



The voice for water consumers
Llais defnyddwyr dŵr

Water Voice - Accountability Session

Summary report

Water company: Dŵr Cymru

Accountability Session date: 10.03.26

Delivered by Taylor McKenzie
Research & Energy Saving Trust

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Questions created and asked by community members



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Community members identified **three priority questions** they wanted to put directly to Dŵr Cymru during the Accountability Session.

The questions were developed through a structured process involving the full Water Voice community (c.50 members). In January and February 2026, members collectively identified and refined priority themes through Spotlight surveys. These priorities were then shaped into draft questions during a dedicated briefing session, before being finalised and formally put to Dŵr Cymru at the Accountability Session.

Each question was led by a community member and explored in depth during the session. Dŵr Cymru provided on-the-record responses, with commitments and actions discussed in real time.

The sections that follow set out each question in turn, alongside the actions discussed and the expectations community members have for delivery through the company's published action plan. This will be published on **Friday 17th April 2026**.

	Topic	Community member question
Q1	Value for money: Bills, revenue transparency & the "not-for-profit" model	<i>"What do you currently have in place to monitor and report on spending, and what are you going to do to moving forward to ensure all customers are fully informed on what proportion of customer's money is being spent on salaries, infrastructure and other operational costs?"</i>
Q2	Pollution: Sewage discharges, coastal pollution and environmental accountability	<i>"What are you doing now to proactively alert customers of these incidents and what measurable improvements should customers expect to see in the next 12-24 months, and what else are you going to do now to ensure this is improved moving forward?"</i>
Q3	Communication and engagement: Transparency, proactivity and rebuilding trust	<i>"What are you going to do moving forward that means that us as customers receive proactive communication on issues that matter to us?"</i>

Summary of insights per question



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The Accountability Session for Dŵr Cymru highlighted a clear call from customers for greater transparency and trust in how money is spent, clearer real-time updates and communication on sewage discharges and coastal pollution, and more frequent and tailored communication.

Q1.

Value for money: Bills, revenue transparency and the “not-for-profit” model

During the session, Dŵr Cymru explained that it operates as a not-for-profit organisation, meaning any financial surplus is reinvested into services, infrastructure and customer support. Financial information, including spending and executive remuneration, is published in the annual report and regulated by Ofwat.

However, community members want clearer and simpler explanations of where their money is going and why bills are increasing. They asked for plain-English summaries and simple breakdowns of how customer bills are spent.

Improving transparency around bills and spending is essential to help customers clearly understand how their money is being used. Educating customers on the not-for-profit model will help to build trust.

Q2.

Pollution: Sewage discharges, coastal pollution and environmental accountability

During the session, Dŵr Cymru explained that sewage discharges are monitored and reported through existing systems and that the company is investing heavily in improving wastewater infrastructure. It also noted that information about discharges is already available online.

However, community members want clearer and more accessible information about when sewage discharges occur so they can avoid affected areas. They also asked for clearer updates on environmental improvements and water quality.

Providing clearer and more timely information about sewage discharges is essential to help protect public health and give communities confidence that environmental issues are being addressed.

Q3.

Communication and engagement: Transparency, proactivity and rebuilding trust

Dŵr Cymru explained that it communicates with customers through a range of channels including social media, and community engagement activities. The company acknowledged that communication could be improved.

However, community members want communication to be more proactive and easier to access. They asked for clearer updates and information to be shared directly with customers rather than requiring them to search for it.

Strengthening proactive communication is essential to ensure customers feel informed, heard and confident that their feedback is influencing the company's actions.

Actions agreed during the Accountability Session



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Q1.

Value for money: Bills, revenue transparency and the “not-for-profit” model

- Provide clear and transparent information about how customer money is being spent (including salaries, fines and infrastructure investment) and why bills are increasing
- Provide transparency about executive pay and bonuses
- Make financial reporting easier to understand and access
- Provide more frequent transparency rather than annual reporting

Q2.

Pollution: Sewage discharges, coastal pollution and environmental accountability

- Provide updates around when sewage discharges occur so customers can avoid affected areas
- Provide information surrounding health risks from polluted rivers and seas
- Make environmental progress updates easier to understand and better to access
- Provide information surrounding environmental investments and the associated costs

Q3.

