



CCW

The voice for water consumers
Llais defnyddwyr dŵr

**South West Water including Bristol
Water and Bournemouth Water
(Pennon Group)
Accountability Session
transcript**

Attendance list

Laura Flowerdew	Chief Financial Officer of Pennon Group
Richard Price	Managing Director of Wastewater Services for Pennon Group
David Harris	Managing Director of Water Services for Pennon Group
Nicky Taylor	Director of Taylor McKenzie Research (TMcK) – Lead facilitator
Rob Wilson	Chairman for Consumer Council for Water (CCW) – Chair
10 x Participants	Water Voice Community Members under the Pennon Group

CCW Chair: Okay, well let's get underway. Good evening, everyone, welcome, and thank you for joining us tonight. My name is Rob Wilson and I'm chairing tonight's discussion. I'm Chairman of the Consumer Council for Water. Tonight's session is part of our Water Voice Programme, and the purpose of Water Voice is to give customers a stronger, more direct voice in how their water company performs, communicates and improves.

This session is about accountability. It's an opportunity for you as customers to question senior leaders from South West Water directly about the issues that matter most to you, about where improvement is needed, about what they're going to change, and what will change as a result of this discussion.

Just to warn you, it's not a complaints hearing and it's not a technical inquiry. It is a structured, customer-led conversation on accountability, learning, and agreeing clear practical actions.

The topics we'll cover this evening haven't been chosen by the company or by myself. They've been shaped by you as customers through ongoing surveys and discussions within the Water Voice Panel, and that's really important that everybody understands that, because this is your agenda.

I want to set at the outset a very clear tone. We expect this to be respectful but a challenging session all the same. Customers should be able to feel able to speak openly and honestly about their experiences and their expectations. Equally, we expect clear and transparent responses from South West Water's senior team.

The session is being fully transcribed and will be published in a couple of weeks. A summary report will follow and the company will be expected to publish an action plan responding to the commitments made. That transparency is a key part of what makes this process meaningful. In terms of ground rules, we'll take one person at a time, we'll keep contributions focused, and we'll concentrate on forward-looking actions, what will change, by when and how customers will know that things have changed.

I'd now like to briefly introduce who's joining us this evening. First, our independent lead facilitator from Taylor McKenzie, Nicky Taylor, who most of you know, who will guide the discussion and ensure all voices are heard. And representing South West Water this evening, we have Laura Flowerdew who is Chief Financial Officer. We also have Ian Cain who's Chief Executive Officer of the Retail and Customer Markets, and Richard Price, Managing Director of Waste Services, and we've also got David Harris, Managing Director of Water Services, so that's quite a line-up.

Question 1 will be answered by Laura and Ian, Question 2 by Laura and Richard, and Question 3, Laura and David. Thank you all for coming this evening. I'll now hand over to Nicky, who'll begin the discussion.

TMcK Facilitator: Thank you very much. We've got sound coming through loud and clear. I just want to go through some housekeeping first of all, and explain just how this session is going to be transcribed and recorded, etc.

In the room today obviously we're going to be referring to each other by our first names. However, the names of the customers will all be redacted when it comes to the transcript itself, and after the session, all participants and customers will have an opportunity to review the transcript, and if there is anything they've said that they think they maybe didn't want to say in terms of where they live or anything personal, they will have an opportunity to have that removed before it is going to be put online. The purpose of the transcript is really to accurately reflect the discussion and all the actions that we agree on the day, and it's not there to single out any individuals.

How this will work today, we've obviously had a bit of a briefing session, myself, Rob and the customers, so they've got a good idea of what the session's going to bring. We're going to have three questions being asked in total. For each question it's going to follow exactly the same structure. The customer will ask the question. South West Water and the team will have five minutes or just over five minutes to respond to that question.

We're then going to spend some time reacting to that response as customers and find out what we think about it, and we'll work together to define the actions that must form part of the company's action plan as a result of that. Towards the end of that, Rob will re-introduce South West Water, who'll have some time to respond to any specific that they feel that might be really out of scope from their remit, or something that they just want to make sure that you understand better before they go and take that away and produce their action plan.

Alongside everyone in this room there are also observers who are going to be watching in a sort of webinar format, so they won't be able to contribute to the session but they are here to watch it, and we've got people from CCW, from Ofwat, we've got some others from the Pennon Group as well who are watching this independently.

So I think really to get things started, and with time in mind, because timings are so important with these things. We don't want to waste anyone's time and we want to make sure we can get through things as quickly as possible. What I'd love to do is just go around the room with the customers and just ask you all very quickly to introduce yourselves. I just need your name and whereabouts it is that you are in terms of your geography, that'll be fantastic.

So as with the briefing session, it's just your luck, it's roulette, where are you on my screen, so I'll go around and we can get started. Community Member 1 you're the first one up, so if you want to get started.

Community Member 1: I'm Community Member 1. I live in Bournemouth, and I'm a welder fabricator.

Community Member 2: Hello, I'm Community Member 2 and I live in Weston-super-Mare and I'm retired.

Community Member 3: I'm Community Member 3 and I live in Bristol.

Community Member 4: I'm Community Member 4 and I live in Bristol and I work in education.

Community Member 5: I'm Community Member 5 and I live in Cornwall.

Community Member 6: I'm Community Member 6 and I also live in Bristol.

Community Member 7: I'm Community Member 7, I also live in Bristol and I'm also retired.

Community Member 8: I'm Community Member 8, I live in Cornwall and I'm a nail technician.

Community Member 9: I'm Community Member 9 from Bournemouth, although I'm in Liverpool today.

Community Member 10: I'm Community Member 10. I'm retired and live in Devon.¹

TMcK Facilitator: Thanks very much for that, and then I think if we could just get Richard and Laura, if you want to do a quick introduction before we get started.

Laura Flowerdew: Yeah, so as Rob said, Laura Flowerdew. I work for Pennon. I'm from Bristol, so good to hear so many representatives from Bristol today as well. I am the Group Chief Financial Officer for Pennon Group. At the moment we do not have a Chief Executive Officer, but I do sit on the Board, and I've been asked therefore, by our Board, to come and be our sort of senior representative today in the session, but we'll pick up on some of the questions as well, alongside Richard, who is joining me for this session and the next one, and then David Harris, our MD for Clean Water will join in the last question. So I'll hand over to Richard.

Richard Price: Good evening, everybody. I'm Richard Price. I'm the Managing Director for Wastewater Services. Really glad to be here this evening and looking forward to the discussion, and I'm currently sat in Plymouth.

TMcK Facilitator: Thank you very much everyone for those introductions. I'm now going to hand back to Rob and we will kick things off.

CCW Chair: Yes, let's get underway. Can we have the first question from Community Member 6 please?

Community Member 6: Yes. The first question's about rising bills and value for money. Publicly owned Scottish Water reportedly invests more per household whilst charging lower bills than the privatised water companies in England such as those in Pennon Group. We're not necessarily debating ownership models though today. We're talking about value, and bills have risen very sharply in the last few years, including for financially vulnerable households, I think around 30% last year for South West Water customers, whilst customers are seeing sewage pollution, infrastructure failures, and supply interruptions.

So the question is: why are bills rising at this level now? Exactly how much of each £1 is going into infrastructure? How can you demonstrate that customers are not funding the fines, your past underinvestment, or past shareholder returns, and what concrete improvements will we as customers see over the next three to five years as

¹ Introduction added retrospectively by Community Member 10 due to technical issues disrupting their introduction in the Accountability Session recording.

a direct result? And finally, what proof can you offer that these increases in our bills are driving preventative investment, not just keeping a strained and discredited system afloat?

TMcK Facilitator: Thanks, Community Member 6. Now just to check everybody heard that question, it's on screen, and I'm going to invite the Company now to respond, and you have five minutes for your initial response, so please focus on the key parts of the question that require answers. Thank you. So over to you, I guess, Laura.

Laura Flowerdew: Thank you. Thank you for the question. I'll start with why are bills rising, what the penny in the £1 is paying for, and then what will we see in terms of investment, which I think are the key components.

We have had fairly stable bills over the last decade, and as you've talked about, there is a need for investment in our infrastructure to ensure that we are providing the services that customers want. This last, this current year is the first year of a new regulatory cycle, and as we move into that, we have a plan that we agree with the regulator that is as a result of extensive engagement with customers to understand their priorities and where they want to see improvements in services.

After a period where there has been more focus on delivering day-to-day services and less investment in the long term, we are now seeing significant investment across all of our regions, whether that's South West, Bournemouth, or Bristol, in ensuring that we have the right infrastructure, that we are fixing leaks and improving, reducing leakage, and that we have resilient, high quality water that we can ensure can meet the demands of a growing population.

So bills have increased this last year. There is a differential whether you sit in Devon and Cornwall, Bournemouth, or Bristol. Some of you are only paying for the water side to the Pennon Group. Some will be paying for water and waste. But in principle, there are a number of movements on your bill. One is inflation, which will have increased, and our bills go up alongside that. In addition, there are cost increases that we have seen. Things like power went up significantly with the energy crisis on an ongoing basis. That's one of our core costs.

So there are some underlying costs of just running our business that are reflected in that increase. But in addition, there is a significant value, and I'll come on to the pence and £1 in a moment if you like, which is around funding investment. Some of that is investment that we did over the last few years, it wasn't funded by bills, but then has some funding coming through over a period of time, and some of that is for the investment we will be delivering over this five-year period in things like improving our water treatment works. We're investing in, for example, a number of water treatment works in the Bristol region. It will be, if you have wastewater in Cornwall, in things like improving the resilience of our network, reducing spills from storm overflows.

If I look at all of those components and break it down as a £1 in the bill, and they're not dissimilar, depending on the region, so I'll use South West Water for timing's sake. Around 34p in the £1 would go on operational delivery, just running the services day-to-day, and maintaining the assets.

There would then be around 6p which is around regulatory licence fees, extractions costs, rates, things we're paying to our regulators and the government. There's about 6p related to customer services, and then we have directly funded investment by customers is around 30p in South West Water, and there is around 23p which is funding, which is indirect, so it comes through from lenders and shareholders to fund investment, for which there is a return that's paid to them.

