency back-up • experts had been brought together to review the issue • monitoring was being strengthened 	South East Water said they would: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • install additional monitoring equipment over the coming months • monitor water quality more closely going forward. 	Community members want: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reassurance that monitoring is continuous, not periodic • confidence that early warning signs will be identified and acted on • assurance that similar failures will be detected before community members are affected. 	Within the next 3 months.



Community members expected stronger monitoring and safeguards to prevent issues escalating undetected.

“We would expect constant, hourly, daily monitoring of coagulants” *South East community member*

Monitoring, coagulants and operational controls

They Said (Drinking Water Inspectorate) Vs You Said (what caused the outage) (Q2 Action b, c & d combined)



The voice for water consumers
Llais defnyddwyr dŵr

Please find the response from South East Water's Action Plan below

Timescale

South East Water are reviewing the efficiency of coagulation processes at all relevant sites to ensure there is no risk of a similar situation. This is presently underway.

In addition we are reviewing our current digital monitoring processes to improve correlation of key warning signs/alert data and escalation.

Within next 3 months



The voice for water consumers
Llais defnyddwyr dŵr

Learning, investment and future risk

They Said (Drinking Water Inspectorate) Vs You Said (what caused the outage) (Q2 Action e & g combined)

“You gave a detailed account of what happened at Pembury and why it happened. We then heard a different explanation from the Drinking Water Inspector.

Why do the two accounts differ and who can we believe? What learnings from the Inspectors feedback are going to be actioned?”

“You said” (Community Member actions)	“We did” (South East Response on the night)	“We will do in the future” (South East Response on the night)	What is the ‘Ideal’ South East response? (In the eyes of our community)	Timescale
Community members said that lessons from the incident should not sit within one company. They asked how learning would be shared more widely and how future risks would be reduced, particularly in a context of increased demand and system pressure.	South East Water said they had shared learning from the incident with industry experts, recognising the unusual nature of the issue.	South East Water said they would use increased investment in the five-year plan, particularly around resilience, to address future risks.	Community members want: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • confidence that learning leads to system-wide change • reassurance that investment is targeted at known vulnerabilities • clarity on how future risks are being identified and prioritised. 	Within the next 3 months.



Community members looked beyond the incident itself, asking how learning and investment would reduce future risk.

“What are you doing now to identify and prevent another Pembury-style outage?” South East Community member

Learning, investment and future risk

They Said (Drinking Water Inspectorate) Vs You Said (what caused the outage) (Q2 Action e & g combined)



The voice for water consumers
Llais defnyddwyr dŵr

Please find the response from South East Water's Action Plan below

Timescale

South East Water is committed to ensuring that the lessons from this incident lead to robust change and investment.

During the incident, we engaged with the broader water industry to investigate whether similar situations had arisen elsewhere. Given the unusual nature of the event, South East Water will publish a briefing to share knowledge and lessons learned to support other water companies.

We continually review our risk models and resilience plans to enhance our capability in identifying and prioritising future risks across our network. Furthermore, once the Drinking Water Inspectorate report is made available, we will review and assess the content along with any recommendations, in turn we will publish a response following our review and act on actions as required.

Within next 3 months

Q3. Actions

What is the next Pembury and how are you minimising risk now?



Q3. What is the next Pembury and how are you minimising risk now?

“What are you doing NOW to identify and prevent another Pembury-style outage - particularly in areas with a single water source or other unique vulnerabilities - given that household demand has increased since Covid, and climate change and population growth are putting even greater pressure on water supplies?”

- a) Commit £200m to resilience at the start of the five-year period, prioritising the most vulnerable areas.
- b) Focus on areas with a single water source, learning from operational teams and making short-term changes.
- c) Introduce boxed spares at sites in two to three areas to improve readiness.
- d) Continue upgrading equipment and working with asset management to transfer more water into the system when issues arise.
- e) Maximise resilience within the current system, recognising where business plan approvals were not granted.
- f) Develop and communicate a resilience plan, explaining what has changed and what is being done now to improve the outlook.
- g) Improve communication with South East Water customers, including use of social media and local outreach, to explain plans, timescales, and rebuild trust.
- h) Be transparent about why the incident happened and what has been done to fix it, responding to customer appetite for clarity.



The voice for water consumers
Llais defnyddwyr dŵr

Identifying and prioritising future risk

What is the next Pembury and how are you minimising risk now? (Q3 Action a & b combined)

“What are you doing NOW to identify and prevent another Pembury-style outage - particularly in areas with a single water source or other unique vulnerabilities - given that household demand has increased since Covid, and climate change and population growth are putting even greater pressure on water supplies?”

“You said” (Community Member actions)	“We did” (South East Response on the night)	“We will do in the future” (South East Response on the night)	What is the ‘Ideal’ South East response? (In the eyes of our community)	Timescale
<p>Community members asked what South East Water is doing now to identify and prevent another Pembury-style outage, particularly in areas with a single water source or unique vulnerabilities. They wanted reassurance that risks are being actively identified and prioritised, not just planned for in the long term.</p>	<p>South East Water said they had committed £200m to resilience at the start of the five-year period, prioritising areas that are most vulnerable.</p>	<p>South East Water said they would focus investment on areas with a single water source and make short-term operational changes, informed by learning from operational teams.</p>	<p>Community members want:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • clarity on which sites are considered most at risk • reassurance that risks are being identified before failures occur • confidence that action is being taken now, not only through long-term investment plans. 	<p>Within the next 3 months.</p>



Community members asked how future risks are being identified and prioritised to prevent a repeat incident.

