



CCW

The voice for water consumers  
Llais defnyddwyr dŵr

**Thames Water  
Accountability Session  
transcript**

21<sup>ST</sup> APRIL 2026

# Attendance list

Martin Padley	Water Director of Thames Water
Sarah Holland	Operations Service and Control Centre Director of Thames Water
Tess Fayers	Waste and Bioresources Director of Thames Water
David Bird	Transformation and Retail Director of Thames Water
Caroline Murdoch	Director of Communications at Thames 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 Thames Water

**CCW Chair:** [Good evening, everyone, and thank you for joining us. My name is Rob Wilson and I'll be chairing today's discussion. Tonight's session is part of our Water Voice programme. The purpose of Water Voice is simple but important: to give customers a stronger, more direct] voice and how the water company performs, communicates and improves its services. This session is specifically about accountability, it's an opportunity for customers to question senior leaders from Thames Water directly about issues that matter most to you, about where improvement is needed and about what will change as a result of the discussion we have tonight.

But it's not a complaints hearing, it is 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 company or by CCW, they've been shaped by customers through the ongoing surveys and discussions within the Water Voice Panel that you're all on, and that's really important, because this is your agenda tonight.

I want to set a clear tone for the evening 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 their expectations of the company. Equally, we expect clear and transparent responses from Thames Water senior team and I'll try to make sure that happens.

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

Now, let me briefly introduce the people joining us this evening. First, and I think most people know him already, but just in case anybody don't, we've got from Taylor McKenzie, Nicky Taylor, who's going to guide the discussions and ensure all of the voices on the panel are heard. And representing Thames Water this evening we've got people shifting in and out, and the first two will be Martin Padley, who is Water Director, and Sarah Holland, who is the Ops Service and Control Director. And then just to let you know, the others coming in and out will be Tess Fayers, who's Waste and Bioresources Director; David Bird, who's Retail Director; and Caroline Murdoch, who is Comms Director.

So, thank you again for joining us, thank you to Sarah and Martin for kicking off for Thames [Water] and I'll now hand over to Nicky to begin the discussion.

**TMcK Facilitator:** Fantastic, Rob. Thank you very much indeed and welcome to all. Before we begin, I just want to cover some housekeeping and I want to explain how the names in the transcript this evening will be handled. So, in the room this evening we are going to be using first names only. In the published transcript we'll ensure that all customer names are redacted. After the session as community members, you'll have the opportunity to review the transcript before it is published and if there is anything you have said that you'd prefer to be removed, or further anonymised, you can request that with the team and we'll make sure that that's respected.

The purpose of the transcript is purely to accurately reflect the discussion and the actions agreed, it's not to single out any individuals. For each question this evening, we're going to follow the same structure, so we have our representative customer who is going to be asking a question and that will be starting very shortly. Thames Water will then have five

minutes to respond, I'll put a timer up, and you know, how these sessions have been working, it is five minutes, but if you do need an extra couple of minutes here and there, if you are on track, I'm sure Rob will give you that leeway.

Community members are then going to be asked to react to that response and we're going to have a really good discussion, a focus group style discussion, to find out what you really thought about what you've just heard. We'll work together in the background, so I've got my teammates on this call, we've got Ryan and Emma from Taylor McKenzie, they're some analysts that are going to be working really hard in the background to pull together everything that's been said both from Thames Water and from the customer side. And once we've got that live document populated, I'll look to share that live document with us, and we'll look to sharpen those actions even further, as a result of that.

Once we've done that, and we're happy, Thames Water will have some time to respond to any specific actions that they feel they want to talk about a little bit more or they feel that they're perhaps out of scope and want to explain why that might be the case. Once that's done, we'll move on to the next question and repeat the process. This webinar itself has been made available for live viewing to members of the CCW Team, Defra, Ofwat, Thames Water and the Thames Water Independent Challenge Group Chair and also other community members who are part of the CCW Water Voice Panel.

To get us started, it would be good if I could just hand back to Rob, who will ask you all to introduce yourselves very quickly, just by your first name and where you're from, and then we can look to crack on. So, I'll hand back to you Rob, for very quick introductions.

**CCW Chair:** Okay, so I'm going to go round the screen as I see it. So, we'll start with Community Member 1, top left?

**Community Member 1:** Hello, my name's Community Member 1 and I live in Wimbledon Park, in London.

**Community Member 2:** My name's Community Member 2, I live in Abingdon, Oxfordshire.

**Community Member 3:** My name's Community Member 3, I live in Thornton Heath, which is part of the London Borough of Croydon.

**Community Member 4:** My name's Community Member 4 and I live in Stockwell.

**Community Member 5:** Hi, I'm Community Member 5, I live in Sydenham, South East London, which is part of the Borough of Lewisham.

**Community Member 6:** I'm Community Member 6 and I live in Thornton Heath.

**Community Member 7:** Hi, I'm Community Member 7, I live in Reading in Berkshire.

**Community Member 8:** Hi, I'm Community Member 8, I live in Berkshire.

**Community Member 9:** Hi, I'm Community Member 9, I live in Highworth in Wiltshire.

**Community Member 10:** Hi there, I'm Community Member 10 and I live in Hanwell, West London.

**Community Member 11:** Hi, I'm Community Member 11 and I live in Battersea, South West London.

**CCW Chair:** Thank you all for those brief introductions. I think we're going to just kick on to the first question now, and that's going to be asked by Community Member 9. The question

will go up on the screen, so that you can all see it. And just to remind you, this is all a bit like Question Time in that the people from Thames Water, Sarah and Martin know the areas we're going to be discussing but they don't know the specific question. So, after the question comes down from the screen, we'll put it in the chat for you, so that you can see it and refer to it if you need to.

Do you want to, Community Member 9, ask the question, and then I'll come back straight after?

**Community Member 9:** My question is, for many of us day-to-day service is actually fine, but our overall view of Thames Water is shaped by much more by what we're seeing in the news. That creates a gap where the water quality that we experience might be okay, but the confidence in the company is low. How will you reassure customers about water quality, improve communication beyond the headlines and rebuild confidence in Thames Water?

**CCW Chair:** So, a question about trust and confidence really. So, in responding, if I could just say to our panellists, it would be really helpful if you could be as specific as possible in responding to the question, and to community members, obviously you've got your pads to scribble your notes and thoughts and comments down, so that afterwards we can come back. So, I'm going to pass to I think Martin's got the sound on, so I think it's probably Martin first and then I'm sure Sarah will come in?

**Martin Padley:** Yeah, thank you for the question. It is something I get asked quite a lot, actually. I was at Islington Council a few months ago and I got asked a very similar question. As you say, most people's experience of Thames Water service as customers is actually quite good. That's the first point. The second point is that people like me and Sarah and the people within our teams dedicate our lives to making sure that people have high quality drinking water. I certainly don't drink water out of anything other than the tap, and I believe that that's a fundamental right for us all, actually, and I consider the water to be very safe.

When I look at the customers who contact us about water quality, it's actually very small numbers, so we have a measure that we do per 1,000 customers, and over the year, the year that's just finished, 0.42 customers per 1,000 customers contacted us about their water quality. The industry average is 1.3, so we're a third of the industry average round numbers. So, the actual people that contact us are very small, and they tend to contact us about appearance and taste predominantly, that's what they contact us about.

In terms of the ... to give you some assurance on sampling, we take about half a million samples a year, water quality, they're taken at random from customers' properties and also from our treatment works and storage reservoirs. Of those 500,000 samples, 122 failed at customers' properties, that's quite a small number bearing in mind the vast number of samples. And of those samples that fail, just over half are due to micro – so bacteria which tend, by the way, to be associated with customer plumbing, not always, but usually, 33% metals, nickel is the most common of those, because people have nickel taps, quite nice taps, but they do cause us to detect low concentrations and lead. And the remainder are various other bits and bobs.

At our water treatment works and sewers, of those tests, 17 failed last year, which is also very good compared to the rest of the industry. So, the water quality factually is very, very good. And the second part of the question is, how do we improve confidence? I think we improve confidence by doing these events. I go to a lot of council events where I talk in open forum at the council and am always very happy to do that. I'm very proud of what we do, I'm very proud of what the industry does, and I'm very keen and happy to do that. I think it's also about how we come to work and how we respond when things go wrong, because things, anything involving humans goes wrong.

I think it's fair to say a few years ago we could have been better, but I think we have massively improved how we respond when things go wrong. We're very open. I mean I don't know, somebody from Oxfordshire, you may have seen when we had the supply interruption in Oxfordshire, I personally went on the news and owned the issue and responded I think fairly sort of openly and honestly of where we were up to. And I think that's very, very important, I think openness, transparency, the data is all on the website for example, or the water quality data, there is nothing to hide. And I'm very proud of that. Sarah, you might want to add something in terms of communication, perhaps?

**Sarah Holland:** Absolutely, and I think, as you say, Martin, transparency for us feels most crucial. So, we are working very hard as well to make sure that we can update that information a bit more regularly. At the moment it's part of a regulatory reporting cycle, which runs annually, but we recognise the need to provide as much information as possible often to, I guess, a counter narrative which has reflected in a significant amount of, I guess, a loss of trust in the industry. Like Martin, I only drink tap water, I've got three young children, I've been into their schools just talking about how wonderful our water is and how it's produced and how it's made. But I wholeheartedly recognise that the experience that customers have with us is often what shapes their perception.