So I would say probably around half the bill, either directly or indirectly, is funding investment in long-term infrastructure improvements in services. And we are very closely regulated by both the Environment Agency and Ofwat, and that means that we make commitments to very specific named projects, things which we have agreed with our regulators that need to be delivered and are the right priorities, or have statutory legal obligations associated with them, and we are monitored against those.

If we don't deliver them, we have the money taken away from us, and they are also linked with service and delivery performance, things like supply interruptions, leakage and so on. We have targets to meet which if we don't meet them we incur penalties, which are for the shareholders account.

There was also a question about how do we know that we are only funding things that are allowed for, and if there are fines and penalties, they are not paid for through customer bills? It is very strictly regulated by the regulator. We give significant information, and they check and adjust our bills – our revenue through the bills, to ensure that we are only funding the things we are allowed for. Where we have incurred performance penalties or fines, then that absolutely comes out of the bill and does not – it reduces the bill that you'd pay if we incur a regulatory penalty and does not go through to the customer's account.

I'm very conscious of time, but you did ask also about what kind of difference will you see. I think just some highlights perhaps. In Bournemouth we're investing in new water treatment works. Those projects, Alderney and Knapp Mill Water Treatment Works upgrade, will ensure that we've got state of the art water treatment in the Bournemouth area and those treatment works are in the last year or so of completion.

In Bristol Water we're upgrading our network to improve water quality, and we're improving our treatment works as well, plants such as Stowey. We're also looking at a long-term reservoir in Cheddar and an upgrade in Purton, which supplies around 40% of the population of Bristol.

And then across Devon and Cornwall, again -

CCW Chair: Ninety seconds, Laura.

Laura Flowerdew: Thank you. Leakage is a really big focus. Water quality is key and we have a number of different projects around water quality. We are looking to – and then super importantly we are focused on storm overflows and reducing pollutions, Richard's area, I'm sure we'll come on to, reducing spills by improving the way our network operates and is resilient, but focused, importantly, on the bathing waters around the region, which we have had feedback from customers. Absolutely the priority is around ensuring the bathing waters are protected and spills are minimised

at those areas. It's a 15-year programme, but that will be absolutely our focus in the first five years.

CCW Chair: Okay Laura, I gave you a little bit of latitude there.

Laura Flowerdew: Thank you.

CCW Chair: Thank you for the answer. I think we're now going to go back to the customers to see what they made of that answer.

TMcK Facilitator: Yeah, that's right, Rob. I think a bit part of what we're about to do now, over the next 10 to 15 minutes, I'm going to share my screen again in 10 minutes, we've taken loads of actions down here the company say they're already doing or they've got planned for the future, but we want to build on those with what actions you're looking for here.

This isn't about asking further questions for the company, this isn't a Q&A, this is about really talking as a group, what did we hear there? What did we not hear? What actions are we looking to achieve or what actions are we hoping the company can achieve? So I think really just to get us started, I would love to hear what you thought about that. Who wants to get us started? Has anyone got any thoughts? Community Member 6, you asked the question, I don't know if you've got any thoughts on the response that you heard?

Community Member 6: Yeah, thanks Nicky, and thank you Laura for the answer. A bit that sounded particularly interesting was around the 23p per £1 that comes out of our bills that is spent on what you described as indirect funding, including to lenders, which I assume – it looks like the Penning Group's got, has racked up debts of, from the latest accounts I could find, about £4 billion, and if it's in line with the rest of the water industry in England, then most of those debts will have been used to fund shareholder dividends, and you're now paying interest on those debts, which it looks like will make up the majority of that 23p.

So if something like a fifth of the money that we're spending on our bills is going to service debts that have been used to fund shareholder dividends, that doesn't sound like the sort of rosy picture of investment that you've painted. Is there anything in those numbers that I've misunderstood?

CCW Chair: Community Member 6, we're not going to go back to Laura just yet. We're going to let – sorry to cut across you, Nicky.

TMcK Facilitator: No, they'll have a chance, Community Member 6, to come back and obviously challenge any of that, and certainly in the action plan they can answer it, and a lot of this will be about good communication. I think for now, Community Member 6, obviously you've raised a point there, I think really focusing in on the fact that a large proportion of the bill is going to service these debts. What sort of action do you feel that could be put to the group that they need to put into their action plan? What do you want to hear from them or what commitment would you like them to commit to?

Community Member 6: Let me ponder that for a second whilst anyone else has got any other comments. I'll have a think.

TMcK Facilitator: Yeah of course. I think Community Member 5 wants to come in.

Community Member 5: Thank you. It was just on Nicky's point in terms of action. It might just be me, but I'm not really clear how much money actually goes out of the system to banks, interest, shareholders, profit, as opposed to how much money's invested. I would appreciate either more information or transparency on where the money goes.

TMcK Facilitator: Okay, so I think, Community Member 5, what you're saying, they can obviously, they'll be able to produce – I think we spoke in the briefing session about, for every £1 that you spend, I think Laura was really good at articulating the fact that it will be pence in the £1 goes to x, y and z. I think what you're asking for there, Community Member 5, is a bit more transparency around those big figures, like 20p goes towards, or 23% goes towards funding debt or things like that. Is that what you're asking to get a bit more focus on?

Community Member 5: It is, it is, and it goes back to Community Member 6's point. I think it's really important that we are respectful, we have a proper conversation here, but I think it's really important that we acknowledge the context. If you talk to anyone about their water company, and I'm talking this region, I have not spoken to anyone who is happy, far from it, and we need to really – if this meeting is meaningful, we need to have some change, because people are paying for bills, they're having repeated problems, there's more and more sewage being dumped in the waters, and that cannot carry on.

TMcK Facilitator: So let's have a think then just in relation to this question. What sort of actions would you be looking to ask for the group to -

Community Member 3: The action, you know, which is really important, to keep with that transparency, is have a clear diagram of where the £1 is going, and clearly define what each bit is, like no wooliness around like, do you know, if it's 23p indirect costs, well actually tell us what that indirect cost is. If it's operations, does that include wages, CEO wages, CFO wages? Be really, really transparent with it, because we all understand how a business operates, and you have to make profit and you have to be able to do all these things, but you're dealing – we're your customer, so you actually need to be able to tell us.

TMcK Facilitator: So Community Member 3, why does transparency matter to you?

Community Member 3: It's really important, because if we can look at things and we can see that it's fair and it's just, and there isn't somebody taking the Michael out of it, to be [inaudible] you know, that actually money is being spent inappropriately, not on what it should be, then yeah, that's why transparency really is important to me, you know, being fair and honest. Integrity.

TMcK Facilitator: Thank you. Has anyone else got any thoughts -

Community Member 2: Yes, sorry, can I come in?

TMcK Facilitator: Yeah, Community Member 2, I'll go to you and then I'll go back down to Community Member 8 if that's all right. On you go, Community Member 2.

Community Member 2: Yes, what I was going to say is one of the things I've been really aware of is the fact that the bathing waters in Weston-super-Mare are not good quality for people who come, for us here who live here, and on holiday. The comment was that the, very important, that the bathing waters are kept in good condition and good quality. So it's a very broad statement to say that they're very keen to keep the bathing waters satisfactory for bathers and looking at sewage spills, but when she gave a breakdown of the bills, it wasn't clear as to which part of the bills would literally be used to look at the sewage outflows and therefore the bathing waters.

And I think when Community Member 3 talked about transparency, those sorts of issues which we're concerned about, it's fine to hear that it's this percent for that and this percent for that. Where does that directly link to the issues that we're talking about, the sewage spills and the poor quality of the water for bathing, for example? Which bit of the money is directly linked to those projects and how is it being used? And I think if we could see a direct correlation between the money and the projects that are enabling us to see change; that would be the transparency I'd look for.

CCW Chair: Community Member 2, I'm sure that Laura will tell us, but I think Weston-super-Mare might be Wessex Water company but -

Community Member 2: It is.

TMcK Facilitator: Yeah, it is. It is.

CCW Chair: Which isn't South West Water. I mean, sorry, carry on, Nicky. Sorry to interrupt you.

TMcK Facilitator: Yeah, no not at all. I was going to jump in as well. We did cover this in the briefing session of course, we've got three companies here and obviously some of them are water-only companies and some of them, like South West, are water and waste. I think when we were having the discussion in the briefing call, whether you're in Weston-super-Mare or whether you're in Cornwall, and you are in fact being looked after by South West Water, the need is kind of the same. There wasn't any major differences.

So I think when we are talking, certainly in Question 2 around the sewage, pollution, environmental credibility, we can certainly try and focus on the areas that this group, the South West group have got the ability to affect, if that's okay. But certainly we'll take your point as well, Community Member 2. I think it's a really good one in terms of showing everyone how the money is being used and what tangible differences we're going to see. So that's great. Who had a hand up? It was you Community Member 8, so if you want to jump in now.

Community Member 8: Hiya. It's just really to add on to the point about transparency. I think the one thing I noticed was it was the wording that was being used to answer the question. I think for somebody that works within the water companies or you know, I suppose just in a more professional job, everything would make sense, but just a normal everyday customer, I needed to do a lot of processing to understand what she was saying to then think about how I felt about it, but by the time I got there, we were way past that point.

I think just in terms of transparency, depending on what is said, if it's not said in a sort of, a more, how can I say, maybe equal way, like it's just not going to make sense to so many customers. You're hearing lots of words but you're not understanding so many of them, and then you just sort of feel like, I mean there could be lots of transparency there but you don't feel like there is, because you don't really understand what is being told to you. Anything could be being said. I don't know if that makes sense.

CCW Chair: Yeah it does make sense, Community Member 8, and I should have said to Laura and Richard at the start that we should try to avoid any jargon, because there was a – because I mean obviously Laura and Richard work every day in the water industry, and their customers don't, so what seems a perfectly good explanation to them is not necessarily a good explanation to you. So if we could avoid jargon as far as possible, as we go forward, that would be really helpful, thank you. Nicky, sorry, back to you.

TMcK Facilitator: No, not at all. That's fine. Anyone else got anything they want to add at this stage?

