



The voice for water consumers
Llais defnyddwyr dŵr

Water Voice - Accountability Session

Action Plan Response

Water company: South West Water including Bristol Water and Bournemouth Water (Pennon Group)

Wednesday 22nd April

Delivered by Taylor McKenzie
Research & Energy Saving Trust

Version: Update with South West Water Action plan response –
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Questions created and asked by community members



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Community members identified **three priority questions** they wanted to put directly to South West Water during the Accountability Session.

The questions were developed through a structured process involving the full Water Voice community (c.50 members). In January and February 2026, members collectively identified and refined priority themes through Spotlight surveys. These priorities were then shaped into draft questions during a dedicated briefing session, before being finalised and formally put to South West Water, Bournemouth Water and Bristol Water¹ at the Accountability Session.

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

	Topic	Community member question
Q1	Rising bills and value for money: Where is the money actually going?	<i>"Bills have risen sharply while customers are seeing sewage pollution, infrastructure failures and supply interruptions. Why are bills rising at this level now, exactly how much of each pound is going into infrastructure, how can you demonstrate that these increases are driving preventative investment and not just keeping a strained system afloat, and what concrete improvements will they see over the next three to five years?"</i>
Q2	Sewage pollution and environmental credibility	<i>"What specific reduction in storm overflow use and untreated discharge will you deliver over the next 12–24 months, which infrastructure upgrades are already fully funded to achieve that, and how will customers be able to see that performance is improving rather than this becoming a recurring cycle?"</i>
Q3	When things go wrong: Communication, contact and vulnerable support	<i>"What clear communication and contact standards will you commit to — including explicit confirmation when water is safe, proactive postcode-level outage updates, and guaranteed response time targets so customers can reach you quickly?"</i> <i>How will you publish measurable evidence that performance against these standards is improving?"</i>

¹This session covered South West Water including Bristol Water and Bournemouth Water (The Pennon Group) – referred to in this report as 'South West Water' for the purposes of brevity.

Executive summary - insights by question



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The Accountability Session for South West Water highlighted customers' needs for clearer explanations of rising bills, confidence that infrastructure investment will maintain a reliable supply and more proactive, accessible communication about services and support.

Q1.

Rising bills and value for money:
Where is the money actually going?

During the session, South West Water explained that bill increases are driven by rising operating costs and significant investment in infrastructure; a new reservoir, improvements to treatment works, leakage and network resilience. They outlined how bills are allocated and emphasised regulatory oversight.

Community members accepted the need for investment but felt the explanation lacked clarity, transparency, and did not fully build confidence in how money is used, particularly around debt, indirect costs and how spending translates into visible, measurable improvement.

The discussion therefore focused on a need for fair, credible, clear and simple communication, directly linking customer bills to tangible outcomes and demonstrating how money is being used.

Customers recognised the need for investment but felt explanations of rising bills lacked clarity and transparency, particularly around debt and outcomes, limiting confidence in how money is used.

Q2.

Sewage pollution and environmental credibility

During the session, South West Water outlined a structured plan to reduce storm overflows and pollution, including a pollution incident reduction plan, targeted infrastructure investment and a phased programme of improvements over the next five years, with some works already underway.

Community members welcomed the scale of investment but challenged whether this reflects their lived experience, with many feeling that incidents are increasing locally rather than improving. It was felt there was a disconnect between reported progress and what customers are seeing in their own areas.

The discussion therefore focused on the need for more localised, transparent and measurable reporting, enabling customers to clearly track incidents, understand what is being done in their area and see tangible evidence of improvement over time.

Customers felt a disconnect between reported improvements and local experience, with a need for clearer, localised and measurable evidence of progress.

Q3.

When things go wrong:
Communication, contact and vulnerable support

South West Water explained that most incidents do not impact customers - where issues do occur, they provide communications through multiple channels, including text, website updates and direct outreach. They highlighted existing processes for water safety communications and publishing performance metrics.

Community members felt that communication does not consistently match their experience, particularly during outages or when water quality is unclear. Delays in response times and lack of clear reassurance can create uncertainty and in some cases, unnecessary concern.

The discussion therefore focused on improving clarity, speed and consistency of communications, ensuring customers receive timely, proactive updates and clear confirmation about water safety.

Customers felt communication during incidents can be inconsistent and unclear, with a need for faster responses and clearer reassurance on water safety.

Actions agreed during the Accountability Session



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Q1.

Rising bills and value for money:
Where is the money actually going?

- Provide clear, transparent and accessible breakdowns of how customer money is allocated (including indirect costs)
- Directly link customer spending to measurable, real-world outcomes and improvements
- Communicate in simple, visual, easy-to-digest formats
- Clearly explain investment decision making, including trade-offs between infrastructure, debt and shareholder returns.