For some that's passive, as a number of you have reflected, so actually generally service is good. When things go wrong, we've invested heavily in the last 12-18 months in really showing up and supporting customers at the time when they need us the most. We've now got an additional 12 people within my team who are there solely to support and communicate more effectively when things do go wrong and to specifically answer the individual questions customers have, because we know that is really important. Generic responses to specific questions just aren't what our customers need. And we are on an evolution with that, there's still more to do, but we really recognise the value in providing high quality, personal and reassuring information, that doesn't sound like it's out of a factsheet or a set of bullet points.

And there's more to do there and we want to use more forums like this to understand how we're doing.

**CCW Chair:** Okay, well, thank you Martin and Sarah, your five minutes are up and you seem to have come to an end of what you wanted to say. Now, we're going to sort of park you for a few minutes now, because we're going to pause and go back to the customers and they're going to discuss between themselves, led by Nicky, about some of the things you've said and some of the questions and comments that they have. So back to Nicky for you to guide the discussion.

**TMcK Facilitator:** Thank you very much indeed, Rob. Okay folks, well we've had a listen to what the representatives from Thames Water had to say and we've been listening carefully, I saw a lot of you taking notes as we went along. And I think, you know, with this sort of thing, I want to really understand is, what did you like that you heard, what do you still need to hear and what other commitments are you expecting from a company like Thames Water? We spoke in a briefing session at great length about your habits of drinking water, some of you don't trust the tap water, some of you do. I want to understand what do they – they need your help here to understand how to communicate to you, so how do we go about doing that? So, who wants to get us started? Community Member 9, do you want to go ahead?

**Community Member 9:** Yeah, actually it was a positive. One of the questions I had for after was, would you set out how you would improve trust and how you will measure that? And I kind of think they answered that question for me during that response, which was quite nice to hear.

**TMcK Facilitator:** And specifically, Community Member 9, what was it you heard that made that feel like they had answered things, what actions did you hear?

**Community Member 9:** Well, I think, you know, they seem to be listening to what we're saying and they seem to be stepping up. I like the fact that they've added more people there, and obviously I totally, personally, prefer somebody human on the end of the phone, not an automated thing. So, it's really nice to hear that they're putting more people in place to kind of help and support people, I think that's really important.

**TMcK Facilitator:** Was there a specific number they gave on how many people they've now got?

**Community Member 9:** I'm sure they said 11 or 12 more people she's brought in, so that's just in her department at the moment. I mean, I don't know if they need more, but it's good to hear that things are moving on that score.

**TMcK Facilitator:** Community Member 7?

**Community Member 7:** I wonder if there's a measure around, both of them clearly stated that they're confident about drinking tap water. I remember a while ago when there was a mad cow disease issue going on and you saw that politician force-feeding their child the hamburger to say, "beef is perfectly safe" when maybe it actually wasn't.

I don't want to be setting any rabbits running about E.coli and you know, the other politician that famously got eggs a completely bad name for a while, but that for me, that personal anecdotal stuff is a little bit weak in terms of actually, you know, an evidence-base, "Well, I drink it, that's okay." So, I'd be interested in knowing what sort of measures they give around how much people actually drink the tap water because that would give them an idea about how much trust there is in it.

Because if everybody thought it was like Perrier, they would be drinking tap water rather than the bottled water. And I think a lot of people are paying for drinking water, which they use to bath with or clean the car with, but not necessarily to drink because of that confidence. So, whether or not they've got any measures around the proportion of their customers that are paying for bottled water because they're fearful of tap water? Maybe that's a measure.

**TMcK Facilitator:** What other things could be looked for there, if we get that measure to say, "30% of Thames customers drink their tap water instead of bottled water", what do they then do with that information, what's their next step?

**Community Member 7:** Well, I'd be saying that would be a clear indication that people are paying more for their water than they should do, because statistically or scientifically it's evidenced that the water is perfectly safe to drink and is really good to drink. You know, like they're very confident that it is. But if we're discovering, for instance, whether they've got that measure or not, I don't know, I'd be interested in that measure so that we know whether or not they are going to measure that, because that gives them a measure of the degree to which people trust the water and the degree to which they're having to pay additionally for bottled water.

**CCW Chair:** Just an interesting statistic I heard the other day, Nicky, I think I'm right in saying this, that there's more water produced from the tap in a day than by bottled water in a year in terms of the usage.

**TMcK Facilitator:** There you go, so I think Community Member 7's looking for some evidence, aren't you Community Member 7? Just something that says, "What's everyone

else doing, what are Thames [Water] doing about it?" And that's more about communication, isn't it? And about putting something behind the facts and figures that can allow people to make decisions, I guess? Community Member 4, you've got your hand up, would you like to jump in there?

**Community Member 4:** Yeah, so I think Thames Water it was, yeah, I could see the dedication, but the thing is there's like a limited amount of people are participating in this session because they said this session helps to build the trust. We're just like a speck in the ocean of opinions. If they could pre-empt the general public concerns by putting on the website something why we should trust them like, you know, "Did you know the drinking water is safer than what you buy from Tesco?" for example, because the plastic leaks into bottled water.

But this is like where you actually dedicate just like the facts, because when I look on the website there is nothing to, for me to, I don't see like ... I can just see what they're doing, yes, I can see where the bills stops and stuff, but there could have been another like part of pre-emptive information, like look at it as a goal, "Well done, I've got more trust in Thames Water, so we'll drink it from the tap."

**TMcK Facilitator:** So, where would you like to see that information?

**Community Member 4:** On the website, yes on the website, because when I look at, if you look at Thames Water, they don't actually ... They've got some like, "We do this, we invest in the infrastructure," they've got some ... It's quite busy the website and I like the fact that it's not complicated language they're using, you know, it's like human language they're speaking, not like abbreviations. They could have also had something like more like pre-emptive like for to build trust.

For example, when I'm clicking to check my bills, they could have a tab like something visible, "why you can trust us", you know, "the water you drink is actually purer than the water from blah, blah, blah". I'm not a PR, you know, but I have no idea about this fact. But if I would see them while looking for something I need, sub-consciously I would think, "Oh, well done, I can relax while drinking this tap water when I didn't buy my bottled one."

**TMcK Facilitator:** I think we spoke about that in the briefing session didn't we about just communicate more regularly, get things out there to ask customers whether it's through video or whether it's through their bills, just to land that message about water quality?

**Community Member 4:** I think it has to be all the time on the website, or something like, yeah, I don't know, it's my personal opinion, I don't know how other people feel.

**TMcK Facilitator:** I'll go to Community Member 2 now?

**Community Member 2:** Just moving away from that slightly, I think it was Martin stating that they take so many thousand samples across various areas and he mentioned that they take samples from the consumer houses. How do you select what houses you go to, is it by area or concern? How would you select where to go from?

**TMcK Facilitator:** Okay, so for that Community Member 2, we'll not bring them in just now, but I think certainly we can take that as an action to just explain the methodology in terms of-

**Community Member 2:** I'm just interested really to know how it's done, how it's chosen and why.

**TMcK Facilitator:** Yeah, absolutely, so a bit of transparency around that is what we're looking for? Community Member 6, would you like to jump in?

**Community Member 6:** Yeah, so for me when you both said that there's transparency, I can't help but go back to the documentary about *Dirty Business* where there was no transparency, everyone was saying that things were all right and things were far from all right. How do I know? I won't drink tap water, I will buy bottled water, I don't trust it. And how do I know things are not going to be hidden on those sides of things, you know, I just need more reassurance than you saying, "Well, I drink tap water so that's okay." I have many people saying to me you know, "I drink tap water". I just have lost so much trust and especially after watching that documentary, it just really scared me because this is something that we're putting in our body.

I drink a lot of water every day and I'm not going to chance putting something in my body that is going to cause me harm and not have the reassurance that that's not the case. I used to drink tap water, but I stopped many years ago and actually feel more comfortable drinking bottled water now, even though it's costing me money and even though there is the fact that you're having the same was what Community Member 4, said the plastic leaking into the water, I'd rather drink that water than drink tap water.

**TMcK Facilitator:** So, Community Member 6, listening to your response, it sounds like you're like, "Do you know what, I don't know if there's anything Thames Water can do to change my mind, but I'm happy to be proven wrong." Is there anything they could do, have you got a list of actions that if they tick those off, "Do you know what, I'll give it a try again"? What are your thoughts on that?

**Community Member 6:** Do you know honestly, I really can't answer that, but I just think something needs to be done in order to. I mean there is just no communication. I pay my bill every year, I think in the last three years I've not had any communication via Thames Water at all.

**TMcK Facilitator:** And how could they communicate with you, Community Member 6, what would be a good way for them to start building this relationship?

**Community Member 6:** I mean even if it was just by emails, you know, just have updates every month or even once every couple of months or once every quarter. It doesn't have to be all the time, just to kind of build that relationship. There is, I feel personally for me, there is no relationship between myself and Thames Water. And any experience that I've had where I've been in connection with Thames Water has been very negative. So, for me, I'm right at the bottom, I need to have that trust built and have that relationship with the company. I mean I have companies that I've stayed with for 35 years, I mean obviously I haven't got a choice with Thames Water, there is no choice, but if I have a good relationship with a company, I will stay with them for a lifetime.