Communication and engagement: Transparency, proactivity & rebuilding trust

- Provide clearer and easier to access information
- Provide quicker ways to receive updates
- Provide evidence that our feedback leads to change



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Q1. Value for money: Bills, revenue transparency and the “not-for-profit” model



Question asked by Dŵr Cymru Community member:

"We are experiencing bill increases, with limited to no explanation. Whilst we read about excessive executive pay packages and bonus' and regulatory fines. At the same time, many households are under real financial pressure, and we know some customers are struggling to pay their bills. Although we know we can probably find more information online, we want transparency from YOU about exactly where our money is going. Additionally, we are aware you are a not-for-profit company, but no one truly understand what that means in relation to operations and costs.

What do you currently have in place to monitor and report on spending, and what are you going to do to moving forward to ensure all customers are fully informed on what proportion of customer's money is being spent on salaries, infrastructure and other operational costs?"

During the session, Dŵr Cymru explained that it operates as a not-for-profit organisation, meaning any financial surplus is reinvested into services, infrastructure and customer support. Financial information, including spending and executive remuneration, is published in the annual report and regulated by Ofwat.

Community members want clearer and simpler explanations of where their money is going and why bills are increasing. They asked for plain-English summaries and simple breakdowns of how customer bills are spent.

Actions

- Provide clear and transparent information about how customer money is being spent (including salaries, fines and infrastructure investment) and why bills are increasing
- Provide transparency about executive pay and bonuses
- Make financial reporting easier to understand and access
- Provide more frequent transparency rather than annual reporting

"We need transparency. How much are you being fined? That I'd like to know as part of my bill. Where is the money going? Is it on fines? Is it on salaries? Is it on assets?"

"Who's got time to read an annual report from Welsh Water? That should be summarised in an easy one-page document so all customers can read it."

"We don't want jargon, we want plain speaking... things that customers can understand so we can clearly see how the money has been spent."



Improving transparency around bills and spending is essential to help customers clearly understand how their money is being used. Educating customers on the not-for-profit model will help to build trust.

Q1. Value for money: Bills, revenue transparency and the “not-for-profit” model



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“You said” (Community member actions)	“We did” (Dŵr Cymru response on the night)	What is the ‘Ideal’ Dŵr Cymru response? (In the eyes of our community)	Timescale/ final comments
Provide clear and transparent information about how customer money is being spent (including salaries, fines and infrastructure investment) and why bills are increasing	Dŵr Cymru stated that financial spending is published in the annual report and on the website. Following the non-for-profit model, surplus is re-invested in assets and social tariff - £14million every year goes into supporting customers struggling to pay bills (currently supporting around 140,000 customers). Increased bills reflect increased investment, with spending rising from around £400m to £650m and £850m in future years. Future plans: Plan to support 180,000 customers in the next 5 years Plan to make a dedicated website detailing local area investment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide transparency over water company’s spending, including how much is being spent on salaries, infrastructure and fines with bills • Update website monthly with what is being spent each month, and if any fines have occurred • Provide clear plain-language explanation of bill increases and how customer money is being spent (including what investments they fund). This should be provided with bills and include clear example of spending. • Provide breakdown of customer financial groups within the Welsh Water customer base in Investment report - simplify figures (e.g. pie charts) • Review social tariff spending • Provide simple, easy-to-follow explanation of the not-for-profit model on their website 	Ofwat decides on tariffs after reviewing the 5-year investment plan
Provide transparency about executive pay and bonuses	Dŵr Cymru stated that executive remuneration and bonuses are already published in annual reporting. No future commitments were stated on the night.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide a plain-English standalone breakdown of executive salaries and bonuses, explaining performance criteria and accountability. 	Information regarding bonuses already available in annual report
Make financial reporting easier to understand and access	Dŵr Cymru stated the information is already publicly available in the annual report and online and committed to making it easier to read and access. No future commitments were stated on the night.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide a short plain-English summary of financial information, ideally one or two pages long, with visual breakdowns showing how money has been spent. 	Commitment to make the annual report easy to read so that information can be easy to find.
Provide more frequent transparency rather than annual reporting	Dŵr Cymru highlighted its annual reporting and existing communications. No future commitments were stated on the night.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide more regular updates on spending and performance, potentially monthly or periodic summaries explaining events, fines or unexpected spending • Community members felt annual reporting alone was insufficient for a utility company. 	Further detail expected through the company action plan following the session.

Note: This table is an excerpt from the full Action Plan. Dŵr Cymru will provide formal responses to each action within 28 days of the session date. The updated plan will then be shared with participating community members for review and agreement.

Q2. Pollution: Sewage discharges, coastal pollution and environmental accountability



Question asked by Dŵr Cymru Community member:

Customers in coastal and river communities describe repeated sewage discharges, health risks, and frustration that these events appear routine rather than exceptional, and with a growing population we are worried these occurrence will happen more often.

