



ccw

The voice for water consumers
Llais defnyddwyr dŵr

**SES Water
Accountability Session
transcript**

22ND APRIL 2026

Attendance list

Ian Cain	CEO of Retail and Customer Markets of SES Water
David Harris	Managing Director for Water Services at SES Water
Laura Flowerdew	Chief Financial Officer at SES Water
Nicky Taylor	Director of Taylor McKenzie Research (TMcK) – Lead facilitator
Rob Wilson	Chairman for Consumer Council for Water (CCW) – Chair
11 x Participants	Water Voice Community Members under SES Water

CCW Chair: Good evening, everyone, and thank you very much for joining us tonight. My name is Rob Wilson, in case some of you don't know, and I'll be chairing tonight's discussion. I'm chairman of the Consumer Council for Water (CCW); we act as the statutory champion and voice for the water and sewage customers in England and Wales. Tonight's session is part of our Water Voice programme and the purpose of Water Voice is simple but very important: 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 customers to question senior leaders of SES [Water] directly about the issues that matter most to you, about where improvement is needed and about what will change as a result of this discussion tonight. This is not a complaints hearing and it's not a technical inquiry, it's a structured, customer-led conversation focused on accountability, learning and agreeing clear, practical actions.

The topics we'll cover this evening haven't been chosen by the water company or by CCW, they've been shaped by customers through ongoing surveys and discussions within the Water Voice Panel that you're all part of and that's really important. This is your agenda and in addition to the questions that will be covered tonight, SES [Water] will briefly provide an overview of their most recent action plan and provide an update on how that's progressing.

I want to set a clear tone at the outset, we 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 the senior team from the water company.

The session is being fully transcribed and will be published, a summary report will follow and the company will be expected to publish an action plan responding to the commitments made. That transparency is a really key part of what makes this whole process meaningful.

In terms of ground rules, we'll take one person at a time, we'll keep contributions focused and concentrate on forward looking actions, what will change, by when and how customers will know that things have changed.

I'd like to introduce those who are going to be joining us tonight. First and obviously foremost, our independent lead facilitator from Taylor McKenzie, Nicky Taylor, who you all know, he'll guide the discussions and ensure all the voices around the table are heard. And representing SES Water this evening for the three questions will be David Harris, who's [Managing Director] for Water Services, Ian Cain who's CEO of Retail and Customer Markets and they'll be here for the first two questions, and the third question, Ian Cain will be joined by Laura Flowerdew [Chief Financial Officer], and on our third question, there'll be some in and out of people coming in and out of the session.

We are joined also by Keith Haslett tonight; he is the CEO of SES Water¹. He's just taken over and so he's come just really to introduce himself, say hello and so what I'm going to do before I hand over to Nicky is I'm just going to give the floor to Keith to say a few words, and then we'll get on with the rest of tonight. Keith, over to you.

Keith Haslett: Thanks, Rob and good evening, everybody. So yes, I am the CEO now of SES [Water] and I guess our Pennon Group, so whilst I'm only three weeks into the role, I've been in the industry a long time, serving CEO of Affinity Water, which isn't far from the geographic area of SES [Water]. So a pleasure to be here, I look forward to listening in on

¹ Chief Executive Officer of Pennon Group, of which SES Water is part of.

the various questions and answers and hopefully, you'll all find it a very productive and informative evening. We very much welcome this format and hopefully, you get as much out of it as we will. So I'll leave it at that, Rob, just let you get on with the session ahead.

CCW Chair: Thank you, it's very good of you to come because it does show that you're committed to these activities that we're doing with these customer panels, so thank you for that. With that, we'll get on and Nicky, over to you for the first part of the session.

TMcK Facilitator: Thanks, Rob. Before we begin, I just want to explain a little bit about how the names in the transcript are going to be handled this evening. In the room this evening, we'll only be using first names and in the published transcript, we'll ensure that all customer names are redacted.

After the session, you'll have the opportunity to review the transcript before it's published, and if there's anything you've said that you prefer not to be there or to be removed or further anonymised, you can of course request that with the team and we'll happily oblige and respect that.

The purpose of the transcript, as Rob mentioned, is to accurately reflect the discussion and the agreed, it's not to single out any individuals. In terms of this evening's format, we're going to have three questions in total and for each question, we're going to follow the same structure: a customer is going to ask the question, I will display it on the screen, I'll also put it into the chat. SES Water will then have five minutes to respond to that and we will be fair, I'm sure Rob will be fair if there's an extra couple of minutes needed, that can be at his discretion. Once the SES Water team have responded, it will be up to the community members and customers to react to that response and we're going to work together really to define the sort of actions that must form part of the company's action plan off the back of the responses to the question.

We're also going to be creating a live document, I've got a couple of analysts in the room, Emma and Ryan who are on the screen at the moment, they're going to be working very hard in the background to bring to life all of the comments that are made, both from SES Water and from the customers. I'll then look to share that document so that we can all review it as a team and make sure we're happy with what is on that document itself. Once we have completed our work as customers, we're then going to give SES Water an opportunity to respond to any specific actions that they feel are relevant to have a response, or indeed they maybe want to say if certain things are out of scope for them, they'll have an opportunity to do that as well.

As this is a webinar, it has been made available for live viewing to wider members of the CCW team, Defra, Ofwat, SES Water and the SES Water Independent Challenge Group, and also some other community members on the CCW Water Voice Panel who are interested in viewing this session.

So that's the groundwork out of the way, the housekeeping out of the way, I'm going to quickly hand back to Rob who's going to go round the room and get an introduction from all of the customers who have joined us this evening.

CCW Chair: Great, I'm going to get you all to say who you are, where you're based, where you're from and I'll go round the screen as I see it. Top of my screen is Community Member 1, so if you could start?

Community Member 1: I'm Community Member 1, I'm in Surrey in the South East.

Community Member 2: I'm Community Member 2 and I'm in Netherne-on-the-Hill, which is near Coulsdon in Surrey.

Community Member 3: I'm Community Member 3, I'm in Sutton, Surrey.

Community Member 4: I'm Community Member 4 and I'm also in Sutton, Surrey.

Community Member 5: I'm Community Member 5 in South Croydon.

Community Member 6: I'm Community Member 6 and I'm based in Coulsdon in Surrey.

Community Member 7: I'm Community Member 7 and I'm based in Coulsdon, Surrey.

Community Member 8: I'm Community Member 8, I live in Caterham-on-the-Hill in Surrey.

Community Member 9: I'm Community Member 9, I'm in Leatherhead and I'm overlooking the sunny River Mole.

Community Member 10: I'm Community Member 10, I'm in Coulsdon.

CCW Chair: Please tell me if I've missed anyone, shout now or I'll move on.

Community Member 11: I'm Community Member 11 and I'm in Edenbridge.

CCW Chair: We're onto the first question of the evening which is going to come from Community Member 5. Just to remind everybody, the water company doesn't know what the question is but knows the area that it's going to be asked. Community Member 5, do you want to ask your question? It's going to come up on the screen and then you can kick off. We'll put it into the chat afterwards as well.

Community Member 5: A lot of us don't feel able to judge water or network quality with confidence because the information that's available is hard to understand, is out of date often and doesn't give straightforward reassurance.

What more will SES Water do to make water quality information clear, current and easy to understand so that customers can quickly feel reassured, especially if there's a change in taste, appearance or cloudiness?

CCW Chair: Great, thank you, Community Member 5. In responding to that, I want to make sure that SES [Water], you stay focused on answering the question that's been asked, so please focus on that. And to community members, you've got your pieces of paper, scribble any thoughts, questions, comments down as you go along, as you hear the answer and then we'll come back to that. We'll start now with, I think Ian, are you taking first on this?

Ian Cain: Yes, I'll take first there on the answer to that, Rob.

CCW Chair: You have five minutes but I might give you a little bit extra if the answer's particularly good.

Ian Cain: Firstly everybody, good to see you, good to talk to some of the panel members, I too live in [the region], so I understand our area, so pleased to be with you. Thank you for the question, which is a good one. I understand and completely recognise the importance of you having a good understanding of the quality of water that you are served with across our network, for yourself, your neighbours, your friends, your families, etc. Can't live without the stuff, it's essential for us and it's important that you have confidence and assurance and also understand, more so than most other areas, other areas of the South Eastern patch, for example, in South East Water, have had problems which might promote this as an issue in your minds.

So let's just get to the issue of information and what we are currently doing. Well as it happens, what we have done is in recent weeks, indeed at the start of this month, upgraded our website and what I'm really pleased to be able to say is that you can now look at our website and be literally two clicks away from most information that you need, and that does include water quality information.

You're now able to go on the website and you look to hardness, which for some customers in our area, has been an issue. We're in an area of water hardness and we soften water, some of you may know and understand. You can put your postcode into the website and you can get up to date information on the water hardness and quality in your particular area. You can also access more documents that talk to what water quality really means, so with regard to the content of the water, fluoride, etc. and it will talk to help you understand issues like taste, odour, pesticides and that in local water provision. So there is information on the website, it has been updated very recently, the website, and you can go down to postcode level to find out.

I just want to turn to a slightly related but separate issue is that I think it's really important also that as the organisation shifts through different events maybe, so you might see a local water event or incident which might be covered in the next question I'm sure, but we are really committed of course, through those events to not only communicate in a timely, clear fashion but we're really acutely aware of the need, through that incident, to be able to tell you that your water is safe to drink. And I think that's one of the most important things that we can say through an incident or an event, or even a planned event where we're doing work locally and you might be slightly nervous.

So there's the ongoing information about the quality of water on the website and then there's the direct intervention through proactive channels, as events might change your local provision through pressure or something like that, and our proactive update of the quality of water that you have. Probably Rob, I would leave that there because I think that addresses the core question and in terms of what we are going to do, we've just done it this month.

CCW Chair: So it's just the website that you're updating, there are no other channels that you're using that will help customers to quickly understand what the quality of their water is and whether it's drinkable and if it's cloudy, what the problem is?

Ian Cain: The core intervention, Rob, is the website so that's the single source of truth for all SES Water information and what we also have in place are other channels that we use, so people will understand social media, we use X, Twitter as was, we use Instagram, we use SMS texts, we use emails, we use what information we can have with regard to our customers but those are the sorts of channels that we will more readily use in the event of needing to get to people proactively and quickly. What I'm saying here is that we're committed to ensure the information is there every day on a channel that customers can easily access in a very quick and manageable way.

As I said, two clicks to the information in your postcode. If we need to get to people quickly with a change of circumstances in their area, we will deploy the other social media channels and other means of contact, including working with local MPs and local radio, etc, to ensure that people get communicated with very quickly about the status of water in their area. But I'm understanding this question as "I want ongoing confidence and to be able to access that."