Q2.

Sewage pollution and environmental credibility

- Provide clear, localised and easy-to-access data on incidents and sewage spills
- Clearly link local issues to specific projects, timelines and expected outcomes
- Provide measurable evidence of improvement and reconcile reported performance with local lived experience
- Proactively deliver and signpost local plans, updates and progress through appropriate channels

Q3.

When things go wrong:
Communication, contact and vulnerable support

- Set, publish and consistently meet clear response time standards for initial customer contact
- Provide timely, proactive updates to affected customers across multiple accessible channels
- Clearly and consistently confirm whether water is safe to drink, including in ambiguous situations
- Provide clear, realistic timelines for resolution and proactively update customers if these change



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Water Voice - Accountability Session Action Plan Response

Our findings in detail

Delivered by Taylor McKenzie
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Q1. Rising bills and value for money:

Where is the money actually going?

Question asked by South West Water Community member:

“Scottish Water reportedly invests more per household while charging lower bills. We’re not debating ownership models, just value...

Bills have risen sharply - including for financially vulnerable households - while customers are seeing sewage pollution, infrastructure failures and supply interruptions.

So why are bills rising at this level now, exactly how much of each pound is going into infrastructure, how can you demonstrate that customers are not funding fines, past underinvestment or shareholder returns, and what concrete improvements will they see over the next three to five years as a direct result?

What proof can you offer that these increases are driving preventative investment - not just keeping a strained system afloat?”

During the session, South West Water explained that bill increases are driven by rising operating costs and significant investment in infrastructure; a new reservoir, improvements to treatment works, leakage and network resilience. They outlined how bills are allocated and emphasised regulatory oversight.

Community members accepted the need for investment but felt the explanation lacked clarity, transparency, and did not fully build confidence in how money is used, particularly around debt, indirect costs and how spending translates into visible, measurable improvement.

The discussion therefore focused on a need for fair, credible, clear and simple communication, directly linking customer bills to tangible outcomes and demonstrating how money is being used.

Actions

- Provide clear, transparent and accessible breakdowns of how customer money is allocated (including indirect costs)
- Directly link customer spending to measurable, real-world outcomes and improvements
- Communicate in simple, visual, easy-to-digest formats
- Clearly explain investment decision making, including trade-offs between infrastructure, debt and shareholder returns.

“I’m not really clear how much money actually goes out... to banks, interest, shareholders, profit, as opposed to how much is invested.”

“Have a clear diagram of where the £1 is going... be really, really transparent with it... so we can see that it’s fair.”

“You’re hearing lots of words but you’re not understanding them... so you don’t feel like there is transparency.”



Customers recognised the need for investment but felt explanations of rising bills lacked clarity and transparency, particularly around debt and outcomes, limiting confidence in how money is used.

Q1. Rising bills and value for money:

Where is the money actually going?



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	"You said" (Community member actions)	"We did" (South West Water response on the night)	What is the 'Ideal' South West Water response? (In the eyes of our community)	Timescale / final comments
A	Provide clear, transparent and accessible breakdowns of how customer money is allocated (including indirect costs)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provided high-level "pence in the pound" bill breakdown. • Explained ~30% of bills directly fund investment, 23% indirectly through 'indirect costs' – servicing lender and shareholder debts. • Confirmed financial information is available in reports, but acknowledged it is complex and not always accessible 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide clearer, more detailed breakdowns of where money goes • Clearly explain what "indirect costs" include (e.g. debt servicing, returns) • Make information easy to understand, easy to find • Make breakdowns intuitive and transparent, not requiring interpretation 	Timing detail expected via action plan
B	Directly link customer spending to measurable, real-world outcomes and improvements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outlined investment examples e.g. treatment work upgrades (Bristol, Bournemouth), a new reservoir at Cheddar, leakage reduction, network resilience and storm overflow improvements. • Referenced long-term infrastructure plans and regulatory commitments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clearly link spending to real-world improvements • Provide traceable mapping from bills to specific outcomes – practical, local examples • Demonstrate impact of spending in clear, measurable terms 	Timing detail expected via action plan
C	Communicate in simple, visual, easy-to-digest formats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provided detailed explanation of bills, investment and funding • Acknowledged use of technical language and complexity • Recognised that existing information (e.g. reports) may not be accessible to all customers • Agreed that communication could be clearer and simpler 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use plain English and avoid jargon • Present information in simple, digestible formats • Use visuals (e.g. diagrams, summaries) to explain key points • Make information quick and easy to understand 	Some improvements feasible in short term Timing detail expected via action plan
D	Clearly explain investment decision making, including trade-offs between infrastructure, debt and shareholder returns.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explained that investment plans are agreed with regulators, shaped by customer engagement, and funded through a mix of bills, debt and shareholder and investor funding • Explained that returns/dividends are performance-linked • Confirmed that fines/penalties not funded by customer bills • Provided some clarity on decision-making process underlying the allocation of funds 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clearly explain how investment decisions are made • Show how funding is balanced between infrastructure, debt and returns • Provide transparency on how spending and investment priorities are set • Build confidence that investment is prioritised appropriately 	Timing detail expected via action plan

Taken from Action Plan summary report.

