



CCW

The voice for water consumers  
Llais defnyddwyr dŵr

**Hafren Dyfrdwy  
Accountability Session  
transcript**

20TH APRIL 2026

# Attendance list

James Jesic	CEO of Hafren Dyfrdwy
Louise Moir	Customer Experience Lead of Hafren Dyfrdwy
Clare Glen	Qualitative Research Director at Taylor McKenzie Research (TMck) – Lead facilitator
Rhodri Williams	Wales Board Member and Chair, Consumer Council for Water (CCW) – Chair
11 x Participants	Water Voice Community Members under Hafren Dyfrdwy

**CCW Chair:** Good evening, everybody and thank you all for giving up your time to join this session. My name's Rhodri Williams, I'm a member of the CCW board and my hopefully easy task this evening is to chair our discussion and make sure that we finish by 8 o'clock. As you know, tonight's session is part of what we describe as our Water Voice Programme, and the purpose is quite simple but important in our view, it's 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 of Hafren Dyfrdwy directly about the issues that matter most to you, and where improvement is needed and about what change will come about as a result of this discussion. It's not a complaints hearing, it's not a technical inquiry but it's what we would describe as a structured, customer-led conversation focused on accountability, learning and agreeing some clear, practical actions.

The topics that we're going to be talking about this evening haven't been chosen by the company or by CCW, they've been shaped by customers through ongoing surveys and discussions within the Water Voice Panel, and that's very important. This is your agenda and hopefully, we can expect this to be a respectful but challenging discussion, customers should feel able to speak openly and honestly about their experiences and expectations, and equally we expect clear and transparent responses from Hafren Dyfrdwy's senior leaders.

As you know, the session is being fully transcribed and will be published in due course, there'll be a summary report and at the end of this, we'll expect the company to publish an action plan responding to the commitments made and that transparency is something that we regard as a key part of what makes this whole process meaningful.

Nothing much to say in terms of ground rules, we'll take one person at a time and we'll keep contributions focused and concentrate on forward looking actions, what'll change, by when and how customers will know about it. Can I now introduce Hafren Dyfrdwy's senior representatives, very pleased that James Jesic, the Chief Executive of the company and of its parent company, Severn Trent, is joining us this evening and by now we do have Louise Moir, I can see that Louise Moir, the Customer Experience Lead of Hafren Dyfrdwy, is with us.

I won't ask you individually to comment at the appropriate times, I'll leave it to you to decide who's going to lead and whether you've got more to say. The one thing I would ask you please is if you could keep your responses very focused to the question that has been asked, and short. There's a five minute slot at the beginning and another one towards the end of the discussion of each question, and I know, I appreciate that's challenging and that it is maybe a temptation to talk more, to get more across but if you can keep it as short as you can, that would be very much appreciated and would help make the discussion work well.

So that's the easy bit over, I'm now going to hand over to Clare Glen from Taylor McKenzie, who is going to do the more difficult bit of actually getting us through this discussion. Thank you, Clare.

**TMcK Facilitator:** Thank you, Rhodri and thank you everyone for joining today and Louise, good to see you, thanks for joining. Before we properly begin in earnest, it's just how to explain how names in the transcripts are going to be handled. In the room this evening, we'll use first names and thanks everyone for getting your names up only and in the published transcript, we'll ensure all customer names are redacted.

So after the session, you'll have a chance to review the transcript before it's published, so if there's anything you've said that you prefer to be removed or made anonymous, you can request that and that will be completely respected in the way that we translate this information.

The purpose of the transcript really is to accurately reflect the discussion and the actions that we agree tonight, so it's not to single out any individual contributions. Each question will follow the same structure, a community member will ask the question and then Hafren Dyfrdwy will have five minutes to respond, as Rhodri said, I'll have a nice little timer in the corner just to keep us on track. And then the community members, all of you guys will have the chance to react to that response and we'll probably go back to the first person that asked the question to begin with and then we'll open it up to general discussion at that point. What we'll do is we'll work together really to define the actions that must form part of the company's action plan.

We will create a live document as we chat away, we'll have a team working in another room just to fill in some of the actions that we're discussing as a live document and that will be captured, and the outcomes from both what Hafren Dyfrdwy representatives are telling us and also how we're feeding back in terms of developing that and I will share that on screen once we've got through that section on that question. Hafren Dyfrdwy will have some time to respond to any of those specific actions; maybe some feel out of scope, some need just a bit of a tweak and we'll have a chance for them to do that.

The webinar's been made available for live viewing to members of the CCW team, Defra, Ofwat, Hafren Dyfrdwy Water and their Independent Challenge Group Chair, and community members on the CCW Voice Panel but you won't see any of them tonight, they'll just be in the background.

So it would be great, to get us started, to go around the room, if you would just introduce yourself, tell me your first name and where you're based. Community Member 1, you're on the top left of my screen, if you wouldn't mind starting us off and then we'll go round.

**Community Member 1:** My name's Community Member 1, I'm based in Wrexham, North Wales and I look forward to the opportunity to ask a question.

**Community Member 2:** I'm Community Member 2, I'm based in Tregynon, Mid Wales and I appreciate you taking the time to listen to questions.

**Community Member 3:** I'm Community Member 3 and I'm based in Gwersyllt, just outside of Wrexham.

**Community Member 4:** I'm Community Member 4, I'm from Ruabon, just a few miles south of Wrexham.

**Community Member 5:** I'm Community Member 5 and I'm from Wrexham.

**Community Member 6:** I'm Community Member 6, I'm from Rossett in Wrexham.

**Community Member 7:** I'm Community Member 7 and I'm also from Rossett in Wrexham.

**Community Member 8:** I'm from Wrexham and it's about 10 minutes from the centre.

**Community Member 9:** I'm Community Member 9 and I also am from Wrexham.

**Community Member 10:** I'm Community Member 10, I'm Broughton, which is not too far away from Wrexham, just down the road.

**Community Member 11:** I'm Community Member 11, I live in Bangor-on-Dee which is on the border with Shropshire.

**TMcK Facilitator:** Thank you for that, I'm going to hand back to Rhodri who's going to introduce the next part of the session.

**CCW Chair:** Thanks for that, Clare. Let's get straight on, shall we?

**TMcK Facilitator:** I'm going to share my screen and hopefully everyone can see that.

**CCW Chair:** Over to you, Community Member 9.

**Community Member 9:** As customers, we are feeling the impact of rising bills alongside wider cost of living pressures, but the bigger frustration is the lack of a clear and visible explanation of why costs are increasing, what has changed and what we're getting in return. Even when information exists, it can be difficult to find or not presented simply, leaving customers unsure whether increases are fair or what local improvement it is actually funding.

How will you clearly demonstrate that rising bills are fair and justified and ensure customers can easily see what they are paying for, and what local improvements they are funding?

**CCW Chair:** Thank you, Community Member 9. James, Louise, over to you.

**James Jesic:** Thank you very much indeed, Rhodri and thank you, Community Member 9. I think it's a great question, the bills have risen. Just for context, the combined average bill now for a Hafren customer, "combined" means water and wastewater services, which is obviously in the Powys area, in Wrexham it's just water, let's not forget that, Welsh Water provide the wastewater services which we bill for on their behalf. But on the whole, the water only, with the wastewater charge in Wrexham is about £1.89 per day, that's the average bill rate.

As a Hafren customer, you do enjoy the lowest bills in Wales, notwithstanding we have seen quite an increase and there's a couple of reasons for that increase; primarily it is the need for first of all, the investment that we have to do. I noted many people on the call were from Wrexham and it won't be lost on any of you that over recent years, there's been quite a number of supply interruptions, water supply interruptions, to the Wrexham area and the reason for that is there's basically a big ring main that goes round the whole of Wrexham, and that ring main requires a lot of investment to ensure that it doesn't break as easily as it currently does.

So part of the investment that we're doing this AMP is to actually fix quite a wide proportion of that Wrexham ring main, to ensure that we don't have so many supply interruptions, we've got much more resilience going into Wrexham of course, which supports not only existing houses but also any additional housebuilding as well. So that is just one example.

I think one of the things we've been wrestling with is how do we get this information out to customers? I'll let Lou, in a second, talk about some of the things that we're doing to try and get this information more readily available. We've of course got our website, I don't think our website is necessarily the most user-friendly in some instances, and there's some work we need to do on there, to your point, Community Member 9, about translating the work we're doing into something that is more accessible. I did say AMP periods, didn't I? When I say AMP period, I mean five years, so over this next five-year period, we're going to fix the Wrexham ring main, for instance.

I'll let Lou come in now and just share some of the ways we're trying to access and provide more information to customers, which clearly isn't working and something we can work on but Lou, over to you.