CCW Chair: And how are you letting them know that it's there on the website?

Ian Cain: So we will let customers know through bills, what we'll have to do this time is obviously, well not obviously, we've gone through what we call an annual billing cycle, we

have pointed people towards different parts of information, but this in SES Water is new, so what we will do is proactively talk to customers on our PSR² register, for example, so 22% of all our customers are on that register, they really do need to know and have access.

We will also use the emails that we have, we will also talk to other partners that we communicate with such as MPs and local customer, what would I call them, advisory institutions to ensure that we can.

We also have a newsletter which, since we've become part of Pennon [Group], we've taken some best practice. There's a newsletter that goes out every quarter now called *Splash*, obviously it's an intended name to link people to water. Currently that's sent to 185,000 homes in our area, so it shows we haven't quite got all the email information for everybody in our area but that's well over 70% of our customers and 50% of customers who receive that have been opening it and reading that particular information, so we will also use that.

CCW Chair: Thank you, Ian, and thank you for that response. I'm going to park you for now because we're going to go back to customers but before I do, I just want to clarify, I said in the introduction that we're expecting an update on an action plan from SES [Water], actually that was my mistake, that was South East Water so apologies for that, there are three questions tonight so just ignore that bit of it.

Ian Cain: Can I just say one more thing and I think it's super important?

CCW Chair: Briefly.

Ian Cain: Apologies to my colleagues in SES [Water] for not saying this, SES [Water] have got amongst the highest quality water anywhere in Europe and the world, not just the UK, and I think that's really important, so if you take any reassurance from me on this call, know that SES [Water] is always in the upper quartile of the tables for water quality.

CCW Chair: That's a really important extra clarification, so that's great. So we're going to go back to customers and Nicky, over to you to guide the discussion.

TMcK Facilitator: Thanks, Rob and thanks to the team in SES [Water] there for the response. As Rob said, let's have a chat now about what we've heard. Community Member 5, you asked the question, what did you think about the response? Is that everything sorted now? Or are there things you want to explore?

Community Member 5: Sorry, just to go across more to the environmental side of things, I brought up at the first meeting, information that was put on the website or I found out, which talked about pesticide run-off into the River Eden, which obviously didn't go into the reservoir, there was a report in autumn 2024 that there were very high levels, certainly since 2018 to '25, that doesn't seem to be addressed anywhere within the website. By the way, the website is much improved and it's really good to find some of the information on there that wasn't there when we had the first meeting.

Just to expand that on the environmental policy side of things; Ian, you signed an environment policy in May 2022, which doesn't seem to have been particularly updated or expanded upon. And the other thing, just before we leave that, there is a section on the website called Our Local Approach, which says, I'll just do one sentence, half a sentence of it, "We take on with our partners across the Eden catchment to achieve a more sustainable river flow and better water quality." With a suggestion that the water quality is not up to scratch.

² Priority Services Register

TMcK Facilitator: Thanks, Community Member 5. So these next steps for us are to create actions, so we've heard from SES Water what their actions are currently, what they're going to be doing over the next few months and years etc throughout the questions. What things do you want to hold them to account here? If you could come up with a couple of actions?

Community Member 5: One, that they're in touch and we know what the water quality is, is it improving? Because obviously the suggestion was back on some of the things I've read that these things are put up, and we're going to be talking about this later, we've got a policy on the website at the moment, "5 years, 5 pledges", which is great because it looks at, it says what they're going to do, not what's been done. So when things go wrong, which obviously must have happened in autumn 2024 for there to be concern about pesticide run-off, where's the feedback to the customer saying that "This has been resolved and what we've done."? That's the same thing going, it's just basically what you've just said, where are things going, will things be answered when we ask a question?

TMcK Facilitator: We spoke a little bit in the briefing session, and it was a good conversation we had about the data on water quality, it can be quite technical and quite scientific and I think someone described it as "bamboozling" when we were going through it. Have you got any suggestions or any actions that SES [Water] could consider to really help you feel confident in the water in a simple manner? I think it was Ian was saying, it's world class water, so what can they do to get that message across?

Community Member 5: That's not particularly on there but it's also, when we read things or see things on television, to communicate exactly what SES [Water]'s position is on those things.

TMcK Facilitator: Community Member 9, do you want to jump on there?

Community Member 9: I think we touched on this in our discussion and I noted Ian's comments being just about being in the top 20% or so of water, and your comment about how water quality is graded: has any thought been given to a national standard, almost like a golf handicap, so you can compare one area with the other?

Everybody pretty much understands, I think if you're sport minded a golf handicap, so if I'm a scratch golfer in the South East, I'm still a scratch golfer in the North West; what are we comparing with? In terms of actions we might like to see is some sort of national chart that all the water companies buy into, so we're comparing with apples and apples as opposed to saying, "SES [Water] have got some great information about water quality but you've got to read through a load of technical information," but somebody up in the North East might be using a completely different barometer. So can we standardise national standards?

Community Member 8: Just a very small practical thing, I went onto the website to have a look and see what the water's like in my area, it's currently not working. I've tried it on the Mac I'm using for this and on my phone, it doesn't work on either of those. I don't know if other people have tried it, it might work for them but there may be a technical fault, it could be just temporary, but I thought I'd let you know.

TMcK Facilitator: Thanks, I'm sure that will be music to their ears! Was it the postcode look up that wasn't working?

Community Member 8: It says, "The postcode does not belong to our supply area" and I started with my full postcode, then I just put CR3 which is all of Caterham Valley and then I just tried CR, that didn't work and so I tried Redhill with a couple of postcodes of people I know there, none of that worked. Whatever postcode you put in, it gives the same message.

Community Member 6: Mine's working, I've just tried it.

Community Member 11: Same, mine's working as well.

Community Member 5: Mine's fine as well.

TMcK Facilitator: There will be a web developer somewhere wondering why so many people are suddenly using that part of their website! Community Member 2, do you want to jump in?

Community Member 2: I was just going to ask what are the ratings they're using to be able to say that they're one of the best water companies or best water quality providers in the world? How do we know that?

TMcK Facilitator: I'm going to throw that question straight back to you and I'm actually going to throw it back to the room because this is a challenge that SES [Water] and all water companies have. The UK has got extremely high quality, drinkable water from the tap and it doesn't seem to be landing with customers. My challenge here is what can they do? What actions can we send them to say, "This is what we want to see that prove that things are as good as they say they are"?

Community Member 2: Well, straight off the bat, they say they can use X, Instagram and SMS text, and also the *Splash* newsletter, I know that's something that by going out a quarter, it wouldn't give an instantaneous response but maybe use the other social platforms and just say, "Hey everybody, we've just ...", if it's an award that they've received or they've been in some sort of grading system, "Great news, we've come out as one of the best in the world", that's something to shout about, "well done us."

TMcK Facilitator: So shout it out loud is what you're saying?

Community Member 2: Yes, absolutely, and then everyone will go, "Oh actually, I didn't realise that they were as good as that, so brilliant."

TMcK Facilitator: Anyone else want to jump in with any ideas or actions we could ask SES [Water] to consider in terms of talking about the quality of the water in the area? I'm going to take that as a no. If we then talk about the quality of the water, we spoke in the session about sometimes there might be a certain hardness to the water, has anyone got any comments on that they want to sort of, or challenges that they want to put to SES Water regarding that?

Community Member 1: It is incredibly hard, I think we all can agree with that, kettles and everything, so maybe just some really basic tips. I know they probably are on there already but just what you can do to try and preserve your kettle and that kind of thing because they do scale up really quickly.

TMcK Facilitator: Have they done anything like that in the past that's been useful that they could consider to keep doing?

Community Member 1: I have used special water in my iron so yes, distilled water, things like that because I was going through so many irons because they were getting clogged up with limescale. So I have done things like that and obviously used certain sprays and things like that, but yes, I think it can become quite frustrating.

Community Member 2: Maybe a best practice would be helpful as part of all the information that they're pushing out, and whilst I can appreciate they may not necessarily be able to recommend specific products but you know, they can give three or four bullet points as to how people can solve these problems. And also, maybe something that they

could consider would be to offer some products as well, I know that you can login and get all sorts of different water saving devices and that sort of thing, maybe they can offer some products that you can use to clean or something that can be fitted in line maybe, so that it's a service that they could provide us because that would be something that I think a lot of people would be interested in, as long as it wasn't very costly. But again, if they've got that facility, then they should be telling us about it.

TMcK Facilitator: I'm going to be sharing my screen quite soon but before I do that, is there anything else that we want to add in terms of actions that you'd like SES [Water] to consider in relation to this question?

Community Member 2: I've just got one more quick point or question. They talked about the socials, they talked about upgrading the website, I would like to know if they've got any consideration for an app because there's lots of people like myself who don't have X, don't have Instagram, yes I'll look at SMS text but I'm not on Facebook and I may not choose sometimes to look on websites. But an app that's pushing information, particularly if they've got an award for being the best water in the world or something similar to that, have an app, it doesn't have to be a complicated one, so that's something I would like them to be looking at.

Community Member 8: This business about limescale, it's not very good for kettles and irons, is it harmful to us? If it is not harmful, it would be nice to know that and it might even be good for us, again it would be great to know about that, like videos, you could have little videos which could go out on social media and be on your website and YouTube, "Everything you want to know about limescale", for example. Somebody said could there be an in-line device you use to get rid of it? Well, if that's the case, could there be an upstream in-line device that is at SES [Water], to get rid of it for everybody? I don't know, it may not be impossible, might not be desirable to do that, just want to know.

TMcK Facilitator: So there's a void of information just now and you're looking for something, like a Q&A type approach to allow you to understand things. Great. Community Member 9, we'll finish up on you.

Community Member 9: Just really wanted to endorse Community Member 2's point about an app, I think it's an excellent idea. Second, logged onto the website, put in my postcode, all working fine. I may be missing this and it may be buried somewhere else, but it tells me I'm medium hardness water zone and then it goes to say, "78 parts per million, 20 French degrees ..."

Community Member 1: Yeah, I was the same!

Community Member 9: What the hell is that?! I'm sorry, I'm sure this is really useful information but then you just put – this plays into my point about a national water recognised industry standard because what the hell is 11 German degrees? Does that mean I'm Bavarian and whatever?! Sorry, I'm being mildly facetious there.

Community Member 1: I had the same, I did exactly the same and it came up and I was like, "What's this?".

TMcK Facilitator: There's a clear challenge here for SES [Water] to find a way to communicate water quality in a manner that is familiar to you, that you can understand and that you can, there's some kind of comparison or barometer we're looking for as well, that will help you just be reassured and actually maybe want to find out a little bit more, in video format or in an easy to understand explainer. I think that's been really clear so thank you very much for getting those points across.