Community Member 4: I think for me, literally Community Member 8 took the words out my mouth. I was thinking the same thing in terms of like jargon, lots of big words. I think it was a lot of information to take in all at once. So yeah, I'm sat here and I probably look like I don't have a clue what's going on, basically because a lot of me doesn't, because I'm sat here and I'm trying to process a lot of what's happening, but I'm also like, that's a word, no idea. So for your everyday Joe, I think that's kind of where Community Member 8 was going, like for your bog-standard person it's really, really difficult to comprehend what's going on, so we just need, like Rob said, a bit less jargon, just some down-to-earth information so that we can process it quite quickly.

TMcK Facilitator: And I've got a question, Community Member 4, because often water companies and utilities put out loads of communications, there's loads on their websites. If you need that info, you can dig around for it and you'll get there eventually. How would you summarise it? What do they need to get to you and how do they get that information to you?

Community Member 4: I need things in bite-size chunks. I don't want to have to go searching like hell and high water to find any information. I need something small, compact, easy to read, like straight to the point. That's kind of what I need, I think. That's more, yeah, I need it straight to the point. I don't want anything that's going to take me hours and hours to get through or ages to find exactly what I'm looking for. Just like headline it and then I can digest it.

TMcK Facilitator: And how do they know what subjects you're interested in and what information's important to you, Community Member 4? How do they get past that hurdle?

Community Member 4: I guess things like surveys and yeah, that sounds like I'm being, I don't know what the term is, but hypocritical, because I'm saying, "Don't give me too much information," der, der, der, but actually if you do a survey and you ask me a few questions, you then get to know exactly what I'm looking for, and then you

can tailor what information you send to me, or say, "Right, okay, this is an easy way for you to get to that."

TMcK Facilitator: Community Member 6, I notice you've got your hand up. Do you want to jump in just now?

Community Member 6: I've pondered your question, Nicky. I think in terms of like a concrete action, I'd like to have as an action, in a broad sense a commitment from Pennon Group that investment in infrastructure will be prioritised over shareholder profits and senior management bonuses, and specifically to understand and to have published what the decision-making process is for deciding when some of the money that we pay in our bills is going to go towards senior management bonus, or if it's going to go towards a shareholder dividend instead of going into investment in the water infrastructure.

I'd like to understand, in the past, what has that decision-making process looked like, and in future is that going to be any different? Are we going to see more of a prioritisation of investment in infrastructure in future, and exactly what will that decision-making process look like? I hope that's a bit more useful and concrete.

TMcK Facilitator: My question to you is, do you want to find that information on Annex 3.5 of their annual report, or where do you want to find that information if they were to commit to that?

Community Member 6: I guess it's fine for it to be in Annex 3.5 of their annual report, great that you're writing your annual report on the fly, talented, talented man, but it would also, I think it's the sort of information that should be linked to in the kind of headline comms that come from the water company, to be able to give us confidence that if we are paying higher bills than other parts of the UK, that that is for good reason and it's because we're investing in our water supply and the environment, and the best way of doing that would be to include that in like when we get a bill, that there's a QR code that takes you to that information, and if we get an email from the water company, that it's got a link in the body of that email text.

TMcK Facilitator: Community Member 1, you have your hand up. Do you want to jump in just now?

Community Member 1: Yeah, I'd like to just, I'm quite interested to find out a little bit more, they said about upgraded their Bournemouth site. That's quite interesting. I wonder what sort of upgrades they're going to be doing there, and also what they mentioned about the local bathing areas, cleaning that up and stuff. That's quite a big issue for me, because Bournemouth is no comparison to Community Member 2, Weston, I'm sure Weston's probably a bit worse, but Bournemouth's like a seven-mile long beach, and there's different points all up that beach where you can see sewage being basically pushed out into the sea along, and it's just wondering what they're going to do about that really.

TMcK Facilitator: I think we're going to cover quite a lot around the sewage soon, Community Member 1. In terms of the actions, have they all been covered, the ones that you want to see? Are there any specific actions you'd want to have added into the slide I'm about to share?

Community Member 1: Not – I'm just curious to what they were going to do, to be fair.

Community Member 3: Could I ask just the question with an action? I wonder, and it might be a step too far, but even on the vans that you have, you know, that would actually say what we're spending our money on, I know it can change every year, but an indicative of actually what is, you know like, because everybody sees them. You know, on the buses in Bristol and so on and so forth, different examples, you know. Make it really transparent, really, really fair and open for everyone to see. So yeah, no hiding, as you said, Nicky, in 3.6 which was, yeah, I never knew that.

TMcK Facilitator: Yeah, I made that one up entirely.

Community Member 3: I know. That's alright. I believed you.

TMcK Facilitator: Okay, so I mean it sounds certainly to me that transparency seems to be the word of the day here, and actually if bills are going up, tell us about why, tell us what it is that's driving it, and we get as excited about, almost excited about the fact that there's going to be investment that's going to drive positive change, as opposed to having these more obscure financial terms that people maybe don't understand as well.

I'm going to share a slide which sort of captures – my team have been working very hard in the background, it's nothing to do with me this, but they've been capturing all the actions really nicely. And before I go into that, I just wonder, has anyone got anything else they want to add, based on what they've heard so far, before we do that and have a bit more of a chat? Community Member 7, do you want to jump in?

Community Member 7: I agree with Community Member 4. It's got to be simple for us to read, and quite frankly, to throw us to QR codes, there's a lot of us who don't even know how to do a QR code, so if you make it that complicated, we're never going to know what you're talking about. I think it helps to be transparent, and I think that's good, and I think it should have more money for infrastructure rather than indirect shareholders and whatever. I think the investment is the most important at the moment, on the grounds of how poor everything is in the sewerage and whatever.

And I know we're Wessex and I can't fault our water, and so I'm fascinated that they're going to put all that investment into Cheddar when I can't see there's anything wrong with it already. Maybe the money could go somewhere else, but that's only my view.

TMcK Facilitator: Okay Community Member 7, thank you. Community Member 8, did you put your hand up there quickly? Do you want to jump in?

Community Member 8: Yes, sorry, just really quickly, I wouldn't mind getting some more information on why, I know as you mentioned before that some areas would be paying for wastage and other areas wouldn't be. Just really, just a bit more like clarification on that as a whole, why that is, you know, if that's going to change in the future, yeah, just more information really.

TMcK Facilitator: Okay, no problem at all, Community Member 8. Let me share my screen just now, and I'm going to really run through the actions that we've seen. This is going to form the action plan that we send on to South West and the team. Now down the left column here we can see the question is going to be repeated, and we've got some of the actions that the water company have already got in place. They are increasing in operational costs, so power, inflation, that's all been reflected in bill increases.

They spoke about the investment plan that they've agreed with the regulator. They mentioned how much of each £1 goes into infrastructure, and again there was a bit of challenge there from the group make it a bit more transparent around what these percentages actually go to. Indirect cost was focused on a little bit there, you know, what is an indirect cost, and tell us a bit more about that and how that drives decision making.

They spoke in the future about the improvements to the treatment works in the Bristol area, reducing spills from storm overflows, investment in new treatment works in Bournemouth, long-term reservoir plans potentially for the Cheddar region. Devon and Cornwall, so focus on leakage reductions. There's a lot of work going on. A huge amount of work goes on in all of these utility companies, as we can see here, and obviously reducing spills by improving the way the network operates. So it's a really comprehensive response from Laura, and obviously there's some then further questions and actions were prompted, which we can see in this column here.

So really the big message was we're looking for more transparency around the larger allocations of spending, clear explanation and additional granularity around indirect costs. A clear indication of actual spending, expected and allocated to improvement of bathing waters, reduction of spills, proving direct correlations between pence in the pound spending and specific investments, just so that people can understand the gravity of the investment and where it's going, why it matters.

Use of plain English, really important, easy-to-understand language when communicating, cut the jargon.

Survey customers, find out a bit what they're interested in so you can communicate with them correctly, and communicate with them things that they're actually going to be interested in, in a way that they can communicate. I think Community Member 7 mentioned, "No QR codes for me," but there'll be others here who would love a QR code. So it's about finding out what works for people.

Provide information in bite-sized chunks, easy to digest, diagrams help, and then obviously a commitment from the Pennon Group that infrastructure investment will be prioritised above shareholder and senior executive pay, and I think a part of that was actually, what is the decision-making process in terms of how is one percentage agreed that that's what's going for dividend, versus this percentage going for infrastructure? Let us understand a little bit about that so that we can go on this sort of value for money, transparent journey that we're looking for.

Hopefully that summarises the actions, and this is an opportunity now really for you as customers to look at these and decide do they go far enough? Should we add anything else to them at this stage?

Community Member 5: Nicky, can I just ask a quick point? I think for all that, fantastic, but given what people said about information, bite size, clarity, what I'd like to know is how much did we pay as customers last year, and how much profit was made?

TMcK Facilitator: So you want to understand where the, just latterly in the last financial year what the -

Community Member 5: How much did customers pay and how much profit was made by Pennon?

TMcK Facilitator: And where would you expect to find that information, Community Member 5?

Community Member 5: On my bill.

TMcK Facilitator: And is it on your bill? Have you had a look?

Community Member 5: Well if it is, it might be, I haven't noticed it.

TMcK Facilitator: Okay, and that's something that's important to you, okay, so we'll add that as an action.

Community Member 5: Thank you.

TMcK Facilitator: That's fine. Anything else? Community Member 9?

Community Member 9: I was just going to say, it could just be, you know, just easily – I'm on the website now, but I'm looking around, I can't find certain things, but transparency around bills and where money goes is great, and also why they're so much in debt. I didn't know that of course, but someone has said that they're in so much debt, you know, how is it even possible to clear that, and how do you even get in that much debt in the first place? Can't be paying it all out to investors and stuff. So it was very interesting to find that out, that's for sure.

But as I said, I'm looking on the website, I can't seem to see anything that says where the money goes. There's lots of information – I'm with Bournemouth Water – about their vision, their 2020 to 2050 vision, but it would be nice just to have a bit more just where your money goes and how come they're so much in debt. It's worrying, you know. It really is worrying.

TMcK Facilitator: What sort of action are you looking for there, Community Member 9? Do you want something around explain historic debt and how you got there, what you're doing to get out of it? Would that be an action?