Q1. Rising bills and value for money:

Where is the money actually going? (Q1. Action A)



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Please find the response from South West Water Action Plan below

Timescale

We recognise the need to make bill information clearer, more transparent and easier for customers to understand, particularly around indirect costs such as debt servicing and returns.

To address this, we have updated our online bill-explainer pages to include:

- A simple narrative explaining how each pound on a customer's bill is spent.
- A visual breakdown (glass of water graphic) showing both direct and indirect cost allocations.
- Clear definitions of indirect costs, including debt servicing and returns, in plain English.
- Improved layout and accessibility so information is easy to find.
- Equivalent information to be add to the 2027/28 bill insert

Updated pages can be viewed here:

SWW: <https://www.southwestwater.co.uk/household/your-account/your-bill-explained>

Bristol Water: <https://www.bristolwater.co.uk/your-bill-explained>

Bournemouth Water: <https://www.bournemouthwater.co.uk/household/your-account/your-bill-explained>

Actioned
(April 2026)



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Q1. Rising bills and value for money:

Where is the money actually going? (Q1. Action B)

Please find the response from South West Water Action Plan below	Timescale
<p>We recognise the need to make the connection between customer bills and real-world improvements much clearer and more tangible.</p> <p>To support this, we have developed region-specific bill inserts which provide:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An overview of investment funded by customer bills. • Specific, local examples of what will be delivered, such as treatment work upgrades, new water resources (e.g. Cheddar Reservoir), leakage reduction, network resilience improvements and storm overflow upgrades. • A visual layout that makes it easy for customers to understand <p>This approach provides customers with a clearer link between what they pay and the improvements being delivered in their area.</p> <p>The glass visual (reference above and on the websites) will be adopted on this insert in 2027/28.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Actioned (March 2026)</p>

Q1. Rising bills and value for money:

Where is the money actually going? (Q1. Action C)



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Please find the response from South West Water Action Plan below

Timescale

We agree that bill and investment information needs to be clearer, simpler and more accessible for all customers. While detailed explanations are already available, we recognise that technical language and long reports can make this information difficult to understand, and often to find.

To improve this, we are:

- Publishing an 'Understanding Your Bill' animation on all water brand websites to explain bills in a simple, visual format.
- Providing an infographic bill breakdown alongside the animation, showing clearly where customer money goes (the glass visual referenced above)
- Updating bill-explainer pages across South West Water, Bristol Water and Bournemouth Water with improved layouts and simplified content:

<https://www.southwestwater.co.uk/household/your-account/your-bill-explained>

<https://www.bristolwater.co.uk/your-bill-explained>

<https://www.bournemouthwater.co.uk/household/your-account/your-bill-explained>

Additionally, we have brought copywriting expertise in-house to support the wider team in using Plain English, removing jargon and making information easier to digest.

These changes will help ensure information is quick to understand, more engaging and accessible to all customer groups.

Actioned
(April 2026)

Q1. Rising bills and value for money:

Where is the money actually going? (Q1. Action D)



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Please find the response from South West Water Action Plan below

Timescale

We recognise the need to provide clearer, more transparent explanations of how investment decisions are made and how customer bills, borrowing and shareholder returns each contribute to funding improvements.

To support this, we will improve our public-facing information by:

- Providing a clearer explanation of our investment decision-making process, including how regulatory requirements, customer priorities and long-term resilience needs shape where money is spent.
- Setting out how funding is balanced across infrastructure investment, debt servicing and shareholder returns, using simple descriptions and visual aids.
- Highlighting how spending priorities are set, with practical, local examples that demonstrate the outcomes this investment delivers for customers and communities.

Making this information easier to find and understand across all water brand websites on our 2025-30 Business Plan pages (PR24):

<https://www.southwestwater.co.uk/about-us/business-planning/business-plan-2025-30>

1 month

Q2. Sewage pollution and environmental credibility



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Question asked by South West Water Community member:

“Customers are seeing repeated sewage discharges, polluted rivers and beaches, and infrastructure that appears unable to cope with rainfall and housing growth.