I'm going to share my screen now and I'm going to recap what's been said over the last 10-15 minutes. The question's on the left-hand side and then we've got the response from SES [Water]. They mentioned at the start of the month, the website had a big upgrade so everything was two clicks away from most information including water quality, we've spoke about the postcode checker for hardness and quality, the website is considered a main source of information. Access to what water quality actually means, understanding technical aspects, e.g. fluoridation, and a newsletter available called *Splash* that goes out every quarter to 70% of customers.

In the future, they're looking to lean into their channels like social media, texts and emails, collaborating with local MPs, advisory institutions, etc. in the circumstance of events and issues at local levels. Proactive updates, they're committed to communicate in a timely fashion when events happen and ensure customers know their water is safe to drink. Proactively talk to customers on the Priority Register [Services]. There was also mention at the end of how the water is world class in terms of its safety and quality.

As customers, after the discussion, we've got some points here of what would an ideal response look like when it comes to the action plan?

Point A, we have in no particular order, a national league table of water quality, something that just really makes things directly comparable, contextualised and simple to digest.

Ensure that the website tools deliver complete coverage of customer base.

Make water quality information simple, tangible and easy to digest and again, let people explore as much as they want to explore around that.

Proactively communicate tips and practical advice on how to deal with water hardness and resulting household impacts, so an opportunity here to offer products which can deal with hardness, with the possibility to integrate this into yearly billing to spread the cost potentially.

Communicate clearly, consistently and regularly regarding actions undertaken and whether water quality is improving over time. So I think that was quite an important point that Community Member 5 made, is you're saying there's an incident and you're dealing with it, what was the outcome of that? Let's square that so everyone can see from start to finish, what has happened on that journey?

Clarify what ratings they're using in their statements, you've mentioned that SES Water is one of the best in the world, let's shout about that and tell us why that's the case.

Use social media channels to advertise any achievements on your water, just talk about it more openly and more clearly.

And consider developing an app so that we can reach customers in a manner that is suitable to them.

So I'm going to hand back to the room and we can talk about what we're seeing here. We've obviously not put any timescales on any of this so I want to understand, how quickly should SES [Water] turn this sort of thing around? Is it this week because the information exists already and it's just a case of repackaging it? Is it in six months so that they can develop things? And really have we covered everything we want to cover here? I'll open it up to customers again and you can come in and tell me what your thoughts are.

Community Member 9: I think there may be one or two things they can cherry pick off if there are some updates going on, but I think rather than us trying to set a timescale, we

don't know the inner workings of the company, I think the onus is on SES Water to say from that list, if they agree it, what can they do, in what timescale and which are the priorities? I could say "I'd like an app next month" but that might be totally unrealistic. My feeling is the onus is on SES Water to put forward rationalised timescales.

TMcK Facilitator: That's absolutely fair, thank you.

Community Member 8: I just want to query something, in the "You said", the word "network quality", does that mean the reliability of service? As in whether there are going to be water outages or does it mean something else?

TMcK Facilitator: This was the question that we put together after the briefing session, so "A lot of us don't feel able to judge water or network quality with confidence." I guess it is speaking mostly about the water quality itself.

Community Member 8: Thank you.

TMcK Facilitator: What are our thoughts? We're obviously going to put this to SES Water for them to create an action plan from it, are we happy with the content? Is there anything else we want to sharpen up a little bit?

Community Member 2: I think the content looks fine as far as I'm concerned. I know that it would be ideal for them to be able to put the timescale but I think some things are quite straightforward, for example, G³, that should be a really quick thing.

Community Member 1: Yeah, I agree.

Community Member 2: If they won an award or they've got simple data that they can put out very quickly, it only takes, I'm going to say a day for a web person to stick that information on the website, for example, so I don't think that's really going to be too much of a challenge for them. I think the big ones are going to be the likes of A⁴, the national league table where they've got to agree that league with all the other water companies, that could take a while. And things like the app, the app could be six months, it could be a year, it could be something that they've already got in development and they say, "We can put that in three months", I'm not sure but that feels like that could be quite a way off.

Community Member 1: I'd agree, and C⁵ could be quite easy as well to literally rectify, just make the language a little bit more in tune with customers rather than overly complex and that kind of thing, so that's something that probably should be quite easy to do.

TMcK Facilitator: Could we sharpen up G slightly because we said "use social media channels to advertise achievements". Could we also use social media channels to really talk about water quality and bring it to life in a way that perhaps hasn't been done yet? Would that be a fair thing to aim for?

Community Member 2: Yeah, when they were first talking to us, they said that the core is the website but actually, if you've got – and this going to sound terrible – on tap, all of these other social platforms, just put the same message out on all of them so that the person that can't be bothered to trawl through the website but is literally attached to Instagram all day, they'll get to know it as quickly as someone that doesn't like to use that and will go on the website. All at the same time, why not?

³ Action Point G: Use social media channels to advertise achievement (e.g. if an award is won)

⁴ Action Point A: National league table of water quality – make performance directly comparable, contextualised and simple to digest.

⁵ Action Point C: Make water quality information simple, tangible and easy to digest.

Community Member 9: A small consideration, I know they talk about 70% coverage of the newsletter and I think everybody in this room is au fait with technology, I just wonder what about those customers that aren't, and appreciating if you'll forgive the terminology, they're probably going to eventually die out, but for those customers that are technophobes, is there any sort of channel of communication or are they just forever forgotten?

TMcK Facilitator: I think there is this *Splash* newsletter, which I believe is posted out.

Community Member 9: But it only reaches 70% of customers.

Community Member 2: Can I add to that? They did say only 50% opened it so that's like one of those cosmetics adverts where they say "89 people out of 90 agree that they like the product".

TMcK Facilitator: Often with communication strategies, different strokes for different folks when it comes to how people interact and it is always an uphill challenge for brands to find a way to access the right people, and I guess that's the discussion today, is we need to get this information about water quality out there in a more accessible manner and I think however we do that, that's a challenge SES [Water] have to face isn't it?

Community Member 2: Yes, sure.

TMcK Facilitator: Community Member 5, you asked the question, so I think it's fair that I go back to you, looking at the response, both from the water company but also from our discussions, are you happy with what we're seeing here? Is there anything we can do to sharpen things?

Community Member 5: No, I think that's fairly reasonable.

TMcK Facilitator: In that case, if everyone's happy, I will hand back to Rob and SES [Water] can have a bit of a chance to review things.

CCW Chair: Thank you, everyone, that's been a really interesting discussion. SES Water obviously have been listening intently to your views so before we finalise any of the actions that we've been discussing on screen, we're going to give SES Water a brief opportunity to highlight if there are any of these commitments they couldn't make or maybe some of them they're doing, or maybe some of them aren't feasible but over to David and Ian to respond.

David Harris: I might go first and then if there's anything I've missed, Ian can come in after me. I have to say very good conversation and when I read action item C⁶, that's exactly what we're trying to achieve, to make water quality information simple, tangible and easy to digest and I thank the panel for their thoughts, some of their suggestions here which are great and we can do relatively quickly.

May I just, Rob, there were quite a few issues there which I can very quickly address and they will answer the question around timings of some of these things but also give the customers a bit more comfort perhaps, than what they've had when they were having their conversation. Community Member 5 raised the question of water quality in the rivers; that's raw water quality so we only abstract from one river which is the River Eden. Our treatment works have a number of processes, granular activated carbon and other things, to address that raw water quality and by the way, if it's really bad, we have sensors on the inlet of our

⁶ Action Point C: Make water quality information simple, tangible and easy to digest.

water treatment works, they shut down. So if they're not capable of treating that water quality, they shut down.

In addition to that and I think the piece, Community Member 5, you were reading was we do fund upstream activity because of course, we receive that water quality, we have upstream partnerships with other actors in the catchment to try to be addressing that raw water quality, but I just did want to make the point that that conversation was about raw water quality.

In terms of the quality of the water post-treatment, we do about 120,000 tests a year on the water in our treatment plant and in our network, that is prescribed by the regulator but we are very heavily regulated in that regard and that can give you the confidence that you're drinking safe water and indeed, to the point about world quality, that's not our words, that's actually the Chief Inspector of the Drinking Water Inspectorate's words that water quality here is among the best in the world.

CCW Chair: It's really important that we avoid jargon because some of the customers were saying even on the website, there's quite a lot of jargon and things that they don't understand. If we can keep as clear of jargon as possible, that would be really helpful.

David Harris: Sure, I'll do my best. In terms of the national standard, there is a national standard, it's set by the Drinking Water Inspectorate (DWI), so when we say to you that SES [Water] is top of the league table, it is actually top of the league table compared in exactly the same way by the regulator against all other water companies. So in terms of the action here around setting up a national league table, that's already in place.

The important thing that you're saying to us and we're taking away is we're top of that table, let's get that message out to you through social media and whatever else, I fully agree with that.

There was conversation around limescale and hardness of water. A couple of points to make there. I do very importantly, want to make the point that limescale is not harmful to health. It is an aesthetic issue. We are the only company in England that softens the water supply so our water treatment works, there's a special Act of Parliament that requires us to soften our water, we're the only company in England that does that.

Yes, absolutely, I think it was Community Member 1 suggested the handy tips around the distilled water, good suggestion, that comes back to this thing about simple, tangible, easy to digest, so we would agree with that.

Finally, Community Member 2 and Community Member 9 talked about an app. We right at the moment, and Ian is leading on this, we are changing over our IT system, we're upgrading that IT system to enable an app to be used.

We are developing an app because we're getting in the technology to be able to use it, to be able to use it to pump those messages around water quality out to you but also coming down the track shortly, that app will also help you manage water bills as we rollout our smart meter fleet, we're installing 45,000 smart meters this year. So yes to the app, we're in development. To be fair, I think it was either Community Member 9 or Community Member 2 suggested that 12-18 month timeframe, that I would suggest is a reasonable timeframe for that but a lot of the other stuff, Rob, we can reflect on this and come back to you with definitive timeframes but as the panel have suggested, some of this comms stuff can be done quickly and easily and I appreciate, we all appreciate, that with things like the app, that the panel see that that's going to be take a little bit more time. I'll hand over to Ian in case I've missed anything out.

CCW Chair: I'm afraid you've had your five minutes on this one, Ian, unless it's very quick.

Ian Cain: I don't think I need to add too much there, I think David very well and elegantly covered the answers to what I have to – the thing I want to say, Rob, is actually the feedback and challenges were excellent and spot on and there's nothing I disagree with in David's response and there's nothing I disagree with in terms of the intent to take forward and work on all these areas.

CCW Chair: Let's go back to customers then and see if, having heard the explanations that David's given, you feel they were reasonable and sensible feedback? Does anyone feel they weren't or they have something else they want to comment before we agree and move on?