**Lou Moir:** Hi, everybody. So like James has touched on, I look after the contact centre, which as a lot of you will know, is in Rostyllen so quite local to a lot of you on the call and we do get a lot of feedback from customers, when we talk about the levels of investment, rightly, customers want to know what that means to them.

So we have started sharing more detailed information on the website so that you can actually go onto the website and see what's happening in my area, so in terms of like value for money, what can I see? But we know there's a lot more we can do so we're really looking forward to getting your feedback on this.

We're also out and about regularly in our community vehicle so one of the approaches that we're going to be taking over the next few years with all of these levels of investment, is actually coming out and about and talking to the communities that we serve. For example, with the Wrexham ring main, just as one of the schemes that we're doing, we'll be looking at other ways that we can communicate these updates with customers, so we know some customers don't really like going onto the website and having to find the information because that can take time, so actually how do we use the local media a lot better to share some of that messaging?

How can we set up events in community spaces and do drop-ins so that people can come and ask us questions, so that they can actually talk to the people who are going to be doing the work as well, so I think that's really important, especially if we're going to be in your communities for quite a while. There's going to be different customers at different stages, we're going to have to keep evolving how we communicate with our customers and we really need to listen to what our customers are telling us, so that we know what works well, what do we need to do differently?

But our customers do tell us that they do like us being a lot more visible so we know those more traditional methods, rather than just putting it on the website and expecting customers to go and work hard to find that information, let's try some different things. Like Wrexham.com is a really good source we know our customers use, we've got the Wrexham Leader, we've got Community Member 2, you're not a Wrexham customer but we'd be taking a similar approach for our customers here in Powys, so when we have schemes in that area, actually looking at local media, what's relevant to those customers and communities, so that we can adapt our style of communication accordingly. Because we're so small, we're quite able to do that, all of our employees are pretty much customers in those communities as well, so that feedback is really important to us.

**James Jesic:** Very quickly, I know we're out of time, Rhodri but I'll just add, one of the things we're really conscious of in the Wrexham area in particular, because we are doing all this work on the ring main, it is going to cause quite a lot of, we'll we're going to need to shut parts of Wrexham to access this particular pipework, so that could cause quite a lot of traffic problems. We're very keen to work with customers and local communities about how do we best manage that to facilitate the work we've got to do and not be as disruptive as we otherwise would be, so we're very keen to hear from people from that perspective too.

**CCW Chair:** Thanks very much, both and much appreciated that you've kept it brief and no problem coming back, James, we have a little bit kept back so great, thank you very much. We're now going to turn back to our panel and Clare is going to lead the discussion for us.

**TMck Facilitator:** Thanks, Rhodri, and thanks for your response. For this section, we're just focusing on your reactions to what you've heard, not necessarily focusing on new

questions. I'd like you to tell us what you feel was clear and concrete, if there's anything vague or anything missing in that response that you would want to pick up on and if there's any specific actions or commitments that you want to be strengthened or highlighted.

Now we've heard lots there in terms of what's going to be happening, which is really exciting, but I'm interested to hear particularly in the area of value for money, I think there will be a question on communication strategy is the next one, so I want to find out whether you feel happy with the response that you've been given there and if there's anything else you want to raise within this area of value for money, rising bills and transparency. I might just go back to Community Member 9, who asked the question in the first instance, are you happy with that response? Is there anything else you would like to know about or pick up on from what we've heard so far?

**Community Member 9:** I think I'm partially satisfied with it. We've spoken a lot about information being there, readily available on your website and you both openly admit that the website isn't the best or it's not the most user friendly, you're aware of that, what steps are being taken to either [1] improve that or look at different channels of getting information out to customers? We said about being more visible and going out into the communities, etc, you don't always capture everybody that way do you? So yes, just what work is being done around the website or what other ideas do you have to make that information more available to customers?

Also, I was quite surprised when you spoke a little bit about the communication channels that you're using in terms of Wrexham.com and the Wrexham Leader, the paper, which I think is kind of like a bit of an outdated way of doing things, the paper, but I'm really surprised that you haven't mentioned social media at all because that's probably the biggest and most powerful communication method around at the moment and that probably captures the most people, so is that something that you've thought of or looked into, communicating with customers that way?

**TMcK Facilitator:** Thanks, Community Member 9. I think I'd like to keep this discussion quite focused because we're going to have a whole discussion next on communication. I know it's intrinsically linked in how we talk about value for money and how that's communicated with customers, but is there anything specifically in terms of the commitments you want, in terms of giving customers clear and simple bill explanations and the explanations around rising costs? Were you happy with the response around that, that we discussed in the briefing session?

**Community Member 5:** I think it would be important, I wasn't quite clear on how the bill is allocated so we understand there's increasing costs for yourself at Hafren Dyfrdwy, but obviously with the cost of living, it's really important for us to understand where our money and the increased bill cost is going. So, is there money allocated to the environment? To helping the vulnerable? Why have the costs increased? We'd just like a little bit more detail and perhaps in terms of a visual graph, just to give us a bit of understanding why our bills have increased, please.

**TMcK Facilitator:** Anyone else like to jump in on that?

**Community Member 2:** I suppose that links to the point that we discussed in our previous sessions, almost like if an infographic could be produced so we can see where every pound is allocated, like the councils do, Powys Council do a really good one for where does your council tax pound, how is it spent? It would be great if Hafren Dyfrdwy could do something like that, it could be allocated to maintenance and cleaning and everything.

**James Jesic:** If I may, Clare, very quickly, we've actually got an infographic that does that. It's designed to look like a glass of water and what we do is we proportion each-

proportion each of that glass of water equates to what your daily cost would be on average and then show where that sits. So it's available on our website, we have included it previously in bills, but I think there's an action there to make sure that we are making that more readily available. I think that's a fair challenge.

**TMcK Facilitator:** Community Member 1, you want to come in there?

**Community Member 1:** I think the question was how it clearly would demonstrate that a rising bill is effective and justified rather than how existing bills or future bills are going to be proportioned across the costs that the company has to meet. So what I'd like to see personally is for every additional £10, £100, whatever, that's raised by the company or paid by a consumer, what improvements will we see rather than "We have X amount of money and this is the proportion of it," I'd like to see something that's, how can we tell the tangible improvements rather than, as will be touched on in the next question, the methods of communication.

**TMcK Facilitator:** Does anyone want to build on what Community Member 1 said? Or any other points or commitments that you'd like to see around that, the rising bills point?

**Community Member 2:** I'd agree with what Community Member 1 said, he's raised it nicely.

**TMcK Facilitator:** What sort of things would you like communicated on that? Is there anything particular? We talked about a bill breakdown in our previous session. Obviously James has explained there's a simple infographic around where that is, is there anything else you'd want to see Hafren highlight or be communicated in a particular way?

**Community Member 1:** I'd like to see something like the, I know we have to work on averages, I get that but say for example, "The average household bill in whatever quarter or annual it was, has increased by ..." and don't give a percentage, give a monetary value and then say that as a consequence of that, taking into account any inflation that has to be attributed for, we've raised an additional X amount of pounds and with that, we have invested it in A, B and C and therefore you can see that your local, I don't know, overspill has decreased by whatever, your rates of burst pipes has gone down, the speed in which repairs has gone up so that we can actually see, "We spent an extra £100 per average household and as a consequence, the improvements are clearly demonstrated." I don't know the best form in which to display that but that's the sort of information that I would like. I'll leave that up to the likes of James to work out the nuances.

**TMcK Facilitator:** Community Member 9, you've got your hand up there, please jump in.

**Community Member 9:** Just a follow-on from what Community Member 1 said there and forgive me if I'm repeating what he said but in terms of- it would be good to see what proportion of the annual budget is spent on investment as opposed to repair, we talk about burst pipes and repair work that is quite a regular thing and constantly needs doing, obviously a proportion of money is spent on that, but what proportion of the annual budget is spent on investment, as opposed to repair?

**Community Member 5:** And also what profits were made and where do them profits go?

**James Jesic:** I can answer that very quickly, Hafren Dyfrdwy have not made a profit. Hafren have been a loss-making company for a good few years now, we obviously need to make sure it at least breaks even, does make a profit but it has not made a profit.

**TMcK Facilitator:** Any other points we want to raise on this?

**Community Member 4:** Is there a plan for making it break even in the future?

**James Jesic:** There has to be a plan, yes there is, it's obviously not sustainable for a company not to make money so we actually think we will be broadly break even for the last financial year just gone and then we will start making a slight profit.

What I will say while I've got the floor, I think your points around clarity on where the money's going from an investment perspective and what those bill rises mean is absolutely spot on, we have not done a good enough job on articulating that. I think sometimes we think we have but it's clear there's a lot more to do be done so absolutely fair. Lou and I will take on board that feedback. I think what I heard was the infographic is still good, it's good to see that just from a bill perspective but definitely the increase, how it's gone up, it would be helpful to understand where that's going. It's a 34% increase which is quite a number, to Community Member 1's point earlier, but as I say, a lot of that is driven by a couple of things: inflation, it's driven by our need to invest, particularly the ring main in Wrexham, in Powys, there's a lot of environmental stuff that we're doing and just making sure that we're more resilient to growth and to climate change. We should do a better job of laying that out so I take all that on board.

