



CCW

The voice for water consumers  
Llais defnyddwyr dŵr

**South Staffs Water  
and Cambridge Water  
Accountability Session  
transcript**

3RD MARCH 2026

# Attendance list

Elena Karpathakis	Managing Director of South Staffs Water and Cambridge Water
Alex Wilkes	Customer Service Director of South Staffs Water and Cambridge Water
Robert Boswell	Capital Delivery Director of South Staffs Water and Cambridge Water
Joe Greenwood	Associate Director of Taylor McKenzie Research (TMCK) – Lead facilitator
Bev Keogh	Independent Board Member for Consumer Council for Water (CCW) – Chair
12 x Participants	Water Voice Community Members under South Staffs Water and Cambridge Water

**CCW Chair:** Good evening, everyone, thank you for joining today. My name is Bev Keogh, I'm a Non-Executive Director and the Deputy Board Chair for the Consumer Council for Water, and I'm going to be chairing today's session, today's accountability discussion. Tonight's session's part of our Consumer Council for Water Voice Programme, the purpose of Water Voice is simple but it's really quite important and it is to give customers a much stronger but more direct voice, in how their water company performs, how it communicates and improves.

So this session is actually about accountability, it's a real opportunity for customers to question senior leaders and thank you, Elena and Alex for joining us and I know that Robert will join later, from South Staffs Water and Cambridge Water directly, about issues that matter the most to them and about where improvement is needed, and it's about what change will result as a direct impact from these discussions that we have today.

It is not a complaints hearing and it is not a technical enquiry, it is a structured, customer-led conversation focused on accountability, learning and agreeing clear and practical actions. The topics that we're going to cover haven't been chosen by CCWater or the company, they've been shaped by customers through the surveys that we do and the discussions that we've had within the Water Voice Panel that you can see here this evening.

And it is important that everyone understands that as customers, that this is your agenda. I want to set a clear tone though from the start, I expect this to be a respectful but challenging discussion and I think as customers, you should feel that you can respectfully speak openly and honestly about your experiences and your expectations. Equally, I expect clear and transparent responses, please, from South Staffs Water and Cambridge Water senior team and I'll refer later to things like limit jargon, acronyms and answering the whole question because we have enough acronyms in the industry to over-complicate it.

This session is being fully transcribed and it will be published. A summary report will follow and the company will be expected to publish an action plan responding to any commitments and all commitments that are made tonight, and I think that transparency is key, it's part of what makes this process meaningful.

In terms of some ground rules then, we're going to take one person at a time and Joe, who I'll introduce in a second, will help me to facilitate to do that. We're going to keep contributions focused, we will finish at 8pm this evening. We'll concentrate on forward looking actions because I think that's really important, so what will change? Why? When? And actually what's important here is how will customers know when changes have been made, and so I think that that sets us up for a great, structured conversation.

So now I'll introduce Joe from our partners in Taylor McKenzie, who is an independent lead facilitator. Joe is going to guide most of the discussions to ensure that all the voices are heard and Elena and Alex, it would be great if you would introduce yourselves, please. Elena, let's start with you.

**Elena Karpathakis:** Good evening, everyone, can you hear me okay?

**TMcK Facilitator:** Yes.

**Elena Karpathakis:** I'm Elena Karpathakis, I'm the Managing Director of your water company, South Staffs Water and Cambridge Water. I am actually fairly new still to the water industry, I joined to lead this organisation around 11 months ago but have worked my entire career in regulated utilities like this one, and I'm really pleased to be here with you all this evening, personally and joined by Alex and Robert, that you'll meet a little later today.

I just want to say, if it's okay with you, Bev, that I'm really supportive of this work by the Consumer Council for Water, I think this creates a new structured forum for us to engage directly with you as customers and builds on all of the customer engagement work that we do already do, and I look forward to the discussion on the three topics that you've chosen.

**TMcK Facilitator:** Great, that's great to hear, Elena, thank you very much. And Alex, just a brief intro from you, please?

**Alex Wilkes:** Good evening, everyone, thank you very much for giving up your time to look after this session with us. My name's Alex Wilkes, I am the Customer Service Director at South Staffs and Cambridge Water. Much like Elena, fairly new to the water sector, I've been with the business for six months but prior to that had nearly 20 years in a similar role on electricity distribution, so looking after the electricity grid and customer service. So really keen to hear your views this evening, you'll get honesty and transparency and candour from us and I'm looking forward to the conversations, thank you.

**CCW Chair:** Thank you, Alex. As Elena mentioned, we will be joined later for the third question from Robert, who's the Capital Delivery Director and we'll do a few intro with Robert when he joins us. So thank you everyone again for being here and for giving up your time and your enthusiasm for the session, and Joe, I'll now hand over to you to begin the discussion.

**TMcK Facilitator:** Hello folks, nice to see you all again. As with the session last time, this next five minutes of me speaking is going to be hopefully the most boring of this, but it's all super important. If you give me five minutes to take you through it, then we'll get into the first question from there.

I guess a bit of housekeeping at this point. We are going to be recording and transcribing the session and I think as Bev touched on earlier, what's really important to us is that you guys are not identifiable through those transcripts. We probably touched on this during the initial briefing session, we'll transcribe in a way that means that you're not able to be identified within the transcript.

We're going to use first names only in the room tonight, you've all got your first names up and that's how we will refer to you throughout this, as we did in the previous session. After the session, you guys will have an opportunity to review the transcript that we produce, so literally the second this finishes, I get that sent somewhere and all of that magic happens and then you'll have an opportunity to look at it and go through it, and if there's anything that you read that you've said that you don't want to be included in the final published document, then that's

your opportunity to let us know and we won't even question it, we'll literally just take it out, so please don't have any issues with raising any concerns on that front.

The purpose of the transcripts is to really accurately reflect the discussion and the actions agreed, it's not to single anyone out or anything out specifically, it's just that we've got a really clear line of evidence as to what has been discussed and what we've all mutually agreed ideally by the end of the session.

Obviously, we've got three questions tonight that we kind of created with your help on that first session, I think it was a really interesting first session, it was great to get all your thoughts and what we're going to really focus in on is the specifics that are contained within the questions that we've put together with your help.

So the way that it's going to work for the rest of the session is that those of you who are asking questions, one by one, will ask your questions. So we'll go to the first person to answer a question first, we'll put that question up on the screen as well, that's for all our benefits but particularly for you guys at South Staffs so you can read the question, make sure you're answering each part of the question that's been asked, to your fullest ability.

You'll get five minutes to do that, so I'll hand over to you guys so you can answer the question and about five minutes or so, we're not going to be unbelievably restrictive and if you run over by 30 seconds, then brilliant, I'll put a little timer up on my screen so you guys can see, a countdown-esque, I suppose. I was trying to make it play a tune when it stopped but that doesn't seem to work very well.

We will be listening intently to your answers and I'd encourage you guys as well as customers, to take any notes or note anything down that you find interesting, that you agree with, that you disagree with, that you want to ask maybe for some clarity on or that wasn't explained very clearly to you because we'll have an opportunity after the question's been answered, to go away as a group and we will talk a little bit about the answers that you were given.

So you guys can basically feedback on what you heard and as I said, whether or not you liked/disliked the answer. While that's going on, a team of people from Taylor McKenzie will be writing lots of notes into a document that will hopefully capture what South Staffs said that they currently do, what they're looking to do in the future, we'll also capture the points that you guys make as well in terms of any actions and things, and we'll kind of review that document together as we go through this.

Once we've got that sort of semi-completed document and you guys have had some time to discuss what South Staffs have said and talk about the kind of things that you would want to see ideally, we'll also then give South Staffs some time to talk about any of the points you've made, anything that you've raised, actions wise

and feedback on what their thoughts are on those actions, how feasible they feel to them, so a little bit of discussion around that.

Ideally, what we want at the end of it is a document that has a sort of approximate idea of the kind of actions that you guys as customers want to see, with a bit of a timeframe attached to it. Does that sound okay? That will make way more sense once we've done the first one and you see it, it's kind of hard to describe it but I think you guys as customers at least saw some parts of that document when we were talking about this during the briefing.

I suppose any questions before we get into introductions? Have I explained well? Okay! I think what we'll do, the next minute or so, I want to go around the room, I want to just get introductions from each of the customers that are here. As I said, we just want your first name, you can tell us a little bit about you, where you live but keep it to a sentence at most, if that's okay.

Community Member 1, on my screen, you're sitting to the right of me so unfortunately you have to go first, I hope that's okay?

**Community Member 1:** Yeah, that's fine. I'm Community Member 1, [I live in] Walsall and we're with South Staffs.

**Community Member 2:** I'm Community Member 2 and I live in Walsall Wood actually and I'm with South Staffs.

**TMcK Facilitator:** Lovely stuff, Community Member 2, thank you so much. Community Member 3, I'll go to you next, please?

**Community Member 3:** I'm Community Member 3 and I live just outside Cambridge so I'm with Cambridge Water.

**TMcK Facilitator:** Brilliant, Community Member 4?

**Community Member 4:** I'm Community Member 4, I'm also from Cambridge, a South Cambridgeshire village about seven miles from the city.

**TMcK Facilitator:** Brilliant, thanks, Community Member 4. Community Member 5?

**Community Member 5:** Hi everyone, my name's Community Member 5, I live in Walsall as well and I'm with South Staffs Water.

**TMcK Facilitator:** Thank you very much. Community Member 6?

**Community Member 6:** I'm Community Member 6, I live in Streetly and I'm with South Staffs as well.

**TMcK Facilitator:** Brilliant, Community Member 6, thanks very much. Community Member 7?

**Community Member 7:** I'm Community Member 7, I live in Sutton Coldfield and I'm with South Staffs.

**TMcK Facilitator:** Brilliant, thank you, Community Member 7. And Community Member 8?

**Community Member 8:** Hi, I'm Community Member 8, I'm in the Walsall area and I'm with South Staffs.

**TMcK Facilitator:** Thank you very much, Community Member 8. Community Member 9, hopefully your audio's behaving?

**Community Member 9:** I've still got an echo on me but my name's Community Member 9 and I live just outside Cambridge, North Cambridge, so I'm a Cambridge Water customer.