Community Member 6: It was just a quick one, I know we were talking about the national standard that is for drinking water but I think what we were trying to say from a panel is that is, to touch base on what Rob said, that is sometimes full of a lot of jargon that we don't understand as consumers, so I think what we were talking about is having something that made that information simple to be able to understand, understand the ranking, so not necessarily the league table itself but actually how do you then take that information that you guys understand from being experts and put it to the customers so we understand it?

David Harris: Definitely, we note the plain English request, for sure.

CCW Chair: Thanks for that really good clarification, Community Member 6. I think we've got as far as we can with Question 1, so thank you everyone for your input and thanks for the feedback from SES Water. For the record, I think we've agreed those actions, there will be some back and forth over the next period but I think we can move onto the next question.

The next question is Community Member 1. If we can put the question up on screen, off you go.

Community Member 1: A lot of us only really notice SES Water when something goes wrong and one of the most common issues raised has been low water pressure. There's also a wider concern about whether the network is actually keeping up with demand, especially with more houses being built, especially around Surrey and that kind of thing.

What is SES Water doing now to improve resilience and reduce problems like low water pressure, and how will customers see near-term improvements rather than just longer-term plans?

CCW Chair: Thank you, Community Member 1 and just to remind SES Water, please focus on the question, I'll try and keep you directly on it if I possibly can, and don't forget to make your notes, panellists. Okay, is it you David or Ian?

David Harris: Rob, I'll take this question, that's absolutely fine. First of all, to talk about low pressure. How that works, SES [Water] has got a very smart network. You're going to be sick of hearing this but it's true, it's an industry leader in terms of its smart network. One of the elements of that is that we have many, many pressure sensors around the network so that they are triggered when the pressure drops below 10 metres head of pressure. The network also obviously can identify where pressure drops in your local area, if there's a burst on that network, so again we talked about it in answer to the first question, we do use the In Your Area interactive map on our website to alert you to affected areas, on the rare occasions where we do have a drop in pressure. Also our customers can sign up to alerts that they can receive on their mobile phones, again alerting them to where there may be low pressure on the network.

We actually have a very, very small number of properties affected from low pressure. We do, as a result of the Godstone collapse, we do have about 80 properties in the Godstone area that we know have got low pressure, we're addressing that, we're actually on site in Godstone starting from this Monday, to repair the three mains that were damaged when that Godstone Road collapsed. That is the main group of properties affected by that, that suffer from low pressure, otherwise there's very few of them.

In terms of the resilience of our water supplies, resilience and reduce problems to our water supplies, there's a number of dimensions to what we're doing here. Obviously, we are investing in our assets, that's sort of obvious statement Number 1; over the next five years, we're investing £100 million in our assets, both water treatment works but also the resilience of our network. Specifically in that regard, we're renewing about 53 kilometres of our mains pipes and that is to address problems in our network around bursts and low pressure.

In the longer term, how we address this, like other water companies, we've got a 25-year water resilience plan. The question mentioned population growth, we look at our current demand, we look at estimates of population growth, new housing and so on, and we're actually required by the regulator but we do have a plan out to 25 years that ensures that we maintain sufficient supply and resilience of our network to be able to meet that growing demand.

It's probably worth adding here, we are more advanced in our network than most other water companies. SES Water, over the last three investment periods, has had a resilience programme, we finished that programme last year and in simple terms, we're now in a position where every customer within the SES [Water] network can be supplied, if needs be, by two water treatment works.

What that means is that if we have a problem such as a main burst or whatever, we're able to re-valve our network, we're able to reconfigure our network and supply our customers as quickly as we can from an alternative water treatment works or an alternative area of supply.

CCW Chair: Can I just interrupt a second? You've mentioned the map of low pressure, you've mentioned the ability to reconfigure the network, you've mentioned the 25-year plan. How do your customers know about these things? How are you telling them these things?

David Harris: Our water plans, our drought plans and our water resource management plans are on our website. They're quite dense documents but we also have condensed, shorter executive summaries of those two things so that, hopefully not using jargon, so that our customers can readily understand that or dig into more detail if they wish. We also use the other, as I mentioned before, if we have low-pressure events, we use the postcode facility on our website and where customers have registered, we can push out notifications to them on their mobile devices.

CCW Chair: It will be very interesting to see if customers are using any of those methods or know about any of those things. I'm going to therefore hand back to Nicky. Thank you, David for that comprehensive answer and we'll go back to Nicky and see what customers think of it.

TMcK Facilitator: Fantastic, thank you very much, Rob, and thank you, David, for the response. Okay, we've heard what SES [Water] think about the question, we've had their response, how well does that match reality? When you're hearing the response, do you feel that actually is true or do you feel you've got a different version of that as customers?

Community Member 1, I'm going to straight to you because you're the one who asked the question.

Community Member 1: A couple of things, I've had water pressure issues actually, although they said it's quite rare. I did go on the website, I wasn't able to, I put in my postcode, nothing came up. I didn't know you could sign up, if I'm being honest, to get the notifications, that's something that I've learned, I didn't know that was possible to do. But yeah, I've had it and nothing's been on there, I haven't been able to find that information but maybe that's just myself, so it wasn't very easy.

TMcK Facilitator: Did you speak to anyone at SES Water in relation to your water pressure issue or did it resolve?

Community Member 1: I didn't particularly on that, I have in the past but on the most recent occasion, I didn't, no, I sort of left it and hoped and prayed that it would suddenly get better, then I spoke to neighbours and they were in the same position and one of the neighbours did contact SES [Water]. Nobody really got a straightforward answer and eventually, it resolved itself. So I think that's what happens, it can drop.

TMcK Facilitator: That's one way of dealing with it, what would be a gold standard way?

Community Member 1: I didn't know that you could sign up so that would be really beneficial and if that worked, that would be really good and you could get like a little ping on your phone and notification, especially if it's in that postcode and in that area, that would be great and I didn't know that, so I've learned something tonight.

But even if you hadn't signed up, just to be a bit more reliable I guess with when you put in your postcode, a couple have tried it tonight and theirs didn't work and others did, so maybe if that was a little bit more – worked, I guess – a bit more accurate and it was live as well, so the data wasn't out of date saying, "There was low pressure in your area but there shouldn't be now" and you think, "Well, there still is", so that accuracy.

TMcK Facilitator: Do you know what's classed as official low pressure for it to make it onto the website versus what you experienced?

Community Member 1: Haven't a clue. All I know is when it's turn on the tap and there's not a lot coming out, so I wouldn't know all the technicalities.

TMcK Facilitator: Community Member 7, do you want to jump in?

Community Member 7: [inaudible] low water pressure and I am signed up to the alerts but you don't get any, if I'm honest. I'm also listed as a vulnerable customer and it is quite difficult because my son has a rare medical condition which he needs to have a minimum five showers a day, so low pressure is a major issue for me. I have contacted SES [Water] and they're very much like, "We can't see it, we'll monitor it", I'm not getting any good feedback really.

TMcK Facilitator: What makes the water pressure go back to normal?

Community Member 7: We have no idea, it's pot luck. We have nurses come daily to do treatment on my son. We get the discount for vulnerable people that do need more water, so I am part of that programme with SES [Water]. But we've been in this house now a year and it's not good, it's quite bad, the low pressure and they are aware of it but they don't seem to do anything about it, if I'm honest.

TMcK Facilitator: When you've spoken to SES [Water] about the issue itself ...?

Community Member 7: They just say to me they're not aware of it and they'll log it in the area; they don't tell me anything else. So it's like "Are you signed up to the alerts?", "Yes, I am", "Am I a vulnerable customer?", "Yes, I am", "Am I on the Priority", "Yes, I am," "Okay".

TMcK Facilitator: Just to help everyone listening understand, you'll use your shower and it will be coming out at a rate you're used to and then you'll use it another time and it's a bit slower?

Community Member 7: Yeah. [inaudible] so you can imagine we rely on showers very heavily and when the nurse comes, we actually have to pump his bowel with water, so it is a problem and I do believe SES [Water] are aware of it but [inaudible].

TMcK Facilitator: In terms of actions, it sounds to me that when you're ...

Community Member 7: You can't just say to them on the phone, it's a constant battle of – and it's not a complaint – but it's a constant battle, I've mentioned it with you guys, letting you guys making me aware, telling me it's going to be changing but nothing ever changes. So it's then the expectation like Community Member 1 says, you kind of take pot luck with it. And I feel like if you had an app or you actually used the text alert to say, "There is affected in your area", it would make it better for us to be able to say, "Okay, cool." I don't think it would do me any favours in terms of treatment wise for my son, but it is what it is.

TMcK Facilitator: It sounds to me both yourself and Community Member 1, you suffer from low pressure at times, at varying times throughout the year but it's not enough low pressure for it to register with SES [Water] and when they're looking into it, they're a bit like, "Not really sure we're seeing much here."

Community Member 7: Yes.

TMcK Facilitator: Community Member 9, do you want to go ahead?

Community Member 9: It was really the question that you asked to Community Member 1 in terms of do you know what low pressure is? And then it was left slightly hanging, dare I say, so I'd just like to add the second half of that, is there a company or national area, a standard that says, is low pressure just Community Member 1's tap dribbles and Community Member 7 can't get a decent shower for her son? Or actually is it there is a, I don't know whatever measurement, pounds per square inch or something that comes out of the tap that then constitutes that is low pressure or that is not low pressure or is that acceptable pressure? I think in terms of the action for SES [Water] from this is, "Do you know what low pressure is?", well tell us what low pressure is, what does that mean for you and is it actually your service has to be disrupted or recorded as 60% of the time to falling to that situation where action will be taken? Or is there a metric that says water pressure has got to be consistent for 90% of the supply etc?

TMcK Facilitator: I think there's a couple of things here, "I've got low pressure", I think they use how long it takes up to fill up a bucket of water, there's a bit of a measure there for that, but there's also varying water pressure and that seems to be an issue as well which in the mind of the consumer, it's still low water pressure or it's still different and it's an issue and I guess, what I'm hearing from Community Member 1 and Community Member 7 is that it's an issue that's just sort of in the ether, no-one really has an answer, it's just sort of out there and it's not potentially doing great things for customer experience, potentially.

Community Member 9: But it seems to be consistent or inconsistent or occasional, doesn't it? Seems to be the two, either you've got a permanent low pressure and your tap just dribbles or you've got inconsistent water pressure whereby sometimes it's good and sometimes it's not.

TMcK Facilitator: That's what it sounds like to me as well. Community Member 2, do you want to jump in just now?

Community Member 2: Talking about where you touched on how long it takes to fill a bucket of water, that chimes with me because I got a water saving product which was a pressure reducing connector you put between your shower hose and your shower head, and it said you shouldn't use it if it took longer than however long it took to fill, I don't know, a one litre container.