Community Member 9: Yeah again, well it's with the transparency. It's all to do with money really. We're paying money for a service, and it turns out the people that are providing our service are incredibly in debt, from what I've understood tonight, and it's just worrying. How did you get into so much debt? If this is public information, it seems to sort of hide behind it, if you know what I mean, and as I said, I'm looking on the website now, but it doesn't tell me where my money's going, not that I've been able to find anyway.

But as I said, how do we know – I mean was it Community Member 6 that mentioned they were so much in debt, I mean how did you find that information out? But that's worrying, you know, so that transparency about that would be good.

TMcK Facilitator: Okay great. Has anyone else got anything they want to add in relation to the actions that we can see here? Community Member 2, do you want to go?

Community Member 2: Can I just say that it's great to hear that they're going to look at reducing the spills, but what they say is they're going to look at it, they're going to do it. What we never know is how, how do they do that? How do they reduce the spills? Instead of just saying, "This is what we're going to do," they need to add, "by x, y and z," so that we can see there's a real action that is going to happen, that for any of these actions is the how, how are you going to do it, and what sort of schemes, what sort of measures would enable us to believe that the spills were going to reduce.

TMcK Facilitator: It sounds like all the investment is going to be as specific projects really, and different projects with different end goals, and it sounds to me, Community Member 2, that you're looking for something that allows you to quickly access these end goals, these projects, and understand, you know, what does that pathway look like, what does the cost look like, and what is the impact going to be? Does that sound about -

Community Member 2: Yes. Yes it does, absolutely. You talked about Bristol Water improving in Cheddar, and I think somebody was querying, what does that mean, because we think that Cheddar's okay. Really that's fine. If Cheddar needs to have an upgrade, then what's the matter with Cheddar at the moment and how is it going to be upgraded, and what will the outcome be? For each of these projects, then we do need to know a bit more about it, rather than just saying, "We're going to put x number of £s into this project." It's the detail of it I think that's useful.

TMcK Facilitator: Yeah, I think a lot of the actions we're looking for here are going to be around communications, around delivering information in a bite-sized and accessible manner. There's also some commitments around, you know, let's make things more transparent in relation to how values are assessed and attributed in terms of payments etc.

So I wonder, in terms of timescales, a lot of this is, you know, we need to put a timescale against this for the company to go away and have a think about. Has anyone got any ideas for how long this sort of thing should take? Obviously building a reservoir, I mean that's not going to happen this year. We don't need to worry about that. They'll have engineers that can look at that. More around the responses you'd like to see, what sort of timeframe are we looking at here? Anyone got any thoughts on that? Community Member 8?

Community Member 8: I think again without working in the industry, it's difficult to know how long a project should take, but I feel like if, say, they say, "We're going to update this pipework," and they say, "It's going to take us two years," I think they should then have a breakdown to say, "In the first three months it's this, and then in the next three months it's this," so like be it planning permission, sorting out contracts with contractors -

TMcK Facilitator: Yeah, so I think -

Community Member 8: - so we can understand why it takes that length of time.

TMcK Facilitator: Ah okay, so more about when there is a project, trying to explain in detail why it takes a certain amount of time.

Community Member 8: Yeah.

TMcK Facilitator: In terms of these actions, so what we the company to go away and do around communication, around providing information, commitment potentially to how they attribute investment and shareholder funding, what sort of timeframes would we want to put on that? Has anyone got any thoughts?

Community Member 3: Nicky, can I ask, like I think all of this information should be already there, because like they already have plans for 20 years' infrastructure, everything, so on, so forth, so actually is it too much to ask that this would be published within a month, two months? You know, because I think, you know, I would probably say, they probably have a dashboard that they have all this there and they go, "Right, yeah, let's be straight up there."

CCW Chair: We need to draw this bit to a close, so if you want to say any sort of final questions or any final comment?

TMcK Facilitator: No, I think that was perfect. Thank you everyone for your feedback. That's our work on Question 1 done. I'm now going to hand back to Rob, who will give the opportunity to -

CCW Chair: Thank you Nicky and thank you for all the panel members for the honest and frank feedback, and you've heard from your customers some very honest and frank views, and so now what we need to do before we finalise these actions, I need to give you, South West Water, an opportunity to highlight if there are any commitments that you believe are not feasible, and explain to us clearly why, if that's the case. If there are constraints, whether to do with regulation or financial or operational, legal, whatever, we need those set out to us transparently, and all those explanations will be recorded as part of this session, just so that you're aware. So Laura and Richard, this is your chance to feedback on those items we've just discussed. Again, it'll be five minutes.

TMcK Facilitator: I'm just going to share the screen again so they can actually look at them as well, if that's all right.

Laura Flowerdew: Yeah, and there are many things that, listening to that conversation, would be good to have much more time to talk through and reflect. And so some of it, I feel like I would like in some ways to set the record straight. We are a public listed company. We probably are more transparent than, as Pennon Group, than most that you'd come across. We're not privately owned. We have a huge amount of information out there. For transparency, how we tailor that and put that on our website and curate it for customers is probably something that absolutely we can look, listen to this conversation, and take back.

I think the debt question is a really important one for customers to understand as well. We raise debt to fund the investment that's paid for in customer bills over the

period in which you get the benefit from that infrastructure. So it's a really important point. We're not raising funds to line shareholder pockets or because we are in any way playing fast and loose with people's money. It's like having a mortgage and paying that off over a period of time. We obviously need to be clearer about how we explain that, but all of that information is available in our annual reports, but it is financial, some of it complex information, so we will think about how we share that with customers as well.

I take the point that in the sector we have a lot of jargon and it is difficult, particularly in five minutes with many questions, to cover that extent in a very simple way that can cover that breadth of questions that I think was being asked. I love the bite-size chunks and trying to do that in plain English and keep that clear. I think we will absolutely try and ensure the "pence on the pound" is shared more broadly across websites. We tailor it to the individual regions.

We have been trying to do a lot of information sharing around our business plan, what that mean. I mean to the earlier question, around £760 million will be spent on improving our storm overflow or reducing storm overflow spills in this five-year period, of £3.2 billion of investment, so that's around 25% of the investment goes on reducing wastewater spills through our network -

CCW Chair: Have you published a plan, Laura? Have you published a plan of what you're going to fix, where you're going to fix it, how much it's going to cost, because that's really what people want to know.

Laura Flowerdew: Yeah, so there's information on our website, and what we're trying to do as we do the projects, we're talking to the local communities, because we know that customers want to know about what's happening in their area, in the bathing water they visit, so we are trying to ensure that comms is local. We hold roadshows. We reach out to customers, but we also try and do that through social media, through other sources, but we acknowledge there's always room to do more, and to make sure that that's easy to access in many different formats is important as well.

So I think there are things we are doing. I think listening to this conversation, what's clear is we need to double down on that. We need to deal with some of the difficult topics and make sure that they're clear in a way that customers can understand as well, in terms of how is the investment funded? What component of that is coming from customer bills, which is about a third of our investment is funded from customer bills, the remainder comes from shareholders and lenders, and they, you know, like your mortgage provider, want to receive a return. That's why they're lending us the money. So that's why I talked about that other component of the investment, which is interest and dividends, but dividends –

CCW Chair: So it's cost of financing the upfront investment.

Laura Flowerdew: Yes, which is then paid back, right, over a period of time. So it's an important part of the model that we are not asking customers to pay upfront for the £3 billion of investment this period. They're paying for the services they receive and a component of it over time, but not all of that money up front, and that's why we have debt as a business, but we try and keep our debt at a level that is backed by assets, but is within the regulatory guidance in terms of the level of debt. We are one of the more conservative companies in that regard.

It is important that we can continue to raise money so that we are sustainable, we can continue to make that investment, but to do that we need to make sure that we can pay the interest to our debt holders and returns to our shareholders, but we will only pay those dividends to shareholders if our performance allows us. Our dividend policy is extensive, quite complicated, but absolutely links with customer performance and delivery, and so it's really important to say that. We have not paid dividends in South West Water for some period in previous years, where we have had to restrict them because we've not delivered where we should have done. Last year -

CCW Chair: Laura, I'm going to stop you there, because we've got three questions to cover, and I just want to go to the customers and see if, having heard those explanations, you feel they're reasonable and they're proportionate. Or is there something else you wanted in the answers?

Laura Flowerdew: Can I make one point as well? I'm sorry to be cheeky.

CCW Chair: Go on then, be cheeky.

Laura Flowerdew: Last year, it might surprise people to know, we didn't make a profit. We made a loss, and that's because of the investment that we'd made that was not funded during the period by customer bills at all. We did that with support of our investors, and because we had significant cost increases. So as a company, we made a loss last year, not a profit.

Community Member 5: I thought you made a profit of £65 million in the first six months of last year?

Laura Flowerdew: Last year, over the year, we made a loss of £37 million.

CCW Chair: I'm going to draw that to a close just there, because I think we've got a lot more to do. So I can take it that we've agreed those actions and you're happy as a company to agree those actions that the customers have asked for, and if I don't see a shaking of heads or anything else, I'll move on to the next question. Okay, I can't see any shaking heads, so I think the second question, Community Member 5, that's you please.

Community Member 5: Right, I've written it down so I don't mess it up, and it's a bit of a long question, it's in three parts. We've already touched on this to some degree. Customers are seeing repeated sewage discharges, polluted rivers and seas and beaches, and an infrastructure that appears unable to cope with rainfall and housing growth. So what reduction in stormflow overuse and untreated discharge will be fully funded over the next 12 to 24 months, and what infrastructure upgrades will be funded to achieve that, and how will customers be able to see in clear, measurable terms, performance is improving?

Just to quickly recap, in the next 12 to 24 months, how much overuse and untreated discharge will be reduced? What infrastructure upgrades are fully funded to achieve that, and as customers how will we see in clear, measurable terms that things are improving? And just some quick local context, I live in Cornwall, and in 2022, in the area, the nearest beach to me is about five miles away, there were four sewage alerts. 2023, there were 11 sewage alerts. 2024 there were 18 sewage alerts. Last year there

were 21 sewage alerts, and this year, in two months alone there have been nine already. So that's the context.

CCW Chair: Great, thank you Community Member 5. I'm now going to – the question's on there, so you can see that, Laura. Sorry, who's joining you for this one? Is it still -

Richard Price: It'll be me, Richard.