**TMcK Facilitator:** You mentioned email, Community Member 6, would social media be a suitable way for them to communicate with video messaging, for example, or updates?

**Community Member 6:** Yeah, absolutely, just to let us know what's happening. But again, I keep going back to that *Dirty Business* and that's really left a bad taste in my mouth to what was covered up and how many people were saying, "Everything's all right," and there was a lot of underhanded stuff going on, a lot of stuff was hidden, there was no transparency. Even though they were saying, "We're being as transparent as we can," and clearly they wasn't. And that has really jarred me.

**TMcK Facilitator:** Yeah, so I think they've got a long way to go with you, Community Member 6, to rebuild that trust, and it starts with small things like emails, updates and taking it from there, yeah?

**Community Member 6:** Definitely.

**TMcK Facilitator:** Community Member 1, you have your hand up, would you like to jump in there?

**Community Member 1:** I was going to say I think it's really good that they've got 12 extra people in customer services now, which I think is really good, because I think it helps when you have a call centre based in this country and they put proper action in like that, so that's really good. And in terms of water quality and they're saying they're improving it, I didn't actually find that, I think the water quality has got worse in the last 12-18 months. So that's one thing I would say, maybe they have a different view, but my view is different. And I think the water quality has got worse, it's got much harder and the water doesn't taste as nice.

**TMcK Facilitator:** Have you let anyone know about that, Community Member 1?

**Community Member 1:** No, I haven't really because I just put up with it really. But the hard water, I've noticed, it's got really bad in the last year. It was always bad in London where I live, but it's got worse. And with the water which I drink, I drink the water from a water filter anyway, because I think to myself, it's I don't like the taste of tap water, that's the reason why. So, I can understand when Thames [Water] say they drink the water, like the two people who came out and said that, but to me I wouldn't drink the tap water.

**TMcK Facilitator:** Without first filtering it?

**Community Member 1:** In tea and coffee yes, because it's hard water and I filter it anyway, but I would drink it in that, but not otherwise. Maybe they think it's improved but I don't actually think that at all.

**TMcK Facilitator:** So, what happens with you, Community Member 1, to get the water so that you trust it to drink it? Is it, do they need to educate more around why it tastes as it does, is it more about improving how it tastes?

**Community Member 1:** Yeah, improve it. I mean I was one of those people who was sampled years ago, actually. Thames Water came to my house and actually knocked on the next-door neighbour's house and the next one over wasn't in, so they checked my water quality. It was a random thing, which they came round and did. But that was like years ago, and they said it was fine, but that was a long time ago, about 15 years ago, so that's the reason why. So, I know how they pick people, it's very random, they'll just come to your house.

Like they picked on my next-door neighbour and they weren't in, so they knocked on my door. But I don't know, I think they have to still treat the water better because I think if water is extremely hard in London, it's getting worse. I've noticed much more limescale and drinking water doesn't taste – in fact, it just gets a film on like tea or coffee, if I drink tea, which I hardly ever do, or herbal teas, I have to filter it all the time.

**TMcK Facilitator:** Okay, so I think we need to understand a little bit more about what Thames [Water] are doing around the subject of hard water, is it something that they're dealing with or can deal with? So that seems like an action we want to look into, certainly.

**Community Member 3:** The water is obviously a lot harder up here than in the West Country where I grew up. Years ago, we actually had water from a spring, we weren't

connected to the mains, so I don't suppose anyone in those days was testing the water from a natural spring, were they? I don't know.

And we weren't connected to the main sewer, you know, you had like a cesspit in those days. So, it wasn't until the early '60s that we were actually connected to the mains water and the mains sewage system. Yeah, interesting.

**TMcK Facilitator:** Before we move on, I'm going to share my screen because we've got loads of actions and comments that I want to go into in a bit more detail in about two minutes. But before I do that, I'd like to just open up to the room again and just – there's a few that maybe haven't said anything, a few of the customers – any further thoughts both on what we've heard and from Thames and from other customers that we want to discuss? Community Member 5?

**Community Member 5:** Not much more, it was just more around the communication, I feel like it should be out wide. I know people said about getting on emails on the website, but I feel Thames Water should maybe be proactive, because from a sort of PR point of view, to just kind of sort out the reputation of them and kind of ... I don't know how well they poll, but I can't imagine it would be particularly well. So, I think it's just try and remind people what they do rather than different crisis to crisis and kind of being a submarine in terms of communication and not say anything until it goes wrong.

**TMcK Facilitator:** So, be a bit braver, Community Member 5?

**Community Member 5:** Be a bit braver and I think just saying what it is they do, because I think when it is a monopoly, you do need to seem like you're doing more. We don't have a choice to be with them, so to feel they could be doing more about what they are doing and why they're a good provider.

**TMcK Facilitator:** I mean it sounds from listening to Martin that they've got lots of great data on how good the water quality is and how safe it is, so potentially that would be a place, you think to start and talk about that?

**Community Member 5:** Yeah, the sort of publish that, promote it I think in Instagram and Twitter and things like that, just to kind of ... I mean obviously I'm on this, so I'm more privy probably to get water things than maybe other people. Or even on the Tube or buses, I think it's ... I imagine it's probably quite hard for them to have like a big marketing budget when you don't need to bring new customers in, but I think something needs to happen to just kind of sure up the brand, that's how I'd see it.

**TMcK Facilitator:** Community Member 2?

**Community Member 2:** Just as a positive note, a couple of other panellists have commented, the positive thing was that they are employing now more agents, customer support, because the last dealings I had with them over a problem it was a very prolonged reply and experience. So, it's good to know that they are addressing the issue of communication.

**TMcK Facilitator:** Community Member 6?

**Community Member 6:** I think as well a good starting point would be to take accountability, that's just really important I think to say, "Look." Because we're human, and it's a big organisation and there's a lot to do and there's a lot to think about when it comes to our water.

So to take accountability and I know obviously the *Dirty Business* documentary went out, many, many people have watched it, and to take accountability and say, "We made a mistake, but we want to put things right." And that's a good place to start. And then also to, in their updates, to reassure with any evidence that they can in the updates, to build that trust and that communication to say, "Look, these are the stats in this area, this we've recently checked these areas, and this is what we've come up with." Just to kind of really be transparent to say, "You know, we need to do a little bit more work here, but we've improved on this side of things and we're updating." Whatever they can say and have that evidence to prove that it's something they're doing and it's not just empty words.

**TMcK Facilitator:** Yeah, okay, Community Member 6, so I think there's a bit of a theme forming here on some sort of PR-based transparency budget to really help get that message out to customers.

So, what I'd like to do now given the timings, is I want to share my screen and I'm going to reiterate very quickly what's been said, both from Thames Water and from customers, and it will give us an opportunity to just sort of really hone in what we want to put down in these action plans as we go forward.

I've got the question on the left-hand side here, and we've got the response from Thames [Water]. So, they mentioned that they've got a very small number of customers contact about water quality actually, which is a third of the number of an industry average customer contacts for water quality, which of course suggests that it is doing pretty well.

They take 500,000 samples per year taken at random at customers' properties, treatment works and storage reservoirs, and out of those only 122 failed at customer properties. And there's a bit of detail there on how that failure happened and it was usually something in relation to the household itself.

The water quality data is of course available on the website. We did mention in the briefing session that that's very technical, we need that to be simplified. Delivering ownership and honesty where issues do occur. They've added 12 staff members dedicated to the support when things do go wrong. Senior leaders attend council events to reassure customers; there's school outreach programmes. They are seeking to provide more regular updates on water quality currently and these updates are primarily regulation driven.

And in terms of our response to that as customers, we've labelled these from A to G.

[A] We want to see a commitment to maintaining support channels which are human, personal, and local – not outsourced; we did like the idea that you've brought on more staff members.

[B] Be proactive about rebuilding customer trust, communicating key health and safety information in customer-friendly, easy to digest formats. So dedicated trust-building section of the website, behavioural data underlying customer confidence, e.g. the percentage of people who actually drink the tap water and why. You know, it could almost bring that back to life a little bit for other customers. They need to own their past mistakes instead of hiding. They need to ensure transparency by providing clear evidence.

[C] Build relationships with customers, provide updates monthly or quarterly, this could be via email.

[D] Proactively identify and rectify gaps between company communications and data around water quality and actual lived experience of customers.

[E] Ensure transparency around how sampling works. So, there's a question about the methodology on that one, I'm sure that will be straightforward enough.

[F] Provide clarity around what Thames [Water] are doing around the subject of hard water, so around the flavour and the taste of the water, and the impact that that can have on customers.

[G] Work on their company as a customer-facing brand, so share information on social media, be brave around how you talk about what you're doing and why and how you're going to make things better and improve things. So yeah, as mentioned that's a bit of a budget to do that.