**TMcK Facilitator:** Brilliant, thank you Community Member 9. Community Member 10?

**Community Member 10:** I'm Community Member 10 and I'm in the Great Wyrley area and I'm with South Staffs as well.

**TMcK Facilitator:** Thank you very much, Community Member 10, and Community Member 11?

**Community Member 11:** Community Member 11, very rural Cambridgeshire, with Cambridge Water.

**TMcK Facilitator:** Brilliant. And Community Member 12?

**Community Member 12:** I'm Community Member 12, I'm in very rural Cambridge and with Cambridge Water.

**TMcK Facilitator:** Brilliant, okay, thank you so much. I'll hand back to you, Bev, if that's okay?

**CCW Chair:** Absolutely, so I'm going to kick off the session then with the first question. Community Member 7, you're going to ask this question, so if I can ask you to ask it now, please?

**Community Member 7:** Good evening. I want to ask, our bills seem to have risen sharply over the last year, why have bills increased so significantly? How is that money being spent, and how will it benefit us as customers in the short, medium and long term?

**CCW Chair:** Did everyone hear and understand the question clearly and fully? It's on the screen?

**Community Member 1:** Yes.

**CCW Chair:** Great, okay. So Elena, Alex?

**Alex Wilkes:** Over to us.

**CCW Chair:** You've got five minutes, if you don't mind, to fully answer the question so it's in three parts, so if you can answer each part, that would be much appreciated.

**Alex Wilkes:** Yeah, of course. Okay, well good evening again and so I'll get straight to it. Community Member 7, thank you very much, great question. I want to start if I can, I'll just place a little bit of context before we get to the actions and I actually want to start by saying, it's an absolute privilege to provide the services that we do for our customers. I'm really driven and recognise that we're a monopoly provider and therefore, you as customers, expect to know exactly why bills are what they are and where that money goes.

We are, as custodians of the network, we have to work incredibly hard to make sure that you get a safe, reliable, high-quality supply of water and that we do that by keeping bills as low as we can. So to give some context, last year was a really sharp increase, absolutely, so for customers in our area, that was around about 25%.

Important to distinguish and as I know you will know, that as a water only company, our part of the bill is associated with clean water provision but we do bill, so in your area, Community Member 7, we are also billing on behalf of Severn Trent Water but we don't control their portion of the bill.

The reason behind that 25% increase is that as we shifted from a previous regulatory period to a new one, we put forward an ambitious proposal to essentially have our largest ever investment programme. So across the two areas of South Staffordshire Water and Cambridge, we're going to be investing just shy of £1bn over five years, on the water network.

In the second year, so the one that we're just entering into, what we've been able to do is that's, so there was that big increase, our increase in South Staffs for instance this year, is going to be 2%, so it's under the rate of inflation, we've worked really hard to keep that as low as we can, it's actually amongst the lowest in the UK now. Now that is not to say it's not significant by the way, it's just some context for how and why that came about.

Reason for those sorts of bills and things that we've sought to do to increase transparency is it's absolutely right and fair and proper that you know exactly where that money goes. Historically, we have included breakdowns within the bills and links through to our website with breakdowns of those high level expenditure areas, but unfortunately the click-through rate hasn't been particularly good so there's a lot more work for us to do, to get that message across to our customers about why bills are what they are and where the money goes.

So in the latest annual billings that's about to drop with customers, well dropping with customers started at the end of last week, we've actually put something forward called a Your Water, Your Future newsletter that will go with every single bill, to explain the expenditure areas that has driven that and what customers can see as a result. So we're explaining the expenditure levels on reducing leakage, producing high quality water, support for customers in vulnerable circumstances, maintaining reliable and safe supplies and protecting the environment.

So we're starting on that journey, I think to be a bit more action oriented, there's clearly more we can do to try to get, to make it clear to customers where their money goes. I think things around interactive tools on the website which shows where every pound goes.

I also think there's an opportunity for us to really regionalise that, so to your point about what are the benefits that people will see in the short, medium and the long term, we can start to give, in my view, probably more micro updates around, within different postcode regions, what the local leakage repairs that have been completed, the investment, capital investment programme that's under way, which Robert will cover with you later, the environmental improvements, things like that. So I think in the short term ...

**CCW Chair:** Can I jump in a second? What you've said so far is really helpful but I think to be quite pointed to the question itself, the bills have increased by circa 25%, the question is why have they increased so significantly? And I'm not sure that you've answered that fully yet, can you maybe go to that point in the question for us, please?

**Alex Wilkes:** Yeah, of course, sorry, my apologies. So as I say it's to fund a huge investment programme, so one of the biggest investment programmes that we've ever undertaken. Against that £1bn, to give you an idea, we're going to be spending £77m on leakage reduction, so reducing the amount of water that is wasted into the environment because of leakage detection. We have over £186m that is around improving and maintaining and upgrading water treatment plants, which means that we maintain high quality water whilst demand increases.

**TMcK Facilitator:** Oops, my buzzer does work, sorry, Alex, I completely cut you off with that, that's actually really annoying, isn't it?

**Alex Wilkes:** Would you like me to continue for a minute or so?

**TMcK Facilitator:** Yeah, I'll let you finish your point, absolutely.

**Alex Wilkes:** So leakage, water treatment works and the biggest increase is around upgrading our equipment, so maintaining reliable, 24/7 supplies, that amounts for around £420m of the expenditure, so upgrading the water grid. We're also massively and significantly increasing the programme of support for those that are really struggling as a result of the cost of living crisis. We, at the present, have around 65,000 customers that we are supporting through social tariffs and through our charitable trust, to help them to meet their water charges at what is a very difficult time.

And I think the final point I'll say because I know time is up and I'll let Elena, I apologise, I haven't given you a chance to speak yet but we're also rolling out what we call a universal metering programme, so something that customers will absolutely see is a huge increase in the numbers of meters that are out there on the network, to enable us to provide consistently accurate billing for customers, so that they receive accurate information and only pay for what they consume.

**Elena Karpathakis:** Am I allowed to add anything, Bev and Joe? Or are we now completely timed out?

**CCW Chair:** It's timed out but I'm not sure the question's been answered. It is quite a significant jump, you know, certainly when you look at the percentage compared to 2020 – 2025, that period of time. So I'm not entirely sure that you've answered the question fully but what I'm going to do is I'm going to do, I'll hand it back to the customers to be the judges of that.

So part of this session now, back to the panel, is about asking some further questions of the company, I think. It's about testing whether what you've heard is credible and clear and sufficient for you, and you know, think about when you have this, when you talk to one another about what you've heard, do you understand what, why your bills have increased significantly because it's a significant increase, do you really understand how the money is being spent? Do you understand the benefit that you're going to get from that spend as customers and the timeline for that? And does this go far enough in terms of helping you to get some answers.

We're going to capture your reactions and Joe is going to guide this part of the discussion. So Joe, I'm going to hand over to you, I'll be interested to see whether it's me that's just not clear.

**TMcK Facilitator:** Bev, thank you so much. So for this section, again just to reaffirm, we're focusing on your reaction to what you've just heard, we don't want to bring in anything too much new to this part, we don't want to bring in any different grievances or whatever it might be that you might want to talk about at this stage.

I'll open it up to the room first of all and I really just want to know how you felt about what you were told in relation to that question. Do we feel like we've got an answer or – Community Member 11, straight in, I'll let you go first.

**Community Member 11:** I felt that they explained where they were spending the money, I can understand, you know, that the investment that was being made, it's probably long overdue and needed. But they haven't clarified any benefits at all to us as customers of that work, what is the long term, what will that lead to? Will that eventually lead to lower bills? How much water are they saving by these leakage repairs etc? We need more detail around that, I believe.

**TMcK Facilitator:** Bring that to life for me a bit Community Member 11, if you can, what would that look like to you as a customer?

**Community Member 11:** Well, I'd like to know that the replacement of all the equipment etc is going to make for a more efficient service? There'll be less breakdowns? Can they quantify that a bit? How much improvement do they expect to see in the network as a result of that work? With the leaks they're repairing, how much water is it actually saving? Does the amount being spent mean that long term, the amount of water we save, will reduce our bills? So that sort of question.

**TMcK Facilitator:** Thank you very much, Community Member 11. Again, I'll open up the room if anyone wants to jump in, feel free to speak, put your hand up, whatever you want to do. Community Member 12, I can see you've got your hand up.

**Community Member 12:** It was interesting the way that the bill was quantified, that it was 25% the first year and then only a 2% rise this year, but that is actually a 2% plus the 25%, which means it was 25% last year and is that 27% this year? Can you clarify that?

**TMcK Facilitator:** Okay, so that's something that needs to be clear for you, Community Member 12.

**Community Member 12:** Yeah.

**TMcK Facilitator:** Community Member 6, on you go, you're good to go.

**Community Member 6:** I think I found it fairly clear but maybe, but basically our bill increases to pay for their, the water company's investments that they want to put back in. It's a hard one because obviously, I've heard other people have experienced loss of water and stuff, I personally haven't had any of that so for them, you know, this investment of maybe reducing things like that will be great. But for me, a bit like Community Member 11, I'd like to see my bill coming back down because I've not actually been affected in any of those other ways in the past.

So for me, for my bill to increase to do these investments that are going to potentially help things that don't impact me, it's a bit of a waste in my opinion. But I totally get from other people's view, it's beneficial.