Laura Flowerdew: I'm hoping Richard is still here. Richard runs our wastewater business as MD.

CCW Chair: Thank you. So try and be as specific as possible when answering this question, because I think that will help enormously, and try and remember to stay off the jargon.

Richard Price: Yeah, certainly. Let me do that and let me try and also bring in some of the themes that we've already spoken about on the discussion so far. Let me start by saying, my priority as the Managing Director for the Wastewater business is absolutely to drive down pollutions and storm overflows. Devon, Cornwall, the Isles of Scilly, which is where our wastewater business is, is such a wonderful part of the country, and with over a third of the country's bathing waters it is so important to everyone who lives, works, and enjoys to visit the region.

Let me give it a little bit of context. Firstly we have our pollution incident reduction plan, which hopefully you'll recognise does what it says on the tin, and we've had a pollution incident reduction plan in place for a number of years, and this year it becomes a mandatory process, and we're going to be publishing our pollution incident reduction plan by the end of the month, so by the end of March, and that sets out exactly how we're going to drive down pollution incidents over the coming year.

And picking up the point that I think Community Member 4 raised, there will be jargon-free, a light, bite-sized version of that document also published at the end of the month as well, so there'll be a larger document and then a bite-sized version.

And then also if I think about storm overflows, in our business plan over the next five years we're driving down storm overflows around the coast, and these 291 overflows, £760 million's worth of investment where those overflows are spilling more than 10 times a year. So that is also set out on our website as to how we'll tackle those. And it's worth saying our plan is working. If I think about pollution -

CCW Chair: Sorry Richard, can I get you to – because you're talking about five years. The question is specific about 12 to 24 months. Can you say what's coming, in a sense, first?

Richard Price: Yeah, so first we've got works underway at the moment to tackle, I think the number is 11 overflows, very much focused in Dawlish and Falmouth. Those overflows are underway. And then in the second year there's another 10 or so, I can firm up the numbers, I don't have them immediately to hand, I can firm up those numbers and we can make sure that they're really, really clear, and then through, over the next years three and four and five, that number goes up to 291.

The reason it's stages is because we have to do the modelling to work out what the right solution is, and I think Community Member 2 raised the question, how do we do that, and the first thing to do is to get flows out of the system. The sewerage system should take foul flows, you know, waste from homes and run-off from roofs and so on. It shouldn't be taking streams and being a land-drainage operation.

So the way we tackle it first is ideally get those flows that shouldn't be in the system out of the system. That might involve sewer sealing as well, and that's good for carbon as well, because we're not pumping that rainwater, having mixed it with foul water and so on. We're leaving that in the environment.

Then we build tanks to – a bit like a bath, the bath fills up and it holds flow, and then as the storm passes, it drains down to the treatment works. If the bath gets to the point that it overflows, that's when you get a storm overflow, and it protects homes and businesses from flooding. That is set out in our plan, so it's 11 this year, I think it's 10 to 15 next year, and then it ramps up over the next two years.

Let me then also talk about the pollution incident reduction plan, because there are five pillars to our current plan. There are six pillars, we break one out, still further in the next plan that will be published this month, and those pillars are all about firstly, people and culture, so getting the accountability and the focus really, really strong within our business, because I've got a thousand passionate people who live and work in Devon and Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly, and they are so passionate about reducing pollution and storm overflows.

The second pillar is about customer and community engagement, so stopping things like wet wipes, and fats, oils and grease going down the sewer system, which block the sewers, other things like kids' toys or mobile phones that we find in the sewer system. So it's working with communities and bringing that to life.

Next pillar is smart operations. That is about making sure that ahead of storm events, we've seen some big storm events this year, generators are ready, generators are tested, people are in the right place, storm tanks are drained down so we're ready to receive any storms.

Next step is focus capital investment, so we're actually targeting the areas that are giving rise to pollution incidents. And then the final area is about smart asset information and intelligence, so sewer level monitors, we've got 12,000 of those that use AI to learn the flows in the sewer and spot where things aren't right. I'll stop there, because we're running out of time, but I'm sure there'll be more to come back on.

CCW Chair: Richard, technically the time wasn't up there, not by my watch, so whoever's put that in has cut you off early. But you were specifically asked about how customers in the next couple of years are going to see these changes, what's visible, how will they know that anything's changed. What is the answer to that?

Richard Price: Let me take pollution incidents as an example.

CCW Chair: Just a quick answer please.

Richard Price: 189 pollution incidents in 2024. Last year the number, we're just settling it with the Environment Agency, around 120, so over a third reduction in

pollution incidents, and we're going to publish those numbers both in a like for like basis, and in terms of the new water industry regulated industry's incidents guidance as part of our pollution incidents reduction plan, and then on storm overflows, our five-year plan is focused on the bathing waters, because that's right for our region, that's what customers have told us, and that is very much focused on bringing down spills that are currently spilling more than 10 times below 10. So customers will see that over the next five years, and then we'll move inland and tackle the high-spilling sites that are inland away from the coast.

CCW Chair: Okay, right, thank you for that response. We're now going to pause and we're going to move back to the customers as we did in Question 1. Nicky, I'm going to hand over to you to guide this part of the proceedings.

TMcK Facilitator: Now we all know what's going to happen now, folks, because we did so well at Question 1. What we're looking for is just a little bit of thought around what you've just heard. We heard a great deal of detail there from Richard about the plans for the sewage pollution and environmental issues that we've seen. What sort of actions are you hearing? What are you not hearing? What do you think they need to commit to that maybe wasn't mentioned there? Does anyone have any thoughts to get us started?

Community Member 3: Yeah, I'm going to go in now, local information so that I know clearly where these incidents are happening and that I can log onto, look onto the website and be able to see where the incidents have happened and that is relevant to me, so that I can see where they are, so we're clear, because all the bits you said, it sounds like the whole of the South West, but actually more for each part, each region or each part or county within that region, basically you have clear data that we can see and that is transparent again.

TMcK Facilitator: And why is that important to you or why do you think it would be important to customers?

Community Member 3: Because again it shows that what you're talking about is real. We can see here, you know, we're drawing that line, we're drawing that loop basically, we're closing that loop down, so basically you're saying this, this is what has happened, we can see what it is, we can look in on it the same as you can, and it closes that loop.

TMcK Facilitator: And I guess it feels tangible if it's local. Is that the idea, because it matters to you?

Community Member 3: No, local as well because it – and then obviously bigger picture, you can see where around, but if we know that certain areas are worse than others, then we should be able to ask the question, well why is it? Why is that the case?

TMcK Facilitator: Thanks, Community Member 3. Community Member 5, do you want to jump in?

Community Member 5: Yeah, thank you. I just have a real problem with matching what Richard said, which I don't doubt is obviously true, but with the local experience, you know, I gave those figures, sewage alerts have gone up 11, 18, 21, and

then nine in the last two months alone in the area where I live. I live in an area with just 12 properties, and we had five major water leaks last year, one that lasted for about five days, and ironically this afternoon I went to pick my son up, end of the lane there's a van fixing a leak. So my experiences, I don't think it's just me, match what you're saying, Richard.

TMcK Facilitator: So Community Member 5, when we talk about actions in terms of, what commitment do we want from the company and what do you still want to see?

Community Member 5: Yeah, sorry, I think it goes back, yeah, sorry, in terms of actions it goes back to Community Member 3's point. I think Richard's giving a picture overall, but really, from where I'm sat, things are not getting better. They're actually getting worse, demonstrably worse.

So I would like local information for my area as to how, you know, what is happening and what are the plans to reduce that, because when you talk about a five-year plan to reduce overflow incidents, Pennon Group covers a very large area, and that's great but, and I keep saying this, I am really frustrated, I'm trying to rein it in, but for me, things are getting worse. I can prove that. I've had so much contact with South West Water over the last 12 months, it's unbelievable.

TMcK Facilitator: And that's mostly in relation to a leak that you've had, isn't it? It's been getting knocked sort of further and further down -

Community Member 5: It's leaks in the road, but I have so many friends who are surfers, swimmers, and every time we have fairly heavy rain, I'll be honest, the local beach, there's a sewage alert, there's sewage being discharged. Friends of mine get diarrhoea, get illnesses. For me, in my experience, it doesn't marry in any way with what Richard is saying. So I need more local information so I can [inaudible] my area.

TMcK Facilitator: I wonder, Community Member 5, just to that point, you know there are websites like Waterfit Live, which is a website which gives you bathing water quality and storm overflow information for specific regions. Are you looking then almost for the company to go down to that level of granularity, "Here's where we're seeing the leaks and here's actually where our plan fits into solving that," and what that might look like for you over a period of time? Is that the level of granularity you're looking for?

Community Member 5: It is. I have an app called Safer Seas & River Service app, and that gives me an alert every time there's a problem. And I wonder if that information is looked at in that detail, because if you look overall, the massive area Pennon Group covers, you could say, "Yeah, we are doing this, this and this, we're investing millions of pounds." But as a customer, I don't see things getting better. I see things getting worse.

And just final thing, and it's not just semantics, I'm not a customer. If I was a customer, I'd be going somewhere else. I have no choice but to get my water from South West Water. And we cannot live without water. And I don't think the company takes their responsibilities seriously enough.

TMcK Facilitator: Okay, so Community Member 5, is there an action that they could have to sort of, if you -

Community Member 5: Yeah, I would like them to publicly say, in my area where I live, how many sewage alerts there have been, how much, I won't use the word, but excrement has been dumped in the sea near me, and what are they doing in my area to reduce that year on year, because in my area, the last six years, it's increased.

CCW Chair: Presumably Community Member 5 you want that for every area, not just your own?

Community Member 5: Yes. I mean I'm not quite that selfish but I was talking about – Nicky was talking about breaking it down into detail. I think if you look at the overall figure, we don't live in Pennon land. We live in our own small communities, and I keep – I don't want to keep going on about this, but where I live, it's not getting better. It's getting worse. I'm sure we all have the same concerns.

TMcK Facilitator: Okay Community Member 5, thank you. Has anyone got anything they want to add? Oh, quite a few hands up. Community Member 8, you just beat Community Member 2 to the mark there, so if you want to go ahead.