What specific reduction in storm overflow use and untreated discharge will you deliver over the next 12–24 months, which infrastructure upgrades are already fully funded to achieve that, and how will customers be able to see — in clear, measurable terms — that performance is actually improving rather than this becoming a recurring cycle?

During the session, South West Water outlined a structured plan to reduce storm overflows and pollution, including a pollution incident reduction plan, targeted infrastructure investment and a phased programme of improvements over the next five years, with some works already underway.

Community members welcomed the scale of investment but challenged whether this reflects their lived experience, with many feeling that incidents are increasing locally rather than improving. It was felt there was a disconnect between reported progress and what customers are seeing in their own areas.

The discussion therefore focused on the need for more localised, transparent and measurable reporting, enabling customers to clearly track incidents, understand what is being done in their area, and see tangible evidence of improvement over time.

Actions

- Provide clear, localised and easy-to-access data on incidents and sewage spills
- Clearly link local issues to specific projects, timelines and expected outcomes
- Provide measurable evidence of improvement and reconcile reported performance with local lived experience
- Proactively deliver and signpost local plans, updates and progress through appropriate channels

“From where I’m sat, things are not getting better... I can prove that... it’s actually getting worse.”

“If you’re hearing improvements across the South West but not seeing it locally, it creates distrust.”

“We don’t live in Pennon land, we live in our own communities... we need to understand what’s happening here.”



Customers felt a disconnect between reported improvements and local experience, with a need for clearer, localised and measurable evidence of progress.

Q2. Sewage pollution and environmental credibility



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	"You said" (Community member actions)	"We did" (South West Water response on the night)	What is the 'Ideal' South West Water response? (In the eyes of our community)	Timescale/ final comments
A	Provide clear, localised and easy-to-access data on incidents and sewage spills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Confirmed incident data is monitored through systems (e.g. event duration monitors) Referenced existing tools (e.g. WaterFit Live, storm overflow maps on the website) showing local spill data Explained that data is already shared publicly and with third parties Acknowledged importance of local visibility of incidents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide clear, localised and easy-to-access data on incidents and spills Ensure data is presented in a way that is easy to understand and use Improve accessibility/awareness of existing tools 	Performance data already reported, trust gap evident Company committed to reviewing accessibility of existing tools and data Timing detail expected via action plan
B	Provide measurable evidence of improvement and reconcile reported performance with local lived experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shared high-level performance data (e.g. reduction in pollution incidents year-on-year). Explained regulatory oversight and monitoring by Environment Agency and Ofwat Referenced targets (e.g. reducing high-frequency spills over time) Focus remained on aggregated or regional data rather than local experience 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide clear, measurable indicators of improvement Align reported performance with customer experience on the ground Show trends over time in a transparent way Build trust that reported improvements reflect reality 	
C	Clearly link local issues to specific projects, timelines and expected outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Outlined 5-year, £760m investment plan to reduce storm overflows ~11 overflow improvement works underway (e.g. Dawlish, Falmouth) - further sites to follow in subsequent years Explained phased approach (modelling → intervention → scaling) Provided examples of investment locations, but did not connect specific customer-raised issues to planned actions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clearly link local issues to specific projects - what will be done, where, and why Provide clear timelines and delivery stages Show expected outcomes and how they will improve local issues Enable customers to track progress in their area 	Company acknowledged need for more localised linkage. Timing detail expected via action plan
D	Proactively deliver and signpost local plans, updates and progress through appropriate channels	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Confirmed pollution incident reduction plan to be published by end of March. Committed to providing both detailed and "bite-size" versions Explained that information is shared via website, newsletters, and community engagement / local outreach Acknowledged customers are not always aware of where to find information 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clearly signpost where plans and updates are available Use multiple channels (digital and non-digital) Ensure information is easy to find and regularly updated Tailor communication to different customer needs 	Ongoing improvements to communication approach implied. Timing detail expected via action plan

Taken from Action Plan summary report.

Q2. Sewage pollution and environmental credibility

(Q2. Action A, B)



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Please find the response from South West Water Action Plan below

Timescale

We recognise the importance of making incident and spill information easier to find, easier to understand and more locally relevant for customers. Although data is already published through tools such as WaterFit Live and storm overflow maps, we acknowledge that awareness and accessibility need to improve.

To address this, we are taking the following actions:

- WaterFit Live is now more prominently signposted, with a homepage banner on the South West Water website to help customers find live spill information quickly.
- A WaterFit Live awareness programme will run across social media throughout the bathing water season to improve visibility and increase customer use of the tool.
- Targeted social media advertising will launch from 1 April inviting local water-based event organisers to notify us of swims and activities so we can monitor assets more closely and support local risk assessments.
- We are simplifying the user experience by introducing 1 map for bathing waters and all storm overflows (instead of the current 2)

We will continue to explore opportunities to present spill and incident data in simpler, clearer formats to help customers understand what is happening in their area.