So, these are the things that as customers have said, our analysts have been working hard in the background to capture those, so obviously I want to just make sure we've got five minutes just now, for the customers, just to review what we're seeing on the screen, make sure we've captured it okay. Anything we want to add? I've got a timescale column that's empty just now, when should we look for Thames [Water] to do this? Is it within a week, is it within a month, six months? Let's have a chat? Community Member 9?

**Community Member 9:** That was exactly what I was just going to ask about is the, are we putting some kind of timescale in place here? Do they have to come back with some kind of answer about that?

**TMcK Facilitator:** Yeah, so we can put our expectations forward as customers, and it's up to Thames [Water] to go away with the action plan and come back with what's realistic for them in terms of resource. So, we need to put forward our thought first of all, Community Member 9. So, what would you expect here for these?

**Community Member 9:** Oh gosh, I think that's putting me on the spot a little bit here, I don't really know. But yeah, I think it's just the plans you've outlined there, the actions, it's going to be quite interesting to see what they do come back with, to be honest.

**TMcK Facilitator:** Community Member 4?

**Community Member 4:** Yes, I think they could for example, start immediately with something which is easy to implement, like, I don't know, if they know the resources, to have a look and within a few, a month maybe. If it's to scale, then maybe three months' timeline, depending on what is the ... I think they have to be quite rapid in terms of trust-building. So, something that's easy to implement, like they've already got the resources in place, like send us posters maybe or emails, you know, they've already got the mechanism, so they could just add something, some extra email, maybe? Something like that, so within a couple of months, a month.

**TMcK Facilitator:** It's your choice, you're the customer so you get to pick. Then it's up to Thames [Water] to look at that from a resource perspective, as mentioned. Any other thoughts? Community Member 7, do you want to come in there?

**Community Member 7:** Yeah, just on that because we're talking about almost rebuilding trust or rebuilding reputation and developing trust, it takes some time. And how do you evidence it?

A longitudinal study needs to start with a baseline, so you'd want them to be starting immediately, and although we've clearly stated to them that there's an issue here about sort of trust, and I think we're unanimous on that, so it is in evidence. You know, statistically if you were to sort of like sample a group of Thames Water customers today, what does that figure look like in terms of the level of trust? So that you can go back to that figure in

six months or a year's time, to show that you've done all the work, it's having some level of effect on people's perceptions of the water quality. Because they're quite firm and quite clear that we're looking at very safe, a safe and clean product.

**TMcK Facilitator:** So, we're looking at an action where they can almost track trust and really put that at the core of their communications of, "We want to do better, this is where we're at just now, and here's where we want to get to." So, it's almost like setting themselves a target?

**CCW Chair:** Just to let you know Nicky, the Consumer Council for Water does have an index it runs on trust annually and Thames Water is in that table. And we also run performance on their performance over the years, so there's also some information, so it is baselined in a way but it may be not all specific baselines you want are covered.

**TMcK Facilitator:** Community Member 6, you've got your hand up, so we'll finish with you before we hand back to Rob, who will give Thames [Water] a chance to respond and then we'll take things from there. So, let's hear what you've got to say?

**Community Member 6:** Sure, so I agree with Community Member 7 and also with Community Member 4, so to start straightaway. It's easy to send an initial communication, whether it's via email or via social media. Email would be a bit more personal. Just to set the pace to say, "We want to build a relationship with you, we're going to be contacting you more regularly," and just kind of have some kind of – even if it's a loose timeline of what is going to be happening, even if it is just saying that we're going to communicate more regularly once every two months or once a month, you'll be getting more updates from us, and just to be really specific when they come through with any evidence. You know, like maybe specifically mention about what areas, what the water quality's like, how it's improved, so that there is a comparison, as Community Member 7, said.

**TMcK Facilitator:** I'm going to hand back to Rob now, who is going to give Thames [Water] a chance to respond.

**CCW Chair:** Great, thank you everyone, that's a really excellent start to the evening. So, we're going back to Martin and Sarah, you've heard your customers' comments, both positive and negative. So, before we finalise these actions, we give you a chance, you've got five minutes really to look at the commitments, tell us if they're feasible, not feasible, but if they're not, please explain clearly as to why. Obviously, if there are constraints if you could outline them to us. But really, it's an opportunity for you to have a say before we move on.

**Martin Padley:** Okay, no problems at all. So, I think, I mean it all sounds very sensible, it all sounds very useful, so thank you everyone for contributing to that, I really appreciate it, actually. I think in terms of we did actually run a TV campaign a couple of years ago, along the lines you've mentioned, and we also ran a social media campaign, I think it might have been last year, and I believe we are about to do one again shortly. So that sounds like we should be helping in those places too. In terms of – I think we'll come back to you and we'll bring Sarah in, in a moment, in terms of the communications.

In terms of the sampling, I'll explain how that works very briefly. So basically, at the start of the year there is a random set of addresses generated, completely random, and it's completely independent of me. The samplers go to those addresses, if they can't gain entry then they knock on the next-door neighbour and they can go two doors down either way. And if nobody's in, they go somewhere else. They then go to the next address on the list, that's how it works, it's completely random. The number of addresses they go depends on the size of the area, so a big area in Central London will do more samples, a small area will do fewer, that's how it works. It is genuinely, completely random.

Sarah, do you want to talk about any comms, do you want to bring your communication stuff in?

**Sarah Holland:** Yeah, I think probably a broader reflection that I found it really beneficial listening to the reflections of the panel. And I think there's opportunity to ask our customers to come and work more closely with us actually and directly support us in doing the right thing. I think often we do our best, we do a lot of our own kind of customer interactions, we do go out into the communities, but sort of sitting there listening, I think the value in our customers' voices being heard and helping to shape what we see as good and bad in terms of what we're doing is huge. So that may well form an element of our action plan, so please do bear with us on that one. In terms of the wider actions around communication, I think there's more and more opportunity there.

We're working very closely with Caroline, who you will hear from shortly I believe, but quite a significant overhaul in terms of how we do communicate. And finding the balance, I guess, between ... We recognise how concerned our customers are and we ... whilst it really saddens me personally, but I know I speak on behalf of my colleagues as well, to hear the experience and the feelings that customers have, but we've also got to face into that and really think about how we build trust, recognising that that looks different to different people. And I think the piece around frequent email campaigns is an opportunity.

Equally, that's not how some other customers want to engage with us, so we're really focused on being as multifaceted as we can be, and I'd love to test that actually with this group or something similar going forwards. So more broadly, I think no real concerns with the action plan, I think we'll obviously come back on the timescales, just from a feasibility perspective. But mostly just thank you and it was really helpful to listen to that discussion.

**CCW Chair:** Sarah, can I just ask while I've got the opportunity, we produce, CCW, the Water Matters Annual Tracker, because that focuses on satisfaction with your services, trust, value for money, and all those sorts of things. How do you use that information?

**Sarah Holland:** We've got a range of information including that, so we have some of our own surveys, we know CCW do their annual surveys. We obviously have our own testing and sampling, and we have what we call a sort of C-MeX proxy survey, which examines customers' experience off the back of both an interaction with us or just in passing.

We use all of that to feed into our annual strategy that we build around a number of key elements including trust, including public perception, and including service. You know, we do hear what customers want and these forums enrich that. But we use many different sources including the Water Matters.

**CCW Chair:** Okay, thank you, Sarah. So, we'll go back to customers now you've had a chance to listen to Thames [Water]'s response, so really it's a question of what do you think of that response? I can see Community Member 4's got her hand up, so over to you?

**Community Member 4:** Thank you, Martin and Sarah. A quick question, you know Martin, you mentioned a TV campaign and social media, and then I think Sarah mentioned a very important point that you have to be multifaceted. I just want to bring to your attention, a lot of people now don't watch TV, but they watch YouTube or they may not have social media, but they may have TikTok. So, I think you have to include all of these, you know, angles, so you cover the majority. Because I personally don't watch TV anymore, I used to, but I stopped, I don't even pay a licence now because I don't watch TV. I only watch YouTube and Netflix. So, I've never seen your campaign and I've been your customer for a million years. I just want you to expand this horizon, thank you.

**CCW Chair:** Does anybody else have any views on what you heard back from Thames Water? It was generally agreement was what I was hearing on the actions? Community Member 9?

**Community Member 9:** Yeah, it was just to say it was really good to hear that actually platforms like these will be used moving forward to help them improve confidence in people, and I think that's a really good point to pick up on, actually. I think it's really important.

**CCW Chair:** Okay, I think in that case I think for the record we do seem to have agreement on the actions on the question. Obviously, there will be some back and forth over the next few weeks, I'm sure as we drill down on them. So, I think with that we'll move on to the next question. I think Sarah and Martin are going to be moving out of their seats but thank you very much.

**Martin Padley:** Thank you very much.

**TMcK Facilitator:** I think Sarah's going to stay but we can say goodbye to Martin just now.

**CCW Chair:** Thank you, Martin, much appreciated that you've attended tonight and thanks very much for your contribution. We're swapping Martin out for Tess Fayers. So, Tess will be coming and joining us very shortly.

**Tess Fayers:** Hello, everyone.

**CCW Chair:** We'll move to the second question now and the question is going to be displayed on the screen, and Community Member 7, I think you're going to be asking this question, so let's get the question up.