So if pressures are easily measured in that way then it would be good for SES [Water] to issue advice so that customers can grab a one litre container or whatever they're going to use, time how long it takes to fill up and then they can say, "It took me two minutes", and I look at the scale that SES [Water] have provided, "That's moderate water pressure" or it took ten minutes, that's low water pressure or it took 30 seconds, that's high.

So there's an instant way for the customer to find out a very sort of simplistic way of finding out the water pressure. But also they could then be encouraged to log that over time and that's more data to go back to SES [Water], rather than the customer saying, "It's low pressure today", you can say, "Over the last two weeks, three weeks, I checked it four or five times and this is the results", so it helps them in the long run to try and identify what these water pressure issues are maybe.

TMcK Facilitator: I think that's a really good shout, thank you very much. I'm going to go to Community Member 8, then Community Member 11 and then I'm going to add in a couple of notes of my own.

Community Member 8: I think that what Community Member 2 has described would be really useful because I have a perception which is rather different than Community Member 7's, but is also a problem, which is it's not that sometimes the pressure is good and sometimes it isn't here, my perception is that over this year, it has declined quite substantially and the reason I say that is – and it's consistent – so when I turn on the tap, I have to turn it on further to get it coming out a decent amount and also, if for example, I'm having a shower, my other half goes downstairs and switches on a cold tap, that makes the pressure drop right down and I'm getting mostly the hot water, so it's actually too hot to go on your skin. That didn't used to happen and I would love an easy way of being able to test it and find out that this is outside of the range of normal, and then say, "Look, what are you going to do about this because it didn't used to be like this?".

TMcK Facilitator: I'm going to reiterate that Community Member 10 has mentioned that's also happening to them as well, he's put that in the chat, so we can maybe get some discussion around that in a second.

Community Member 11: Community Member 2 mentioned the works map that you can see on the website. Something we noticed in the last session, it wasn't relevant in the places I was looking at but a few people commented on how the works map wasn't actually up to date when they were walking round and could see live works happening in the streets nearby their house. Since that session, I have then tested that theory and when I have seen SES Water signs on works and different things like that, I have then gone onto the works map to check if it's live and updated and they haven't been.

So I just wondered how live is live in as far as a works update, so I can see obviously there's ones that say they're planned and in train or being looked into, but some of the ones I've driven past or are clearly maybe emergency works or I'm not sure of reasons, aren't even on there, so I wondered how, with the website update, has that live map also been more updated?

TMcK Facilitator: What's your expectation there? I'm assuming if they're digging in the ground, it needs to be on the map so it's useful, is that what you're saying?

Community Member 11: Yes, I think the problem we have in Edenbridge, because there's like one street and if the utility networks don't talk to each other, they can all arrive on the same day for emergency works and that has happened on more than one occasion, we've had water, electric and everything blocking the high street with many different sets of traffic lights, it could be one's at one end of the high street, one's at the other and the whole place just comes to a complete and utter halt, there's no in between because there's nowhere else to go, and it can be the same if you're trying to go along to Lingfield or Gatwick or anything like that.

When those roads potentially have pot holes being filled or things like that or they've been affected because of the rain and the pipes have burst, lots of different things, that communication doesn't then filter down and then as you can imagine, local Facebook groups and local things are like, "Another set of works that we're just seeing, we've looked on here, they're not mentioned." I suppose how live is live, would be my question?

Community Member 3: I agree with Community Member 11, we've got a stretch of road that's been dug up in the past six months about five times, they obviously keep repairing, we've had leaks, they keep repairing it. I go on the website to look to see if it's showing and there's never not applicable showing, yet they repair it and then they dig it up again and it's still not showing on the website. So it's not up to date.

TMcK Facilitator: I think Community Member 9's put another comment in the chat, "200 yards from me, there's a repair supply connection estimated to finish on 25th March, 7.40am, that's four weeks ago and there's a works reference there for that as well." So it's clear that more can be done, so I think an action that we can take here is to make sure that that potentially very useful resource is kept up to date, as much as possible.

I just want to touch on something we spoke about in the briefing session if you remember. So we got talking about water pressure, what could be behind the varying water pressure? What could be behind issues that we're seeing? And that's when we started to talk about resilience and about network investment and about future-proofing the supply.

We listened to some of the response from SES Water in relation to that, has anyone got anything to say in relation to that response or anything further to add about how they could communicate their future investments? Any thoughts at all?

Community Member 8: Not so much about the water pressure but the resilience of supply, obviously what happened at the beginning of the year was quite scary for a lot of people, when Tunbridge Wells went without water for a few weeks, and there was also East Grinstead was without water for a week or so. Okay, that's not SES [Water]'s area but it's next to or adjacent to SES [Water]'s area, like Edenbridge, for example, is not that far from it and that is within SES [Water]. Could it happen to us?

TMcK Facilitator: Interestingly, just very quickly, David did mention as part of his response that actually, every single area in SES [Water] is covered by two supply areas and the big problem with South East Water was that they only had one supply area, that went offline and the problems then persisted for a few weeks. So I think potentially, David's got an opportunity – or SES [Water] have got an opportunity – to talk about the benefits of having two supplies per region.

Community Member 8: That's what I'm saying, he said that to us and that is reassuring to us, it is to me, but I don't know how many customers, I bet none of them know that, I didn't until now. It would be really useful to know and having two of them, does that solve the

problem? Because if one of them goes down, is there enough water left for everybody or does it just mean like you're going to have to ration it or some areas are not going to have it? I don't know.

TMcK Facilitator: I'm sure it will be different for every area but I think you've hit on a really important point here about communication and there's so much information and annual reports that water companies put out about infrastructure, about all the things they're doing that are positive but it doesn't mean anything to the customer and it's about trying to create stories that really resonate in a way that people can understand, and I think to your point, if one thing goes off supply, "We've got a back-up supply ready for you", these are ways that they can communicate infrastructure I guess, quite simply.

Community Member 2: Thinking about the resilience and dual water supply, really I think one of the things that we need to know is – and this could be on a quarterly basis or yearly basis – is how much supply and demand there is. It could be a very simple table, it could be done such that you can see that the usage is let's say if we use coffee mugs, that the whole of the SES [Water] area are using say two coffee mugs but the supply is four coffee mugs, so we can see easily that the amount of water available is far, far above the actual usage.

But then to have that for previous years would be of interest but to project forward as well because we've talked about new developments and the strain on the system that that would create, and it would be nice to see how they're factoring that in, in a very simplistic way, moving forward.

Community Member 9: The point of that sort of trip-over, if one supply is not working, you can open the valves for the other one. On the point of resilience then, does that apply, I'm just thinking nationally, if there's a water shortage in one area or if there's issues in the likes of Tunbridge Wells and Uckfield, can water companies almost import water from another water company? So the same principle, the trip-over, if I've got a surfeit of water up in the North West, is there any way that somehow through the system, that could be transferred to the South East? Or is it a case of never the twain shall meet? Or the pipes don't connect?

TMcK Facilitator: I'm going to assume the pipes probably don't go that far or there will be things in place.

Community Member 9: You could go through a series of water companies, like a canal network if you like. But if SES [Water] has a surfeit of water, could it loan some to a neighbouring water company? That's just a thought.

TMcK Facilitator: I'm going to share my screen now and go through very quickly what's been said. We can see the question on the left-hand side and the company response. There is a smart network in place, it's industry leading. Very few properties are affected by low water pressure which has perhaps been refuted somewhat in what we're hearing in the group. But it might come down to what is classed as low pressure from an industry perspective.

Every customer can be supplied with two waterworks, ensuring versatility in terms of supply issue. Many pressure sensors around the network, triggered when the pressure falls below a certain level. Customers can sign up to alerts on the mobile phone alerting about low pressure on the network. There's a live works map available on the website, again we've spoke about potential issues with that map that we'll get to in a second, and information as provided on the website about pressure as required. We spoke about the 25-year water resilience plan forecasting demand including population growth and property development, investing in assets over the next five years, there's £100 million investment going in and renewing 53 kilometres of mains pipe to address any potential issues in the future about bursts and low pressure.

We then had a good chat just now and we've got a number of different actions that we want SES Water to consider.

Let's try and communicate official definitions of low pressure, what threshold must be breached for this in lay terms and communicate that to customers because it's clear, just from this discussion, that people are suffering from – as customers – what they see to be low pressure, however it's maybe not being picked up by the network. So what's getting done about that? What can good look like there?

Educate customers in how they can measure whether they have low pressure in their home and encourage them potentially to log this, to help identify ongoing issues.

There is a gap between customer experience and official tracking data and comms in relation to low pressure, so what is the appropriate action and follow-up from companies in circumstances when there appears to be low pressure? When we spoke to Community Member 1 and Community Member 7 about that, it seems to just go into the ether and there isn't really a resolution found.

We want to see SES [Water] deal with inconsistent water pressure better.

We want to ensure that the works map is actually up to date, there's a few examples given where it's clearly not the case at the moment.

Want to better advertise the opportunity to sign up to text alerts for low pressure events and ensure these are sent out during events that customers are experiencing.

Communicate the infrastructure in a more friendly manner, taking current events such as that of Tunbridge Wells and saying, "Actually, we've invested to prevent this from happening" and talk about it in a way that people can quickly resonate with in a digestible manner.

Show data about supply and demand quarterly and annually in an easily digestible manner about what people are using, what's available and why there's risk mitigation within that.

Again, going back to the room before we hand back to SES [Water] and Rob here. What are our thoughts on what we see here? Does this summarise our discussions quite nicely do we feel? A few nods there, anyone want to jump in? The next column is timescales so maybe have a think about when you'd want to see actions be achieved by.

Community Member 8: Putting together Points A⁷ and B⁸, we found out earlier that an app is being developed, could it be used firstly to push notify people if there is a problem in the area? Secondly, so that people can report a problem, whether it's water pressure or taste or something else, again using their app? Because it's one thing for people to go round measuring their water pressure, it's another thing to get the information back from them and this is a way you can provide it.

TMcK Facilitator: So we're looking for two-way communication via app or potentially initially some other format before the app is available?

Community Member 8: Yes, an app's a wonderful thing, sometimes it's just a web version of the internet, it's fairly pointless, it's static, but using it for what it's good at, because it

⁷ Action Point A: Communicate official definitions of 'low pressure' – what threshold must be breached for this to be communicated to customers.

⁸ Action Point B: Educate customers on how they can measure whether they have low water pressure in their own home and encourage them to log this over time to help identify low water pressure issues.

already knows where you are, that is a big advantage compared to website and you can therefore send push notifications, and you can receive information back.