We recognise the need to demonstrate environmental progress in a way that is local, tangible and measurable, rather than relying solely on high-level or regional data. To help build trust that improvements are real and meaningful, we are expanding how we communicate environmental progress by:

- Delivering an ongoing programme of earned media stories that highlight specific environmental improvements, investment projects and spill reduction outcomes, prioritising local stories and “on-the-ground” examples.
- Showcasing customer-impact stories, local engineers and community actions through press, LinkedIn and (where relevant) Facebook to bring improvements to life in a relatable way.
- Sharing the legacy of Clean Sweep and how it continues to benefit coastal and river environments via press, newsletters and social channels.
- Including a Turning the Tide environmental improvement story in every edition of The Splash customer newsletter.
- Ensuring that every customer event includes localised environmental updates so communities can clearly see how work in their area is delivering improvements over time.

These actions will help us present environmental data in a clearer, more credible way and connect reported performance to the lived experience of the communities we serve.

August 2026

Q2. Sewage pollution and environmental credibility

(Q2. Action C)



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Please find the response from South West Water Action Plan below

Timescale

We recognise the importance of showing customers exactly what is being done in their area, why the work is needed, when it will be delivered and how it will improve local environmental conditions. While we shared examples of our wider £760m storm overflow investment programme and several live projects on the night, we acknowledge that customers want clearer, localised links between issues raised and the actions planned.

To support this, we are:

Publishing dedicated investment pages for all live wastewater improvement projects, including:

- an overview of the project
- key milestones and expected timelines
- the customer benefit, environmental outcomes and spill reductions expected

Providing onsite signage for every live project, explaining the work, the benefits and the local improvements it will deliver. Ensuring that project information is easy to access from our website and customer channels so customers can track progress in their area more clearly.

These steps will help customers understand how local issues are being addressed through specific, measurable investments and when improvements will be felt on the ground.

Actioned
(April 2026)

Q2. Sewage pollution and environmental credibility

(Q2. Action D)



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Please find the response from South West Water Action Plan below

Timescale

We recognise that customers want clearer visibility of local environmental plans, regular updates on progress, and easy access to information through a range of channels. While we already share information via our website, newsletters and community outreach, we acknowledge that customers are not always aware of where to find it.

To strengthen this, we are:

- Embedding local customer engagement as a standard step before starting any environmental improvement works where residents are invited to attend a local event.
- Ensuring all updates are clearly signposted across multiple channels, including customer newsletters, local social media groups, onsite signage and council networks.
- Providing both detailed and short “bite-size” versions of our pollution incident reduction plan to suit different customer needs.
- Making information easier to find online, with clear navigation and links to local project pages and environmental updates.
- Committing to regular updates as projects progress, so customers can track what is happening in their area.

These actions will help ensure customers receive timely, relevant and accessible updates on environmental plans that matter most to their communities.

1 month



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Q3. When things go wrong:

Communication, contact and vulnerable support

Question asked by South West Water Community member:

“When customers experience discoloured water or supply outages, some are left unsure whether water is safe and report long delays getting through to customer services.

What clear communication and contact standards will you commit to — including explicit confirmation when water is safe, proactive postcode-level outage updates, and guaranteed response time targets so customers can reach you quickly?

How will you publish measurable evidence that performance against these standards is improving?”

South West Water explained that most incidents do not impact customers - where issues do occur, they provide communications through multiple channels, including text, website updates and direct outreach. They highlighted existing processes for water safety communications and publishing performance metrics.

Community members felt that communication does not consistently match their experience, particularly during outages or when water quality is unclear. Delays in response times and lack of clear reassurance can create uncertainty and in some cases, unnecessary concern.

The discussion therefore focused on improving clarity, speed and consistency of communications, ensuring customers receive timely, proactive updates and clear confirmation about water safety.

Actions

- Set, publish and consistently meet clear response time standards for initial customer contact
- Provide timely, proactive updates to affected customers across multiple accessible channels
- Clearly and consistently confirm whether water is safe to drink, including in ambiguous situations
- Provide clear, realistic timelines for resolution and proactively update customers if these change

“I waited 17 hours in a WhatsApp chat... that’s just not acceptable when you’re trying to get information.”

“We were told about discolouration but not whether it was safe to drink, so we ended up buying bottled water.”

“It’s easier to find out what’s going on from local Facebook groups than from the water company.”



Customers felt communication during incidents can be inconsistent and unclear, with a need for faster responses and clearer reassurance on water safety.