**Community Member 7:** Okay, thank you. Pollution and sewage is a really high priority for all of us because it's such a visible and concerning issue. From our perspective it feels like the same problems keep happening and we don't see clear evidence that things are getting better.

What specific changes would you deliver in the next 12-24 months to reduce sewage pollution? What work is already funded and how will customers see clear local evidence of improvement?

**CCW Chair:** Great, thank you, Community Member 7. And as Tess wasn't with us on the first question, I just want to reiterate in responding, we really need you to keep to answering the question, so if you deviate too much, I will haul you back on track. So, I don't know who's answering this first, is it Tess?

**Tess Fayers:** Yes, it is me. So, I guess the first thing to say is that you would expect me to say in my role that reducing pollution is absolutely one of my top priorities. So much like you have said, it is a really high priority for us as well. I guess the first thing I would say is reflecting on the last year, we have actually had quite a successful year when it's come to reducing pollution incidents and also spills. So, in the last year, we have reduced our pollution incidents by around 18% on wastewater, that will be published and is published as part of our Pollution Incident Reduction Plan, which we have published only just recently on our website, which explains our past performance and also explains the work that we're doing to improve performance.

In the same year, we have managed to dramatically reduce the spills from our sites and that has been around a 60% reduction. Now, many will say, "Well, you had a very good year environmentally from a rainfall perspective," and that's absolutely right, the system is very

responsive to rainfall. But in that year, it was around about the 90% of the long-term average rain that we received, so to reduce our pollution incidents by 18% is something that we're particularly proud of.

That's off the back of quite a difficult year in 2024, and I've listened, actually, to the first panel where many of you were talking about openness and transparency and building trust back into the business. And since 2022 actually where we were the first to publish our storm overflows information live on a map on our website, you know, we're a company that has moved from a position where we wanted to ensure that we were very open and very transparent in the way that we operate, sharing information, responding to environmental information requests and delivering on our environmental commitments.

So, we have three main core elements of our Pollution Reduction Plan: the first one is targeted interventions to reduce the pollution at source. So, this is where we deploy planned cleaning in our network to eliminate issues before they become issues for customers or for the environment. We have delivered in the past year over 1,500 kilometres of cleaning on our network. We also have 23,000 sewer depth monitors within our network that allow us to detect issues before our customers and the environment are impacted by escapes of sewage. And are responding to those very quickly now, and much more quickly than we have done historically.

Looking ahead to the year ahead, we have made quite a step up in investment, so in the last year we have spent on specific pollution-related priorities around £200 million on specific pollution-related interventions. That is obviously a commitment that we're making going forward but as well, the business has allowed us to implement further enhancements into our programmes; we will be cleaning more of our networks, we will be deploying more sewer depth monitors so that we can be proactive. And we are making record levels of investment in our infrastructure to reduce pollution incidents from our treatment works.

When we look at where the source of most of our incidents come from, around 60% of our incidents actually come from our network and many of these actually, at their root, are caused by behaviours that we as consumers can influence every day.

So this might be the presence of rag in sewers, it might be presence of what we call fats, oils and greases or FOGs, and we're working very hard on our customer campaigns to ensure that actually we can spread a message well to our communities and ensure that actually we can influence network protection activities at food service establishments, at care homes, local schools, and communicate in a hyperlocal way with our communities to actually talk to them about the measures we can all take as consumers to help us prevent sewer abuse and prevent that causing escapes of sewage, which then become pollution incidents.

So, I think it's fair to say that, you know, as the largest organisation, we will unfortunately, most likely, always have the largest number of pollution incidents. To bring that into focus, we have 110,000 kilometres of network. The nearest company to us in the North of England has 80,000 kilometres, so we're quite a large proportion of the UK estate, and so it's natural that we will have a large number of incidents. But I'm very proud that we've achieved an 18% reduction.

**CCW Chair:** Tess, can I just get you back to an important part of the question, which is what work is already funded and how will the customers see clear local evidence of improvement?

**Tess Fayers:** Yes, well the local evidence of improvement comes in two ways. It comes in the sort of reduction in pollutions that are published in our Pollution Incident Reduction

Programme, so we can see that on a local level where the incidents are happening and see that reduction. We're also investing in our sewage works quite considerably, so over the next – over this five-year cycle there's £6 billion of improvement going into our infrastructure, which will ultimately reduce the discharges that we have from our sewage works.

**CCW Chair:** What can customers expect immediately, we're talking about the next 12-24 months, what are they going to see, what's going to be delivered?

**Tess Fayers:** Well, further reductions in our pollution numbers is what we're targeting. Although I would say that this, and this is where it becomes quite a challenging topic; the pollution landscape is quite evolving, and the reason for that is because we're working very closely with the Environment Agency who are making changes to the way that pollutions are measured and managed. And so ultimately for us, what we want to do is reduce all escapes of sewage and that will come through in published reduced pollution numbers and also published reduced spills numbers.

**CCW Chair:** Okay, I mean you haven't used all your time, I don't think.

**Tess Fayers:** Yeah, I'm over the time, sorry.

**CCW Chair:** Okay great. So, thank you very much for that response, I think we covered off most of the points. We're now going to pause and park you, Tess and Sarah, again for five minutes and we're going to hear what your customers make of what you have said on that. So over to you Nicky, to guide the next phase of the discussion.

**TMcK Facilitator:** Fantastic, thank you very much. Now, this was a really big discussion point for us in the briefing session that we held folks, there was lots of opinions. We've heard from Thames Water now, what do we think of the responses, has it put your mind at ease, has it been a positive response, are there other questions that have come out? Who wants to kick us off?

**Community Member 10:** I was intrigued with the 18% waste. I just wanted to know a little bit more sort of fundamental information behind that, with regards to what was it last year, what's the projection for the next year? Is there a service level agreement around that, because it's all well and good saying a percentage, but what does that actually constitute? Visualisation.

**TMcK Facilitator:** Yeah, so an action from that, Community Member 10, is just to really create clear data points that customers can look at and see what the direction of travel is?

**Community Member 10:** Yes.

**CCW Chair:** Community Member 6?

**Community Member 6:** So, I've got lots of questions, they probably might not all make sense, but I was just trying to take notes during listening to what you were saying, Tess. Initially, you said that you had reduced pollution by a certain amount, but you didn't say specifically what you've done to reduce that pollution. I think you slightly went into it, so that was one of my questions. And also, I don't know what you call them, the sub-stations that detect any overflows that report back, have they or will they be upgraded? Because I know that I keep mentioning it, I did mention it before, with the documentary, the *Dirty Business* documentary, it was clear that those sub-stations were sub-standard and were many times not working properly, not sending information across, which meant that there was overflow for more than a certain period of time. And it was because they're very old, and they haven't been upgraded in a long time.

And also, you mentioned about talking to people about or organisations about what we can do. There's really no information out there for everyday people about what we should be putting down.

Some of it is common sense, I know I wouldn't put oil down the sink or, you know, I wouldn't throw anything down the toilet that is not paper or certain things that you wouldn't put down the toilet. But a lot of people don't know this, so we need to be educated on what we should do and how we can help. I think somebody mentioned when we were having our initial meeting, about when somebody moves into a house and starts paying their water bills, to say, "Hey," you know, get a letter, "Here's your bill, and here's a bit of information about how you can help us," would be really good, because then that's educating people.

And also again, going back to *Dirty Business*, the documentary, it was talking about how the environmental services are overseeing, well how do I know that they are really overseeing and they're not overlooking certain things? Again, there was no transparency, a lot of things were hidden, and I think that, that for me has caused a lot of distrust with Thames Water. So how do I know that that information is accurate?

**TMcK Facilitator:** So, just to jump in there, Community Member 6, how do you know? Let's have a think? We're not asking questions of Thames [Water] here, we're creating solutions, so what needs to happen for you to look at data and go, "Do you know what, that looks great, this is trustworthy, I can now put my mind at ease and can track this with confidence"?

**Community Member 6:** Well, I think initially it's accountability again because there was a lot of not taking accountability for what was happening, "No, everything's fine, we're all right, no, that's fine." And it wasn't fine, you know, obviously we have a system that's very old and it caused deaths.

**TMcK Facilitator:** It should almost be that they need to be transparent with the tech that they're using now and how that meets head on the criticisms that were levelled at through this documentary you mentioned, does that roughly ...?

**Community Member 6:** Yeah, absolutely, and then to say what has been done in order to make those changes? You know, how do I know the environmental services, according to the *Dirty Business*, the environmental services it was a business, they were making money somehow to overlook ...

**TMcK Facilitator:** I think that's potentially separate from Thames Water, so we just need to watch that, so they're a separate organisation and I guess it's about Thames [Water] being able to link up with someone that is more reputable in your eyes, potentially is what you're looking for?

**Community Member 6:** Yeah, no I understand that, I understand that, but was that something that had been arranged via Thames Water, that there was some kind of, I don't know, some kind of way that the environmental services were being given money by Thames Water to not look at things and overlook certain things and not report on certain things?

**TMcK Facilitator:** Okay, Community Member 6, I'm going to come back to you because there's a few other hands up just now. So I'll leave you just now and come back if that's all right. Community Member 5?