Community Member 8: It's really sort of I suppose a follow-up onto those two points. I sort of feel like the key thing is by [inaudible] area specific, we feel like change is being made. If you're hearing, "The South West is getting this improvement and that improvement, and we've decreased, done things in this area by this much percentage," but you're not seeing that, it creates a lot of distrust, because you're being told one thing but you're seeing another thing. So I think being specific area-wise does close that loop.

But I suppose my then other thing leading on to that again would be, it was mentioned before that they're going to be publishing at the end of March detailed information and then bite-size information on their plans, but where is that being published? Is that just going to be on the website or will leaflets be posted through the door? Is there a newsletter that people can be subscribing to? Yeah, I think a bit more information on how then that information, you know, is how that's going to be delivered would be useful to know.

TMcK Facilitator: Okay Community Member 8, thank you very much. Community Member 2?

Community Member 2: Yes, I just wanted to pick up on the figures that were quoted. Certainly when Community Member 5 was talking about things getting worse, and then the figures that were given us was there were less storm overflows which were reported. What concerns me is, on the ground we see a certain number of things happening and going wrong, and then when the figures are given to us, it would appear from the figures that we are told that things are getting better.

And I'm wondering whether or not the regulator is either checking up on what the companies are saying, and making sure that the facts and figures that they're giving are accurate, or whether the facts and figures are being delivered by the water authorities to the regulator and then perhaps some of the smaller out-spills and the smaller issues are not being reported, so the figures look as if things are improving, but on the ground, as Community Member 5 says, we can see that actually they're not.

And the importance of the regulator I'm querying, because they talk about being regulated and that fines will happen if they're not meeting targets, but then there is a question of who then is inspecting or assessing whether the water authorities' targets are being met, and what process that takes.

TMcK Facilitator: So Community Member 2, I think what you're saying, I think I heard there's numerous, tens of thousands of sensors keeping an eye, or there's AI involved. From what you're saying, potentially, are you looking to – would an action here be to open-source that information where possible, without giving away any secrets, but you know, so that you can keep or someone can keep an eye on it?

Community Member 2: Yes. Yes. I mean I have suggested to my family that if they're visiting beaches, that they do go and check on various apps and live feed to see whether or not there is likely to be a discharge then. And it isn't necessarily when it's raining. There may be a discharge at other times, and I think for people's safety, and as Community Member 5 mentioned, people get sick, people are ill when they've been to the beach, in order to go to the beach you want to be absolutely sure that it's going to be safe that day, and that's the issue for people's real lives. They need to know that it's safe.

So when you get figures saying it's improving and you personally see that it isn't, then there is a disconnect somewhere, and somebody needs to take action to make sure that those figures are real and they are real to people on the ground as well as just in reports.

TMcK Facilitator: Thank you very much. Community Member 5, do you want to jump back in?

Community Member 5: Yeah, just a quick point of information, I hope I've got this right, but I understand that this week, South West Water pleaded guilty to supplying water unfit for human consumption. To me that's pretty scary that it's that bad. And this I think refers to an incident in Devon last year.

TMcK Facilitator: That's slightly out of the remit of that particular question, Community Member 5, so I don't know if you want to -

Community Member 5: I think – I don't want to say someone's being disingenuous, but we can quote statistics, but they also pleaded guilty to supplying water unfit for human consumption just this week, so that's also the kind of context that we're operating in.

CCW Chair: I mean the company will have an opportunity to come back on that if they wish to, so we can pick that up in the next few minutes.

TMcK Facilitator: I think Question 3 covers water quality, Community Member 5, so we can bring that up as an action in terms of what you'd expect from the company to handle that.

Community Member 5: I don't want to dominate this. Thank you.

TMcK Facilitator: Okay, I'm going to share my screen and we can have a look at some of the actions that we've got. We can see the question on the left, and we can see obviously the response, driven from what Richard had said, so obviously it's a real

priority of the business to drive down pollution and storm overflows. He spoke of the passion of his 1,000 plus employees and how it's their number one priority. They are producing a pollution incident reduction plan, which is going to be published very soon, that you'll be able to look at, and he spoke about the pillars are a part of that and how it all kind of comes to fruition in the future. That's coming out in March.

They're looking to do bite-size summaries of spillage reduction plan to be published, staged implementation of spillage improvement plan to ensure flexibility to changing circumstances. Building storm overflow storage tanks to protect homes and businesses from flooding. There's that £760 million of investment over the next five years. Specifically in the shorter term, so 12 to 24 months, we're looking at 11 overflow improvement works this year currently underway, and he mentioned Dawlish and Falmouth, and he obviously wanted to check up on the other ones, he didn't have them to hand, understandably. And obviously there's another 10 or so overflows will be addressed in the second year and so on.

He spoke of the six-pillar improvement plan there and mentioned how there's different ways that they can tackle sewage, and that again is all going to be explained in bite-size pieces in the report that's upcoming.

When we went out to you as community members, we obviously were looking for clear, accessible, localised information on incidents and spills, and that was really important to you, because you're seeing the impact both on yourself and your friends, your social circles, etc. You want to understand a little bit more clearly around what's happening there.

Not only do you want to be able to see those spills, and I think there's a few apps and websites that do that already for you, but you're really keen to know that what is it that's actually happening in the local area that's going to reduce those incidents, and that's actually going to see tangible improvements? So it's tying up the improvement plan to these localised information points almost and allowing that sort of end-to-end consumer experience of oh, something's getting done about this. We can at least track it. We can chase them if it's not happening in time. It's about understanding what's going on and when.

More information about where the plan is published, so we want to see it on website, leaflets, or newsletters, so just make sure, again we spoke about this in Question 1, everyone's got different communication needs. Obviously the company have a responsibility to balance, you know, how much it costs to send a newsletter to everyone versus sending out push notifications, etc. It's about making sure they get that right, and make sure it's fit for purpose for customers.

And then just one from Community Member 2 at the end there was really, we're seeing lots of data, we're hearing lots of information about things are getting better, and the numbers prove it, but actually the reality that Community Member 2 was seeing was that maybe things aren't actually getting better. They don't feel like they are. So it's really making sure that the data can be trusted. What can be done by the company to have a third party almost look at the data that they're seeing live, and prove it is accurate, that things are actually getting better, it just might not feel like it for everyone, but here's the factual, correct, transparent data that proves it, and here's what it's going to look like in two, three, four years' time.

Those are the actions that we have. Again, are there anymore that we want to add to that, or do we want to sharpen any of them before we hand back? Any thoughts from anyone?

Community Member 3: I would say again, let's go with one or two months, because I think this needs to happen, doesn't it?

TMcK Facilitator: Yeah. Okay Community Member 3, thanks. Okay, are we happy then? I can hand back to Rob? Okay, let me just stop – I'll keep sharing my screen actually, Rob, and I'll let you hand over to the company.

CCW Chair: Okay. Well back to speak to the company. Thanks for all the customer input. Again you've heard what your customers have to say, and again, before we finalise these actions, we need to give you an opportunity to highlight whether these commitments are feasible or not, and if they're not, why they're no, and just to explain if there are any constraints on what you can do with this. So Laura or Richard, over to you then.

Laura Flowerdew: If I start and then I'm sure Richard may want to add anything that I've missed as well. I think I first want to say, if there are specific issues or anybody would like to follow up with us as a company, we'd be very happy to do so. I think we need to do that through CCW, but we would be very happy to arrange a call to talk through any of the particular issues, locations, or concerns you have directly, so let me just put that out there first as well, in addition to the actions that are coming out of this session.

I think on the guilty plea to the water quality incident, that was the incident in Brixham in 2024. It was a very isolated and very specific set of circumstances that we don't have time to go into today, but outside that specific issue, water quality in our region is very strong, we are very closely monitored and regulated by the Drinking Water Inspectorate, and regularly take samples, tests, etc, etc. I'm sure we'll come on to that in the third, but I wanted to reassure everybody that they should not have concerns about the quality of their water. It is, in this country, amongst the highest in the world, and people should have confidence in that.

If I then go back to wastewater and some of these actions, it's probably worth pointing out our storm overflow map and our Waterfit Live bathing water map. I think Nicky may have mentioned them, but we do have our own versions of the maps and apps on our website already. That gives localised information on all of our storm overflows across the South West region, as well as information on the local area, some of the history around those spills, and so on and so forth.

The data that you get on an app like the SAS app comes from South West Water, comes from the EDM monitors that we have, looking at the duration, not the volume but the duration of discharges from storm overflows, and we are already sharing that data with third parties so that they can use it and make it accessible to people. But it is also on our website, and you'll be able to see both bathing water and storm overflow water quality across the region that we serve.

We are also putting out more and more information about our infrastructure investment. We have newsletters. We share information on our website, the ongoing projects are on the website, and we are trying reach out to communities in person,

because we know not everybody wants to access that digitally, but we're also sharing information digitally.

So in response to some of those actions, I think there is a lot that we are doing. We know that people care about their local bathing water where they go, not necessarily something that's 100 miles away, and so we are trying to make sure that it is local, it is relevant, and it is not a Pennon for you. We do talk about large numbers overall, but we know it needs to be micro and local and relevant to you as a customer, and we are trying to ensure we've covered both sides of that so people understand both the scale but also the local criticality for individual beaches, bathing waters, rivers, etc, that you experience locally.

And each of those has their own catchment. We have very localised weather at times and that causes differences in terms of the way in which the network responds, but we are, through our investment programme, looking to have got through all our bathing waters over this five-year period to do the work needed to reduce the spills to below that 10 per bathing water that Richard has talked about.

So I think there is a lot going on. I think we are covering a lot of what you are talking about. I'm sure there is always more we can do, but let me hand over to Richard as well to pick up on some of those final pieces about how do you get assurance on data we're providing, how do we know that's accurate? I think that was another point, and apologies if I've missed any of the others.

CCW Chair: You've got a minute, Richard.

Richard Price: Yeah, no, thanks Laura. I've got 50, well 47 seconds left. Just a couple of points on the regulation, and obviously the industry's heavily regulated, and that is a good thing to provide that assurance, and takes something like, sorry for the jargon, event and duration monitors. They're the things that monitor the spills. We have either the highest or the second highest operability in the country, and that is heavily regulated by Ofwat and the Environment Agency. They obviously assure the information, or we assure it and they review the information that we send.