Q3. When things go wrong:

Communication, contact and vulnerable support



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	"You said" (Community member actions)	"We did" (South West Water response on the night)	What is the 'Ideal' South West Water response? (In the eyes of our community)	Timescale/ final comments
A	Set, publish and consistently meet clear response time standards for initial customer contact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Outlined existing contact channels (phone, text, website, WhatsApp) Explained that staff can respond quickly in many cases, particularly for operational incidents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Publish clear response time targets across channels Ensure customers can quickly access support when needed 	Timing detail expected via action plan
B	Provide timely, proactive updates to affected customers across multiple accessible channels	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Confirmed use of multiple channels (texts, voice messages, website updates, direct outreach for vulnerable customers, and mobile response units). Explained that communications are issued during incidents (e.g. outages) – proactively to vulnerable customers. Acknowledged current limitations in technology for more proactive or targeted updates 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide proactive updates to customers in affected postcodes Use multiple channels to reach all segments of the customer base Ensure updates are timely, easily accessible, and reach customers before they seek information elsewhere 	<p>Company implementing a new customer platform</p> <p>Potential to introduce improved communication tools (e.g. push notifications)</p> <p>Timing detail expected via action plan</p>
C	Clearly and consistently confirm whether water is safe to drink, including in ambiguous situations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Confirmed that clear communications are issued in situations when water quality issues are clear-cut e.g. written notices and alerts. Highlighted that 76% of incidents have no customer impact Acknowledged that clarity is not always consistent, particularly in less severe incidents Publishes regulated performance standards (e.g. discoloured water, supply interruptions), with separate reporting for different regions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clearly communicate water safety in circumstances where ambiguity may exist Provide reassurance alongside issue updates 	<p>Company agreed this can be integrated into communications –</p> <p>Timing detail expected via action plan</p>
D	Provide clear, realistic timelines for resolution and proactively update customers if these change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explained that incident timelines can vary significantly (e.g. burst pipes, treatment shutdowns) - acknowledged variability makes precise timelines challenging Confirmed updates are provided during incidents via existing channels – website, text, and voice messages for vulnerable customers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide clear, expected timelines for resolution of different issues Proactively, regularly update customers if timelines change Set realistic expectations during incidents 	<p>Company acknowledged importance of clearer timelines</p> <p>Confirmed timelines for water quality restoration can be integrated into communications</p> <p>Timing detail expected via action plan</p>

Taken from Action Plan summary report.



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Q3. When things go wrong:

Communication, contact and vulnerable support (Q3. Action A)

Please find the response from South West Water Action Plan below	Timescale
<p>We acknowledge that customers want clearer expectations about how quickly they will hear from us when something goes wrong. While we already offer multiple contact channels and can respond quickly in many situations, we recognise the need to make our standards more visible, more consistent and easier to understand.</p> <p>To support this, we will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review and update the 'Unplanned Incidents' webpage to include our Incident Communication Strategy • Add Ofwat's requirement for companies to act promptly and effectively, prioritising customer and environmental risk. • Bring in relevant information from the Guaranteed Standards Scheme (GSS) so customers know when they may be entitled to compensation. • Review and align wording within our Customer Promise to ensure clarity and consistency. • Update the Incident Communication Strategy and brief the Control Room. <p>These actions will make it easier for customers to know what to expect from us and ensure our response-time standards are clear, accessible and consistently delivered.</p>	<p>May 2026</p>



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Q3. When things go wrong:

Communication, contact and vulnerable support (Q3. Action B)

Please find the response from South West Water Action Plan below	Timescale
<p>We recognise that customers expect timely, proactive updates during incidents, across a range of channels, and that communications must reach them before they feel the need to seek information elsewhere. While we already use SMS, voicemail, website updates, direct contact with priority customers and mobile response units, we acknowledge the need to strengthen consistency and coverage.</p> <p>To support this, we are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using SMS and voicemail as standard for all incidents affecting specific postcodes, ensuring affected customers are contacted proactively. • Expanding additional reach through social channels, including paid advertising, to ensure updates are visible to wider local audiences. • Issuing press releases where appropriate to increase visibility and support broader public awareness during larger or prolonged incidents. • Continuing to explore enhanced communication tools as part of our new customer platform, including future options such as push notifications. • Updating the Incident Communication Strategy and briefing the Control Room. <p>These actions will improve how quickly and reliably customers receive information and ensure updates are accessible across multiple channels.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Actioned (April 2026)</p>



Q3. When things go wrong:

Communication, contact and vulnerable support (Q3. Actions C and D)