**Community Member 5:** Yeah, it was just to kind of pick up on the fats and oils that that line around it, about what they're doing. So, I guess it was whether- do they look at the cost of it, like "Pouring oil down the drains, this costs us X amount to fix annually, however often"?

Or are they going to talk more on the community impact? A direct correlation, “If you put oil down your sink, this will happen.” I guess the communication around that.

And I think that was the bit I picked up the most at because I think you do get some communication on that, just a little infographic, “Don’t pour oil down the drain, throw it out,” but I think you have to go out of your way to see the shocking images of a – I think it was in Whitechapel a few years ago, there was a fatberg in the sewer that was like really powerful and everyone was like, “Oh, this is gross.”

And it was like, it was one of the first times you saw it, it’s not regularly used, and I feel like that would be quite a good way of saying, “This is what happens if you do this.” I’m just wondering whether there was a way of Thames Water saying, I mean this is obviously not the reason, but like, “Your bill is this much, we have spent this much on pollution, if you were all to play your part we would be spending less on ...”

**TMcK Facilitator:** So, it’s impact, it’s impact on your pocket and it’s impact on infrastructure of these bad behaviours that some customers have got.

**Community Member 5:** Yeah, and I think just maybe showing – because I think it’s often just, “Don’t pour oil down the sink,” rather than, “How do you dispose of these things safely?” I’ve noticed a lot online about batteries recently, about like don’t throw those out in the bin, how do you go about it? I think showing [A] why you have to do that and [B] how you got about doing it, because I think yeah, maybe there’s confusion from people or it’s not maybe that clear.

**TMcK Facilitator:** Community Member 7?

**Community Member 7:** Yeah, thanks. It was very interesting to hear the response to the question. It was statistically quite a lot of information to take in and there’s something about, you know, sort of simple messaging. You know, you’ve got quotes around percentages that can sound impressive next to actual £220 million investment figures that isn’t given as a percentage. So, a sort of little bit of consistency, because whether I’ve got it right or wrong, I’ve picked up elsewhere that actually what we’re seeing is a pattern of increased pollution incidents in the Thames Valley region, it’s gone up by about 120 from 350 to 470.

That could be me being misled by things I’ve read online. Your information is telling me that we’ve got an 18% reduction, so I’m just a little bit confused about actually what the figures are telling us in reality. Because you can create statistics and measures that present it in a certain way, almost like, “There’s nothing to see here. Everything’s going to be fine and we’re already sorting this all out.” When I know that locally we are seeing damage to very precious chalk stream rivers as a result. And that has a really serious knock-on effect on the ecology and delicate ecosystems, which I don’t imagine for a moment that those people that have dedicated their careers to this work at Thames Water, don’t care about very, very deeply. But I’d like to see it sort of with a bit more upfront and being sort of like, you know, laid out there, these other problems, and actually if you pour oil down your sink you’re contributing to those sorts of things as well. So, there’s just a little bit about, or I didn’t quite pick up the last figure, I was going to ask about that, that £6 billion, whether it’s £6 billion or £6 million?

**TMcK Facilitator:** It’s £6 billion being spent over the next five years.

**Community Member 7:** Well, that is a massive investment which would explain something to do with the way in which our bills have been going up, so you know, it would be very good to hear messaging about the proportion of that either as a percentage or in cool, hard money, exactly what that is going to fund and how it will reduce. Because I think part of

the problem, and particularly you're talking about a 60% reduction in storm overflows, well, you know, 60% reduction because the weather hasn't been too bad, is positive, but you're still left with this Victorian infrastructure, which is part of the problem.

And year after year if that investment isn't going into the infrastructure particularly with growth of population in different pockets of new developments emerging within the Thames Valley region, you'll continue to face all of that.

So just a little bit simpler explanations around statistics and how that measures against what is actually happening and actually being accepting that there are some really frightening problems that are occurring at the moment.

**TMcK Facilitator:** Thank you very much, Community Member 7, and I think it was really interesting when you mentioned there about how it can be quite bamboozling about the figures, but then you were able to bring to life this lovely river system near you that's being impacted. And I wonder if there's something potentially around that that Thames [Water] could do to bring to life the positive impacts that could be happening in these systems as a result of changes? I don't know what you think about that?

**Community Member 7:** Yeah, I think it is something that worries everybody, naturally, you know, and I say that, you know, I don't doubt for a minute the people that are working at the chalk face in Thames Water are battling against odds and, you know, want to reduce those damages. So, progress on that is to be applauded. But what can we do to prevent that and to really sort of like safeguard our natural environment, which is very, very precious?

**TMcK Facilitator:** Okay fantastic, Community Member 7. I'm going to go to Community Member 2, now?

**Community Member 2:** It's just following on from this dumping sewage into rivers, and I gather that it's probably following on from this *Dirty Business* programme, I understand in certain times in storm times by the river, they are allowed to dump a certain percentage of sewage, untreated sewage, into rivers, which in itself is a concern. Is there any way that can be changed, can it be processed in another way rather than allowing it to be dumped in rivers and watercourses?

**Community Member 10:** And also, at the seaside too, isn't it? The seaside? In that *Dirty Business* when that little girl died and that again was in Devon, where I come from, I think it was Dawlish or Teignmouth or something like that. And then there was another case in North Devon, Saunton Sands, where I think a school teacher was taken gravely ill. He was surfing, wasn't he, on the beach there? That's a worry, because obviously people do go – you know, we want a homegrown tourist industry, and you know, some of these beaches aren't safe to swim in. And a lot of people do wild swimming now, don't they, in rivers? And they're getting ill.

**TMcK Facilitator:** We're going to focus purely on the area that Thames [Water] covers, I think to Community Member 2's point.

**Community Member 2:** Yeah, that's South West Water, of course.

**TMcK Facilitator:** Yeah, of course, I think what Community Member 2's potentially saying is that what can we see from Thames [Water] in terms of progress? So, we need to simplify the infrastructure investment so that people can understand clearly what a sewage overspill is, how it works, what can be done to improve it. I don't know, Community Member 2, is there a way that could be presented to you in a communication that would help, or

something that you've seen that's helped when it comes to understanding these things better?

**Community Member 2:** I mean there's been a lot in the news this year, and I'd say probably following on from that documentary, that highlighted to everybody just what – just the amount of sewage untreated sewage that's going into our waterways.

**TMcK Facilitator:** I'm pretty sure the thing is, if these companies could stop these overflows by doing something, they absolutely would have done it, so I guess it's more about understanding of why that hasn't been stopped or what's been done?

**Community Member 2:** Yeah, I mean it's a concern that any of it's going in there, really. I understand they are working to guidelines and are within those guidelines in that *Dirty Business* programme they were over, that was one exception. But it's a concern that this is regularly going on. You know, we get an awful lot of storms, wet weather going on, it's a concern that this is happening. It's killing wildlife, damaging all sorts, really. Can we treat more sewage than we're putting into our rivers?

**Community Member 3:** And nobody's mentioned wet wipes, they're a bloody nuisance, they should be banned, shouldn't they? They cause a lot of trouble.

**TMcK Facilitator:** I'm aware of time folks and what I want to do is, I want to share what we've gathered so far from our analysts. I'm going to reiterate that in a second and then we're going to confirm that we're happy with what we've gathered, or if there's anything else to add. So obviously there's a question in the left-hand side.

Thames [Water] stated that they had a relatively successful year in terms of reducing pollution incidents, that's something that actually straightaway, Community Member 7, you questioned and you wanted to know more about that. You know, there's an 18% reduction in spills, 60% reduction elsewhere and an acknowledgement that this has been a good year for rainfall as part of that.

You know, there's 3 core elements of PRP<sup>1</sup>, so it's: eliminate issues at source. You know, there's 1,500 kilometres of cleaning in the networks, there's 23,000 sewer depth monitors. 60% of incidents come from Thames [Water] network, many stated to come from customer behaviour, and again that's something water spoken about at length.

In 2022, Thames [Water] were the first to publish overflow data live on a map on a website.

They're working hard on a customer campaign to ensure that they can spread messages well to our community about food service establishments, care homes, local schools, etc.

And communicating hyperlocal with the community.

Into the future, they stated that Thames [Water] are likely to always have the highest number of spills and pollutions just because they are the largest water company.

They're investing £6 billion over the next five years into infrastructure.

There's been a step-up in investment, £200 million on specific pollution-related interventions.

They're cleaning more of their network; they're deploying more sewer depth monitors. They're making record levels of investment in infrastructure.

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<sup>1</sup> Pollution Reduction Plan

They're working with the Environment Agency to change the ways in which pollution levels and incidents are reported.

And these are all the things that we then commented on. So, we've got [A] to [F] here in terms of what the ideal response would look like on the action plan.

[A] Communicate investments and improvements in a clear, more concise, and tangible customer-friendly format. That's all great, but what does it actually mean to me as a customer? We spoke about things local; we spoke about bringing it to life. Easy to understand data points, easy tracking of environmental performance.

[B] We want to give customers confidence that monitoring and treatment centres are being maintained and invested in, and again there's lots of reference to *Dirty Business* and how can Thames [Water] meet that head on and challenge it head on.

[C] Aligning reported company-level data with regional localised data and lived experiences. Work to bring local improvement efforts to life.