**Community Member 10:** I agree too as well.

**TMcK Facilitator:** Go ahead, Community Member 10.

**Community Member 10:** I agree where she's coming from as well, Community Member 6, because like I'm one of them families that are on low income so like it's, my bill being high, it's not affordable, do you know what I mean? And then if you put between food and putting a rise on the water bill, you all contribute towards, you know, the family and stuff because we've got like six of us in one house and obviously, food will come first, if it's like higher than, do you know what I mean?

**TMcK Facilitator:** Of course, so what in an ideal world, Community Member 10, what do you want to happen? I think we spoke about this a little bit when we talked about what was realistic for the company to do? And I suppose that realistically, bills are not coming down by a huge amount in the next however long.

**Community Member 10:** Bills need to come down, like I think everybody just wants their bills to come down because everything's like continuously going up, like the electric, the gas, the water, you know? And I just don't think there's any reason for that to happen, to keep going up and up and up because it's affecting everyone's household.

**TMcK Facilitator:** Okay, brilliant Community Member 10, I've got loads of hands up so thank you so much. Community Member 5, I'll go to you and Community Member 7, I'll come to you next because you've been waiting. But Community Member 5, I'll let you go first.

**Community Member 5:** Yeah, just felt like a very politically correct sort of answer to, going around the houses really in terms of no real commitment that the bills are going to come down, I'm not convinced that they ever will. Once families and customers have started paying a particular amount, it's not very often that you start getting them reduced significantly, anyway. He didn't convince me that there was any real commitment or any real desire to tell us how and when it will come down, just a lot of talk about the schemes that they're involved in and what they're trying to roll out, but ultimately, it looks like we're footing the bill for some of it.

**CCW Chair:** I just want to come in here because on balance, the question does not address why your bills are not coming down, okay? So I just want to be clear and stick to the question that Community Member 7 asked, which was, "Our bills have risen sharply over the last year, why? How is this money being spent and how will it benefit us as customers in the short, medium and long term?".

So the question does not ask the company for explanations around why a bill's not coming down, so I just want to be clear about that. Can we maybe go to Community Member 7 next?

**Community Member 7:** Doing the quick maths there, there's still £250m unaccounted for but it does very much seem that yes, we're footing the bill for the improvements, so they've sort of answered it but what are they actually doing, technical details, that's what I'd like to hear? You're saying yes, "we're putting into the infrastructure" and the new meters and stuff but what's the point of having a meter if the pipes are leaking everywhere else and it's not a true reading?

It's not the actual amount that's true because it's not a fully working system, you know? You put a meter in but if there's a leak along the line somewhere, you're paying for that leak personally if you've got a meter because if it's near your house or something like that, it's going to show up on that. So in essence, shouldn't it be a case of "Let's get everything right first, let's put the money into that" and then start introducing meters.

**TMcK Facilitator:** Turn that into an action for me, Community Member 7, what do you want as a customer to see?

**Community Member 7:** I want to see less leakage, less silly roadworks that cost a lot of money and a lot of time for people, and I want to see where the money's going. "Yes, we've improved this here, we've improved this here, there's no more leaks in this area, the supply to this area is now perfect" and when we start going onto billing and all that sort of thing. Get the system right before you start putting meters in to charge people, that should be a very, very last concept.

Once everything's perfect, yeah, come in and say, "This is our new water meters", great, "because we know they're accurate because everything's working fine." But at the moment, it's not working fine and it should be, that should be the whole focus of everything the money's going towards, everything should work perfectly before we start getting silly bills.

**TMcK Facilitator:** Okay, Community Member 7, thank you so much. We're probably getting a bit tight on time, Bev, aren't we, but I do want to give others the

opportunity to speak who have got their hand up. Community Member 3, as briefly as possible, I would love to know what you think.

**Community Member 3:** I'm questioning the 25%, obviously that's the first year but why is it 25% in the first year and then less in the next? Because obviously, that's a massive jump for a customer, 25%, was there no forward planning? Because they say it's for a new regulatory period but everybody knew that the systems needed to be maintained and upgraded, so why is it such a massive jump when it was known all the way along? Was there no forward planning to that, so now we've got to foot the bill?

**TMcK Facilitator:** So what would you need to know? What do you want? What's the action from that, Community Member 3?

**Community Member 3:** Going forward, because obviously that's done but going forward, it's like if there's a plan and our bills are likely to change, how much are they likely to change over the next period? Because I mean if all my bills went up 25%, I wouldn't be able to live, so I don't see how with the inflation and everything like that, that can be justified.

**TMcK Facilitator:** Thank you so much. Community Member 2?

**Community Member 2:** I would agree with what Community Member 7 said and I think the most important thing is before they start putting new stuff in, they should make sure that the old stuff works. I mean there's lots of people, I haven't had my meter read since 2023, so what's the point of everybody putting new meters in when the old ones are not working anyway? I think the money should be spent on actually, because infrastructure's no good at the moment, I mean I don't know if I'm going to get a bill for £500 when I've got my new meter eventually. The money should have been on actually, instead of putting new meters in, it should be putting the old ones right.

**TMcK Facilitator:** Okay, so what do you need Community Member 2 by way of an action, if we're writing a note here for what you need, what is that?

**Community Member 2:** I want them to guarantee that before they start spending money on new stuff, that the old stuff that's collapsing and things like that, is actually mended or whatever.

**TMcK Facilitator:** Community Member 2, thank you so much. Community Member 11, we'll go to you and then we'll move onto the next part of the discussion.

**Community Member 11:** Just going back to the 25% and whilst this year is only 2%, that sounds great on paper but basically we're still paying more than 25% more than two years ago, and we'll continue to pay that much higher rate permanently, unless there was a fixed term that that additional need was identified for and bills will reduce at a certain point in time. But otherwise, that 25% increase will be part of our new bills every year, but paying on a much higher rate.

**TMcK Facilitator:** So is there something about making, playing devil's advocate here, bills and stuff does generally go up, it's very rare that a bill goes down in many

cases. What can they do and I know the 25% is probably quite a lot, right? What actions can they take to, I don't know, is it to soften the blow? Is it to inform you a bit better about when this stuff happens? What is it?

**Community Member 11:** No, I accept the money is required to do the work that was required but the infrastructure work must have been costed and there must have been a need to raise that money over a period of time, to deliver everything and when everything is delivered, according to that, is it just a case of we stay 25% to continue to maintaining it? Or is the system in a better state then and doesn't need such investment?

**TMcK Facilitator:** Shall we keep moving?

**CCW Chair:** Yes, I can see that we've got some actions here that we want to present back to the company, please. Elena and Alex, we'll come to you then, just give you about five minutes.

**TMcK Facilitator:** I'll share this first and we'll talk through them first if that's okay, just to make sure that we've captured them as the customers come on. I'll talk these through and we'll obviously then give an opportunity to ... sorry, we're already running behind, it's always the way when I'm involved in these things.

Okay, I'll really quickly talk through this, so while we've been speaking, people have been listening, doing things in the background, is capturing what you guys have said.

Obviously, we've got the question on the left, you know that and what we captured overall was there was an ambitious proposal, largest ever investment programme, approximately £1bn over five years. Previously included breakdowns of expenditure in bills and links through to website, however these suffered from poor click-through rate, so there was some information on bills but it didn't have the uptake that South Staffs expected.

So the "what we will do in the future" component of this? We've got that Your Water, Your Future newsletter, what is driving bill increases and where they're being invested. Future investment plans, I won't go through each of these individually, you can see them there but a few numbers next to things here, increasing the programme of support for those in financial difficulty and universal meter programme roll-out.

We then obviously asked you guys to tell us what you thought of what was said here, and I tried to get you to create a few actions off the back of that. We're looking for clarification of the long-term benefits to customers, quantification of the improvement being delivered, for example, how much water is being saved as a result? Improving confidence in infrastructure, commitments to less leakage, a more considered and manageable increase in bills to foot the investment in infrastructure, and to improve the consistency of meter reading before investing in new meter rollouts.

I want to open up to the room again and see what our thoughts are on what we've captured here in terms of actions. Is this capturing what you guys feel like you said? Is there anything missing here? This will hopefully sort of, hopefully it's close, if not, let us know and we can look to tweak some of the wording on this.

**CCW Chair:** Everyone happy, yeah?

**TMcK Facilitator:** Anyone want to jump in?

**Community Member 6:** I just wanted to add something. I think someone did the quick maths earlier, maybe just to clarify where that other £250m is going because that's not, unless it's going to support those in financial difficulty.

**TMcK Facilitator:** So to make it clear where everything is invested, essentially?

**Community Member 6:** Yeah.

**Community Member 12:** Yeah, if we can have that, that would be great.

**Community Member 7:** It's £317m, that's what was left over from their maths, is £317m or thereabouts, so I'd like to see where that's going as well.

**Community Member 12:** But is a portion of that not going to the shareholders?

**CCW Chair:** Let's capture that as an action and then we can put that to the company to respond, okay?

**TMcK Facilitator:** What we're really keen on is making sure that we're asking for things within a particular timescale as well, so you'll see on the right hand side of the column, we've asked for a timescale and I'd love to get your thoughts on when you want to see, for example, we've labelled these all, we've given them all a letter, for example, Point [A]<sup>1</sup>, clarification on long term benefits to customers, when do you want that? How does that, what does that look like?

**Community Member 12:** They normally have two days to respond so should we not do the same?

**Community Member 6:** I think a lot of those points should be available instantly really because they should already have that information, from when they made the investments.

**Community Member 7:** The first two, definitely, they should be able to be quite quickly, improving confidence, that's going to take a little bit longer because you've got to prove that you do it. More considered and manageable increase in bills to foot the, again that's a little bit longer, that's going to be measured in months and years isn't it?

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<sup>1</sup> Clarification of the long-term benefits to customers

And again, the first two, quite quickly, the last few, sorry, other than [A]<sup>2</sup>, [B]<sup>3</sup> and [F]<sup>4</sup>, quite quickly, but the rest are in the long-term and they've got to be measured and set dates for.