Community Member 9: Two quick points, one is a point of clarification on the 25-year water resilience plan, presumably that's a rolling plan that is updated at set intervals, otherwise if you could predict 25 years out from now, you'd be a rich man. The second point just on the self-reporting on low water pressure, I've put that note in the comment, my only slight concern here is would that be open to abuse? If I've got low water pressure, I'd fill up my bucket and it fills up in 45 seconds but I want SES Water to do something about it, I start bombarding them with messages via the app saying, "It's taken me five minutes to fill up my bucket, come out and do something". I think great idea but a cautionary note or comment that I think that could be potentially open to abuse and then you set customer expectations as "I can report that my bucket is taking three minutes to fill up, but SES Water haven't come out and done anything about it", so we might be making a rod for their own back there.

TMcK Facilitator: Noted. Community Member 5?

Community Member 5: Just the "what will we do in the future?" There have been things that have been produced in the past, we're back to this "5 year, 5 pledges" thing, so that in the previous five years, there was a commitment, a pledge to spend £200 million "to keep running our up-to-date operations and investing £40 million on improving our service." Where did that money go? How was it invested? Was it successful? Was it tangible? Can we see it? Can we have it explained to us? Because obviously, we've now got a figure which they're talking about investing in assets over the next five years of £100 million. What exactly are we targeting? Is it measurable?

TMcK Facilitator: Great points, thank you. Community Member 10?

Community Member 10: Yeah, my point was just on the pressure piece. I agree that you will require the customers to be sensible when using it but I'm sure like if there is a genuine issue in an area, they would get multiple reports from that area, which could lead to better actions.

TMcK Facilitator: I think that makes sense and it's not really for us to come up with a complete solution this evening, how they handle customer interactions, it's about creating a platform – because that's what we're looking for – so that customers can easily log, "I think my pressure's a bit low" and then obviously they have the data to potentially do something about it, if required. So I think that's a really sensible point.

Okay, I'm conscious of time so if we're happy just to go with the, I think with the last one with the timescales, you were all quite happy for SES [Water] to look and have a pragmatic hat on and create timeframes that you can then reflect back on.

If anyone has strong opinions on timeframes, say it now or say it in a second but for now, I think I'm going to hand back to Rob, just in the interests of time, to summarise.

CCW Chair: Great, thanks Nicky and thanks to the panel for their excellent feedback. That was a really interesting conversation. We're going to go back to the company now and see if there is agreement on these actions and see if there are any constraints or problems with them. We're going back to Ian and Graham.

Ian Cain: It's me, Rob. We don't have Graham tonight but I'll go anyway. So thank you everybody, again really good feedback and I'll be as brief as I can to allow time for the next session, so in that spirit, Community Member 5 raised a point there about measurable use of funding, we may cover that in the next question, I don't know but it is measurable, we

have to do a good job of explaining that to you. Secondly, Community Member 9, thank you for your sympathy to us, we don't want a rod on our back either, but we are here for you so the feedback's important for us to respond to.

The good news that we do have which a number of you have said a few times, we do need to get through, it's really hard frankly to get good news through in an industry under scrutiny, as water industry is, let's make no mistake about that. But we clearly need to work harder on that and we will. So we do as David says, not only have water quality but also the way in which we manage our network and we need to help understand that and why.

There are many more ways to communicate in plain English than it's evident that we are taking right now, so I take that feedback onboard again, so we need to leave the jargon behind. It's very clear from this conversation, if this was a sample of our customers and representatives, that we don't always get things right, that's very clear. On that note, Community Member 1, Community Member 7, be really interesting for us to find out a bit more about your own experiences and we can get your details hopefully after the session through our colleagues on the call, so we can get closer to your issues and understand them and support where we can.

We're not updating maps is what I'm really hearing in terms of where work is. We need to invest more time in getting that right. We have invested, as part of the last session, in the new website, we have got the new website up and running, it feels like the next part and one of the things we are reviewing now is who's owning all the pages? Who's owning all the content? How quickly do they update? What's live? What's not live and what's our commitment to keep that so?

Our commitment is of course that you shouldn't be searching for the data. You shouldn't be phoning us to chase the data about a job that you can see in the road or outside your home, that you don't think is on the website. So we need to work harder at that and clearly we need to take that action forward.

With regard to pressure, I'll try and avoid the jargon but I'll just throw a bit at you: there are measures, whether it's PSI or whether it's bars. We think that two bars is about the norm and the average that you go for, one bar, just to give you an insight into that, is enough to push water up 10 metres, but what we need to do is put that in plain English on our website to help people understand what they're looking for, what they might test but of course, we want people to ring us and tell us when there is a problem so that we can help and understand that as quickly as we can through technicians' visits or something like that.

And that would be helpful, that was mentioned, we talked about that in the last session, it will help in many respects, we need people to register when we get it out there of course, but it can help us understand where road closures are, we can update, it can be two-way, it can help us understand leaks, it can help customers understand bills, smart meter information, consumption, etc. So I think the common theme through here has been the use of that kind of technology which we need to get to the market as quickly as we possibly can.

From the point of view of supply and demand information, there is more we can do on that, so we can certainly work with the challenge here to understand what we can do and when, and with regard to the longer term plan, the 25 year plan, obviously it is a continuous work in progress for the industry, not just 25 years but over far longer, to understand what we need to do as an industry in order to ensure that we've all got enough water and we all manage water efficiently over time.

We can transport water, as one of our customers was alluding to there, we do know, for example, that by 2032, the industry will have connected the Grand Union Canal from

Birmingham down to London, so that's a fairly significant thing to do and there are other strategic reservoirs being built by other water companies and of course, we're taking our own measures as SES Water to ensure we have resources over time.

So that's a very quick response to the feedback and challenge, which again, I have to say, are welcome, it was a super discussion and we will work with all of that feedback.

CCW Chair: Great, thank you very much for that feedback. With massive apologies to David for calling you Graham. Can we go back to customers and see was that answer reasonable? Are you happy with it? It seemed to be very constructive, as far as I can see but you're the customers, you're the ones at the sharp end. Any views or comments? I can't see any. Okay, in that case, we will close Question 2. For the record, we have agreed those actions, obviously there will be a bit of back and forth between SES Water and customers over the next few weeks, so that will settle somewhere in that period. But we will then move onto Question 3 and I'm going to ask ...

TMcK Facilitator: Very quickly, before we do that, I need to do some substitutions here. So we're going to say goodbye to David and I'm going to bring Laura in.

CCW Chair: Thank you David Harris for your time this evening, it's been great having you.

Ian Cain: Can I just thank David as well? Thank you.

CCW Chair: We're now going to bring Laura Flowerdew in, she's the Chief Financial Officer, I believe, to support Ian on this final question. It's going to be asked by Community Member 8, so that question is going to pop up. Is Laura in?

Laura Flowerdew: I am, yes.

CCW Chair: Brilliant, thank you, Laura. Over to you, Community Member 8.

Community Member 8: A lot of us judge value for money, not just by what we pay but by how easy the company is to deal with, how clear the information is and whether we feel informed and in control. Because we can't switch provider, things like comparing bills, better communication, easy access to information and more modern ways of managing our account really matter.

SES Water already offers account information and area updates online, but what will you do to make cost comparisons with other providers clearer, and improve the day-to-day customer experience so people feel they are getting better value for money?

CCW Chair: Thank you, Community Member 8, and just for Laura's sake, a reminder to please focus on the answer to the question and not the sort of context or anything like that. With that, I don't know if Laura, you're answering this question first or Ian?

Laura Flowerdew: We might do a bit of a double act but if I say a few words and then I'll see whether Ian wants to add in as well. We have seen a lot of focus on bills over the last year or so and appreciate that when you can't switch, it's really important for customers to know where their money goes and feel that they get value for money. I'd probably just say a couple of things about the SES Water bill comparatively as a starting point and then we can talk about some of the things we've been trying to do around communication to make sure that people understand what their money is spent on and therefore, the value they can get. Ian can then add in, in terms of the customer service angles around that as well.

Across the water companies in the UK, last year, water bills went up by around 26% but by comparison, SES Water's bills stayed relatively flat. So they're about £230 last year but there will be an increase that's about £26 in this next year, from 1st April, for the next 12 months,

about £26 for the year takes it up to a little bit over £250 and that's really helping to fund some of the investment that we've touched on a little bit in the conversation so far, but around things like continuing to invest to soften water in some areas, I've heard about concerns about hard water, we're one of the only companies that do water softening, which is reflective of some of the water that we have in the area and there is continued investment in that.

We're also renewing the pipes that bring water to you, that helps with water quality, making sure it stays in the same really high water quality that leaves our treatment works, when it comes to your door. And then also, upgrades and improvements in our water treatment works themselves. So we're doing work around that and that has an impact on bills in the area but as I say, it's about a £26 bill increase to just over £250 for this current year.

Where does that money go? Well, some of it is around, that increase is around investment but it's also about running our operations and maintaining our assets day to day, and we know that customers are interested in what that money pays for and we have updated our website to give more information around that, so on that new website that Ian's referenced, we have updated information to try and give more information about where the money goes, how that helps ensure that we're running our operations efficiently. And if I give a sense of it, for every pound you pay, 33p of that goes on running our operations day to day, 13p goes on energy, we pump water to the treatment works around the network to get the water to you, as well as use energy in the treatment process, so 13p goes on energy. 12p goes on the people that are running those assets, running the customer contact centres where you have questions and queries, whether that's operational or around your bill.

We pay about 5p out of every £1 we spend on things like business rates, abstraction from the rivers, we pay charges to the Environment Agency and licences to our regulators. And then the remaining 37p is either directly funding investment from your bill or it's funding our investors who put up a lot of money upfront in order to enable improvements to be made, investment to be made, which they then receive a return through either interest, I would say dividends but in SES [Water], we haven't paid dividends for a while, they would over a long time, hope to get a return but at the moment, that hasn't happened in the business.

CCW Chair: Laura, can I just ask you, can you focus a bit on value for money, how you're demonstrating what you're doing is value for money for the customers?

Laura Flowerdew: Everything we do is heavily scrutinised by our regulators. I guess it's important to say we are benchmarked across others in the sector and you can also see our bills compared to others, so we think we're a little bit below the average bill for a water-only bill. You can compare, there is a huge amount of information, whether that's around water quality, whether it's around customer service, whether it's around more operational performance like leakage, there is comparisons around that that you can see, and which we try to talk in terms of what we're doing on social media, on some of the communications we give.

We do try now alongside our bills, to give some explainers of where that bill goes, why it is I guess value for money and trying to help customers understand why the bill is at the level that it is. And so I guess that's all about trying to share with customers what the purpose of their bill is and how it references value for money.

CCW Chair: There's a lot in there to unpick and I'm going to park you, Laura, for a second and go back to customers to get their feedback on your answer and see if they've got any comments, questions, concerns about anything that you've said. Nicky, over to you.