[D] Educate customers on how they can help Thames Water to reduce pollution, much more advertising required here, can that be provided both within the bill but also in other advertising formats.

[E] Help to show the impact on infrastructure and on the customer bill of the fact that bad customer action, so putting oil down your drain and wet wipes, all of these things, really do impact the network.

[F] Provide a clear breakdown of the £6 billion investment, showing exactly what it's going to be used for, what differences we can expect to see and what that means to customers.

I'm going to hand this back to the customers on the call: have we covered everything that we want to cover, is there anything else we want to add here to tighten it up a little bit? What about timings and when you expect this to happen?

**CCW Chair:** Before bringing in everybody else, I sort of thought, I may be wrong, and I'll be guided by I think it was Community Member 7, there was this concern about chalk streams and whether there should be some action on chalk streams in particular? Because they're being specifically damaged. What's the plan on that, is there a specific plan to rejuvenate them?

**Community Member 7:** Yeah, I think, I mean that's something that's very, we're in a chalk stream valley here, it's quite a unique ecological environment in parts of Reading around the Kennett and all the rest of it, and that pollution is seeping through, it's something that I know is a very live issue in the Berkshire countryside and all the rest of it. But I just think that is very locally based. It does allude to in the what the ideal water company responses would look like to hyperlocal, and that might be sufficient rather than being very specific. I think the point was made about the chalk stream rivers that are very badly affected, but it is the case that these are very delicate balances across from the other side of Southend through to the other end of the region. So, I'd be very happy if it's given a point on its own.

**TMcK Facilitator:** We can definitely get that added in, Community Member 7. In terms of timescales folks, when do we want to see, when the action plan has been put together, when are we hoping to see this come to fruition? Community Member 4?

**Community Member 4:** I think could start implementing and communicate quite quickly, so if they've already got this data they can, you know, some messages could be sent within

four weeks' time. They don't have to invent anything, they've got it, so could just email. Four weeks will be plenty to compose an email.

**TMcK Facilitator:** Community Member 1?

**Community Member 1:** I wrote 28 days as well, really, in the timeframe, because they've got automation there already.

**TMcK Facilitator:** Any other thoughts on this in general, folks, before we look to ..

**Community Member 3:** It's obviously going to take a while, because they have to put in a lot of new infrastructure, don't they? That new super sewer they did on the Thames [Water], that was years in the building, wasn't it? You can't do these things overnight, being realistic to the Thames Water board.

**TMcK Facilitator:** Yeah, I think a lot of the infrastructure stuff is kind of happening. Our discussion has more been around, "Tell us about it, show us the success stories, show us the failures, be transparent," I think, is that fair to say? Community Member 7?

**Community Member 7:** Well, it was just that what we need to see is that £6 billion that has been mentioned there, is creating an infrastructure to deal with 21<sup>st</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> Century problems, because we're stuck with the 19<sup>th</sup> Century infrastructure that didn't, wasn't built for the population that we have in the UK or the climate breakdown that is causing lots of problems in terms of the vastly increased rainfall. So, it's very much needing to be invested in, at the moment, so you know, I think that that's all very urgent and certainly it would be good to have reassurance that that £6 billion is adequate and that it's going to be invested in very strategically and in a targeted way that leaves the population with a fit for purpose water supply system.

**Community Member 3:** Recently, they were using the original Joseph Bazalgette system that was built in the 1850s, you know, let's face it, it's nearly 180 years ago.

**TMcK Facilitator:** Rob, I'm going to hand back to you now, I'm aware of time.

**CCW Chair:** We are slightly over time, so we'll have to haul it back somewhere, but thank you everyone for another brilliant discussion. Before we finalise those actions, I just want to give Thames Water a chance to respond? Tess, do you want to kick us off?

**Tess Fayers:** Yeah, certainly Rob, thank you. The first thing I would say is Community Member 7, you're incredibly well-informed, your numbers are actually right, but they bring you up to the end of 2024, and it's into the 2025 calendar year where we've made that reduction. So, you talked about the numbers, they are absolutely bob on, if you look in our published Pollution Incident Reduction Plan, you'll be able to take a look at the data and the level of change.

Also, understanding what that means in terms of incidents per 10,000 kilometres, you know, all of that is explained in the Incident Plan that we can ensure that we consider how we can publish that more widely. Because that is available on our website, but clearly we can take an opportunity to reflect on how we can get that message out there.

I was really heartened to hear that many of you referenced some of the messages we've been pushing around fats, oils and grease disposal, wet wipes, came up as well. Which is good to hear that that has landed to a degree. We have a new marketing campaign that we're about to push out which talks specifically about the investment and where that investment is going.

It's going in a number of different places, into increasing capacity, into improving quality according to the obligations that we have under the Water Industry National Improvement Programme. So much of that is going onto that core infrastructure which you say is aged and does need that investment. So, I often talk when I talk to the press about this being the time to be alive in the wastewater sector, because actually this is a record level of investment, and it's our biggest upgrade for 150 years. And for me, this is a super exciting time for us.

I think we also touched on the trust matters and one of the things that I wanted to leave you with is the fact that we recognise that we can't mark our own homework, so we do use an independent water quality monitoring company who will actually review everything incident for us and provide independent evaluation of that incident which is then provided through a self-reporting mechanism to the Environment Agency. Because we really want to ensure that everyone feels that they can trust in what we're doing, and the best way that we felt to do that was to have that independent monitoring of water quality when incidents happen.

But I think there's some great things for us to take away there about how we can communicate that impact, get our message out there more, educate more, and just to ramp up our "bin it, don't block it" message, so thank you for your feedback.

**CCW Chair:** Just to confirm, Tess, there's nothing on those actions that you would disagree or say that they can't be achieved?

**Tess Fayers:** No, I think one of the panel, Community Member 3, talked about the timescales, I think we do have to be realistic. When we're investing in some of these sites, I mean these are multimillion pound programmes, that will take time to come through. But it is really important that on a local level where people can see and understand the plan for investment in their area, you know, that's something that we're working on in terms of how to best communicate that out either through public forum, through some of the community touchpoints that we have out in the regions.

Community Member 7, you talked particularly about the Kennett, I spend a lot of my time talking to customers in the Lambourn area about their precious chalk stream. Similarly, we've had lots of really good engagement with the Pang and other areas within- around Hemel Hempstead. So certainly, we've got lots of really good news stories that we would love to push out and to engage with. I guess I think we all need to recognise though that some of that is somewhat drowned out by a wider debate around sewage spills and around some of the challenges that we have.

**CCW Chair:** Okay, Tess, thank you for that. Very briefly I am going to go back to the customers and see if there's anything in that explanation that they want to pick up. Community Member 4?

**Community Member 4:** Yes, Tess, thank you very much. And a quick question, what marketing channels do you use, because you said you're going to communicate it via marketing channels, but I'm just wondering is it ...?

**CCW Chair:** I think we'll have to leave that one, Community Member 4, for now, because I think we're so behind time we won't get the final question in if we don't move on. We can pick that up outside for you if that's okay? Any other comments on what you've heard?

**Community Member 4:** I just wanted to say for them to expand, that's it, to expand all the channels so everyone is included, that's my point, that's it.

**CCW Chair:** Thank you. Okay, I can't see anybody else. So, I think with that, we're going to move on. For the record, we've agreed those actions and the question, and we'll move on to the next question. Tess, I think you're leaving us now, thank you very much for your input and your time this evening. I think also, is Sarah leaving us now?

**TMcK Facilitator:** Yes, she is.

**CCW Chair:** We're now moving on to a third question, and David, the Retail Director and Caroline Murdoch are going to be coming in. And Community Member 2, is going to be asking the third and final question. So, Nicky, you've sprung into action, no doubt to bring in the two new people?

**Caroline Murdoch:** Good evening, hello.

**CCW Chair:** Hello Caroline, thank you very much for joining us. And David, thank you also for joining us. So, we're on to the third and final question of the night, and Community Member 2 is going to be asking this question. The question will come up on screen and then Community Member 2, you can ask it?

**Community Member 2:** We're seeing bills go up and at the same time we're reading about things like dividends, financial issues, and the company not meeting expectations. On top of that, we have details that lights are being left on in head office throughout the night and they don't help the story. We're being asked to pay more without seeing any clear improvements. Can you clearly explain where our money is going, how we know it is being used for customers and what improvements we will actually see as bills rise?

**CCW Chair:** Great, thank you very much, Community Member 2, for that. And just because you're new into the session, I just want to say that we're trying to focus people on answering the specific question, so try not to stray too far from the question in your answer. We're going to keep it strictly to five minutes on this occasion because we're running a bit behind. If we make some more time up from some other method, I'll give you a bit more time on the response to the response. So, thank you very much and over to I think David first?

**David Bird:** Yeah, thank you and I may very well pass those to Caroline for some supplementary. So, I mean I know this is an incredibly emotive topic as we all feel the cost-of-living challenges.

So, at a very simple level, the average bill for our metered customers is going to be £700 in this coming year. That is up 3.4% on the previous bill. So, in reality, that means that on average our customers are paying about just under £2 a day for their water and wastewater usage. In terms of where that goes, for each £1 that customers give us, 55p goes on replacing, in effect, the old infrastructure and then investing for population growth, which we're seeing significant growth in the South East. And also, the impact of climate change and improvements to the topics that we've already been discussing.