**TMcK Facilitator:** Thank you, James. Is there any other points before we move on that you desperately want to capture here on this one?

**Community Member 11:** Just a couple of things, one in particular, the issue with improving the ring main infrastructure in Wrexham, that was obviously going to be a massive investment, that's the first I've heard about that. The other thing which has recently been an issue is the improvements which are needed to the Llandegla Reservoir, that needs quite a bit of investment, so just using those two examples, I mean if the average person in Wrexham knew about this quite substantial capital investment, it would go some way to sort of explaining the increases in the bills. We'll be coming onto communication in the next part but two examples there where you're obviously going to be throwing quite a lot of money at those two things, I don't suppose the average bill payer in Wrexham would know anything about it.

**TMcK Facilitator:** We're going to move on now to the next topic unless there's anything else on this point, and I think that's an important point to raise Community Member 11 because we did talk about local investment and what local improvements you'll see on your back doorstep, in terms of where that money's going. Is there anything else anyone would like to add? Maybe someone that's not had a chance to jump in? No, have we covered it all? Great.

What I would like to do now is share my screen just to see what's been captured by the team. We should be familiar with this template but I'll just highlight, we've got a few columns here, a bit about what Hafren have told us that they have done to date, a bit about what's going on in the future and then what we've captured here in terms of our action points.

I'll read through each of these and I want you to think about is that a clear action point? Is it specific enough for us? And would it be meaningful from our perspective, from a community member perspective? And if anything feels too vague or lacks that timeframe or it doesn't go far enough in your opinion, then this is the time to tighten up. And an action is only agreed when it's clear and specific and measurable where possible, and meaningful to you all, so if it doesn't meet that standard, we'll refine it together.

The first one was around improving communications around projects, letting local residents know about substantial projects, and we've highlighted a couple of examples locally.

The second one is around clear and concise customer friendly formats for information on bill allocations and what is driving bill increases. The penny on the pound spending, using the visual aids such as a pie chart, using council tax bill as an example was highlighted, and clarification around where the profits are.

Number 3 was around making improvements and investment efforts tangible for customers, so directly relating costs to specific improvements on a local scale, so that was the point around for every £1 spent, “we delivered X, Y and Z.”

Number 4, show what percentage of the annual budget is spent on investment as opposed to repair, so the investment repair point that was made by Community Member 1.

**James Jesic:** Clare, I actually think [4] will be picked up in the other three, so I wouldn't necessarily have that as a separate line item, I think it will be covered.

**TMcK Facilitator:** How does everybody feel with that list that we've generated? Is there anything that's not clear or that we would like to add to or improve? Or something you've not felt that we've talked about and not captured?

**Community Member 10:** I think it's very clear. I like all the actions that have come out from it, especially Point 2 is very clear in terms of exactly what they're going to look to do in terms of the visual aids, appreciate James was saying they do already exist but highlighting those more, so I'm quite happy with those actions.

**Community Member 6:** I'm also happy, I think my comments would probably be more so on the communication side because Number 2 is brilliant, the customer friendly formats are really needed and my only comments would be on how they're going to be communicated to the broad spectrum of customers that they have. But otherwise, really happy with those three.

**TMcK Facilitator:** Do we have any preferences on how that's visualised? James talked about the glass, is there any kind of format or visual or anything that works well maybe that you've seen outwith this world, that you would like to ...?

**Community Member 10:** I quite like the glass idea that James was saying already exists; it relates to the company itself, it's probably a lot more appealing to me than a standard pie chart, if I'm honest.

**Community Member 6:** The more simple, the better, I think, I don't think we need to over-complicate it, especially considering there'll be like I said, a wide variety of customers that will be viewing it, so the more simple, the better really and yes, I like the idea as well of the glass, I think it's a nice idea. I didn't realise you already had that so it speaks to the communication aspect, I suppose.

**Community Member 2:** This is the thing, it's there, it's just not being communicated in the way that it needs to, so it's just building on that and making it more accessible. They don't need to rewrite it, it's just building.

**TMcK Facilitator:** And building the content within that, okay. Is there anything in terms of timescales we would like to put in there as a commitment from Hafren? When do you want to see this happening?

**Community Member 5:** Expect it to be realistic, giving them time to be able to realistically achieve it but within a reasonable time; it should definitely be given a date so that it's measurable.

**Community Member 6:** A year is pretty reasonable, in the next year.

**Community Member 5:** I feel like I was going to be more- say within the next quarter or two.

**James Jesic:** I think a quarter is absolutely fair, I think we can't get our act together in the next three months on this sort of stuff, then you would be right to be disgruntled, so within the next three months, we will have this much clearer for you. What we would welcome though is some feedback as and when you guys get stuff, if you want to find my email or Lou's email and drop us a note to say whether it's working or not, honestly that would be brilliant. Or better still, even look for Dilys, our little van that goes round sometimes in Wrexham, feel free to pop in and have a chat with the team in there, that would be brilliant.

**Community Member 5:** And I think that's important because there may be a reason why that quarter isn't achievable but it's keeping us communicated as to why that wasn't achievable, so keeping us updated is very important as well.

**James Jesic:** I agree completely.

**TMcK Facilitator:** I'm going to round up on that topic, thanks James, and I'll hand back to Rhodri.

**CCW Chair:** Thank you all, I think that's been a very fruitful discussion and thanks for the contributions as we went along, James, that's been very useful, I was going to come back to you and ask if you wanted to sum up at the end, but unless you tell me differently, I don't think there's a need, I think we're ...

**James Jesic:** If everyone's happy, as we go through, if there's certain things we can address there and then, we'll carry on doing that if everyone's comfortable with that.

**CCW Chair:** Absolutely happy with that, so I think we can move onto the second question which comes from Community Member 1.

**TMcK Facilitator:** I'm just going to share the screen, there we go.

**Community Member 1:** Thank you, this question builds on some of the points that were mentioned whilst answering Community Member 9's question. At the moment, customers are too often left saying, "I didn't know about that." we should not have to guess whether important information is on Facebook, hidden on the website, buried in a bill or somewhere else entirely. The issue is not just whether communication exists but whether it's simple, easy to find and actually reaches the people in the way that works for them.

What will you change in how you communicate so that customers consistently receive important information in ways that work for them, through the channels they use, rather than missing it because it's not reaching them in the first place?

**CCW Chair:** Back to you, James and Louise.

**James Jesic:** I will start and I will let Lou come in and give a bit more colour. One of the things it's worth bearing in mind is obviously our customer base ranges from people that are moving into their first house on their own, so 18-year-olds in some extreme circumstances to individuals who maybe in their 90s. So we have to try and make sure we can communicate in all ways to all people, it's a really tricky challenge that we have.

To be honest, we've still got our hatch up at Wrexham where some people still come into pay their bills with cash through the hatch to our team there, so the team always get a nice chat to some of our customers in that instance.

But I think Community Member 1's point's a really valid one, getting the balance right between being all things to all people and hitting the same, or making sure that everyone gets the same message is a really tricky thing to do. We do do some social media, we've got our own X account, last time I checked, there was about 900 followers, that was all. We do use Facebook, we do use local media and stuff but it's clear that it doesn't always work well. I'll hand over to Lou now and she can bring to life some of the things we do do, where it works and also I guess from you guys, what you'd like to see in how we get from yourselves and other customers, what the communication preferences might be.

**Lou Moir:** Like James mentioned, we do really struggle with social media and I think Community Member 9 mentioned earlier, he was surprised when we talked about using other media outlets. What we find is we don't get that much engagement from our own following, so we do really need to think about ways that we can boost that, so any feedback you guys have got would be great.

And also understanding how our customers want to be communicated with. We do have a lot of customers who prefer more traditional communications like in-person, at community drop-ins, seeing posters in the post office and that can signpost them to support. And then we have other customers who would probably like getting a text message, feeding them a little bit of information so that they know quickly where they can go.

Over the last couple of years, we have been trying different types of communication but we will be moving to a new billing system this year, which will enable us to better capture what our customers' preferences are, so that will give us so much more ability to actually feed the customers where we know they want email, we'll be able to communicate with them in email, if they prefer SMS, communicate that way but again, it is a tricky one because we've got such a vast demographic of customers, it's not always one size fits all. So we do need to be really versatile – and again, it depends on the messaging.