What are you doing now to proactively alert customers of these incidents and what measurable improvements should customers expect to see in the next 12–24 months, and what else are you going to do now to ensure this is improved moving forward?

During the session, Dŵr Cymru explained that sewage discharges are monitored and reported through existing systems and that the company is investing heavily in improving wastewater infrastructure. It also noted that information about discharges is already available online.

Community members want clearer and more accessible information about when sewage discharges occur so they can avoid affected areas. They also asked for clearer updates on environmental improvements and water quality.

Actions

- Provide updates around when sewage discharges occur so customers can avoid affected areas
- Provide information surrounding health risks from polluted rivers and seas
- Make environmental progress updates easier to understand and better to access
- Provide information surrounding environmental investments and the associated costs

“As a mum, I’m really concerned about what’s being released into our rivers and seas... I want to know what’s in the sea before my children go in it.”

“Ideally I’d like to be able to check on an app when sewage has been released into the sea or river in real time.”

“We need to know that our money is making a difference... has water quality improved, has sewage discharge reduced?”



Providing clearer and more timely information about sewage discharges is essential to help protect public health and give communities confidence that environmental issues are being addressed.

Q2. Pollution: Sewage discharges, coastal pollution and environmental accountability



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"You said" (Community member actions)	"We did" (Dŵr Cymru Response on the night)	What is the 'Ideal' Dŵr Cymru response? (In the eyes of our community)	Timescale/ final comments
Provide updates around when sewage discharges occur so customers can avoid affected areas	Dŵr Cymru explained incidents are monitored and that teams respond to pollution incidents when they occur. They stated that there are 4,000 staff involved in fixing issues. There is a website which contains a map detailing incidents happening in the operation region, and overflow alerts which are sent when overflows occur. No future commitments were stated on the night.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve communication overall regarding this issue • Update website with statistics or create an app where these updates/targets are available • Update customers via email or letters monthly as well to ensure all customers are aware of updates – communicate failures as well as achievements 	Sewage discharge information available online and on 'Surfers Against Sewage' app – will better communicate this
Provide information surrounding health risks from polluted rivers and seas	Dŵr Cymru acknowledged pollution incidents are taken seriously and teams work to resolve them quickly. No future commitments were stated on the night.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide clear alerts so people know when water is unsafe, particularly for families using beaches and rivers. • Create an app for real-time monitoring of sewage discharge into rivers and sea, which pinpoints specific locations and explains health risks of sewage discharge • Include information in paper bills or include PDFs in emails about sewage discharge 	Further detail expected through the company action plan following the session.
Make environmental progress updates easier to understand and better to access	Dŵr Cymru described large investment programmes and infrastructure improvements to address sewage issues. No future commitments were stated on the night.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create an annual environmental progress report alongside the app, which is ideally 1-page long and includes discharge figures, water quality figures, and clearly highlights any improvements made 	Further detail expected through the company action plan following the session.
Provide information surrounding environmental investments and the associated costs	Dŵr Cymru outlined investment in sewer upgrades and infrastructure improvements. Future plans: £4billion investment program over next 5 years. Building green infrastructure to collect rainwater. Re-engineering the entire sewer network would cost £14 billion, which needs to be balanced against what 1.4 million households can afford	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Involve customers more and at an earlier stage and set clear expectations of how much money these investments are going to cost the customers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Show projected costs - Provide clear explanations of investments and their benefits - Explain reasoning behind investment - Use easy-to-understand language • Community members wanted transparency on costs and timelines. • Send newsletter on company investment – every 3/6 months 	Further detail expected through the company action plan following the session.

Note: This table is an excerpt from the full Action Plan. Dŵr Cymru will provide formal responses to each action within 28 days of the session date. The updated plan will then be shared with participating community members for review and agreement.

Q3. Communication and engagement: Transparency, proactivity and rebuilding trust



Question asked by Dŵr Cymru Community member:

“When it comes to financial transparency and environmental performance, customers repeatedly describe Dwr Cymru as quiet and reactive – only communicating when something has gone wrong. We feel as consumers we are unable to engage with you and have our voices heard.

“What are you going to do moving forward that means that us as customers receive proactive communication on issues that matter to us?”

Dŵr Cymru explained that it communicates with customers through a range of channels including social media, and community engagement activities. The company acknowledged that communication could be improved.

Community members want communication to be more proactive and easier to access. They asked for clearer updates and information to be shared directly with customers rather than requiring them to search for it.