But just building on Laura's point, I really hear loud and clear the local information, and Waterfit Live is our gateway to that. We will review, just as the actions have set out, the information on there and make it more accessible and more local.

CCW Chair: Well, perfect, I mean right on time, Richard. I must admit, I was going to give you a few seconds longer, so well done to you. Okay, customers, having heard that explanation, does that feel reasonable? Are you happy with the answers you've just had or are there further things and actions you would want to raise?

Community Member 5: For me, I think, well firstly a compliment. As I said, I've had a lot of contact with South West Water. The people on the ground and the people on the phones and WhatsApp, they are very good, I'm really, really impressed with how they've spoken to us and how they've responded.

But I think in terms of what Laura was saying, we could do with more localised information, because we care widely, but we live locally, and we need to understand what's happening in our area, and the stuff on the website, if you could send out

push notifications to people who are registered when there is a sewage alert, that would be really useful. So that's something tangible I'd really love, if possible, please.

Laura Flowerdew: Do you know, I would love to be able to do that. We don't have the technology to do that at the moment, and we would need permission from customers to sign up and do that. So it isn't something we can do quickly. We are implementing a new customer platform, and I think it's something that we can absolutely keep under review, and in the meantime look at whether we can get more local comms out on where we are doing things, and where we are making investment, so we can certainly take that away as an ongoing action to make sure we're communicating with people in localities -

CCW Chair: I mean, Laura, push technology is not, you know, it's not leading-edge stuff. What's the challenge you're facing in being able to do that?

Laura Flowerdew: Our current technology doesn't do it. It's old. That's why we're upgrading it. When we have our new technology, that will allow us to do it, and so we will be able to then do push notifications, but at this moment, sitting here today, we have tried to do that before and we can't. We do Waterfit Live through a website, not through an app, so we're in a slightly different position. So, rightly or wrongly, that is our technology and that is why we're investing in a new customer experience platform that will allow us to give better, enable better comms with customers as well, which we know is really important.

CCW Chair: Providing some information about how and when you're going to get that sort of level of information out through that sort of technology would be really helpful. Sorry, Community Member 8.

Community Member 8: Sorry, it's just a quick question. When you say that the technology is too old, what technology is that? Is that what you have in place that detects when there's a leak or is that something more office based or ...?

Laura Flowerdew: No, I mean in terms of our communication and customer service technology.

TMcK Facilitator: Community Member 2, do you want to jump back in?

CCW Chair: Well there's a big investment, I'm told. There's a big investment going into water at the moment, so maybe some of that investment should go into getting the technology right.

Laura Flowerdew: We've already been doing that. We're spending around £25 million. It's expensive to implement. We've been doing that for the last 18 months and we hope that this, or the intention is that this year that will go live, and that will then make it easier for us to communicate, certainly digitally with customers, and to be able to track communications. But it's a billing and customer platform that will allow us to do better communication, enable better engagement, and help customers with more optionality around communication. We have high hopes of it, but we've still got to get it in, which is notoriously difficult.

CCW Chair: Should we add it as an action, Nicky?

TMcK Facilitator: Yeah, we can absolutely get that added.

Community Member 4: Can I ask a question?

TMcK Facilitator: Of course.

Community Member 4: With all that's being discussed now, I'm just trying to figure out, obviously we've been told that you're in lots of debt, etc, etc, the cost of this push notification platform, would that then fall on the customer? Is that what's going to happen? Like is that why our bills are going up? Where does the money come from? If you're already in debt, where are we getting this money to get this technology in place?

Laura Flowerdew: The debt is raised to fund the investment in infrastructure that we are, as I said earlier, about a third of investment is paid for through customer bills, and two thirds is raised through debt and equity, shareholder funding that is paid back over the period to which you get the benefit.

The customer billing system is a slightly different structure to that as well, so that's funded effectively by the company in the short term as part of the customer service cost that we manage over a period of time. It is, I'm afraid, quite complicated, the whole financial side of it, but there is no direct immediate impact on your bills as a result of our investment in this technology.

CCW Chair: Thanks, Laura. Community Member 2, is it something that can hold, because I need to move on to the next question? Could you bring it up as part of the next section or is it a quick one?

Community Member 2: Very quickly that it would be very useful to have a two-way feedback, so that you're going to send out information to us but it would be really useful to know that there's a quick way that we could feed back that the case that you're talking about is actually happening, or if it's not happening or if it is happening, to send that information back to you very quickly.

CCW Chair: Thank you Community Member 2. That's really helpful. With that, can we agree the actions that are there? Yes? Yeah, okay. I can't see any dissent, so we'll now move –

Laura Flowerdew: I can't see them. I assume we'll also have a chance to just make sure the timeframes and so on are clear, because that says one to two months. I think we probably just need to check that through, for example, and double check [inaudible] -

TMcK Facilitator: Absolutely, Laura. I think for all of these ones, we'll share them with you, there'll be an opportunity for you guys to look at this and put realistic timeframes against them, that the plan is, once we have those back, we'll share them with the customers and they can take a look and say, "That all makes sense to us," or if they've got any further queries, then it'll be a bit of a conversation after that.

CCW Chair: Okay, let's move on to the final question, and I think we've had a change of person ask this. Richard, is it you?

Laura Flowerdew: So David Harris, was that the question?

Community Member 10: It's supposed to be me.

TMcK Facilitator: Yeah, it's Community Member 10 that's going to ask the question, but we have got David here from Pennon, so maybe [overtalking] David introducing himself quickly.

David Harris: Yeah, good evening, everyone. David Harris, I'm the Managing Director of Water Services National, and like many of you, I live in Bristol.

CCW Chair: Thanks, David. Okay, someone gave me some duff information about Richard, so back to Community Member 10.

Community Member 10: Okay. When customers experience discoloured water or supply outages, some are left unsure whether water is safe, and report long delays getting through to customer services. What clear communication and contact standards will you commit to, including explicit confirmation when water is safe, proactive postcode-level outage updates, and guaranteed response time targets so customers can reach you quickly? How will you publish measurable evidence that performance against these standards is improving?

And just on a personal note, we've had two or three outages in the last two years, and the information that's available, certainly in the early stages after the outage is, to put it mildly, vague.

CCW Chair: Thank you, Community Member 10. Okay, again, please focus on the question and answering what's specifically in the question, and you have five minutes.

David Harris: Okay, well thanks very much for the opportunity and thanks for the question. Just to say one or two things, and I will absolutely try my best to avoid jargon and keep it relevant to the question that you've asked, but just to say one or two things up front in terms of the incidents that we have and the impact to our customers.

So one of the things I'm most proud about in terms of our service is that 76% of the incidents that we have on our network or in our treatment plant have no impact on our customers. What that means, to put that in simple terms, is that our staff out on the ground are able to quickly respond and to re-valve or reconfigure our network so that we can supply customers from other parts of our network, or bring tankers in to infuse water into our network, so that in 76% of cases where we otherwise would have an impact on our customers, there is no impact on our customers.

Your question has focused on sort of water, more water quality incidents. In fact the larger proportion, by far, of the incidents that we have are bursts to our pipes, or where we have to shut down a water treatment work because of the waters we are getting in, particularly from ground water, are not of the standard that we can safely treat that water and put it out into our network to supply to our customers. They are the vast bulk of the incidents that we have, the causes of customer impact.

In fact, with the exception of the Brixham incident that was spoken about earlier, what happens in water quality cases is that, and we've had no other broader case in the time that I've been here, what happens is we find generally that the water quality issue is related either to a private supply, so in Devon and Cornwall in particular there are many properties that are supplied both from our network, the public network,

but they also have their own private supplies on their property, and we find that those private supplies can be contaminated. They are generally not as well looked after as our network.

So those incidents are very much contained or constrained in terms of their impact to that particular property, or alternatively we find that, as we found, there's someone here from Bournemouth tonight, as we found recently in a block of flats in Bournemouth, the internal piping of that block of flats was copper based and that was causing a problem within those particular premises.

And what we do in those cases is we issue very clear communications. We issue written communications. We issue written notices in those cases to -

CCW Chair: David, can I focus you back on the question please, because I mean we need directly to tackle the answer to the question. Do you want to put the question up again, Nicky, just as a reminder?

TMcK Facilitator: Yeah of course. It's in the chat as well if that's of use, and you can have a look at it in the chat. Let me just share the screen.

David Harris: Yeah, so what I was saying, Rob, is that where the water may not be safe to drink, generally is in those very geographically confined examples that I've given where we communicate to customers in writing, we give them specific water notices or "Do not drink" notices. Beyond that, so those incidents are confined very much geographically.

The other incidents that we have that I've already described, which are more, you know, pipe bursts or supply interruptions, again we do provide information about those, and if there is, which there generally is not, but if there are water quality dimensions to that as well, again we will be very, very clear about that. As I say, that is generally not the case for the vast bulk of our supply outages. We -

Laura Flowerdew: I'm conscious of time, but I think just to pick up on some very specific points, we do try and communicate to all those people at a postcode level. That would be where we are trying to put it on our website, would be at that level, and we would also reach out through text messages and voice messages to customers, recognising they might not all go on our website. We'd also try and extend opening hours and support customers calling in so that we are supporting them, and if there is any problem with the water supply, we'd also proactively ensure that we're reaching out to vulnerable customers that have specific needs as well.

I think a guaranteed response time is often difficult, because it depends on the nature of the incident, but we would try and give regular updates from a customer comms perspective, and if the incident is longer, we would also try and get our mobile response unit out with customer support to try and engage in the local region.

Just picking up the communication point, I think there's quite a lot there, and we do publish information, because we are regulated against performance standards around discoloured water, the number of contacts we have, the number of minutes lost to supply interruptions for customers across the region, and so on. So we would separately report on those measures for South West and Bournemouth, those are

regulated together, and for Bristol Water as a separate region, so you can see our performance against others on all of those areas.

So just to be, apologies, a little bit more specific around some of those particular points, we've tried to pick up on some of those areas, but it's obviously a much wider conversation.

CCW Chair: Thank you, I'll stop you there, Laura, and thank you David as well for that. We need to now move on to your customers and see what they have got to say about those answers. Nicky, I'll hand over to you to bring the customers in.