Please find the response from South West Water Action Plan below	Timescale
<p>We acknowledge that our communication is clear in well-defined water quality events, but can be inconsistent during less severe or ambiguous situations.</p> <p>We will strengthen our approach by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clearly stating whether the water is safe to drink in all incident updates, including situations where the guidance may be uncertain or not yet fully confirmed • Providing reassurance and plain-English explanation alongside technical updates. • Embedding this requirement into our customer communications process for all brands. • Updating the Incident Communication Strategy and briefing the Control Room. <p>We recognise that customers want clearer expectations during incidents. While timelines can vary significantly depending on the issue (e.g., burst mains, treatment interruptions), we agree that we must improve how we communicate expected resolution times.</p> <p>We will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide clear, indicative timelines for different types of service issues, including expected steps and likely duration ranges. • Proactively update customers if timelines change, ensuring communication is regular, timely and easy to understand. • Set realistic expectations from the outset, even when exact timings cannot yet be confirmed. • Update the Incident Communication Strategy and brief the Control Room. 	<p style="text-align: center;">Actioned (April 2026)</p>

What happens after the Accountability Session?

After the Accountability Session, there is a clear and structured follow-up process.



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Publication and transparency

Within 5 working days

A full (anonymised) transcript of the session was [published](#) on **Wednesday 18th March**

Within 10 working days

A plain-English summary is published, setting out:
The questions asked.
The key points raised by Community members.
The actions agreed for inclusion in the action plan.
Anything recorded as *not yet agreed*.
Wednesday 25th March



Action plan

Within 28 days

The water company must share its **action plan**, setting out how it will deliver the agreed actions.
The action plan will be **shared with the Water Voice community on Wednesday 22nd April**



Customer feedback

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

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

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



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Water Voice - Accountability Session Action Plan Response

Annex

Delivered by Taylor McKenzie
Research & Energy Saving Trust

ccw.org.uk

Background



What is an Accountability Session?

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

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

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

Why do they exist?

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

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

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

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

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

Objectives

What the session aims to achieve



1. Give customers a real voice

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

2. Make companies answer directly to the people they serve

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

3. Agree clear actions that lead to real improvements

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

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

4. Build trust through transparency

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

5. Make sure all types of customers are represented

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

Outputs

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

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

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

Methodology

How does it work?

CCW

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01



Prioritising what matters most

1. We listen to what customers tell us each month

Through Barometer & Spotlight surveys and the online community

2. We play back what they said

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

3. Confirm their priorities

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

02



Getting ready (Briefing session)

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

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

The facilitator talks them through:

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

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

03



The Accountability Session (Main meeting)

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

TMcK facilitator & Chair guiding the conversation:

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

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

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

04



Agreeing what should happen next

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

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

05



Publishing the outcomes and following up

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

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

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

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

[Priorities will be shared with the ISG]

Sample

Who takes part in an Accountability Session



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

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

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

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

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

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

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



Bill Wrapper 2026

Important information about your bill



From 1 April 2026, your water bills will increase. We understand this is never welcome news, but we're here to help.

1. Why are bills increasing?

We're investing to prepare our region for the future. This will:

- Maintain and improve water quality
- Enable us to treat more water at any time
- Reduce the risk of problems like burst pipes.

To meet this region's challenges, the water regulator Ofwat has agreed the cost of water in your area will need to increase from 1 April 2026.

Key projects in your area include:

- **Cheddar Water Treatment Works** – upgrading filtration and adding UV treatment
- **Stowey and Littleton Water Treatment Works** – adding eco-friendly membrane-based treatment
- **Blagdon Lake Tower** – works to improve lake water quality.

2. Our goals to 2030

Reliable, safe water supplies

Reducing leakage on our networks to less than 10% (less than 4% on customer properties).

Action on climate change

Achieving Net Zero by 2030 and generating enough energy through solar schemes to power 20,000 homes.

Our support package

Our largest-ever package of support measures for customers who are struggling.

3. How you can find support

If you're struggling with your water bill, we're here to help. We have support tariffs and options for managing payments to help make life easier. Getting a water meter is often the first thing to try to reduce your bills. bristolwater.co.uk/help-to-pay

Be stranger aware - if in doubt, keep them out

Unwanted callers may target elderly or vulnerable people by pretending they work for Bristol Water. All of our staff carry photographic identification and operate a password system where requested.



What to do if you have a leak

If you think you have a leak on your pipework, please visit our website for further help

bristolwater.co.uk/help-with-leaks



Bristol Water Customer Promise

The Bristol Water Customer Promise details the levels of service around water quality and supply, customer service and billing that you can expect from us, and what compensation we'll pay if we don't meet these targets. Visit bristolwater.co.uk/promise or call 0345 702 3797.