Actions

- Provide clearer and easier to access information
- Provide quicker ways to receive updates
- Provide evidence that our feedback leads to change

“I spend quite a lot of time on social media and I’ve never seen anything from Welsh Water on there.”

“Information needs to be sent to us... it shouldn’t be something we have to go searching for.”

“An app similar to the Octopus energy app would be ideal... it keeps customers engaged and provides updates in one place.”



Strengthening proactive communication is essential to ensure customers feel informed, heard and confident that their feedback is influencing the company’s actions.

Q3. Communication and engagement: Transparency, proactivity and rebuilding trust



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"You said" (Community member actions)	"We did" (Dŵr Cymru Response on the night)	What is the 'Ideal' Dŵr Cymru response? (In the eyes of our community)	Timescale / final comments
Provide clearer and easier to access information	Dŵr Cymru communicates through social media, traditional media and engagement events but acknowledged feedback that it is not reaching customers effectively. No future commitments were stated on the night.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication should proactively reach customers rather than requiring them to search for information. • Provide summarised information in clear, readable formats, delivered through the same channels customers already use (e.g., bills or emails). 	Further detail expected through the company action plan following the session.
Provide quicker ways to receive updates	Dŵr Cymru said it uses multiple communication channels and is exploring further engagement activities. Future plans: Dŵr Cymru is looking into new social channels to communicate with customers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a mobile app or similar digital platform to provide real-time updates and make communication easier. The app/platform should: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Detail local works, profit reports etc. allow information to be tailored to the customer's <u>local</u> area - Provide real-time updates - Provide information all in plain English • Improve use of social media for updates 	Further detail expected through the company action plan following the session.
Provide evidence that our feedback leads to change	Dŵr Cymru explained that reaching 3 million customers is a challenge and communication is costly (newsletter would cost £1million & research shows people need to see information 7 times before it registers), however emphasised that they are dedicated to understand how better to communicate with customers to hear their concerns. Future plans: Dŵr Cymru stated it is holding further customer-led sessions to gather feedback and shape strategy. They are also looking to directly communicate with customers affected by operational works.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide clear updates showing what action has been taken following customer feedback • Provide a "You Said, We Did" tracker which clearly shows how issues raised by customers are being addressed • Ensure the company includes a representative cross-section of customers for their customer-led sessions 	Further detail expected through the company action plan following the session.

Note: This table is an excerpt from the full Action Plan. Dŵr Cymru will provide formal responses to each action within 28 days of the session date. The updated plan will then be shared with participating community members for review and agreement.

What happens after the Accountability Session?

After the accountability session, there is a clear and structured follow-up process.



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Publication and transparency

Within 5 working days

A full (anonymised) transcript of the session was [published](#) on **Tuesday 17th March**

Within 10 working days

A plain-English summary is published, setting out:

- The questions asked.
- The key points raised by Community members.
- The actions agreed for inclusion in the action plan.

Anything recorded as *not yet agreed*.

Tuesday 24th March



Action plan

Within 28 days

The water company must share its **action plan**, setting out how it will deliver the agreed actions.

The action plan will be **shared with the Water Voice community on Friday 17th April**



Customer feedback

Participants will be asked, via a short survey, whether they feel the action plan:

- ✓ Reflects what was agreed in the session
- ✓ Goes far enough to address customer concerns

This feedback forms part of CCW's ongoing monitoring and follow-up with the company and helps inform future accountability work.



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Summary report

Annex: Research approach

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Research & Energy Saving Trust

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Background



What is an Accountability Session?

An Accountability Session is a formal, facilitated meeting where **water consumers directly question senior executives from their water company** about performance, service failures and issues of concern – and **agree the actions they want the company to take**.

They sit at the heart of CCW's statutory role to strengthen consumer voice and ensure companies respond transparently and meaningfully.

*<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2025/5/enacted>

Why do they exist?

Accountability Sessions exist because customers deserve a real say in how their water company performs. They give people a direct line to the people in charge – not through a survey, not through a complaint form, but face-to-face.

For years, customers have felt that water companies weren't listening closely enough. *Water (Special Measures) Act 2025** requiring a relevant undertaker to have arrangements in place for involving consumers in decisions of the undertaker that are likely to have a material impact on consumer matters.

These sessions make that happen. They create a space where customers can:

- Ask honest questions
- Raise the issues that really affect them
- Agree the actions they expect the company to take next.

It's all about making the process fair, open, and focused on what matters most to the people who actually use and pay for the service.