**TMcK Facilitator:** Amazing, okay. Community Member 8, I've not heard from you, I want to go to you and I'm just going to get your thoughts on what we've talked about so far, then I'll go to you, Community Member 9 and then we'll hand back over to South Staffs after that.

**Community Member 8:** I agree with the points regarding the budget and the investment, not kind of seeming like it's good customer satisfaction or value for money. I agree with some of the points of fixing the meters doesn't seem like a sustainable plan if there's issues with leakage, so I think they should reverse the order of their plan or action plan.

**TMcK Facilitator:** Community Member 9, any thoughts from you before we hand back to South Staffs?

**Community Member 9:** Yeah, I can see all these things need doing and this X amount of money is being spent but my biggest question is kind of why now? Let's have some information about why it's come up right just now and also, this is all written down and if we want to go to the website it's written there, but we need to be communicated with so much better, so that we understand what's going on with this increase and these upgrades etc.

**TMcK Facilitator:** Bev, I'll hand back to you.

**CCW Chair:** Thank you, everyone and before we finalise the kind of, the actions and the timescales, I really do want to offer a brief opportunity back to South Staffs Water and Cambridge Water, our representatives, an opportunity to highlight for you if there are any commitments you believe are not feasible and to explain clearly, why? And that includes whether there are any constraints around regulatory, financial, operational or legal because this is about transparency, so let's be clear about explaining why something can't be done.

And also an opportunity for you to do some commitment to some timescales here, we've got about five minutes for a response here, so I just open the floor up to you both.

**Elena Karpathakis:** Can I kick us off, if that's okay, Alex? So thank you, really interesting to hear the perspectives of everyone on our opening position. Some of these make absolute sense and I think are reasonable asks, I wonder if I can just comment on a couple of them that I think are challenging and I want to explain why, and I want to say that many of you have raised the question of why did we apply such a big increase, relative to the later years this year?

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<sup>2</sup> Clarification of the long-term benefits to customers

<sup>3</sup> Quantification of the improvements being delivered (e.g. how much water is being saved as a result)

<sup>4</sup> Improve the consistency of meter reading before investing in new meter roll-out

And the reason we've done that, just so you know, is that we wanted to give as much certainty as possible to all of our customers, so rather than having multiple years of significant increases, wanted to apply one increase, whilst still keeping our bills amongst the lowest in the sector and then have smaller increases in years 2, 3, 4 and 5. We do engage with our customers through our other channels on the way to do that, and that is now set for the course of this regulatory period.

I'm not sure that we can change the sequence of our bill increases as suggested in Point [D]<sup>5</sup>, through the course of this regulatory cycle, just because of the way that we operate and we set our overall investment framework over a five-year period.

The other one I wanted to come to is [E]<sup>6</sup>, we have again, made a commitment to increase our metering, our smart metering rollout for many of the reasons that you discussed, to be able to give accurate bills to each customer, to make sure that customers absolutely are not being billed for leakage that isn't related to their usage, etc. So again, I can't commit to pause our meter installation programme, that is a commitment, we're required to meet that now by our regulator and being funded for it, but I do think we can make some improvements in the way we are doing meter reading in parallel. So rather than doing it before as stated here, I just want to propose that we do that in parallel, if that's okay with you all as an edit.

Alex, do you want to come in and add anything?

**Alex Wilkes:** Yeah, just quickly if I can. I think they're incredibly reasonable asks, I think on the point about the maths point, it was simply because we were timing out that I didn't give you the exact amount for each of those component's parts, but that would be captured within the action plan, that there isn't a missing £250m, for example.

What we're also absolutely committed to doing, someone mentioned that shareholder return, is having real clarity on the shareholder return, which stands at around 4% of the bill for this regulatory period, so we can absolutely do that.

Also absolutely possible and right, I have some of those statistics around "What are the benefits that I'm likely to see?", which is a really salient question and one that I apologise, that I just didn't get the chance to get to. Ultimately, for example, we're looking at reducing leakage by 20% over the five years, 200 megalitres per year, over 5,000 leaks fixed. Things like that, that people will have a real tangible, see tangible benefits from.

Final point from me is that the metering is also part of that leakage mix, by having more meters on the network, it allows us to identify leakages quicker and get out and fix those quicker, that at the moment, we're relatively blind to unless they present themselves visually. So this isn't for us about a sort of concurrent, a sort of sequenced programme, this is about having a concurrent programme where we're looking at reducing leakage, at the same time as upgrading ageing pipework, at the same time as getting more meters, so that we know where those leaks are and get out to them quickly.

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<sup>5</sup> A more considered and manageable increase in bills to foot the investment in infrastructure

<sup>6</sup> Improve the consistency of meter reading before investing in new meter roll-out

**Elena Karpathakis:** And, by the way, at the same time as meeting ever-increasing environmental requirements on us and particularly for our Cambridge customers who are on this panel, you will know that the chalk streams that are, well you probably know that the chalk streams that are in and around the Cambridge area that we rely on to feed you water today, are very delicate and we need to change the way that we deliver water to you and for that, we're making quite significant investments in bringing new sources of water into the Cambridge Water area from outside our current geography.

So again, we can set that out more clearly when or if we have time but I just wanted to say that that is all part of this £1bn investment programme as well, it's just making sure we have a sustainable source of water for all of our customers, while meeting the ever increasing demand of environmental rules and climate change.

**CCW Chair:** Thank you, Elena. When an action can't be totally agreed, obviously we can still capture what the customers have asked for in this document, but I think for the record now, do the panel agree that we've got some actions here agreed under this question, and that we can now move onto Question No. 2? Are we happy?

**Community Member 1:** Yeah.

**Elena Karpathakis:** That "giving customers the confidence of a commitment to the investment", it would be helpful to be clear on how we can do that, that's quite a big statement and I think what we can do is either give you or through our bills, more transparency in how our investment is being spent, is that what we mean in capturing that there?

**CCW Chair:** For the benefit of customers in the short, medium and long term, so I think what happens next, Joe, is that you will get an opportunity to look at this document, Elena as well, and make sure that what these actions are that you're agreeing to are written in as transparent and as clear way as possible, a meaningful way before publish, okay?

**TMcK Facilitator:** We're under no illusion that it can be quite hard to come up with these kind of things on the spot, these are helpful for ideas but we're not going to get down to the nitty gritty here.

**Elena Karpathakis:** Right, okay.

**CCW Chair:** Thank you all. Let's go to Community Member 12 and Question 2, please?

**Community Member 12:** Customers are experiencing repeated burst mains, flooding, pressure issues and loss of supply, which is a personal bugbear for us, in areas that are already water stressed and seeing housing growth. What can you do to support the future proofing, to ensure that ongoing housing developments do not continue to impact the current water customers?

**CCW Chair:** Did everybody hear and fully understand that question clearly?

**Community Member 1:** Yes.

**CCW Chair:** Thank you. So Alex and Elena, over to you, you've got five minutes to respond, please. It would be really helpful if you can be as specific as possible when you answer the question, set out what's already in place maybe and what is planned, what will change because of this discussion and when will those changes happen, and how customers will see and be able to make progress. And for the community panel members, listen carefully to this one because this was a big topic in the briefing session, so Elena, Alex, over to you.

**Elena Karpathakis:** Can I ask because I think this was originally Topic No. 3, can I ask that Alex and Robert Boswell are swapped over because Robert will be our lead answerer on this, supported by me.

**TMcK Facilitator:** Of course, apologies for that.

**CCW Chair:** We can take a moment for Robert to introduce himself as well.

**TMcK Facilitator:** Thank you, Alex, I'll put you back into the viewing room.

**Alex Wilkes:** I'll speak to you all shortly, thank you.

**CCW Chair:** Thank you, Alex.

**TMcK Facilitator:** I pressed the button so Robert should be in shortly. Elena, apologies again for that, that was not the smooth transition we're trying to accommodate.

**Elena Karpathakis:** He's with us now, hi, Robert.

**Robert Boswell:** Good evening, everybody, I hope everybody can hear me.

**CCW Chair:** Absolutely we can, loud and clear. Before we start, Robert, hi, I'm Bev Keogh, I'm the chair of tonight's Accountability Session. Would you mind doing a very short, please, introduction to yourself, a short but important introduction to yourself?

**Robert Boswell:** Good evening, everybody, my name's Robert Boswell, I'm the Capital Delivery Director and I've been with South Staffs and Cambridge Water for 30 years now, and have worked in most, if not all of the departments that include the laboratories, leakage, the engineering teams, the customer liaison officers and I'm now responsible for where we invest our capital expenditure within the business, some of the topics that you've already been talking around. I hope that gives you a clear explanation of my remit.

**CCW Chair:** Absolutely it does and Community Member 12, if you don't mind, I'm going to offer you the opportunity to ask the question of Robert directly, again, as he was not with us. Over to you.

**Community Member 12:** Customers are experiencing repeated burst mains, flooding, pressure issues and even loss of supply, in areas that are already water stressed and seeing housing growth. The question is what are you going to do to support the future proofing, to ensure that ongoing housing developments do not continue to impact the current water customers?

**CCW Chair:** Robert, in the interests of time, Joe has set a clock to time you, I'd like to offer you five minutes to respond, please, and if you could do that by being as specific as possible, answering the question fully and if you can limit sort of acronyms and jargon as the water industry is well known for, and answer the whole question. Over to you.

**Robert Boswell:** Thank you, so a great question. Our network, our pipe network is an ageing infrastructure in both regions and some of the infrastructure is over 100 years old. Some of those mains that are in the ground are still as good as they are when they were originally installed and there are some that aren't, and our asset detail of where our mains are failing is really comprehensive. So we have a really great level of detail of our go-to list of what to replace and where, so whilst we start to see fairly short-term increases in burst mains, we're targeting those with our largest ever expenditure on replacing those mains which are now time expired.