TMcK Facilitator: Thanks, Rob, and thank you very much, Laura, for that answer. Yes, as Rob said, let's have a chat about what we've heard and see if there's any further questions, what sort of actions could we challenge SES [Water] with to take away and think about? I'm going to come straight back to Community Member 8 who set the question and just see what your thoughts are on the response.

Community Member 8: I'll just run through the points you made. You talked about that overall, there was a 26% price rise last year for other companies and yours was lower, but this year yours are going to go up by 11%. That's obviously a lot more than inflation, which is a bit concerning. Of course, there's an argument that a lot of water companies have got old pipes and stuff and they want to upgrade them, but a lot of that controversy has been about the treatment of wastewater and you guys aren't responsible for wastewater, you're only doing the drinking water inbound supply and in our bills, I'm not really clear, I don't think it's clear what's going to you and what's going to Thames Water or whoever else for dealing with the waste products and how that's changed.

Also, you mentioned that there is information about your bills where they are versus other companies. I don't know where that is, couldn't find it on the website. Earlier on, somebody had what I thought was a brilliant idea about a league table of water quality. Wouldn't it be great if on Page 1 of the bill, there's a league table of water quality and also a league table of water prices, so you can see what your water would have cost you if you were living in Brighton or Bristol or Manchester, so you can compare.

You also talked about the breakdown of how the money is spent and the biggest category was really not a category, it was several things lumped together, it was capital expenditure, cost of financing as in debt and also returns to shareholders, which would be dividends and buy-backs. I would have liked to have seen those things separated out because I want to know what you're making, and I can't know what you're making if you put all those things together like that.

TMcK Facilitator: Thank you very much, I really like that idea of the league table, if you are paying money then it gives a great opportunity for the water company to explain why and shine a bit of a light on "This is what's causing it and here's what we're doing about it," and it opens up that sort of honest discussion, so I like that idea, thank you for that. Community Member 10, do you want to jump in?

Community Member 10: I saw that Laura gave a breakdown of where the money is being spent. I think that would be something quite useful to include on bills, for example, so generally for example, when we do our tax returns and stuff, we can generally see how the tax money has been spent, so something like that on the bill would be quite useful. Secondly, she mentioned that SES [Water] is cheaper than some of the other ones so similar to what Community Member 8 said, a comparison of other companies would be quite good to see.

TMcK Facilitator: Has anyone else got any thoughts in terms of overall value for money, how things are communicated? How that relates to customer experience, that we want to go into? Community Member 5?

Community Member 5: Going back to the pledges that were given five years ago to 2025, there was a suggestion, well more than a suggestion, there was a table suggesting that come 2024/25, that the average water bill would be £164. Obviously, we're now faced with a bill of £256 as an average. Again, what I'm saying is, I'm going back to what I said previously, there's no explanation as to why things didn't happen.

TMcK Facilitator: It's that reflective piece, isn't it, Community Member 5, where you're seeing data that says "This is the plan" but the reality is things have changed and I guess if

they're not answering that and squaring, closing that circle, then it raises more questions perhaps.

Community Member 5: It does. Do you trust for the future if you're told something that was given just five years ago that doesn't appear to have been acted upon?

TMcK Facilitator: And I'm sure there's very relevant reasons for it.

Community Member 5: Yes, I'm sure there is.

TMcK Facilitator: That they will be very able to answer, it's just making sure they get that communicated to you as a customer. Community Member 11?

Community Member 11: More of a comment, the bills are very clear in the way they come through and they're very informative. I think for me, when I look at them, for an average household of two, I'm told that I'm using excessively less water than I could be, I get no benefit for using less water apart from a pat on the back on my bill and you know, things like that. Whilst it's interesting to know that I use lower than average water for a household of two and that is the equivalent of baths or pints or whatever, which is very plain English, it's understandable, I think the thing that I then question is you're telling me that, I'm using below average, you're telling me I could do better and use less again but there's no benefit to me for doing that per se, there's no financial benefit, there's no reward in that instance apart from using less water. I suppose it maybe just evidencing that, you're paying your money, you break down where the pound goes and you're showing me that I'm using less water, but my bills are going up, that doesn't add up for me.

TMcK Facilitator: Obviously you're metered which is how they know you're using less, does that not mean your bill naturally goes down versus someone that's using more?

Community Member 11: It doesn't feel like it does and I think I explained it on our last session when we were talking about the bills, etc. and I said, "Our bills are pretty consistent, our sewage water bill doubled overnight last year but specifically that, it feels like I then, a week later, got a letter to be like, "And now your bill will be going up by X-amount of money because we're making all these improvements." It just seemed like I was marketed with the rest of everyone, it wasn't like a personalised thing, whereas the bill seems personalised about how much you spend, how much you use but it doesn't feel like it goes down when you're then getting a thing to say it's going up in price. I don't know, I can't explain it, but with the cost of living, it's quite hard to understand why things are going up.

TMcK Facilitator: So you're doing everything you can at your side, but the price is going up and there's no recognition of that potentially.

Community Member 11: Yes, I could use above the average and it would feel the same, I suppose.

TMcK Facilitator: You'd be charged more surely?

Community Member 11: You would think but it's not clear in the bills is what I'm saying. It's not clear whether me using less water would save me more money or if I used more, it would cost me more but either way, my bills are going up.

TMcK Facilitator: I wonder if an action could be a comparative, not just you're using less than people but "Here's how much you've saved as a result"?

Community Member 11: Yes, something like that.

TMcK Facilitator: Okay, we can add that as an action, that's fab. Community Member 6?

Community Member 6: This was just to expand on what Community Member 11 was saying. It's slightly different but if I think about energy companies, they quite often do like Saver Sunday, so if you save using the amount of time on a Sunday, I think we're with EDF, so if we reduce our energy between a certain period of the time during the week, on a Sunday, we get free electricity, so they're not necessarily ... well they do lower it because they give you the money back but it's something where it's almost in retrospect, so you save the energy during the week, get free energy on a Sunday and then they take it off your bill retrospectively, so the next month, it comes off. But that would be more, that incentivises us to use less energy and could sort of not be an action but something for SES [Water] to think about, could they implement something like that? I think a lot of companies are moving more towards that.

TMcK Facilitator: I know the energy industry did that for a very good reason because they have to sort of displace all the excess- I think the challenge here is can SES [Water] consider ways to incentivise, almost gamify usage in a way that is going to engage customers?

Community Member 6: Yes, because I think as well, it's something where you're not then lowering everyone's bill and then suddenly everyone starts using it and you're having to put it up. It's something where actually in retrospect, it's almost going off of the monthly or weekly usage, etc. so it's just something where it could help and maybe Community Member 11 might feel a bit better about her bill, if you see what I mean, it's something along those lines, it's just something to have a think about and maybe an action to take away.

CCW Chair: What you're saying is that you'd like SES [Water] to try some innovative tariff trials, essentially?

Community Member 6: Yes, because I think the point that everyone made is we can't choose who we have, right? You go with whoever supplies your area, so actually having something that incentivises you to be better for the environment or as you say, the different tariff side of things, would maybe benefit other people or be more with the times, I suppose, especially with, as we say, value for money and everyone is focusing on bills at the moment, everybody is paying out a lot more than necessarily ... with the living wage going up, etc., so it's just something to consider.

TMcK Facilitator: I'm aware of time but I'm going to come to Community Member 9 and then Community Member 2.

Community Member 9: I agree with Community Member 8 that I think the pound breakdown lumped together too many categories that it became a bit hazy. On a similar type vein, I understand water bills are going up but being metered, so pay for what you use but it's not clear then that the sewage which is contracted out as Thames Water, then you get a bill as a total that tells you "You're using this water but you're also paying this much for sewage", but I guess there's no such thing as sewage being metered, it's just a lump, it would be nice to know a little bit more about what-

TMcK Facilitator: So is this an issue for Thames Water to consider or is it something that SES [Water] could do something about?

Community Member 9: By dint of the fact that SES Water contracted out to Thames Water and are enforcing that on the customer, I think SES [Water] has a moral obligation, semantics, you could argue.

TMcK Facilitator: I'm not sure if it's like a contracting situation, I think we can maybe get clarity on that.

Community Member 9: Could we have some clarity on the arrangement between SES [Water] and Thames Water because it's a little bit hazy.

Community Member 2: Just touching on the whole idea of tariffs, it just felt very similar to the situation you find yourself in with a mobile phone contract where you can choose different levels of usage and then you pay a certain price for that. That could be applied to water, if you were a very, very low user, then you could be on the low user tariff and then you would pay significantly less maybe or however it works, than someone who's an extreme user, who uses it all the time. So you could choose which tariff that you went for and then that would be more suitable to you, so that would be a bit more tailored to the individual user rather than just one tariff for everybody.

TMcK Facilitator: I think with the water industry, it's a bit behind the energy in terms of smart metering but I think certainly when smart metering comes in, these things will be ...

Community Member 2: Rolled out.

TMcK Facilitator: More available, to be considered but I think one of the actions to take away is, is there something that SES [Water] can do right now to try and help customers engage more with their bill? Engage more with usage and make it seem a bit more ...?

Community Member 2: Exactly, thank you.

TMcK Facilitator: Community Member 11, very quickly?

Community Member 11: I would just say just in response to Community Member 9, I actually rang, when I first moved here, I rang SES Water because I came from a Thames Water area in Croydon and Thames Water was the bill, that was it and moving here, the previous homeowners didn't know there were two bills so they hadn't paid one and it's a brand new house development. When I rang, they perfectly explained it to me, they said "Tell us the date you moved in", all of that stuff, but what they explained was, "This is your whole water usage and then the remainder, Southern Water, will take ... SES Water will tell us how much clean water you've used and then Southern Water will then subtract the remainder and that's what they'll charge you for, for your sewage water," and I would imagine Thames Water is the same. But it was really interesting, having that conversation and I wouldn't have ever learned that had I not spoken to someone on the phone and had to deal with that hands-on whilst setting up the account. I would say only just now, before this meeting, is when I got my online account and I've lived here for nearly five years, so that's just something to bear in mind, that not everyone deals on computers and accounts and different things like that. Only through doing this research have I got an online account and set up all of that stuff but if I hadn't have spoken to anyone as a real person, rather than like a chat bot, I would never have learned that information as to why I have two separate bills.

TMcK Facilitator: It's a perfect example of when you work in an industry, you kind of know everything and you just assume that customers are at a certain level of understanding along with you, but it's clear that that's just not the case with water or with waste and there's so much more that can be done to really simplify things and remove that jargon and make it feel that you're almost like a partner with them and you understand what they're saying to you, and what the core needs are from your perspective.