Objectives

What the session aims to achieve



1. Give customers a real voice

These sessions make sure customers aren't just "heard" – their views actually guide the conversation and shape what happens next.

2. Make companies answer directly to the people they serve

Senior water company leaders must respond openly, honestly, and in real time. No hiding behind reports or press statements.

3. Agree clear actions that lead to real improvements

By the end of each session, everyone should be clear on:

- ✓ what the company will do
- ✓ how they'll do it
- ✓ how customers will know things have improved.

4. Build trust through transparency

Everything is published – the questions, the answers, the agreed actions – so customers can see what's happening and whether companies are following through.

5. Make sure all types of customers are represented

People from different backgrounds, ages, abilities and regions take part, ensuring the outcomes reflect real experiences across the community.

Outputs

By the close of the process, this Accountability Session will have:

- Provided CCW with **robust, publishable evidence** of consumer concerns and company responses.
- Established a clear and transparent set of customer-agreed actions that the water company must reflect in its published action plan. The action plan itself is published by the company following the session, in line with the accountability process.
- Given consumers confidence that their participation leads to **real scrutiny and follow-through**, reinforcing the credibility of the accountability process.
- Informed future regulatory engagement by highlighting **systemic or recurring issues** requiring wider attention.

Together, this ensures the session delivers both **immediate accountability** and **longer-term value** for consumers and the sector.

Methodology

How does it work?

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01



Prioritising what matters most

1. We listen to what customers tell us each month

Through Barometer & Spotlight surveys and the online community

2. We play back what they said

In the January Spotlight survey, we show customers the issues they raised & ask them to prioritise the most important ones.

3. Confirm their priorities

In the February Spotlight survey, customers confirm if they agree with which points matter most.

02



Getting ready (Briefing session)

Selected 12 customers join a 2-hour online (via Zoom) briefing before the main meeting.

Everyone gets clear, easy-to-read information beforehand so they feel confident and prepared.

The facilitator talks them through:

- How the session will work
- The issues they've prioritised
- How to shape their questions & come up with a set of questions for each priority.

We will brief the CCW Chair separately at this point & remind them on their role, share guide & prioritised topics / Priorities will be sent the Water Companies at this point

03



The Accountability Session (Main meeting)

12 customers take part in an online session (via Zoom) with a senior water company representative for 2 hours.

TMcK facilitator & Chair guiding the conversation:

- Customers ask their prepared questions
- Challenge the company's answers
- Explore what needs to change.

Live polls let everyone share honest views – even those who prefer not to speak out loud.

Welsh panels will be given the option of English, Welsh or simultaneous translation .

04



Agreeing what should happen next

During the main accountability session, after each issue is discussed, the facilitator checks whether customers feel the company's proposed actions are good enough.

Together, they work towards a clear **consensus** on what actions the company must take.

05



Publishing the outcomes and following up

A summary is produced showing: the questions asked, how the company responded, and the actions agreed.

- CCW publishes a **transcript within 5 working days**
- CCW publishes a **summary within 10 working days**
- The company must publish its **action plan by day 28**

Panellists are asked short follow-up questions about whether the plan reflects what was agreed.

CCW then tracks progress and updates panellists before the next session.

[Priorities will be shared with the ISG]

Sample

Who takes part in an Accountability Session



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We'll bring together a **small, representative group of around 12 people** for each accountability session.

This number keeps the conversation manageable and ensures everyone has the chance to speak.

Each person is selected by the panel manager from their panel of 50 participants.

Our panel managers are responsible for selecting a representative range of participants and ensure that anyone who has expressed a keen interest in taking part in an accountability session is included at this stage.

We make sure each session of 12 includes the following types of panellists:

- **Age** - younger adults, middle-aged adults and older customers (2 per age bracket)
- **Gender** - a balanced mix (at least 5 males & 5 females)
- **Income levels** - including low-income households (3 financially vulnerable, 3 x 20-40k, 3 x £40k-60k & 2 x £60k+)
- **Location** - Rural and Urban water users (different house-types represented)
- **Ethnic backgrounds** - reflecting the local population, 2-3 from an ethnic minority background
- **People with accessibility, neurodivergent or additional support needs** (at least 1)
- **Different customer types** - e.g. metered/unmetered, renters/homeowners
- **Different attitudes** – including 3 x positive, 3 x neutral & 3 x negative customers
- **Bathing water users** – 3 regular users (for WaSC panels)
- **Welsh speakers** – at least 2 Welsh speakers within our two Welsh panels & options for accountability session language

This ensures all voices are represented, not just the loudest or most confident.



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Thank you!



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