The trick is really, is to replace them before they're beyond their asset life, so there's an enormous emphasis on that. We're above our colleagues in the industry as the average of replacement mains, so we're doing above what the rest of our colleagues are doing and we're targeting 250 kilometres in the next five years. We've already replaced 38, 37/38 kilometres in this year and we'll step that up to sort of 50 kilometres.

That should absolutely reduce the burst mains and the interruptions to supply that our customers receive. We are already some of the, we already have some of the best statistics in the sector around interruptions to supply, that's measured in the amount of minutes spread over every single customer, of how long a customer is interrupted and I've already heard on the call that some haven't been interrupted.

I think I made a list of Community Member 6 or [corrects pronunciation of name], sorry, in Streetly, she would have been interrupted, we had a really large burst there 10 years ago or more, and it's those type of big events that we've got an enormous amount of data that helps us to target those, to pre-empt those burst mains. So that's our pipe network, we're all on the way with that, we're investing.

Water stressed and growth is a real problem to us, it's an enormous trajectory of what we're seeing in both regions and I'm sure wherever you live, you're seeing the new housing estates pop up as well, but we're well catered for that, we're preparing for that, we've got some really accurate growth targets that are coming from government, that tells me where expected housing developments are likely to be and therefore in this period that we're seeing now, the next five years' worth of investment, we're thinking around new reservoirs to make sure that we have that diurnal load to take the peak shock events of super high summer days or winter freeze thaws, that we have enough water resilience in the reservoirs, that people will not be impacted.

And then also, we have water efficiency is almost at the top of our tree as well, there's making sure that the white goods that are being installed in people's houses and the taps and the showers and the toilet flushes, are the most efficient that the Developers are using, so we work closely with the developers as well that are developing these properties, to make sure that we are operating at what we call a PCC and that is per capita consumption, so that's how much water each house uses

on average and we're trying to drive that figure down through efficiency as well, on the newer developments as well as the existing infrastructure in place as well.

So growth, whilst it presents a real problem to us, we're catering for it in this next five years but we're also catering for it in the long-term resilience, and that's really important. So the review of our network as a whole, making sure that we have enough water coming into the area and I think I already heard talking particularly in the Cambridge region, around our Grafham scheme, of where we're bringing a huge pipe network coming from our colleagues in Anglian Water, that will then be superseded by a new reservoir that you may have even heard being talked about at Westminster, that's the Fens Reservoir, and that's making sure that we have enough water into the future, a long term horizon, we're talking about 50, 70 years down the line, that we can sustainably supply water at the high quality that we supply today and even improving that quality by some of the above ground investment as well.

I heard earlier in the first section around what do we see today? What's the medium term and what's the long term? Well today, we're seeing nitrates go through the roof in the farming agricultural world, so some of the water that we're abstracting the nitrates are going higher than what we expected and anticipated, and therefore we're having to treat those right now and that's the short-term impact. But we're working with the farmers and the catchment teams, long term, to reduce those so therefore our treatment costs can also be reduced.

**CCW Chair:** I'm just going to jump in there, you mentioned when you joined us that you hear that some people didn't have any issues and weren't suffering issues, but you wouldn't have been privy to in fairness is the discussion that came up from the customers in the briefing session, and that was about there are people on this call who live near housing developments, that currently live in villages and since then, they are experiencing disruptions of loss of water or low supply.

So I think there's a really important part of this question that I would like you to answer in the remaining minute or so that you've got left, very succinctly, which is what are you going to do to support or what are you already doing to support future proofing, to ensure that ongoing housing development does not continue to impact current water customers? I think it would be really helpful if you could focus on that element of the question for us.

**Robert Boswell:** Certainly. We are investing today and will continue to invest in maintaining our guaranteed standards that we supply to the customers, that's flow and pressure, and we are installing new booster stations to make sure that any new housing sites or housing developments that are nearby, that has the potential of reducing those pressures to our existing customers, are catered for.

It's part of a well-structured procedure and it's a reinforcement into our network, we are going to be spending at least £12m this next five years on ensuring that every customer can receive and maintain those guaranteed minimum standards.

**CCW Chair:** Thank you, Robert. Now we're just going to pause and turn back to the customers, this part of the session is not about asking further questions of the company, it's about testing whether what you've heard is clear, credible and sufficient and again, as we did in Question 1. The team behind the scenes will be

capturing your reactions and some actions that you agree to put forward to the company.

So Joe, I'm just going to hand back to you to facilitate this section and I don't know whether it would be helpful if maybe, the customers who are having these real life issues of low pressure and no water, who live in these areas where there are housing developments, whether they get an opportunity to share that with Robert.

**TMcK Facilitator:** Community Member 12, I'll go to you because obviously you chose to ask this question because of what you told us about your experience, so I'd love to know what you think of the response that you heard and you can feel free to bring to life your experience in your own words as well.

**Community Member 12:** My experience is we were 26 days without water last year and three housing developments were put in our village, 96 houses over three developments, resulted in 26 days where we had no water, which I don't think is acceptable – and then we got a 25% increase on the bill, so I was particularly keen to hear your response and what I've heard is the planning about how to supply the new water and keep our pressure up, what I didn't hear is how you stop our waterflow being interrupted.

**TMcK Facilitator:** What do you want in terms of an action from what you've heard?

**Community Member 12:** I'd just like running water, it's a simple request, can we just get up in the morning and turn the tap on and actually have water, and for 26 days last year, we didn't and as you know, I'm a mobile caterer, I couldn't even take water to work which meant I lost work. As did the café, the pub, mine was a very sorry tale I'm afraid, but five businesses in our village stopped work for 26 days last year.

**TMcK Facilitator:** I'd like to open the discussion, Community Member 12, but we can certainly come back and if anything comes up for that, Community Member 7, I'll let you step in, you have your hand raised?

**Community Member 7:** There was a lot of company line there that didn't particularly, from my point of view, that was very much, it sounded like "we're behind and we're trying to catch up, and we're doing okay and everything was working and we're keeping on targets, but now we want to invest and try and catch up with everybody else." The maths just does not make sense at all.

So yeah, I think there's a lot more questions in this, yeah, it just doesn't make sense, it seems like there's, "We saw an opportunity to make more money and we're going to make that money." But actually, what I'm going to do to improve that – and it's a lot of filler sort of thing, and that's what he sounded like he was saying, whether I'm right or wrong on that, I don't know but that's how it felt to me, it felt just very "This is the company line that we're toeing", with no actual facts or figures, other than "We're going to put £12m into putting boost stations in."

Yeah, okay, great but if the water ain't working in the first place, putting a boost station in is going to stress the water even more, all these new estates, you can't say where the new estates are going to be, you know where they think it might be but the amount of objections and stuff going into play, locally to where I am in Sutton

Coldfield, the green belt land that's supposed to be put towards new communities and new estates, are being blocked left, right and centre. So actually, you can't tell where they're going to be, you know where they'd like to be but you can't tell where they're going to be. I've got a playing field next to me that they've been trying to turn into a new estate for donkeys' years, so yeah.

**TMcK Facilitator:** What's the actions there? What can they do?

**Community Member 7:** I'm trying to put it into words and that's where I'm struggling, I'm hoping somebody else will jump in and say, "I've got the idea" and put it into words because I'm a bit ... it needs to be, it always comes down to transparency but actually, that transparency, him just jumping in saying there was a water shortage 10 years ago from where Community Member 6 lived, great, Community Member 6's only lived in that area for six months, she told us that last time, he doesn't know that, not once you mention the folks down in Cambridge, he's mentioned the stuff that has been improved upon but the lady that's losing her business in Cambridge, he should know about that, 26 days without water is appalling. Why isn't he mentioning that? More transparency in the hard-hit areas rather than going with, "Oh yes, we've done this in Streetly."

**TMcK Facilitator:** So it sounds like you're wanting to know more about what's going on, like this example and we'll obviously give him the opportunity to come back.

**Community Member 7:** Yeah, speak.

**TMcK Facilitator:** But it sounds as though it feels like they should know about Community Member 12's incident and the impact that that's had on the ...?

**Community Member 7:** That's quite a severe incident, you know, that's in the extreme, 26 days without water that those poor folks in that area, is appalling. There should be some consequence, there should be some reason, there should be some rhyme to it, rather than, you know, 96 new houses and there's still no water, that's bad, they should know about that and that should be something that's addressed.

**TMcK Facilitator:** Opening up to the room, again, I don't know if anyone else wants to jump in on anything that we've heard here. Community Member 4, I'll go to you if it's okay, I've not heard much from you, let us know your opinion on what you heard here.

**Community Member 4:** I'm in the fortunate position that we've not had any problems with our water supply or pressure for a number of years, so that's an encouraging point of view. However, I appreciate that in our area especially, there seems to be housing estates going up left, right and centre and it is worrying to think about the extra supply and the point of sewerage and flooding to a lot of housing estates being put on flood plains, that sort of thing, I don't know, that's probably not a water board issue but that's my point.

One thing I'd like to know is the investment that's been put into the infrastructure of the water system, how much is actually coming from the investors rather than the end customers, for that? Rather than just paying them dividends, should they not be putting extra investment in for that sort of work? I don't know.

**TMcK Facilitator:** A bit of clarification around that, that side of investment. Community Member 3, on you go?

**Community Member 3:** I'm asking the question as the future proofing and was told that obviously, working with the building developers, putting in the most efficient white goods and flushes, I mean I did bring up the use of grey water, I don't understand why grey water can't be used for flushing a toilet and things like that, so that would improve efficiency, I've not heard anything about that. And then obviously, it's not just households, there's businesses as well and for example, why isn't there more options rather than just when you're developing, for water efficiency being the goods that we're putting in?