Bill Wrapper 2026 Assessed

Customer number
1234 5678 90

Bill date 1 December 2025
Bill number 1234 5678 90

Firstname Surname
Address Line 1
Address Line 1
Address Line 1
Town
County
Post Code

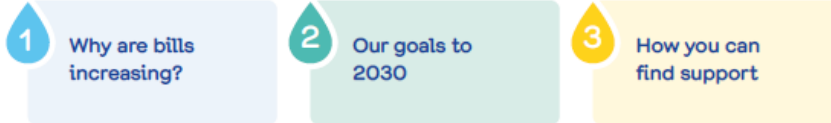


Customer Care 01202 590059
Monday-Friday 8am-6pm, Saturday 9am-2pm
Calls may be recorded and monitored for training or audit purposes
bournemouthwater.co.uk

Important information about your bill

From 1 April 2026, your water bills will increase. We understand this is never welcome news, but we're here to help.

This leaflet explains:



1 Why are bills increasing?

We're investing to prepare our region for the future. Speaking to customers from across your area has shaped our priorities.

To meet this region's challenges, the water regulator Ofwat has agreed the cost of water in your area will need to increase from 1 April 2026.

Key projects in your area include:

- **Alderney Water Treatment Works** - major upgrade at works that supply water to Bournemouth and Poole
- **Knapp Mill Water Treatment Works** - major upgrade at works that supply water throughout the region
- **Woodgreen Water Treatment Works** - planned major upgrade to works near Fordingbridge.



Why save water?

Using a bit less water helps to ensure there's enough to go around and helps protect the environment.

For water-saving tips see
bournemouthwater.co.uk/save-water

2 Our goals to 2030



Your bill explained

Find out how we calculate bills, support people who need extra help, provide financial assistance and more.



Scan me

3 How you can find support

You're on the Assessed tariff, which is a flat rate charge for customers who are unable to have a meter fitted.

If you're struggling with your water bill, we're here to help. You can also find independent sources of help and advice on our financial support page.

You can also opt to spread your payments to make your water bill more manageable. Many people find a Direct Debit works better for them.

To explore your options, and for details of independent sources of help and advice, please visit bournemouthwater.co.uk/financial-support



Bill Wrapper 2026 Measured

Customer number
1234 5678 90

Bill date 1 December 2025
Bill number 1234 5678 90

Firstname Surname
Address Line 1
Address Line 1
Address Line 1
Town
County
Post Code



Customer Care 0344 346 1010
Monday-Friday 8am-6pm, Saturday 9am-1pm
Calls may be recorded and monitored for training or audit purposes
southwestwater.co.uk
f x

Important information about your bill

From 1 April 2026, your water bills will increase. We understand this is never welcome news, but we're here to help.

This leaflet explains:

1

Why are bills increasing?

2

Our goals to 2030

3

How you can find support

1

Why are bills increasing?

We're investing to prepare our region for the future. Speaking to customers from across your area has shaped our priorities:

- Providing reliable, safe water supplies
- Supporting healthier rivers and seas
- Taking action on climate change.

To meet these challenges, the water regulator Ofwat has agreed the cost of water in your area will need to increase from 1 April 2026.

In the last year we have:

- Reduced storm overflow spills with the help of a £760m spending programme
- Invested in renewal of mains pipes, helping to prevent bursts and leaks.



Reduce your overheads
by saving water

Simple water-saving tricks can cut your bills and help the environment. For tips and free water-saving devices see southwestwater.co.uk/save-water

2

Our goals to 2030



1. Reliable safe water supplies
Reducing leakage on our networks to less than 10% (less than 4% on customer properties).



2. Healthier rivers and seas
Tackling every storm overflow at a bathing water or shellfish site by 2030 and limiting spills to less than 10 per year.

£2.5bn investment programme across the South West



3. Action on climate change
Achieving Net Zero by 2030 and generating enough energy through solar schemes to power 20,000 homes.



4. Our support package
Our largest-ever package of support measures for customers who are struggling.

Your bill explained

Find out how we calculate bills, support people who need extra help, provide financial assistance and more.



Scan me

3

How you can find support

If you're struggling with your bills, we're here to help. We have support tariffs and options for managing payments.

Our support tariffs include:

- ✓ **WaterCare** – for customers on low incomes who are either on a water meter or assessed charges. The tariff reduces bills by 15-85%.
- ✓ **WaterSure** – for customers on certain means-tested benefits who need to use a lot of water, either due to having a large family or a relevant medical condition. The tariff caps your annual bill.



You can also opt to spread your payments to make your water bill more manageable. Many people find a Direct Debit works better for them.

To explore your options, and for sources of independent help and advice, please visit southwestwater.co.uk/financial-support

Thank you!