We did hear from customers, like all of us, I want to know why my bills go up, I want to know where money's being spent so a couple of years ago, we put a newsletter out to all of our customers, some customers liked that, some didn't read it, so this year we changed our approach based on feedback and we put something in with the bill, so that customers saw that before they saw the bill. I appreciate some of you might not have had your bill yet but that will be coming with an explanation around why the charges have gone up and hopefully will be signposting you to the investment pages for a bit more info.

I think we're just constantly trying to evolve our thinking so that we can be more versatile but this is really where we need these sort of panels where we can get that feedback from our customers, and again like I said earlier, we've got all of our colleagues are out in the communities that we serve across both Powys and Wrexham, obviously we're based in Wrexham but we've got a large number of our colleagues who are living and working Powys as well, and Dilys is across all over our patch every day. We're going into schools every day talking to children, trying to ...

**James Jesic:** It might be worth explaining who Dilys is, Lou.

**Lou Moir:** The community vehicle, sorry! I just assume everyone knows her, she's part of the Hafren Dyfrdwy family. So again, can we use the schools to share some messaging if appropriate? It is just us being able to think about how do customers want to receive the information so that we can then make sure that we're pitching it at the right level because some customers want a lot of information, they want to know everything, other customers just want a slight sort of high-level explanation. But again, like I said, when we can capture that, we'll be able to better target our customers but any insight. You're all in our communities so any insight that we can get from yourselves will be really helpful to help

us shape that moving forward because like James said, we have got a lot of work going on over the next few years, a lot of key messages that we really want to share so we do want to make sure we get it right, it's really important that customers know exactly what we're doing. So yes, that would be super helpful to get that feedback.

**CCW Chair:** Great, thank you both yet again and thank you especially for keeping it as concise as you have, that's no mean feat. Let's carry on and back to you, the panel and I leave it to Clare to lead the discussion again.

**TMcK Facilitator:** Thanks, Rhodri. So as before, we'll just have a chance now to focus on your reactions to what you've heard, we won't invite any new questions at this point. Just to tell us how you feel about that response, what was clear, what was concrete, if there's anything vague or that you didn't understand, anything that was missing in the response that you would like to see captured or whether there was any specific actions from what you've heard, that you would like to capture. I would very kindly ask James and Lou to just give us the 10 minutes and then we'll invite you back into the discussion at that point. Shall we go back to Community Member 1? It was your question, would you like to jump in first and then Community Member 3, I can see your hand's up.

**Community Member 1:** I understand wholeheartedly that it's really difficult to get a message out in so many different formats because you've got such a diverse demographic. I wouldn't really want to have the problem about being able to reach everybody who's there. But as potentially the demographic is going to change as the people who are more savvy with digital technology possibly become the majority, is there any thought about putting bills online, for example, so you hit it online, you get a headline about "This is what your bill is" and then being able to click in deeper, so each time you click in, you get into a slightly deeper understanding and more comprehensive explanation about how the money's being spent, and what's being raised and so on and so forth. So you can take it as far as you want, you can either have the headline, "It's cost me X amount of quid" or you can see where it's going to.

**TMcK Facilitator:** Is that something you'd make use of, Community Member 1?

**Community Member 1:** Yeah, I'm of an age where I'm not ... paper's great but also you can only get, when you've got paper, you've got a finite amount of information in front of you whereas if you've got an electronic, you can possibly delve a little bit deeper for those who want to access it.

**TMcK Facilitator:** Got lots of hands up on this one.

**Community Member 3:** Firstly, I know how hard it is to communicate all the information, in so many different ways to so many different people but a lot of it that's been explained seems to me very old school, so there's a lot of information being put out there, something being put in with your bills. If I'm completely honest, my focus is on the bill and then whatever's in the [inaudible] in the envelope, the intention's there but it's been put in the wrong place. So if I'm comparing Hafren Dyfrdwy to somewhere like Welsh Water, I see Welsh Water on the television, I know they have a larger demographic of Wales, but they're on the television, I see them on Facebook, on TikTok. Granted you said X, in all honesty, X is quite outdated as well, you need to be a certain person to be on X, Twitter. The biggest social media is a 10 or 15 second video on TikTok or a Reel on Instagram, or just a catchy thing on Facebook.

It's a lot of information to put out there but I don't think that it's being put to the right to use, to the right people. Even my grandmother is 74 and she's on Facebook. Granted, she's not amazing but she sees herself on Facebook so even the older generation are getting

more tech savvy. We need to figure that out a bit better to go “what’s trending right now?” really.

**Community Member 5:** I agree with that comment. There seems to very traditional ways of communicating with customers, but have you thought like lots of other companies use app based, which is a more personalised experience to them and all their information is there that’s personalised to them and you’ll be able to display all that information in an app? Has that been considered?

**TMcK Facilitator:** Is that something you would like to see as a commitment?

**Community Member 5:** Yeah, if I had an app, that would be so much better and it would be more personalised to me and just be there at the click of a button.

**TMcK Facilitator:** What would you want to see on that? What commitment would you like to see made on that?

**Community Member 5:** That personalised bill, being open and transparent, which is very important to me, about where the billing’s gone, but you’d be able to ask questions, if you had any questions or needed to talk to somebody, you’d have help on there. So a bit of everything like you would get on an app these days.

**TMcK Facilitator:** Does anybody else agree on the app point?

**Community Member 6:** Yeah, definitely. I was going to bring up another kind of provider, it’s not water, but Octopus Energy, another company that I have a lot of positive things to say about, they charge me a lot but a lot of positive things to say. Social media wise, they’ve got a really great, a really big following, again I know it’s different company size, however what they do on social media I feel like hits a lot of the demographic so it might be a good one to look at and explore.

They’ve also got it in an extremely user-friendly great app that I use and it has a section for your usage, your bill, your payments, there’s a section to add in a meter reading and things like that. There’s also a section called Octoplus, which is like kind of a section where it talks about rewards, you can spin a wheel to get points for your account, again I know these are certain things that might not be replicated for you but there could also be a section on there for like your local area projects, all of these things could be popped on there. I know creating an app isn’t a simple thing, however I do think it solves a lot of the problems that maybe lots of people are having.

That’s on the app and I was going to mention as well, James, you mentioned the newsletter, Louise, that you sent out recently, I think it was a new thing, what you said about the new billing system, I think that’s brilliant and it was a positive thing that I heard that you were changing the billing system so you’re able to personalise how you receive your bill. I get mine electronically, if you sent me a letter, I wouldn’t want it, it’s a waste of paper in my opinion, whereas I know my grandad would not even be able to access his bill if it was online.

When I got my bill from you, I think it was a week or so ago, I read the newsletter that was attached, I think you had to click on it, it came into my browser and it was really great, there was a note from you James on there, then a section about looking back and talking about the work that you’ve done, kind of what help you’ve provided, etc, and I found that really helpful. So, I think in terms of the accessibility, about how people can see that, like is it just going out electronically? Would my grandad have got one of those? That’s just one thing to think about in terms of accessibility and I suppose that problem may be solved when you fix the, you’ve got your new system of billing going out but I definitely think what

Community Member 5 said about the app seems to be a really good focal point for us to add as an action, maybe.

**TMcK Facilitator:** Thanks so much, and loads of great examples of what can be on there and I've seen lots of nodding and agreement as well. Community Member 9, you had your hand up?

**Community Member 9:** I've written quite a few things down as James and Lou were speaking, but most of it has been covered already so I won't speak for too long. I'd written about an app as well, as was just touched upon there, your energy companies you can go on and all of your information is there. You can download the app, have a choice of switching off paper bills so you're not excluding one so if you've got the app, switch off your paper bills, all your info's in there, your other customers who still want paper bills can still have that postal communication.

We mentioned social media, I am on X and it was 775 followers that you've got, well it's now 776 you'll be pleased to know, but you haven't posted since January last year, so if we're struggling with social media, that's probably something that the company could probably invest in is a social media team or a social media person to try and find that engagement online as well.

Just something else that popped into my head, whether it would be within an app or sort of just on your website, do you have any sort of live chat? A lot of companies now you can have a live chat, can't you? Rather than having to phone up, that might reduce traffic in your call centres as well if you have people based on a live chat because sometimes you might want to ask a really quick question, you might not be able to find the info online, just need to ring them online and ask and you don't want to be sat in a queue.

**Community Member 1:** Sorry to butt in but do you not find that live chats are quite often just done by bots? You just get frustrated?

**Community Member 9:** There are certain companies that use bots but ...

**Community Member 5:** What I always do with live chat, I say "speak to a live agent" always.

**Community Member 9:** You can bypass it, yeah.

**James Jesic:** We don't have bots, any live chat we do is actually live chat with a person.

**Community Member 8:** That's good.

**Community Member 9:** Is that something that you offer already, James?

**James Jesic:** Yes, it is. If I may and I'll let ...

**TMcK Facilitator:** Can I just give the team a couple more questions and we'll come back, James. I'm being strict on this.