I know that reed beds, for example, in the past, when you're building something sustainably, just of some knowledge I've had of the Olympic Park, that all had to be done sustainably and they used reed beds to filter, and obviously, there's things like that, that could be used and not heard any mention of any of that and it's like business areas as well as household because if you've got large scale industry going up in places, you look at around Cambridge, you've got numerous, like the hospitals are going in and things like that, that are massive, that use a lot of water, is there nothing? And it's new hospitals, it's not just there's been, it's the old hospital and they can't do anything there, we've had new hospitals go up, are they going up sustainably? So that it's the most efficient and working with developers there as well as with housing developments.

**TMcK Facilitator:** So is it about making commitments to these kind of things to ensure it doesn't happen, fundamentally? Is that fair?

**Community Member 3:** It's just making use of all the, I mean it's making use of the finances to make it the most efficient that it can be, that's quite a big thing, like if you're working with developers, obviously they're on profits and they want to put in the cheapest, low efficiency thing going, so they maximise their profits. But equally, I feel it's a much bigger picture than "We're working with them and they're going to put those in." Surely that's what they should be doing anyway?

**TMcK Facilitator:** Anything else? Bev, you look like you're about to ... Community Member 9's got her hand up, we'll go to Community Member 9 first, if that's okay. We'll come back to you, Community Member 9. Community Member 11, I'll go to you?

**Community Member 11:** Yeah, so it was interesting to learn that the water companies work with the Developers in making sure new houses are built with the maximum efficiencies installed. But I'd like to know more about before it gets to that stage, at the planning stage, what the water board, the water companies can do to pushback against developments where it is going to have a significant impact on their ability to supply in the area.

**TMcK Facilitator:** Okay. Bev, I'll let you jump back in, we're working on Community Member 9's audio.

**CCW Chair:** Joe, you mentioned capturing some actions, are we as a team happy that we are capturing actions from the discussion? A lot of this sounds around communication and much more clarity on what is actually being done.

**TMcK Facilitator:** I'm going to let them finish typing the final one! I'll be two seconds, I'll share the screen with you so you can have a quick look, I'll run through those quickly and then we need to move onto the next question fairly soon.

So we'll run through these really quickly, we'll put it up to you guys after this to make sure we're capturing I guess what you think and feel here. I'm not going to go through the "We did" and "We will do in the future", I want to focus on the actions that you've raised, which is that third column there, "What would an ideal water company response look like?".

So we said that responses so far felt a bit like toeing the party line, because they want improved confidence, reducing scepticism in the company intentions requires greater transparency, so that "transparency" word I think we heard a couple of times during that discussion there.

Clarification on how much of the infrastructure investment is coming from investors versus customers, again transparency isn't it really? Communication I suppose is a big one there.

Communication and commitment to working with large scale, non-residential developments with water efficiency, I'd probably take out "non-residential", I think it felt like it was quite all-encompassing personally.

And clarification on what power water companies have to push back on development prior to working with developers to improve efficiency here.

Is there anything missing from here? I know that fundamentally, Community Member 12, your main point was "I just want it to work, I just want water", I'd love to know what you think?

**Community Member 12:** It's consistency of supply, I mean that's what the question was about because it's being impacted predominantly by the new housing developments, that the existing customers are being ignored at that point.

**CCW Chair:** I think that was the main point that came from the question that Community Member 12 asked, was it's about continuity of supply in areas of high housing development and how does the company intend to give that continuity of supply, knowing that there's housing development work going on?

**TMcK Facilitator:** Community Member 5?

**Community Member 5:** Just about the 250 kilometres of line in the next five years and replacing mains that are time expired, is that enough? Are they confident that that is enough to sort of resolve it in the future? Obviously a lot of the things we've complained about in our sessions are what we've experienced previously, so is this,

is that action plan enough to actually resolve it or is it just basically all they can afford, and a bit of a starter really? That would be a bit of clarity on that.

**TMcK Facilitator:** Community Member 3?

**Community Member 3:** I just think on [C]<sup>7</sup>, you said take out “non-residential” but I think you should actually say “large scale” and then residential and non-residential developments, with water efficiency. So it’s clear that we’re asking about both.

**CCW Chair:** Thank you, Community Member 3. I’m conscious of time on this one.

**TMcK Facilitator:** No problem, Community Member 10, really quickly and then we’ll move on.

**Community Member 10:** Saying about the villages because I live in a village, I was just going to ask about the flooding and the burst pipes and stuff, leakages. Like what are they going to do to prevent this from happening? Because we’ve had a lot, you know?

**TMcK Facilitator:** We’re not going to cover anything new unfortunately, Community Member 10, but keep that one and definitely raise it on the community and things like that because we’ll definitely pass those kind of things on.

**Community Member 10:** Okay.

**TMcK Facilitator:** Bev?

**CCW Chair:** We’re not asking any new questions, we’re just asking the three that we highlighted so it’s not to say your question’s not relevant.

Thank you for the actions and can we just, Action [C]<sup>8</sup>, that wording does need to change, I can’t see that it’s changed on my screen but it’s “large scale and residential developers with water efficiency”, it’s not just non-residential.

So what I’d like to do now if I can is Robert, I’d like to offer you or Elena, a brief opportunity, five minutes, just to maybe highlight if there are any things on here that you feel that are not feasible and if there are, I’d like you to explain clearly why there are, why that is the case.

And even if there are regulatory constraints, financial, operational or legal, let’s talk about that so it’s transparent and if you’re happy to accept some of these actions, then let’s do that and I think we haven’t covered the timescale element of this yet, but we do need to agree timescales. Let’s get the company to comment on some of these actions first.

**Elena Karpathakis:** May I just ask on the first one, for some input from you all on, your feedback is that we’re toeing the party line and that you want transparency, have you got a view on how? What would give you that sense in terms of our approach to renewing our infrastructure and delivering service to you? Because if

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<sup>7</sup> Communication and commitment to working with large-scale developers with water efficiency

<sup>8</sup> As above

you do have a view, I'd love to understand it so we can make sure we respond in an appropriate way.

In terms of investment from investors versus customers, I think as either I or one of my colleagues mentioned before, there is a standard envelope that we're allowed and expected to pay to our investors in terms of dividends, but I think I'm happy to take that as an action to come back to you, in terms of the investment overall and how that splits.

Communication commitment to working with large scale developers, I think we do do that so we can articulate a bit more on what that means and how we do it.

On [D]<sup>9</sup>, we are required to connect new domestic customers so we in effect, can't say no to new domestic customers. We do have an opportunity, particularly in our Cambridge area, which is constrained in terms of water supply for the coming period until the new reservoir and the new Grafham transfer that Robert mentioned comes in, but for a domestic customer, a domestic development, we need to connect. So I can't commit that we are able to pushback there.

Maintaining consistent supply to existing customers, I think we can comment, we can provide a view on how we are doing that and how well we're doing that. Robert, can you just comment on some of the work with Developers because I know there's some interesting work we're already doing there on grey water?

**Robert Boswell:** There's two elements, I think they're all brilliant items for us to take away as well and I think we can fairly quickly reach for those and try and give a full transparent response.

But I heard grey water mentioned earlier and it's really valid. We have a plant down in Cambridge which we refer to as the Eddington plant, which is a grey water harvesting scheme that uses reed beds and rain water and it's the largest in the northern hemisphere, and we are reinvesting in that shortly to increase the capability of the plant, which we'll be able to offset over a million litres a day, where people are using that water to flush their toilets and use as a grey water within the Cambridge campus actually, the Cambridge University campus.

It's built, it's existing, so we are using that and sometimes we don't necessarily share that information and it was quite rightly brought up earlier.

And the second point I just want to make around the Developers, when the Developers ask for a plot of 1,000, 100, 3,000 houses, the obligation is on the Developers to pay a contribution to the reinforcement of the network. So not, the customers, our own existing customers aren't paying for the upgrade and the investment that's required to lay new mains and new boosters, that's not totally financed through the existing customers, the developers have to pay that charge on every single house connection that they make to us, and it goes into a pot of money that we use in both regions that can support the growth.

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<sup>9</sup> Clarification on what power do the water company have to push back on development, prior to working with Developers to improve efficiency

So it's important to know that, that it's not being funded through, that all of it is being funded through the customer bills, the developers also have to pay their way as well.

**CCW Chair:** Thanks, Robert. So maybe there's something there for you to think about, is how do you use that money to ensure that there's continuity of supply in areas where there's high housing development going on, so I think that's a great action for us to capture, so thank you for that. And I think to our team sitting behind the scenes here, in terms of timescales, I think I hear, am I right, Elena, that a lot of these can be answered fairly quickly but you're going to need to have some more clarity on Item [A]<sup>10</sup>?

**Elena Karpathakis:** Yes.

**CCW Chair:** Okay.

**TMcK Facilitator:** I'm hoping that the next question will help clarify some of that, to be fair, so hopefully two for one!

**CCW Chair:** Okay, thank you, so I'm really conscious of time so what I'd like to do, please, is for the consumer panel to ask the question nice and concisely, which I know Community Member 3 will do and when it comes to the discussion point about actions, I want some real clear actions, very quick, decisive comments around actions. Let's help Elena and Robert understand what is it that you want from them, in relation to this question when we come to that point? And Elena, Robert, it would be really helpful again if you could limit the jargon, acronyms and just answer the question quite specifically.

So let's jump to Question 3, Community Member 3.