“What is the next Pembury and how are you minimising risk now?” South East community member

Identifying and prioritising future risk

What is the next Pembury and how are you minimising risk now? (Q3. Actions a & b combined)



The voice for water consumers
Llais defnyddwyr dŵr

Please find the response from South East Water's Action Plan below

Timescale

As part of South East Water's business plan we are investing company-wide in a flexible, resilient infrastructure and service including:

- Improving network connections to move water around more efficiently
- Implementing a full smart network rollout
- Increasing drinking water storage capacity by 60million litres
- Long-term pipe replacements and maintaining water quality.

In addition we are looking at a number of further resilience initiatives in the shorter term including:

- Improving the resilience to supply and interruptions through the use of temporary storage tanks
- Bewl to Cottage Hill Transfer Main commissioning
- Battery installations at key sites to mitigate impact of power blips and improve resilience.

Within Next 3
Months

Operational readiness and system resilience

What is the next Pembury and how are you minimising risk now? (Q3 Action c, d & e combined)



The voice for water consumers
Llais defnyddwyr dŵr

“What are you doing NOW to identify and prevent another Pembury-style outage - particularly in areas with a single water source or other unique vulnerabilities - given that household demand has increased since Covid, and climate change and population growth are putting even greater pressure on water supplies?”

“You said” (Community Member actions)	“We did” (South East Response on the night)	“We will do in the future” (South East Response on the night)	What is the ‘Ideal’ South East response? (In the eyes of our community)	Timescale
<p>Community members questioned how prepared the system is to respond to failures when they occur. They asked what changes were being made to improve operational readiness, equipment resilience, and the ability to move water through the system during incidents.</p>	<p>South East Water said they had been working to improve system resilience, including upgrading equipment and working with asset management to transfer more water when issues arise.</p>	<p>South East Water said they would:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • introduce boxed spares at selected sites to improve readiness • continue upgrading equipment and maximising resilience within the current system, recognising limits in approved business plans. 	<p>Community members want:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • assurance that sites are ready to respond quickly when problems occur • evidence that operational learning has led to practical, on-the-ground changes. • Risk assessment updated and shared 	<p>Within the next 3 months.</p>



Community members sought reassurance that the system is operationally ready to respond to future failures.

“You have a risk map, don’t you?” South East community member

Operational readiness and system resilience

What is the next Pembury and how are you minimising risk now? (Q3 Action c, d & e combined)



The voice for water consumers
Llais defnyddwyr dŵr

Please find the response from South East Water's Action Plan below

Timescale

As part of South East Water's ongoing operations we are increasing stock levels of critical equipment at key operational sites. This will allow our teams to perform rapid restorations in event of failures.

In addition we have strengthened our on-the-ground response teams by implementing a network working pattern review, resulting in new shift patterns, recruitment and operational learning for on the ground changes.

Once the Drinking Water Inspectorate (DWI) report is published, we will review and assess the findings and any recommendations. We will then publish our formal response and take all necessary action to comply with the findings.

Within Next 3 months

Transparency, communication and rebuilding confidence

What is the next Pembury and how are you minimising risk now? (Q3 Action f, g & h combined)



The voice for water consumers
Llais defnyddwyr dŵr

“What are you doing NOW to identify and prevent another Pembury-style outage - particularly in areas with a single water source or other unique vulnerabilities - given that household demand has increased since Covid, and climate change and population growth are putting even greater pressure on water supplies?”

“You said” (Community Member actions)	“We did” (South East Response on the night)	“We will do in the future” (South East Response on the night)	What is the ‘Ideal’ South East response? (In the eyes of our community)	Timescale
Community members said there is a strong appetite for transparency. They wanted to understand why the incident happened , what has been done to fix it, and how future risks will be communicated clearly to Community members.	South East Water acknowledged the need to explain what happened and recognised the importance of rebuilding trust through better communication.	South East Water said they would: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • communicate their resilience plan and make this accessible to customers • improve communication with customers, including greater use of social media and local outreach • be more transparent about what has changed and what is being done to improve in the future. 	Community members want: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a clear, customer-facing resilience plan • honest explanations, delivered in plain language • proactive communication that builds confidence, rather than reacting after problems occur. • Social media should be used to greater effect, to communicate what the company is doing in terms of resilience. 	Within the next 3- 6 months.



Community members wanted clearer explanations of what went wrong and how future risks will be communicated.

“Why has this happened and what has been done to fix it?” *South East Community member*

Transparency, communication and rebuilding confidence

What is the next Pembury and how are you minimising risk now? (Q3 Action f, g & h combined)



The voice for water consumers
Llais defnyddwyr dŵr

Please find the response from South East Water's Action Plan below

Timescale

South East Water has recruited a new Social Media Coordinator (starting March 7th) and a Digital Marketing Manager, both with exceptionally strong social media backgrounds, to strengthen communications moving forwards.

Our independent review process will be used to strengthen processes and to enhance our existing resilience plans.

Our existing Resilience Plans and support documents can be found within the following links:

https://cdn.southeastwater.co.uk/Publications/Business_Plan_2025_2030/Resilience.pdf

https://cdn.southeastwater.co.uk/Publications/Resilience+Action+Plan/sew_resilience_actionplan_final.pdf

Within Next 3 – 6
Months

ccw

The voice for water consumers
Llais defnyddwyr dŵr

Thank you!



ccw.org.uk