**Community Member 5:** Another point for me is, is it necessary for two languages? Obviously, we're in Wales and I appreciate that but some people, it just seems very wasteful for me if I'm an English speaking, I may live in Wales but the first thing I do if I receive a bill and it's in Welsh, unfortunately I'm not fully in reading the Welsh or understanding the Welsh, it just feels wasteful. So obviously, I appreciate you may want to opt-in which language you receive, I just think it's absolutely unnecessary to have the two languages, I think it's very wasteful.

**TMcK Facilitator:** I'll get James to jump in on that in your response, James but I've got Community Member 11 who's patiently had his hand up.

**Community Member 11:** Just a quickie in terms of community communication, there are 39 community councils in the Wrexham area and they are very good at getting out information to the communities, and in terms of social media and perhaps the non-engagement with the Facebook page of Hafren Dyfrdwy in particular, but a lot of the communities in Wrexham have their own community Facebook pages with loads of information goes out on those. So there are possibly two other areas that you could consider in getting messages out, especially if it's community specific. It's just a suggestion.

**TMcK Facilitator:** That's a clear action there, Community Member 11, thank you. Community Member 8?

**Community Member 8:** Adding to what Community Member 11 said, in the local councils, most of them in Wrexham have a community agent. I used to be one, they help people in the community with all sorts of different things and they could help people with, you know, if you got in touch with the agent say for, they could pass on information on their website or to their clients, customers also, we get straight to them, and then if they're struggling with bills and things like that, you could liaise with them specifically. They're all on the website, if you look, all the community agents.

**TMcK Facilitator:** What did you think about the community vehicle idea, Lou was talking about?

**Community Member 8:** Was it Dilys? I've never heard of it before. I didn't even know you had one. So yeah, it's a good idea really, if people know about it and what does it do? Does it go to different areas at different days? Is it like a drop-in but in a vehicle?

**Lou Moir:** Yes, we post it on our social media where she's going to be every week and then I've got a team of community connectors, so people drop-in, talk about their bill or they might want to talk about water efficiency, so we travel all around Powys and Wrexham, taking her to events, sometimes- we'll be supporting at Wrexham 10k on Sunday, Dilys will be there with some of us, so yes, we get all over with her really but we post where she is on the website and on social media.

**Community Member 8:** When you say social media, is that Facebook?

**Lou Moir:** Yes, on Facebook and Instagram as well.

**Community Member 8:** The community connectors are the same as community agents, just a different name.

**TMcK Facilitator:** I want to come to Community Member 9 and Community Member 10, just to round up. Community Member 10, you've been waiting patiently.

**Community Member 10:** It's more on Community Member 9's point. I've used the WhatsApp, I couldn't rate it high enough, I've used it loads of times in the past, it's one of the main ways I communicate with yourselves. Really clear, really easy to use. I also want to come back to the app point as well, I think it's a great idea but I think for me to use it, I'd want somewhere where we could track my daily or weekly usage, but obviously the only way you're going to do that is replace a lot of meters with smart meters and I'm not sure what your coverage is like with smart meters at the moment.

**TMcK Facilitator:** Is there any specific action there you'd want to capture?

**Community Member 10:** I think it's more of a future prospect, are we going to look to go towards smart meters in the future? Not only to track usage but to track leakage as well, and then can we build that into an app where we can include a lot of information that people have already raised.

**Community Member 8:** There is quite a lot of information on your website though, I pay online and it tells me all what I've paid and how much I'm using daily actually, which is good, so yeah, it just needs improving a bit more, what we're discussing. But it is quite informative now, I do use it because I pay that way through the website.

**TMcK Facilitator:** Is there anything else on there that you'd want to see?

**Community Member 8:** I don't know really because it says about opting out of paper bills, it's got like a bit of a breakdown on there of different things, says My Bill, Total Spend, Water Usage – 43 metres squared which I don't understand! Things like that, maybe it does need to be simplified, it's got Account Information, when your bill's created, balance, meter readings, so there's quite ... and then if there's a problem, you can check on there about water, where it is, there is a lot of information on there to be fair.

**TMcK Facilitator:** There's potentially an action point there, in simplifying that detailed information.

**Community Member 8:** Breaking it down easier for people to understand because I don't know what 43 metre, it's not squared, it's got a "3".

**James Jesic:** It's cubed, 43 metres cubed. It equates to 43,000 litres of water.

**Community Member 8:** And what's my water usage?

**James Jesic:** That's how much water you've used, yes.

**Community Member 1:** Sorry to interrupt, how can you visualise that?

**Community Member 8:** 174 it says, it's a lot, isn't it? Gosh.

**TMcK Facilitator:** Community Member 1, jump in there will you?

**Community Member 1:** Yes, sorry to interrupt, it's a huge figure so 43,000 litres I think was mentioned, well I can't picture that personally and I don't go to Olympic swimming pools, we won't go standard size, but there's statistics and when a statistic gets so big, it becomes impersonal so we really need to be able to visualise it or equate it to something that's more relatable than just, "Oh, that's a big figure."

**Community Member 8:** Sorry, it's 435 pints a day! So yeah, it's a lot really, but yeah, so it is simplified underneath a bit into pints.

**TMcK Facilitator:** I'd like to take one more question from Community Member 9 and then we'll move onto the next question.

**Community Member 9:** What I will say very quickly if I can is that I do love that you've got the hatch and people can still go in and pay their bill in cash. I really like that and I think you should definitely make sure that you keep that.

**Community Member 8:** And me, the personal touch, people like that. It's gone, more or less disappeared and like they say, people don't use cash and I'm guilty of that because I do everything online, but I do like that aspect of that, the old fashioned way, I agree.

**James Jesic:** To be quite frank, some of the individuals that come along, it's the only conversation they have with somebody that whole day and it's really important, we recognise that importance in the local community, Lou and the team do a brilliant job.

**Lou Moir:** The hatch isn't going anywhere, there'd be uproar so don't worry, we'll protect the hatch!

**TMcK Facilitator:** I'm going to go back to our screen where we talked about what our ideal response or ideal commitments would be. If you can see the list there, I'll read through each one in turn, just again what we did last time was to think, is that clear enough? Is there anything specific we want to add? Are there any timeframes we'd like to talk about for each of those? And would that feel meaningful for a community member or customer from your perspective? If anything feels too vague or doesn't go far enough, this is the moment to tighten it up.

The first one is transitioning billing and more services online, particularly as a long-term strategy, with changing demographics towards improved digital ability, so the ability to choose the level of detail included and the language on there.

Using plain English, jargon-free language, make information tangible for everyday customers.

Use a Hafren Dyfrdwy app, we talked about Octopus Energy, social media platforms as a model to build upon, and the specific allure of app would be tracking personal water usage on a daily or weekly timescale but likely requires upgrading of the metering system as it stands; we've referenced the smart meter transition there.

Number 4 is about ensuring that offline or vulnerable customers also continue to be catered for with preferred communication styles, so opt-in for postal communication or opt-out of digital, so having that choice.

Number 5 was around harnessing more popular and modern social medias for communication, TikTok, Reels to reach the younger generations and invest in a social media team or specialist to develop that.

Number 6, exploring collaborations with community pages and community agents, such as Facebook.

I just want to hand back to see whether we feel that that's captured everything we've talked about, if we've missed anything?

**Community Member 11:** On the vulnerable customers, I think you've got to take into account the visually impaired and the hearing impaired, in terms of communication. Now you may already do that, I don't know, but I work with people with disabilities and it's quite important because they can feel quite isolated.

**TMcK Facilitator:** That's a really good point, thank you.

**Community Member 5:** If someone needs Power of Attorney, that's becoming quite an issue, perhaps if someone's got dementia, I do see on some companies that it's not easily accessible to do and that causes distress to families, so making sure that if someone is incapable of making them decisions, that it's not a really difficult process to do that because that's becoming more of an issue.

**Community Member 2:** I've just got a few points. Point Number 5: harnessing more popular social medias for communication, TikTok, Reels, reaching younger generations – I think we can take out “younger generations”, my partner is 40 and he uses TikTok and I'm not sure

he's classed as the younger generation anymore, so I think we could take that. And then also, I don't necessarily think it needs to be opt-in for postal communications, opt-out for digital. I think that people should be able to sign up to both if they want to. A lot of companies now have a "select your marketing preferences" or the banks, you can select how you want your bill and you can have digital, paper or both and I think I'd like the option for both, I don't want to just have it online or just be limited to post, so that's what I'd change on those.

**TMcK Facilitator:** We mentioned TikTok there, do we want to specify any other channels within social media, you have Instagram on the chat there, is there anything else?