I'm going to share my screen and we're going to very quickly go through where we've got to here. Obviously, we asked the question and we had a great response from SES [Water] in terms of explaining why the bills have gone up. It's about up to date investment via, in terms of the infrastructure, it's available on a website, they're the only company that actually does water softening and has continuous investment in this area, there's upgrades

in improvements in water treatment. Bill increases also go running operations and maintaining the assets. For every £1, there's a breakdown: 33p goes into running operations, 13p into energy, 12p into people running the assets and the customer contact centres, 5p into business rates, licences and there's some more money went into things like finance and servicing debts.

And obviously, there's explainers of where the bill goes provided within the bill and there's going to be investing in pipes to ensure the water quality is consistent from source to tap into the future, to try and build that value for money reception.

Lots of comments from us and we've got some core actions and as I'm reading them out, if we need to sharpen them up, please just jump in as I'm saying them.

A, we want to provide customers with clarity around operational agreement between fresh water and wastewater service providers, including the billing split. It's clearly not understood whose responsibility it is, how it all works, so just try and start from Ground Zero on that one and explain to customers better what that arrangement is.

Provide customers with reflective communications, Community Member 5 raised a really important point, if plans and promises are not delivered and are still available on the website, across a five-year plan, let's communicate that and just be honest and transparent about it.

Include billing comparison against comparable household average and billing communications with customers and do that in pounds and pence because that's a lot better to understand and to gain that value for money perception.

Explore innovative, creative tariffs as methods to incentivise customers to reduce usage and bills and just really make people interact more with their water usage. Get customers understanding and engaging with their usage and how that impacts them.

Identify and address areas of information asymmetry between customers and the company, provide a league table of water prices provided with the bill.

And that can work nicely with the league table of water quality and again, if there are big differences between SES [Water] and Portsmouth [Water], for example, explain why that's the case and use it as a mechanism to have an open and honest conversation with customers.

Include a breakdown of spending within the bill and provide more detail on the financing, I think it was potentially Community Member 9 who mentioned that there are a bit of ambiguity in some of the breakdowns of financing and more clarity is required there, so that customers who want to can get a much better understanding of the financial leverage that's used within the business.

And that's the actions, any customer input at this stage?

Community Member 8: I just want to say I think that that's going in the right direction but I'd be a bit more granular with some of them, for example, on Point B⁹, which is about reflective, this session for example, is making a lot of pledges about what's going to happen in the future. Are we going to come back in a year's time or two years' time, or will some other people like us come back that in that time, to see whether these things have been

⁹ Action Point B: Providing customers with reflective communications – if plans and promises are not delivered, proactively communicate this with honesty and transparency.

done because obviously, what was supposed to be happening about prices didn't happen, it's gone up a lot more.

The second one is C¹⁰, I think it would be nice to see more than a comparison of our price against an average somewhere else, but more like a league table, similar to the idea of the quality one. I think Point D¹¹, you're saying that is difficult because there aren't smart meters in the water world but do you need smart meters? Maybe there's some other way of doing it. And how far away are smart meters? I'd be interested in the views of the people from SES [Water]. Point G¹², what I'm really suggesting there is a more granular breakdown of spending and financing, in other words, where the money goes.

TMcK Facilitator: Really nicely summed up there, Community Member 8. Thank you very much indeed. Rob, I know you were going to come in about how CCW are going to help to hold the actions to account, one of your points Community Member 8 was what if this just goes into the ether and nothing happens with it? I know that CCW have a role within that.

CCW Chair: Yes, we will keep constantly monitoring it and making sure that the action plan that's drawn up is implemented, so there are a number of checks and balances in the system that will make sure this all goes forward. To be honest, if we fail to do that, we will have failed customers, it's really important that out of these sessions come real actions and the change that everybody's been seeking in the water industry on behalf of the customers, so I mean it's a top priority for us.

TMcK Facilitator: To the customers, anything else we want to add here before we give SES [Water] a chance to respond? Are we okay?

CCW Chair: And just to say, we have regular meetings with customers and we'll be making sure we hold them to account in those meetings as well.

TMcK Facilitator: Rob, if you want to hand back to SES [Water].

CCW Chair: Yes, just quickly, we've heard from the customers, we've got the action list, anything that the company wants to say in response to that?

Laura Flowerdew: Yes, let me pick up on a few points. I think it's a great conversation, I got particularly excited about the innovative tariffs, which I think is absolutely a brilliant way forward, but let me pick up on some of the things.

From wastewater, you're absolutely right, we measure the water that you use and then wastewater is billed as an assumption about what water then goes back into the drains to be treated from a wastewater perspective, that's standard in terms of approach. But Thames Water are entirely different, we are not under any contract with them in terms of wastewater but we do have a contract with them to bill on their behalf, which is why you see that come through. We can make that clear on the website on some form of comms if that is helpful.

On reflective communications, I think we probably take this for granted a lot in the sector because we're very, I'm going to say regulated and Ofwat, CCW, DWI and others all make sure that, where we have made commitments that are funded through the bills that we are delivering on those commitments and there are rewards and penalties if we

¹⁰ Action Point C: Include a billing comparison in billing communications

¹¹ Action Point D: Explore innovative/creative tariffs as methods to incentivize customers to reduce water usage and bills – get customers understanding and engaging with their usage and its billing impact

¹² Action Point C: Include breakdown of spending within the bill and provide more detail on the financing – make this easily understandable for customers.

outperform or fail on those. So that is very carefully monitored but we can take away how we maybe make sure that we think about how we talk about how we deliver that.

Certainly investment, we are trying to do more about sharing what information we're doing, when it is being done and when it is completed, so that you get a sense of momentum and delivery against those angles.

Perhaps on the national standards and the league tables, there's actually a website called Discover Water that publishes all the bills, company by company and you can compare that water, waste and combined. It also publishes a lot of the performance charts and so it includes water quality as well, so maybe we can signpost that and pick that up but should be interested, it's a treasure trove of comparison across the sector to see where we're doing, you can see our water quality performance, the lower the better on that measure, we are at zero.

On innovative tariffs, I can get quite excited about this. As mentioned, that's really enabled when we have smart meters and we can understand what you're using, we can look at whether we can understand whether that means there are opportunities for greater water efficiency to reduce bills further, but I think the value of what you're saving if you're below average or what it's costing you if you're above average is something we can take away and look at. I think that's a really good thought as to how we help people understand the value of what they're achieving.

We are in other parts of our regions, in the group, looking at innovative tariffs where we've already installed some smart meters and that's doing things that perhaps Community Member 11 would benefit from, where you're using really small amounts of water, you're on a lower rate for that usage and if you use more, those rates increase. So if you're a high consumer, you're incentivised to use less because you're paying more for that top band, that's had some really good results and it's something that we will look at rolling out. It's in trials at the moment, it relies on smart meters but those smart meters will really give us opportunities to look at how we use different tariffs and indeed, potentially give people options, you can't choose your water supplier but we would like to get to a point we're giving people options around the tariffs that they may choose, similar to mobile phones and energy.

I think we need to make sure that we are always challenging ourselves on information asymmetry and providing data but we also know it needs to be clear, it needs to be easily digestible and thinking about value for money is perhaps around that, coming back to the league table and the benchmarking and so on.

Apologies, I obviously summarised a little too much the complexity of the investment and the funding of the sector in terms of what that means in terms of your bill. We do have a breakdown on our website that tries to explain that better than I obviously did. But we are definitely looking at that again as an area to look at both where does the bill go and then if you're looking at where we're investing or funding investments to improve services, giving more information and trying to demonstrate that we've delivered that as well.

So that is all something that we are doing more of I think than we have done previously but there is always more that we can do, and certainly as we go through delivery of some of the things that we've talked about, the water mains replacements, the water softening, the treatment works upgrades, we will look to share that through communication forums to help people understand what's taking place.

CCW Chair: Great, thank you very much Laura, a comprehensive answer there. So back to customers, anything in that answer you'd like to comment on?

Community Member 8: To what you've said Laura about the Discover Water website, by all means no harm in signposting it but I don't know how many people will really look and probably the information is too much of it and therefore it will be hard to find what you want. I would say instead, just go for something like on the bills, just have a prominent thing, league table of water quality, SES [Water] is Number 1 in the country, great, you know, league table of prices, let's say it's in the top third, as in value for money, so it's in the bottom third for prices, that's okay actually because you've delivered good quality. If you're the most expensive, then actually does it need to be quite as good as good as it is, if we can make it a bit cheaper?

The other thing about tariffs is I understand what you're saying that smart meters would enable you to do more but if for example, you want to reward people who are say in the bottom 10% for water consumption relative to size of house and you want to charge extra for people in the top 10%, all you need is a normal meter to know how much they're using and that would be a way of doing it.

The other thing is there is a big link, I would suspect, between the flexible tariffs or new tariffs and your capital expenditure because if you've got for example, a load of people who have got tariffs that give them big discounts at night, well, they're going to use a load more water for things like dishwasher, washing machine at night and that's the time when not many people are using water, so the peak capacity of water going out is going to be less if you can persuade more people to do that.

CCW Chair: We're running very short of time and Community Member 7 had to go, thank you, Community Member 7 for being here and we understand why you had to go. It is over the 8 o'clock scheduled finish.

I'm going to draw this question to a close and just thank everyone for their contribution, for the record. I think we've got broad agreement on the actions that have come out of that. So obviously, we will continue to communicate over the next few weeks as we go forward.

I'm going to now move to closing the session because I think everyone's got things they want to go on and do. I just want to say thank you to everybody, particularly the panel, you've been absolutely fantastic. I think SES Water has probably picked up a lot of very useful information, certainly we at CCW have this evening, and we've covered quite a few important themes and we've agreed a pretty clear set of actions in response to the actions that you've raised as customers.

I just want to say thank you to all those people behind the scenes that have been capturing this information live as we've gone through the session and that's going to form the basis of the company's formal response in the next weeks ahead. In terms of next steps, a full transcript of the session is going to be published on the CCW website within five working days. Before publication, an early draft is going to be shared with participants so you can review it and raise any concerns relating to any personal comments that you've made.

A plain English summary's going to be published within 10 working days. SES Water is required to publish its action plan within 28 [working] days, setting out how it will deliver the commitments we've agreed tonight. Customers are then going to be asked whether the action plan accurately sets out what we've agreed to do tonight.

The process is designed to ensure transparency and follow-through, the last thing we want, as somebody said earlier, is this just to be a discussion, so it's really important this comes out with real actions that are delivered.

Finally, again, I just want to say thank you all for your time, thought and honesty that you've put into the session, your input is what really gives this process absolute credibility and purpose, so thanks to you, thank you again to Laura, David, Ian and Keith, who briefly appeared at the start, I think he's probably been listening in as well. Thank you all for your engagement tonight, I think it's been a great session.

[CLOSE]

CCW

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