TMcK Facilitator: Thank you very much and thank you to David and Laura for your answers there. Now obviously the discussion and the responses we heard there were all about water. It's something we use every day. We see it coming out of our taps. We've got lived experience of what it looks like to have an outage or to hear from the water company. How closely does the response that you've heard there from the water company match your experiences? Is everything okay or are there actions that we need to look at? Who wants to jump in? Community Member 9, do you want to go?

Community Member 9: I was just going to say, because you were saying that these sorts of things are published online, so I was having a quick look, I mean of course I'm part of Bournemouth Water, do I find that on Bournemouth Water? Do I find that on the Pennon website? I'm looking on the Pennon website now to see if I can find what's just been talked about, but I'm struggling to find it, you see, so it's almost like it's hidden somewhere. I mean of course I'm doing it whilst we're on a call, but I was just having a quick look to see if I could find it, but I can't see anything that Laura's just spoken about when I'm looking on the Pennon website. As I said, is it Pennon I look at? Is it Bournemouth Water I look at? Where do I look to find this information?

TMcK Facilitator: Community Member 5, you had your hand up first there, so I'll go to you in a minute Community Member 8.

Community Member 5: Yeah, just on one of the points about targets, it would be useful to have a published target on response times, because while I have had a lot of good contact with staff, there have been occasions where I've, I think after 12 hours I gave up in a WhatsApp chat more than once last year, so you know, obviously trying to contact your company for 12 hours and not getting a response, it's not that great. So a published target for response times would be really useful.

TMcK Facilitator: Community Member 5, you've waited 12 hours to hear back from someone on WhatsApp, what was your expectation of timings? What does good look like?

Community Member 5: It would be five minutes, 10 minutes, an hour, certainly not 12 hours. I mean like I said, I've literally given up twice, and I've got the chats in my phone if anyone wants to see them for proof.

CCW Chair: I think Community Member 8 was next was she?

TMcK Facilitator: Community Member 8, do you want to go?

Community Member 8: Yeah, sorry, I just feel like what was said wasn't really matched up with what I've seen and experienced. I've been quite lucky to where I've not personally had issues with my water being discoloured, but I have had it with close friends and family as well, and living in a relatively small town, I'd say, I found it easier getting information on community Facebook groups than it is getting information online. If I've tried to sort of, in the past, help my father-in-law, finding out what's going on, I've found the easiest thing to do is just go on the community page and see what everybody else has been saying, because if you're lucky, at least one person will have gotten through to the water company, because it isn't easy to find that information published online.

I think as well, it's easier if somebody's water isn't safe to drink. They tend to, you know, again from what I've seen, get a quicker response to say, "No, don't drink the water." But if the water might be okay but you're not sure because there's discolouration, that seems to definitely be where there's more of a delay. So it could be in that timeframe that you've been waiting to get a response, you could have been using the water the entire time, but I feel like there's less of a priority when the company knows it's okay.

TMcK Facilitator: So Community Member 8, what sort of actions do you want here? You're talking about, you know if the water is not safe to drink you'll get told pretty quickly, because yeah, it matters, but there's this sort of grey area when the water's cloudy, you're speaking of, so what does an action look like?

Community Member 8: I think just a text, an email, a Facebook status, anything, just saying like, "Customers in area postcode, we know your water might be looking a little different to usual, but don't worry, it's because of this reason, please continue to drink it, and if you see any further changes, contact us and we'll update you," just something so that people know the water is fine but this is why it looks like it, just reassurance-wise.

TMcK Facilitator: Great, thank you, Community Member 8. Community Member 2?

Community Member 2: Yes, I just want to reiterate that. We're on the priority list, so we do actually get a text to tell us if there's going to be a problem. In recent times we've had one when the system had to be flushed through and it explained we might have a drop in the pressure and we might have discoloured water, which I appreciated. The one thing it didn't say is, "It is still safe to drink."

So while we were very aware that this was going to happen, during that four days which we were told it was going to happen, we actually used bottled water to be on the safe side, because we weren't 100% sure that with the pressure dropping and with slight discolouration, that that meant that we probably shouldn't drink the water. And I daresay it was safe, but we just would have liked, as Community Member 8 said, the reassurance to say, "You're experiencing this over the next four days, don't worry, it's still safe to drink."

TMcK Facilitator: And what would that mean to you as a customer, Community Member 2, that sort of information?

Community Member 2: Well, firstly it meant that we wouldn't have had to buy bottled water, because it meant that we were over cautious, which I think everybody

would be, and it meant that we were slightly anxious about the quality of the water for those four days and to whether or not this flushing through was really going to make a huge difference and we might lose water altogether. It caused uncertainty where they were trying to reassure us and it caused uncertainty that time.

TMcK Facilitator: Anyone else want to add any actions or any thoughts to what we've heard for this question? Community Member 3, on you go.

Community Member 3: I was just going to say, in 2026 we shouldn't be having these issues.

TMcK Facilitator: What issues specifically?

Community Member 3: As in discoloured water, you know like, I'm lucky in Bristol, where we live, we don't have that, but when I hear this from other people, I'm there thinking, "God, why is this? Why is it like that?" Do you know? There should be no regional differences. It should be the same. The standards should be the same.

TMcK Facilitator: I mean I think there'll be hundreds of reasons for discoloured water, anything from there might be local works happening to something very run-of-the-mill happening, but I guess it comes down to communication and why it's happening.

Community Member 3: Transparency again, just being clear, "This is why," you know, isn't it?

TMcK Facilitator: Community Member 10, I'm going to finish on you. You asked the question, Community Member 10, so is there anything that you think that we want to see in the action plan?

Community Member 10: No, I think what you've done in the information you sent me is great. The one thing I would say is that my personal experience of trying to get information when we had outages was that either you were given incorrect information in terms of when something might be fixed, or you got no information at all, and I just think that simple statements – if you contact them, you need a simple statement, "Such-and-such has happened, we're working on it, water will not be restored until at least such-and-such a time," something specific about what's going on, and my experience was that you don't get that.

TMcK Facilitator: Rob, I'm going to hand back to you, because I'm conscious of time and I think we need to get a suitable response from the water company before we round things up.

CCW Chair: Yes. Okay, so we're going back to the water company now to look at those. Could somebody put the sound off please, because obviously I'm getting some feedback. Yeah, we'll go back to Laura and David and see what your reactions to that are.

David Harris: I'm happy to go first. Look, there's two main things there with which, very happy to move forward with the recommendations. First of all, the information about water is safe to drink, and I thank Community Member 2 for referring to the text that she has received, but absolutely hear the point that want the reassurance that that water is still safe to drink. So Community Member 2 referred to us and we

do, in our messages, refer to discoloured water and so on, but absolutely take the point that you want the reassurance as well that that water is safe to drink and we can do that, given the extensive water quality tests that we do at those times.

I think the other thing Community Member 10 raised, when will it be fixed? It's not always easy, Community Member 10, to know. These things can be a bit tricky, but taking your suggestion that water won't be returned until at least such-and-such a time, again, I get that in terms of that greater transparency, which is our aim generally, is for customers in the affected area to know what's going on, and to be transparent. So those two suggestions I think are good ones that we can definitely take on and improve in that regard.

CCW Chair: Thank you David. Laura, do you want to add anything?

Laura Flowerdew: I think -

CCW Chair: You don't have to.

Laura Flowerdew: No, I'm just reading them and taking them in. I think the first one, I think we will need to reflect on what that would be and what those timeframes are, so we would need to just review and come back to you, not to say we won't do it, but I think we just need to make sure that we are being realistic around that.

But I think yeah, I think as David says, we do, and as has been referenced, we do try and communicate with customers around it, and I think we can listen to some of the feedback today and make sure that we're just expanding that a little bit more or trying to ensure that we're doing that comprehensively where we're doing that, so that customers aren't worried about their water quality. I think that's a point we'll take away and just reflect on how we best do it.

CCW Chair: Okay. Let's go back to the customers. Are we happy with what we've heard there and the recommendations? Obviously Laura says she's going to come back on the first one after she's checked it out. But does anyone have anything further they want to add? I can't see anybody obviously because you've got the sheet up.

TMcK Facilitator: You need to invest in another screen there, Rob.

CCW Chair: [Laughs].

Community Member 5: I've just checked my phone and I waited 17 hours in a WhatsApp chat.

Laura Flowerdew: And I think again, we'd be very interested, Community Member 5, to just understand that and see that detail perhaps, and we can review and learn the lessons from that. That would be really helpful just to understand that specific circumstance if you wouldn't mind sharing.

Community Member 5: Sure. Thank you, Laura.

CCW Chair: So with the caveat on the first one, are we agreed on those actions? Okay, I can't see any dissent, so thank you that for the record we've now agreed those with the caveat on the first one. Right, Nicky, unless you've got anything else from your

end, I'm going to close the session, firstly by saying a big thank you to Laura, Richard, and David for their time this evening, but also to all the customers. We have covered quite a lot of ground and some important themes, and we have got some clear actions in response to the issues you've raised, I think.

In terms of next steps, we're going to publish a full transcript of this session within five working days, I said two weeks at the start, I should have said five working days, so it's basically a week. Before publication an early draft will be shared with all the participants so you can review it and raise any concerns relating to any of your personal comments. Only first names are going to be used, as I think Nicky said earlier.

TMcK Facilitator: We'll anonymise it.

CCW Chair: Anonymise it. A plain English summary is going to be published within 10 working days. South West Water is required to publish its action plan within 28 days, setting out how it's going to deliver the commitments that we've agreed tonight. Customers will then be asked whether the action plan accurately reflects what was agreed, and we, CCW, will monitor progress and report publicly on the delivery of that. This whole process is really designed to ensure transparency and follow through, not just people having a discussion. We want some real hard actions to come out of this.

Again, I just want to thank you all for your time this evening, the thought and honesty and frankness that you've brought to the session, it's been a really great session, and your input really does help us with this process and the credibility of this process, and this whole Water Voice project, so thank you very much for your engagement this evening and thank you to the company for your input.

Community Member 5: Thank you everyone.

CCW Chair: Goodnight. You're free to go.

[CLOSE]

CCW

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