**Community Member 2:** In the chat, I've said the big three: Facebook, Instagram and TikTok. I don't see the point in Twitter and LinkedIn but that's just me, I'm not a user of those, but I think the big three definitely should be used and I would hope you have a social media team, I'd be so surprised if a company that big doesn't, like you say, they should be regularly posting. I can see why you might not get post interactions because some of the topics are dry, but I don't think that should dissuade them from posting either.

**TMcK Facilitator:** A couple more points and then I'm going to hand back to the team. Community Member 10, you had your hand up there?

**Community Member 10:** I think Point 3 is really important, I'd also add in not only smart meters can help with tracking but monitoring leakage, I appreciate again, smart metering and upgrading is going to be very costly but if you're currently having your meter read every 3-6 months, you could have a leak, very small in your home and you wouldn't know for six months, and that could escalate and become quite costly for you. Correct me if I'm wrong, James, but I do believe you've got a one-time claim thing where if something like that does happen, you're able to claim and they're able to give you grace on that bill. But in turn, that's also going to help with your profit margins and breaking even.

**James Jesic:** Absolutely correct, there is that facility available. What that means if somebody's got a leak on their property, as long as they tell us about it and they get it fixed within a certain period, we will basically discount their bill for that leak.

**Community Member 10:** I think it's really important because if you can monitor leakage, you can save money from your guys' side and we can save money from our side as well. But again, could be a very costly upgrade for a lot of households.

**James Jesic:** Agreed.

**TMcK Facilitator:** The last minute, we're on a countdown for this one, Community Member 7?

**Community Member 7:** I was just thinking about the app and how a lot of apps that we have, it just lets you have one person on the app, whereas I think a family app would be a lot better so that me and my husband could see it. I also think trying to make things, like I know Louise said about going into schools and helping children understand; what would be really good, and I don't know if maybe I'm living in an ideal world, but having like a video or something to show your children at home, like "this is why we don't waste water, this is what we need to do to look after the environment", making it a little bit more family friendly rather than just towards adults, I suppose. Perhaps that's the primary school teacher in me! I think it could go really far if you were to really invest in it, it could be really successful and reach a lot more audience than the [inaudible] we just mentioned.

**TMcK Facilitator:** Great, I'd like to hand back to Rhodri, thanks all for your contributions on that question.

**CCW Chair:** Quite a lot there. James, Louise, do you want to come back very briefly on any of that before we move on?

**James Jesic:** If I may, Rhodri, I'll keep it as quick as I can because as you say, there was lots there. I think it was Community Member 5 that raised the issue about the two languages. I don't know if you're aware of this but legally, we have to provide both English and Welsh language option, now people can decide, "Just send it to me in English/Just send it to me in Welsh" but unless a customer specifies which version they want, they will always get both. My ask is if you just want the English version, drop us a note and we can make sure that happens.

In terms of social media, we do have an Instagram page and a Facebook page. I said X earlier on but the team reminded me that we dropped our X communications because not many people use X anymore, so we do have Instagram and Facebook, we don't have TikTok I'm afraid at the moment and it's something we might look at but obviously any additional social media platforms we use just includes additional cost, so we do try and keep that down to a minimum. But Instagram and Facebook, we definitely do use.

On the smart metering piece, that is absolutely spot on points that were made by Community Member 10. We do have a smart metering programme roll out planned for this next five-year period, so some customers will have instantaneous readings enabled to them, which brings me to the app point, we are and we will look at whether we can get an app but we want to tie that in with a couple of things.

First of all, I can't remember who said they're currently an Octopus customer but we're going to use the Octopus billing system within Hafren. So it's called Kraken, so if you're an Octopus customer, you will see ultimately the very same version of engagement with us because we'll be using the same system that Kraken have got. When we've got that Kraken system in place, we are already thinking about how do we build in app capability? We've got to cost it all up to see whether it's viable or not, somebody said we're a big company, we're not actually, Hafren is a very small company, we've only got 200 employees, we only serve 128,000 households, about a quarter of a million people, so we're not a big company. We don't want to overburden bills with putting lots of bells and whistles in there, so we do try and keep it as stripped back as we possibly can, but we will look at an app and the viability of that going forwards. When that app's in place of course, we can link back to things like your meters and what your regular meter usage is.

I did just want to come back as well on the use of local councillors. We have written to every local councillor in the area, trying to tell them about the Wrexham ring main in that area and we also write to parish councillors too. We've been struggling, if I'm honest, to get much feedback but we will persist but if anyone happens to be talking to a councillor or the MP, feel free to ask them what they've heard from Hafren because we are writing to them and we haven't had much engagement back at the moment. But we will keep banging the drum in that space.

I know I went through that really quickly but I just thought with everything that was mentioned, things like online billing is available, WhatsApp chat is available, lots of things available, I don't think we've necessarily communicated well enough that it is available.

**CCW Chair:** Thank you, James. Is there any further comment from anybody on the panel, very briefly, if you're happy, we will move on but I just wanted to give you one last chance.

**Community Member 5:** I just wanted to give some positive feedback, where I think I see the communication on water works is actually on the road, so keep doing that and it's really effective to give some notice or there's a ring road not too far from where I am at the

moment, and it's informed us about works that's about to start. So for me, that's really helpful, so keep doing that.

**Community Member 2:** It's actually really interesting to hear it's such a small team, only 200 staff members and I think that's the thing, when we think of water companies and electrical companies, we think of these big corporate companies who have lots of staff, so actually that's a good selling point for your company and a good thing to celebrate on your communications. You could have "Meet the team", "Meet one of the engineers", "Meet one of the office staff", you could turn that into a marketing piece and it sells you as – you're not a family business – but it sells you as a small business and we're more likely to trust you, so that could be your social media selling point as well, throwing it in there.

**CCW Chair:** Thanks both for those comments. We are perfectly on time so very happy to move onto our last question, which is coming from Community Member 6.

**Community Member 6:** For context, I moved house last year and before that, I was very privileged, I hadn't paid a water bill before so I actually had a really positive experience with Hafren Dyfrdwy. I unfortunately moved in in the summer, hadn't received a bill and then I had a contact with a person I presume from the customer care team at Hafren Dyfrdwy, reached out and let me know that I'd gone into arrears and they wanted to know if I had any concerns or questions about it, they kind of made me aware of it and were really reassuring really because I saw the bill, it wasn't very nice and I was really concerned and that kind of bill welfare check-in really actually made a massive difference; I was less than six months into my new house and was trying to set up all these new bills, had a lot going on, so that personal touch in contact from them, them reaching out to me before I panicked, saw it and had to wait in a queue on the phone, it made a massive difference, it showed how helpful early support could be to a customer like myself.

But it also made me really think about how many other customers may not know that that kind of help is available or maybe would only then find it when things have become difficult and they're in a panic, Googling things or asking neighbours or going onto your website, which brings me to my next thing. It cannot just be something people are expected to find on a website when they're already in that state of panic and concern.

How will Hafren Dyfrdwy do more to identify customers who may be struggling after earlier bill welfare check-ins and make sure the support is easy to access, and not just something people are expected to find for themselves online?

**CCW Chair:** Thank you very much. Back to you, James and Louise, for an initial response.

**James Jesic:** I think first of all, thank you for that, it's really good to hear the positive experience you had. We've got two types of customer support available and I'm going to let Lou, who is the expert in this space, go through these in a moment. We've got something called the Priority Services Register and then as Community Member 6 has just pointed out, we've also got affordability support. Lou, do you want to walk through both of those?

**Lou Moir:** Thank you, Community Member 6 for sharing that, that's lovely and I will share that feedback with the teams because it's really nice obviously when we hear the stories of how positive that impact of just having that call and that early intervention is.

**Community Member 6:** I've got the person's name as well.

**Lou Moir:** Who was it?

**Community Member 6:** I'll find out from my emails and send it through.

**Lou Moir:** All of our team, we're a small team so going back to our size, there's probably about 20 in the team in the office in Wrexham, who are handling calls every day from our customers, WhatsApp, again we don't use bots, all of our digital interactions are dealt with by my team. And what we did recognise, going back to your comment about waiting to fall into arrears or waiting to get a red reminder, which can be really daunting for customers who are struggling, so what we try to do is look at those early interventions where we can so that we can proactively contact customers to reach out and see if they need support.

We've stopped some of that work just because we've been so busy over the last 12 months with customers calling us in, but we have just reintroduced that again, we've just recruited to get a couple more people in the team, which means that will give us more capacity. Like you, Community Member 6, customers are saying to us, "If I'd just known, I would have been able to apply sooner rather than waiting six months for me to then get a reminder, that's then meant I've not been paying for six months." So we are really keen to do more of that proactive signposting for customers.