**Elena Karpathakis:** Excuse me, Bev, would you mind? Because we need to swap again from Robert back to Alex?

**TMcK Facilitator:** I'm on that now.

**Robert Boswell:** Thank you everybody, really appreciated your time.

**CCW Chair:** We appreciated yours, thank you.

**Community Member 3:** Are you ready for my question?

**CCW Chair:** Not quite. We're just going to wait for Alex, is that okay?

**Community Member 3:** Yeah, that's fine.

**CCW Chair:** Robert's going to leave, Alex is going to join. Community Member 9, have we sorted out your mute?

**Community Member 9:** Can you hear me?

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<sup>10</sup> Response so far has felt like "toeing the party line" – improving confidence and reducing scepticism in company intentions requires greater transparency

**CCW Chair:** Yes, brilliant.

**Community Member 9:** But I haven't got your picture, let me just try and get back in somehow.

**TMcK Facilitator:** We'll let you ...

**CCW Chair:** Is Alex with us?

**Alex Wilkes:** I am, I'm back with you, thank you very much.

**CCW chair:** Thank you for coming back. Community Member 3, over to you.

**Community Member 3:** Why do we as customers feel uninformed about bill increases, investment plans, compensation rights and available support such as Priority Services Register? What specific changes will you make to ensure communication is proactive, transparent and accessible, rather than reactive or buried online in technical documents?

**CCW Chair:** Is this a response from Elena or Alex?

**Alex Wilkes:** I'll start and I'll try to leave a bit more time to let Elena come in.

**CCW Chair:** Nice and specific, so customers feel uninformed, what specific changes will you make to ensure communication is proactive, transparent and accessible?

**Alex Wilkes:** Yeah, okay, well thank you, Community Member 3, it's a great question and I think critical here is that I absolutely, as I've said at the start, customers pay for everything we do so they have a right to know exactly where their money goes and this isn't about toeing any party lines at all from us.

I'm disappointed you feel uninformed but I take that challenge that we therefore need to be much clearer in how we articulate what we're up to on the network. Your questions today have sort of elicited from us all of those major investments that we're making in terms of improving ageing infrastructure, leakage detection and so forth and therefore, some of the things we've already started to do, I would hope would start to have an impact.

So things like Your Water, Your Future newsletters that help to open up the conversation about what are the investment proposals? I do think there's an opportunity to be more granular on those, I think we can make those a little bit more micro and area specific.

In terms of compensation rights, we do publish that information but I'll again take that challenge, that we can be more transparent. A major change though is that rather than customers needing to apply for that compensation, we've now made changes whereby we will automatically identify those failures and make those payments as a matter of course to customers, which will certainly help and support.

Interesting about the Priority Services Register, we currently check that on every interaction with our customers so again, certainly take the challenge on how we do more but we have quite an extensive number of our customers on the Priority

Services Register but also, there are other opportunities around things like our social tariffs and our charitable trust, to make sure that we align those services.

Something we've been contemplating is actually having what I'll refer to as an affordability support programme, so at every interaction, we look for opportunities for any customers indicating that they're struggling, to have essentially a needs assessment around what support they require from us, so that we can facilitate access to wider energy and water efficiency advice but also ensure that they're registered on the Priority Service Register and we're really clear about what that means in terms of supply interruptions, response and support.

In terms of transparency and access, I think the billing cycle gives us a huge opportunity to provide that information to customers in a timely fashion. I think there's also opportunities at first point of resolution so when we speak to customers, providing – we have a million customer interactions every year, so that's huge, I think every one of those is an opportunity to ensure there are key topics that we can cover with our customers. But it's also a case of us not swamping them, so I think it's around not burying it but having high level information with then simple and easy track-through to customers.

I think the final point is it is, the critical word on that entire slide that you read to us, Community Member 3, is “proactive”. There are many warning signs for me that customers might be struggling and we need to take those opportunities of seeing that bill charges are potentially going to change and are going to be higher, and having a proactive outreach to customers before those bills land, taking the effort away from the customer needing to come to us, but us going proactively to them, to offer support and understand the reasons, see why consumption has changed and see what support can be offered through things like the affordability programme.

Elena, is there anything that you would like to add to that?

**Elena Karpathakis:** I think this is something Alex and I, since joining the company, have spent a lot of time on, is the way that we serve our customers because particularly in a year where as we discussed, we have increased our bills for the reasons we have, we have been contacted a lot, which has put some of our customer service performance under strain, versus the standard I would like and we have now recovered that and have improved our customer service sort of answer rate, etc.

But yeah, I really welcome the views of this group particularly on this topic because the needs and desires of customers are all quite different in many cases, and some people want more information, some people want less and you know, very interested to hear specific actions or areas that you all will suggest for us to consider.

**CCW Chair:** Thank you, both. Joe, can we share the actions that have been captured from the company response on the screen? And now, it's time to go back again to the customer panel and ask whilst this is not about asking any different questions of the company still, it's about understanding and testing whether what you've heard is clear, credible and sufficient. So let's have a look at those.

**TMcK Facilitator:** I'll put them up in a bit if that's okay, I've got some hands up so I'll let people talk before we show them what we've said, just to get their initial read on it, I suppose, again what we're building towards here is creating these action points so any questions you've got, try and turn that into an action for me. Community Member 7, your hand's up and I'll go to Community Member 3 next.

**Community Member 7:** Elena asked for advice on what they could do and something that I've been working on for quite a while in my profession is how we interact with people, and how much gets across, I work in education at the moment. People have apathy for emails, texts and the web at the moment because it's just so much information overload. What we've found works is more face to face interactions, so when she asked, "How could we get this across?", maybe roadshows to communities that are in the company's catchment area, so "We'll be here this date and that, come and ask us questions", do like we're doing now to an audience, have the questions ready to be answered, have somebody there that's knowledgeable enough.

If not, take those questions down because it also gives people the opportunity to say, "Look, I need help with this but I can't use the internet, I don't have the ability to do that." There's people with additional needs, there's people, older people that don't use the internet and stuff like that but that face-to-face interaction is cost-effective, and we found that very quickly because you're not messing with websites and stuff like that and you're not on the phone. It's a very quick solution and it can be done over the space of a year.

So yeah, when Elena raised that, I thought maybe that's a solution for those guys.

**TMcK Facilitator:** So almost like too much digital and not enough balance, Community Member 7?

**Community Member 7:** Not enough community interaction and that's the problem, people are really apathetic and it's like, "I'm looking at a screen, I'm switched off because I can't find that figure", whereas if you've got your man there going, "It's this, it's this" and can reel it off, that's a really appreciative thing to happen, it's a really one-to-one interaction, even if it's in a group and you [inaudible] as a human being, feeling more satisfied and knowledgeable.

**TMcK Facilitator:** Lovely, Community Member 7, thanks very much. Community Member 3, your hand's up as well?

**Community Member 3:** Yeah, mine is quite similar to Community Member 7's actually, it's some of it, I've written down, is in one of the prior questions, it said that the click-through wasn't very great from the bills and they're going to get a newsletter, I can't remember if that was coming out with the bill. But if it is, you get a bill and your main thing is, "Oh my God, how much have I got to pay?", so what makes you think that having a newsletter coming out is going to get any higher click-through?

And then again, I had how are you going to get that message across to the vulnerable? Like Community Member 7 said, the elderly, who don't use the internet, who, you know, families-

**TMcK Facilitator:** What I want you to do for me is I want you to turn that into, so you tell them, how do you want them to get, your first point and your second point?

**Community Member 3:** I think it is more of a face to face, especially if you go into, I mean obviously these people are across the whole region but you do have areas that are more deprived than others. I, for example, had five children, I didn't know that because I had five, that my water could be capped but if you speak face to face with people and then explain things that can happen or things that you're potentially going to be eligible for, yeah, I think the face to face is massive because I agree with Community Member 7, because there's so much online.

**TMcK Facilitator:** You said that the newsletter, you said that the click-through, they said to you that the click-through wasn't that effective and you've then suggested that the newsletter would be the same kind of thing, because I want to be able to help, I want to understand what would work because obviously we've got that-

**Community Member 3:** If you wrote something in massive bold letters, "You could be saving money on your water", so it is like on the envelope, you know? Or so it's attention grabbing rather than it being sort of inside the bit.

**TMcK Facilitator:** Lost in amongst the rest of it, yeah, okay. Thank you so much, Community Member 3.

**Community Member 3:** And then you've got the people that can't read and like I say, the vulnerable, those who are without internet, so that's why I think some of the things like you say, go out to, I don't know what agencies you get involved with, so you can go to them and get the outreach via different other agencies to say, "Do you speak to people?", because I work with the disadvantaged so ...

**TMcK Facilitator:** Okay, understood. Community Member 3, I'm going to move you along but I take your point entirely about engaging a bit more broadly, potentially. Thank you so much for those points. Community Member 11 and then Community Member 8 next.

**Community Member 11:** I received my water bill by email on Saturday, looked at it, happy, well as happy as I can be with paying a bill, accepted I can afford to pay it and moved on. Sunday, I received a second email which was entitled, "Get help with your water bill." I totally ignored that, I didn't need help with my water bill but I've opened it tonight to see exactly what it said, and it actually gives me lots more information about where the money's being spent but I would have ignored that and I'm sure a lot of people would ignore it, because they think it's about that one subject and if you get the messaging right in the sort of heading of an email, to get people to open it, you won't get the clicks on the email if it doesn't give a message that makes people want to open it.

**TMcK Facilitator:** What would have made you open it? Other than obviously, you opened it because you're coming here tonight, what would do it in the wild?

**Community Member 11:** I imagine "Get help with your water bill" is trying to get to the people that need the help the most and those are likely to click on it, but the

fact that there's additional information in there, it needs more on there, something, "Help with your water bill and where your money is spent" or something like that.

**TMcK Facilitator:** A better call to action, fundamentally?

**Community Member 11:** Yeah.

**TMcK Facilitator:** Community Member 8, you've got your hand up as well?

**Community Member 8:** I just wanted to touch on the earlier points around face to face interaction, I just probably wanted to add a bit of balance, I don't think it's been forgotten but also having the online interaction should be enhanced and should equally feel a value or a valued experience, as it would be face to face. I think someone mentioned it should be attention grabbing, I think it should also be educational and it should be linked to maybe offers or just ways of communicating or supporting our customers with reductions.