The other thing that we introduced at the back end of the summer last year, that the team are very much talking to customers about when they contact us, is a Better Off Calculator, so it's not just about affordability support with our water bill, it's actually a complete holistic sort of tool that helps customers access benefits that they might be entitled to, that they don't yet know about. So just since, I think it's September last year, we've helped customers access around £67,000 worth of unclaimed benefits, so it's not just about getting them a discount on their water bill, it's actually can we help them increase their household income so that they can put more towards another bill that they've got, maybe increase – we all know that food's gone up, everything's going up, so that's around 230 customers that we've been able to help, alongside the sort of 12,000 customers that we've got on our schemes.

But going back to we talked about communication quite heavily and I've got so many notes around different things that we can look at, it's how do we make sure that customers are aware of it. It doesn't matter what we're talking about, it's feeding customers the information that we know is going to help them and tailoring that communication and doing that proactive activity with the additional staff that will have started in the next few weeks, we'll be able to ramp that up a lot more.

So for example, if a customer misses a payment on a payment plan, we could pick up the phone to that customer and just check and say, "Is everything okay? We've noticed you've fallen a little bit behind," rather than waiting for them to get a reminder notice land on the doorstep and that customer not being that comfortable about picking up the phone, and also things like when people have moved into a property, doing a bit of a welfare check. So one of the things we were trialling is if a customer had been in the property for six months, just doing a check-in to make sure everything was okay, "Did you understand your first bill?" if you're on a water meter, "Did it make sense to you?", "Did you know how many pints of water you used", not cubic metres, to Community Member 8's point. So little things like that where we can be talking to customers more and being a little bit more clearer with some of this stuff and obviously, it's all coming into our team in the one place, so they're the right team to be able to get that information out to our customers. It's definitely something that we'll be focusing more on and be able to do more of over the next 12 months. I can see Community Member 8's got her hand up.

**James Jesic:** Before you do come in, Community Member 8, I think what we do recognise is we could improve the website a little bit, it's probably not that clear from that perspective but also to that end, people can register for the Priority Services Register on there as well, so I think it was Community Member 11 who mentioned earlier that you work with people who sometimes struggle to see or hard of hearing. The Priority Services Register means that we can actually provide additional support from a communication perspective or in

the event of something going wrong, we can give them very tailored, individual specific support rather than just general support.

So, I acknowledge the website isn't where it needs to be, there's some work we need to do on that but also there's a big piece of work on the Priority Services Register, for anybody who thinks, yourselves or anybody you know might need that additional support.

**Community Member 8:** I knew about, so do you still have the Here to Help Scheme?

**Lou Moir:** Yes, it's the Here to Help Scheme.

**Community Member 8:** When I used to do the community agent, I used to tell customers about that and also I've been on it for myself because it's for people who are on a low income, that's not working, so that is really good but that isn't on the website is it? I don't think, or is it?

**Lou Moir:** Yeah, it is.

**Community Member 8:** Maybe that needs to be more highlighted, is it on there?

**Lou Moir:** It should be on the landing page of the website because we're trying to constantly improve the website based on customer feedback, so again, hence why I'm making lots of notes, we created a Here to Help Hub, so it's a dedicated section of the website customers can go to, they'll be able to find information about the Priority Services Register, the Better Off Calculator. The feedback from our customers was "You've got great schemes but how do I know what one is the best for me? I don't want to make the decision, I want you to tell me what's going to save me the most money." That's basically why we introduced the Better Off Calculator because a customer will put in all of the information that it asks for and then it will tell them, and then it will guide them through that application process and then it will come into my team to assess. That's primarily the reason why we introduced that last year, based on what our customers were telling us.

**Community Member 8:** That's really good. And you said about getting people the benefits they're entitled to and they didn't know, that's really good and I know that my utility, the electric and gas, do that. I think more are doing that, so that people know what they're entitled to. Is it a Government thing or have you been told to do it? It's just that they're doing it aren't they?

**Lou Moir:** I think it's just listening to our customers and it will be the same in energy as well. Anything that we can do just to make bills more affordable and manageable across the piece for customers, that's just going to get better outcomes. It's just something that I think everybody's looking towards.

**TMcK Facilitator:** I'm going to jump in there and just give everybody the chance, we'll have the next 10 minutes focused on some feedback on what you've heard from Lou and James there, whether you feel you've had enough information, is there anything that's missing or anything you would want any clarity on, we can start developing some of the commitments and action points off the back of that. I wonder whether if we go back to Community Member 6, you asked the question and very kindly gave us a bit about your own personal journey, how did you feel about that response and is there anything you'd like to add?

**Community Member 6:** I felt good with the response, it's nice to know that you have a dedicated team and you said it yourself, Louise, it's important that you're contacting these people before it gets to the six months mark or when they're receiving their bill because if it gets to that point, it may not be the only bill that they're struggling with so to hear that

you've got the Here to Help Scheme and part of the website, the Hub section, you've got a dedicated place, is absolutely brilliant but again, it just feeds into that communication piece on how you're actually making these things accessible to your customers and how do customers know of them? I love that you've got the calculator, you said it yourself, the fact that customers in those positions don't want to have to sift through information and work out what works best for them, whether they're going to be this much money better off or that, it's great that you're able to give that information themselves.

And yes, just early intervention is key here and I don't know what that will look like in terms of the beyond because if you're just doing that on the phone, whether that's an email check-in, whether or not eventually if you have an app and like a pop-up comes up each time you open the app just to let them know, I'm not sure what that will look like but I think future-thinking, a phone call's brilliant, I know for me, I received a phone call with a voicemail and then I received an email, and then life got a bit busy and two weeks I received another email and another voicemail, and I've got the person's name, Amanda Humphries, she was absolutely brilliant, truthfully, really helped me out so really positive feedback for her, if you could give her some recognition that would be brilliant.

But on my side, Clare, I felt really comfortable with it, it's just future thinking in terms of what that might look like.

**TMcK Facilitator:** I was going to say, was there anything, so that's a really positive stuff on things that are already happening, is there anything that we want to take forward in terms of a commitment or anything else you'd like to see as an action point off the back of that? Or maybe it's a continuation, a maintenance point?

**Community Member 6:** It's a maintenance one, a continuation of making sure that's happening, like whether or not there's actually a structure, I don't know that I was the golden, I don't know what the saying is, but it just so happened that Amanda looked at my account and thought, "Oh, I've got a spare 10 minutes before my break, I'll give her a ring." I'm not sure what the process is there, whether you've got a system in place to ensure that every customer, regardless of how much they've gone over, gets that customer connection and that call to ensure, and then obviously thinking about those that need greater accessibility needs, if someone's got extreme anxiety and it isn't someone who can speak on the phone, can you offer them a welfare check-in in-person? Or can we do it via email or a video call? Just thinking about these accessibility needs of different people, ensuring you're not just offering them, "We'll call you at this time", they don't answer, "Okay, tick in a box, we tried, let's move onto the next." Obviously, there needs to be a line in the sand eventually but it's just ensuring that you're doing everything you can to ensure that your customers are being supported. I don't know if anybody else has got anything to add on that one.

**TMcK Facilitator:** I think there's two really strong points there: the early identification process, identifying and then adding that more tailored response to how you then deal with that person, which was really interesting. So some clear actions there, thanks.

**Community Member 5:** It's really important that Community Member 6 had a positive experience and as she says, is that standard, but making sure the right staff are in the right roles, have they been trained? Are they empathetic if they're on that side of it? So just an understanding that the staff, you've got the right staff, it sounds like Community Member 6 got a really good staff member, so she's the right quality and also trained in the right way, it's important to standardise that and everyone get to that same experience, and they don't feel judged if they ring in about that vulnerability that they've got, so they feel they're being supported and not judged.

**Community Member 8:** I just want to add to that as well that my experience has always been positive and when I've spoken to people over the phone, they've always been really helpful and patient and they've got enough time for you, and they find a solution. So yes, it's really important because like the others were saying, when you're stressed and got a bill and everything's going on and you've got somebody nice on the end of the phone, who understands and who gives empathy, it's really important. All the people I've spoken to are like that, I've never had a complaint about Hafren Dyfrdwy with that, no.

**TMcK Facilitator:** Community Member 8, you mentioned the Here to Help Scheme, it's something we highlighted in the briefing session, it's just again about the communication point, do we need to make an action point around that and how visible and accessible that is?

**Community Member 8:** I think so, I think it's really important that people know what they can have access to when they're struggling, and it's a really good scheme and the people you talk to about it are really helpful also. So yeah, that would be really good to advertise that, it would be a really good, positive thing for your company, I think.

**TMcK Facilitator:** Any other points on this one?

**Community Member 6:** I was just going to say quickly on Community Member 8's point regarding the Here to Help Scheme, even a simple thing as like a flyer through people's doors, I know it sounds like it's Stone Age, you can put it on your website, you can send it by SMS but simple things like posting that through someone's door or putting it in community hubs and posters, those things should still be happening, there is still a demographic that will happen but simple things like the little flyer goes a long way and it can help a lot of people if that's the only way they're going to be seeing it. That's all from me.