**TMcK Facilitator:** Elena asked this around how you want to be communicated with and we've captured, we want to do a bit more face to face, a bit more effective signposting or call to action when it comes to things that we are being sent, that helps us understand what they actually are, how they can help us. What else? Because we sat down together for two hours and we talked about these things and you were very unhappy with some of the communication. Tell me how to fix it. Community Member 9, you've got your hand ready?

**Community Member 9:** Yeah, I think this is really about educating the public, i.e. me and all of us, about where our water comes from and how much goes into getting it to us, right? So it's about like the water companies have got to come to us with information and say, "Look at this, this is what we do for you and this is why it costs this money."

So that idea of outreaching, maybe TV documentaries, I know they're expensive but school talks, stuff like that, that will educate people on the difficulties that they face as a business, you know?

**TMcK Facilitator:** Thanks very much. Community Member 6, I'll go to you.

**Community Member 6:** I think personally for me, whether it's email, a letter, whatever format, even face to face, just quite precise and to the point. If you receive a letter through the door, like someone said earlier, you quickly look at what the cost of the bill is and you've got 100 other things going on around you, that you just want to see the quick points, you haven't got time to sit and read through paragraphs of information. So sometimes it just needs to be a bit more precise and to the point, I think.

**TMcK Facilitator:** Yeah, okay. What about the method that we're communicated with, we touched on this kind of thing that we're not super excited about something that comes next to our bill, or an email that comes the day our bill comes and things like that. So help them fix that, what's the solution there? Community Member 12, you've got your hand up.

**Community Member 12:** If they said my bill was £100, 25% of this is going to be spent on infrastructure, 25% is this going to be spent on leaks? 25% is this is going to be spent and 4% is going to the shareholders and then tell us what the other percentage is.

Right, five points at the front of the bill, “This is how much it costs, this is how we’re spending it”, that simple.

**TMcK Facilitator:** Okay.

**Community Member 12:** Front page of the bill, not another new- because I won’t read another newsletter, I haven’t got the time, but if you said, “This is how much my bill is and this is how we are spending it” on that front page, we’d all read that ... I think.

**TMcK Facilitator:** Okay. Conscious of the time, any other points that you want to ...?

**Community Member 6:** Social media, I think, you know like reels, you’ve got to target a broad range of ages but social media, the amount of people that scroll through reels and if you had like a little video on there, saying what a water company does and what it provides or like, that would get a lot of people seeing it, I would imagine.

**TMcK Facilitator:** We’ve got five things I think we’ve highlighted here, I’ll go through them really quickly and then I’ll open it for any other points because obviously, I’m very aware of the time so I do apologise.

So on more face-to-face engagement, we’re looking, a bit of doubt over the effectiveness of the newsletter side of things, we’re looking for that kind of clear, really attention-grabbing messaging. Community Member 12, you highlighted that in terms of where the money goes, “This is how much your bill is and this is how much of it went here.”

Clearer signposting of different types of communication, general education about the water supply and the value that the company is delivering. Engaging with different demographics through varying media streams, so we’ve mentioned a few things here, social media etc, I’m sure that Elena and Alex will come back on what they currently do there anyway. And a clear breakdown of how money is being spent, I suppose in line with that clear attention-grabbing messaging there.

Bev, I don't know if we want to jump straight to the water company's response here?

**CCW Chair:** Yeah, I think so, so Elena, Alex, I’ll just offer you again five minutes to highlight if there are any commitments that you believe are not feasible, and if you could explain clearly why.

**Elena Karpathakis:** Let me kick us off then in terms of face-to-face engagement first off, we have actually had, in one of our areas, a community hub, an in-person

community hub, a location where customers could go, ask us for any questions or support and at times, use the location for community events, etc.

And we had it for five years and we've ended up, we've shut it down this year because it's just not used, there just hasn't been customer demand for that in-person interaction and I think, we are looking at other things that we can do so for specific programmes, where there are big programmes, so for our metering, our universal metering rollout, for example, we have a community engagement officer who goes to the street that we're metering and is available in-person to answer questions, etc.

So what we're trying to do at the moment is target the particularly challenging interactions or that might be challenging or where customers need more support, because I am very conscious that the money that we may spend on doing lots of face to face is customer money, so I want to try and make sure that we use it in the most effective way possible, for the majority of customers to try and meet their needs.

So I would just question whether doing a big sort of investment programme that may increase bills, to do more face to face when our experience shows that it's just not used by very many customers, is the right action to go forward with. But I'm absolutely supportive of, for the programmes where we're doing a big upgrade in an area, whereas we rollout metering sort of street by street, those I think are areas where this value in, more value in face-to-face conversation.

In terms of newsletters, Action [B]<sup>11</sup>, I have seen and heard even just in this conversation, contrary views of different needs from different customers and different levels of interest from different customers.

We have, it won't surprise you to know, a huge amount of information that we could provide but trying to strike that balance and the right channels, our social media, does not get a lot of engagement and we do communicate through social media but I think we've only got about 10,000 of our customers that follow us on there. So most of our interaction is by phone, by our website or by letter. So I think we have to tackle Action [B]<sup>12</sup>, customer group by customer group, perhaps it's not a one size fits all answer. I think the others, [C]<sup>13</sup> and [D]<sup>14</sup> and [E]<sup>15</sup> and [F]<sup>16</sup>, we can give you a response to those to show what we do do, and how we think we can do those things more clearly.

**CCW Chair:** Thank you, Elena for that and obviously, for transparency, we will leave these, we'll publish these points. Going back to [A]<sup>17</sup>, what about the point that was made around face-to-face engagement with people, customers in vulnerable

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<sup>11</sup> Doubt the effectiveness of newsletters in communicating key information – particularly when provided with bills: need for clear, attention-grabbing messaging

<sup>12</sup> As above

<sup>13</sup> Clearer signposting of different types of communication (e.g. other useful info hidden under a 'bill-saving' email subject line)

<sup>14</sup> Generally educating customers about their water supply and the value that the company is delivering

<sup>15</sup> Engaging different demographics through varying media streams

<sup>16</sup> Clear breakdown of how customers' money is being spent

<sup>17</sup> More face-to-face engagement with customers – making 'real' connections and engaging in sessions such as these

circumstances? So I do take the point around the hub shutting down and the community engagement officers out where there are, in communities where there are big rollouts of work but what about customers in vulnerable circumstances and the need for face to face for people, who may not have access to the system driven comms?

**Elena Karpathakis:** I think our best current route is through the phone, so we're always available through the phone, we're available 24/7 and as Alex mentioned earlier, we have quite a high volume of vulnerable customers, particularly in our South Staffs area, who are registered for support. So if something happens, if we have a burst in an area that has a vulnerable customer living in that street, for example, we will go and see that customer, if we need to, we'll provide water directly to that customer's home, for example. So I don't know the circumstances of everyone on this call but there will be members, probably on this call even, of our PSR register but depending on your health circumstances, you may not have personally experienced the full range of support we do offer. Alex, do you want to add anything?

**Alex Wilkes:** Yes, just a really, really punchy response on that if I could, Bev, is that the Affordability Support Programme that I mentioned, that we're currently exploring, will do exactly what Elena's said, so it will take the opportunity for anybody giving either vulnerability explicit markers already on our PSR, or responding to some of our probe questions and revealing that they're struggling, would trigger a much more in-depth needs assessment, of which there is a face to face component being considered.

So we are looking at joining forces with some of the other utility providers that operate mobile advice vehicles across the two regions, that would allow us to marry the two bits of feedback we've heard, that a static location wasn't utilised but a mobile offering, particularly targeted to those that have vulnerabilities, less digital propensity and so forth, will be part of our consideration.

**CCW Chair:** There's some good actions captured there for you to consider in your responses, right, so you may have low take up of social media now but it's an opportunity to share with customers what you're going to do about that. Are we happy then, panel, for the record, that we now have some really good, agreed actions under this question? Yeah? Great. Joe?

**TMck Facilitator:** I'm going to hand back to you, Bev, at this point, thank you so much guys, for the discussion, it's my first one of doing these and written down lots of things that I think we can do better moving forward, so really appreciate your time.

**Elena Karpathakis:** Just one question, I just wondered, Bev, if it's possible, I know this isn't about sort of individual customers' personal service but if possible, Community Member 12, I wouldn't mind via CCW, if we can follow-up on the experience you had with the 26 day outage because I'd personally like to understand a little bit more about that.

**CCW Chair:** We can take that away, Community Member 12 and with [inaudible] Water speak to you about that, is that okay?

**Community Member 12:** Perfect, thank you very much.

**CCW Chair:** Thank you, Elena. Okay, listen everyone, thank you very, very much for the input that you've given this evening. We have covered a lot of important themes here and we've agreed a set of very clear actions, I think. We might need to do some work on one or two as we've agreed and then there are maybe some timescales that we'll need to be a little clearer on, as well. But I think we've agreed a set of actions in response to the issues that your customers have raised.

Those actions have been captured live, as you know, and they will now form the basis of your formal response, so you get a chance to formally respond to that as a company.

What's going to happen next? There will be a full transcript of this session that will be published on the CC Water website within five working days, before publication, an early draft will be shared with participants so you can review it and we will raise any concerns, as we do normally.

A plain English summary will also be published within 10 working days, which is really important and of course, Elena and the team and South Staffs Water and Cambridge Water will publish its action plan within 28 days, setting out how the team will deliver the commitments that we've agreed on tonight.

You will then be asked whether the action plan accurately reflects what we have agreed, so we have full transparency and then the CC Water team will monitor the progress and report publicly on the delivery. So as I've said at the outset, this process is designed to be transparent and also to have accountability and follow through on actions, it's not just about having nice discussions, okay?

So finally, thank you for your time, thought and honesty that you've brought to this session. Your input, all of you, company included, is what gives this process credibility and purpose so I want to say as Chair, thank you to all of you for the way that you've approached the session tonight, and I will now draw to a close, this accountability session and I want to thank you for your engagement this evening.

[CLOSE]

# CCW

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