**Community Member 8:** I was going to say, you can do leaflets, if it's cost-effective obviously, there's a community hub in Wrexham where the old Crown buildings were, the council buildings, there's a community hub there now where all the community agents, they do go there I think for Wrexham, so you could put some leaflets in there and they could give them out in their communities which they're responsible for. That's a way of getting it out, isn't it?

**TMcK Facilitator:** Any other points we want to raise or any other commitments you would like to see on this one? You all seem quite happy, it's a happy ending!

**Community Member 6:** Maybe something that Community Member 5 said about modelling greatness, someone like Amanda who I dealt with, having a role model agent or a customer care specialist or some sort of training commitment that you'll have all of the customer support people that you've got at Hafren Dyfrdwy who's going to be like modelling it on Amanda's attitude for the role, a commitment that the people you're putting within these roles who are dealing with vulnerable people, I'm not sure if you already have like a training model or anything like that, but maybe just having an internal commitment to ensure that you're having the right people in the right roles, in the right places to ensure you're not just – I think you know what I'm trying to say, maybe an internal commitment to ensure you've got that team in place because you're already committing to communicating to so many people and reaching out, it's important that you've got the right people doing it.

**TMcK Facilitator:** Any other final comments and I'll share where we are? Is there anything else before we check onto the actions live? Why don't I share what we've got and then we can get your feedback on that.

The first one is around the availability of support tools and schemes, the lack of customer knowledge of these, highlights the need for better advertising, communication and outreach about these, using non-digital advertising techniques such as flyer and leaflets and community hubs, continuing to expand early intervention checks, make it available for everyone, so great experience amongst those who have used it. A personalised, sensitive and empathetic outreach to potentially vulnerable customers, including appropriate training for involved staff.

And Number 2, setting a training commitment for high standards of staff education, I'm assuming that's going to say, we'll develop that a bit further.

How do we feel about those? Is there anything we've talked about that we feel we've missed or that we feel we want to develop further?

**Community Member 2:** For Point 1, the availability of support tools, we've got use of non-digital advertising, can we also add digital advertising that can go on social media as well as the web page, so it's everywhere kind of thing?

**TMcK Facilitator:** Do you feel these represent what we've talked about? Is there anything that we've missed?

**Community Member 2:** I think it's quite a nice summary of it all.

**TMcK Facilitator:** Anyone else, any thoughts on that before we hand over to the team? Do we want to put any timescales on this one? Does it feel that we'd ...?

**Community Member 6:** I think we'd be silly not to just because you know how quick life goes, you blink and it's been three months. Does anybody have an opinion on timescales for this one? I feel like I always say a quarter, but I feel like this is a bit of a big ask.

**Community Member 3:** Even though a timescale would be great, we're setting a training commitment for high standards, that should be continuous, so maybe a timescale would be a quarter or half the year or something to establish education, I'm a high school teacher and going into GCSE territory, but it's certainly in that timescale of [inaudible].

**TMcK Facilitator:** Community Member 3, I think we've lost you, sorry, you've frozen. I think the point you were trying to make about is-

**Community Member 3:** -continue on and there's no end date, there's no goal, there's no timescale.

**TMcK Facilitator:** Sorry, we might have lost you a wee bit there but I think you were talking about the continuous improvement on training and maybe we look at other timescales on the other points?

**Community Member 3:** Sorry, my internet's a bit weird tonight but yeah, just continuous training.

**TMcK Facilitator:** If we have anything missed, just put it into the chat. Community Member 8, you had your hand up.

**Community Member 8:** I was just going to say the same as Community Member 3 that it should be ongoing, and also that a lot of it's already set up isn't it really, about the customer care side, it's been so positive what we've been talking about tonight and I've always got a positive view of it, so if they keep doing that and then add more to it and then put it on the website and highlight it more, just sort of enhance it a bit more that it's available.

**Community Member 5:** How about we say for Point 1, six months?

**Community Member 2:** That gives them, if they're overhauling their web page anyway, that will feed into it, if they're already going to be looking at social media and Question 2, that will also feed into it as well, but that's still a lot of work for them to do. Six months seems reasonable.

**Community Member 5:** How are we monitoring this? How do we know that these have been achieved?

**TMcK Facilitator:** There will be more sessions like this in the autumn.

**Community Member 5:** Thank you.

**TMcK Facilitator:** If we're happy with that, I think the points that we were making around identification and tailoring, we can maybe pull out as well. Is there anything else before we hand back to Rhodri? No, you seem quite happy with that one, generally quite a positive experience. I'll hand back to Rhodri to round up.

**CCW Chair:** Thank you all, thank you Clare for taking us through that. James and Louise, can I come back to you and offer you the opportunity of a response on some of that? Although I must say, it must be very pleasing for you to hear such positive comments on what you do.

**James Jesic:** It absolutely is, Rhodri, it's really good to get the feedback and to hear some of the individual stories has been really positive and trust me, we will definitely be feeding that back to the team, which Lou will definitely be doing tomorrow with her team because they really, it's not just one individual, all members of the team really care about the customers of Hafren and making sure that they get the best possible service. So absolutely positive all round, so not only Amanda, we'll be saying it to all the teams.

I think the actions here are fair. Before we sign up to the six months, I think we just want to go back and be much clearer internally about what we need to do in this particular space. I accept the high-level actions here, I think they're all spot on, I think the conversation's been really helpful. We just want to go back and understand the full extent of what we're going to do in this space, so we will confirm, we will definitely obviously do a big chunk within the six month period, we just want to be able to commit to what that specifically might be so that when we do come back later in the year, you can all hold us to account, obviously.

**CCW Chair:** Thanks very much, James. Louise, did you have any final comments?

**Lou Moir:** I was just going to say in terms of it is really important, we've just done some recruitment and behaviours, when people are coming in to come and work in our team, we're a very small team, we are like a family and all of my team are customers of Hafren, their friends, family are customers of Hafren as well, so it is really important that they get it right. When we're recruiting, we do have to make sure that they do fit with our team and with what our customers need. Empathy is really key, so we do a lot with candidates around making sure that they've got those right soft skills before we get any further.

In the team, we have a dedicated care and assistance team, so Amanda's not actually on our care and assistance team, she works in our billing team so it's really great to hear the experience that you've had with somebody who hasn't had some of the more specialist training; it is those soft skills, the empathy that we find super important. We do look at getting additional training for the care and assistance guys and the wider team, so we've got planned for later this year, some Dementia Friends training, we partner with other

partners like Macmillan, so we're looking at how we can bring in different charity partners to upskill the team, so when they're having difficult conversations with people experiencing different things, they can adapt their communication.

So that's something that we're really wanting to sort of get on with this year, so this has come at a great time to get that sort of feedback. We know that is really important and it's just been heartwarming to hear the feedback and I will be sharing that with the team tomorrow, so thank you everybody for being so open about your experiences with us.

**CCW Chair:** Thank you, James, thank you, Louise. I think that brings us to a close, I think we've covered a lot of important themes this evening and agreed a lot of actions, thanks to the team for keeping up with monitoring those, getting the tables ready for us and they'll be the basis of a formal response from the company in due course. There'll be a full transcript, Clare mentioned at the beginning, available shortly, within five working days but before that, an early draft will be shared with all of you so that you can review it and if there are any things that you'd like changed, you think should be adapted, there'll be an opportunity to do that and then there'll be a plain English summary which will be published within 10 working days, and then hopefully within 28 working days, we hear back from Hafren Dyfrdwy as to how it's going to deal with this or these, sorry it's not just one issue, there's all of what we've been discussing tonight, so there's quite a lot to deal with there.

As Clare mentioned earlier, obviously this is an ongoing process, this is the first of these sessions, there'll be another one in the autumn and hopefully it will lead to that permanent dialogue between yourselves as customers and the company. So hopefully, you can see that this is not just a sort of empty discussion, that we expect something to happen as a result of that and obviously, I want to thank all of you for the time you've given tonight to put into this, the thought you've put into it, we at the Consumer Council for Water appreciate that very much and we think it is a key part of changing the culture and I'm not talking specifically about Hafren Dyfrdwy here, James, but the culture of the water sector, that the voice of customers is heard and is listened to by the companies.

I'd also like to thank James and Louise for being with us and for the way in which you've listened attentively, taken note of what's been said and have responded honestly, openly, to what you've heard and you've managed to do that concisely, which is not something that people always find very easy, so I'm particularly appreciative of the way in which all of you who have been a part of this call this evening, have made it in my view, a very successful and worthwhile session.

So thank you all once again and we look forward to following through on the bits of the process I've just talked about, and to continuing our engagement with the company over the coming months. Thank you all very much, goodnight.

[CLOSE]

# CCW

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