So there's been a lot in the press about forever chemicals that come through manufacturing, through agriculture, and as a water company, part of our responsibility in the future will be to take those out of the water system. So 55p in the £1 goes on investing in the infrastructure. We then spend 37p in every £1 that we get in effect just running the network and predominantly that's on the salaries of the people that work for us, all the consumables that we use, and things like the energy costs we have to use to pump water around the system and actually ensure that we run the service.

And also on things, I know Community Member 5, mentioned spend on brand and communications, which from definitely hearing loud and clear we need to spend more there. But all of that is spent running the network and running the business. And then

perhaps the more contentious one is this whole issue around finance costs. So, in order to run the company, we have to borrow money and we have to pay that back and therefore we pay 8p in the £1 on finance costs. And in a way, the simplest way to look at that is similar to a mortgage, where you're paying interest on the payments that you borrow on any money that you may have borrowed in the past. So that's where the money is spent.

We're acutely aware as a business that Thames [Water] has not delivered to the expectations that our customers have got. But that is why we're now significantly upping the level of investment. So, we'll spend £20 billion over this five-year period on making improvements to the service that both Martin and Tess have talked about. And the way you'll see that is through less disruptions, you'll see less supply interruptions, less pollutions, and a better level of customer service.

Again, to give you a sense of the type of scale of investment, we're recruiting an additional 1,000 people over the last 12 months, to make sure that we've got people in the right places at the right time, to run the network and to provide the customer service that we need to offer to you. So, a lot going on. I mean I think one of the challenges has been around financial issues, and Caroline, do you just want to touch on that because there's been a lot in the press on that recently?

**Caroline Murdoch:** Thanks very much, David, and thank you everybody, this has been really informative, so I've really appreciated it. On the financial issues, so yes, as you'll be aware, we're currently going through our recapitalisation, so our shareholders walked away from the business in March 2024, they've played no role since then, and we're currently talking to our creditors about recapitalising the business, which is a fairly complicated process that we'll see them writing off some of their debt and becoming shareholders, enabling us to be put on a more stable footing for the future. I suppose one thing I should mention is that as a result of this, no shareholder had taken a dividend since 2017 and the creditors who would become or shareholders have pledged that they won't take a dividend before at least 2030.

So, there's huge recognition that the financial position of the company really needs to be improved and that's what the management of the business is seeking to achieve, so that we can focus on delivering for customers and not going on focusing on our balance sheet, which is one of the issues we've got at the moment.

**CCW Chair:** Okay, thank you both for those answers. I think now we're going to go back to the customers and see what they made of that. So, Nicky, over to you?

**TMcK Facilitator:** Thanks very much, Rob, and thank you Caroline and David for the response. So again, we've listened to the response from Thames [Water], what did we think of that, did it give us the answers we were looking for, do we still want to find out a little bit more? Community Member 9?

**Community Member 9:** Yeah, I just wanted to know whether they would consider publishing clear evidence year on year and showing what has improved as a direct result of all the investment they're making?

**TMcK Facilitator:** So, just something that proves that the money has been well spent?

**Community Member 9:** Yeah, just showing that year on year that we are investing in this, things are improving, and we are on the right track, that would be good, I think for building public confidence as well.

**CCW Chair:** Community Member 9, is it also the size of the improvement that you want to know about because the bills are going up?

**Community Member 9:** For sure, any improvement is good improvement, right? But yeah, obviously the bigger it is, the more we want to know, we want to understand that we as the consumers that are being affected by all this.

**Community Member 10:** Well, you save a lot of money having a water meter, customers. I had a guy here from – because they said, “Oh, you can’t have a water meter,” and I insisted and insisted. And this member of staff came from Thames Water, he was very good, and I was connected to the hairdressers at the back, so he separated our water supplies because obviously I didn’t want to pay for her next door having a shampoo and set, do you know what I mean?

So, I did save a lot of money and he was very good, he was here several hours sorting it out; he even took copper wire, copper piping from a redundant shower that I didn’t need anymore, and took that away, you know, because I had one from the mains. What he did was beyond the call of duty, so I can’t thank that member of staff from Thames Water enough, to be honest. And he saved me a lot of money.

**TMcK Facilitator:** Great to hear. Community Member 2, do you want to go ahead?

**Community Member 2:** Yeah, obviously the bills are going up very quickly, very high, particularly in the last couple of years. And I think from what I understand, I think Ofwat allowed you to increase the bills by 35% over five years. But it seems you’ve loaded last year’s increase quite highly, so obviously, subsequent years as a percentage of that, it’s going to go up big time, isn’t it?

I understand your infrastructure takes a lot to run, and it does take money, but it does concern me that we are paying so much all up front out of this 35% that was given to you over the five years. So, it’s like shark practice really, even though I understand that your costs are high.

**TMcK Facilitator:** I guess Community Member 2, from an action perspective, what would you want to find out? You’ve said today that they’ve went quite hard in terms of the increase, but what sort of action are you looking for here?

**Community Member 2:** Well, I suppose we said it, I mean we need to see some evidence of what’s being done with this money, as I think we’ve spoken of by David and Caroline, but it’s just I want to appreciate that this money was seemed to be loaded up front, this 35% that was granted to them for over five years, I believe, it seems a great big bulk of it was up front? That seems to be from my memory.

**TMcK Facilitator:** So, a bit of understanding around why that was the case, because obviously that was done for a reason, and it’s just about that transparency around why was that the case, what impact will that have on our services?

**Community Member 2:** Well, if we’re talking percentages, if you load the percentage up front, subsequent annual increases are going to be that much higher, aren’t they? So, you’re gaining all the way through. How was the 35% proportioned over the five years? You’d assume it would be 35% divided by 5?

**TMcK Facilitator:** So, a bit of questioning about why that was the case?

**Community Member 2:** To understand more about that, so it’s all to do with a fundamental question, really, understanding the increase and where the money’s going. Another point also raised in there, and one of our panellists raised it here in our earlier session, about the lights being left on in your head office all night, every night. I don’t live in Reading, I don’t see it, but one of the panellists lives there. It’s a small point but it’s a question that you think,

“Well, how are you handling your money if you’re leaving all your lights on all night long?” It doesn’t give you a lot of confidence in the way you’re running the bigger picture.

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

**Community Member 7:** Yeah, there was just a question, obviously we heard about 12 new additions to the Customer Services Department earlier on, I mean 12 people goes a long way, there’s a lot of customers, but 12 is something, isn’t it? And it’s good to hear that Community Member 3, had a positive experience in terms of a customer there. I’ve got no complaints, I would worry about what Community Member 2’s pointed out there about year-on-year increases and percentage costs to me, because 3 to 4%, that does affect my bottom line as an average earner, really.

You know, things are getting tighter and tighter in the squeezed middle. But just in the sort of immediate term in terms of those 1,000 people that have been employed, obviously you’d want to applaud that, that sounds really very positive about maintaining the structure. But you know, I just wonder about how much investment Thames Water actually make in sort of the universities and the research and development and apprenticeships and the young people?

Because we’ve got a load of young people coming through in this country at the moment from all over the globe, really talented pool of young people that could really help the business to drive on into the future. But it seems to be that they’re all paying their student loans and all the rest of it and the universities are a little bit underfunded and struggling.

But Thames Water might benefit from all of those graduates who have to pay back their loans, so I’d just like to see some sort of levy or contribution to the future workforce so that we are actually employing from our own, growing our own in the UK, as it were. So, whether or not those 1,000 people all come from universities in the UK or not, I don’t know, but certainly I think that would be a point that I’d be wanting to know about in terms of the investments that you’re making with our funding.

**CCW Chair:** So, giving people job opportunities in the UK, you mean?

**Community Member 7:** Well, I just think that you’ve got these universities, they’re investing and training talented engineers who take on all of these loans. Thames Water potentially benefit from that because they can recruit these graduates. How much are they spending on research and development in our universities for apprenticeships and younger people being free to make the workforce of the future? That was the point I was making about investment.

**TMcK Facilitator:** And I think when we’re talking about bills, value, and trust, you know, and confidence, I think that sounds like something that could potentially feed into that for you Community Member 7, if they show that they’re investing the right way in both the talent and infrastructure? Community Member 4, do you want to jump in?

**Community Member 4:** Yes please, thank you. So, my point is, I used to work in investment banking before and David mentioned the 8% finance cost and I 100% know, this is a very expensive way for a utility company. And I also read in the Financial Times that they also have emergency borrowing ...

**CCW Chair:** Oh, you’ve frozen.

**Community Member 4:** ... and the reason why it looks – they know they can pass this cost to us, that’s why our bills are quite high because it’s got a massive impact on our bills because they’re borrowing money expensively when they could have, as utility companies,

they could have found better ways. But they can do it because they know they can pass the cost to us, the consumers. So, my point is, could this financing costs have been better, like cheaper for them so then it would drip through to our bills as well, you know? Because they borrow at a high rate, that's why we pay more money.

**TMcK Facilitator:** So, what do we want here Community Member 4, do we want some evidence around how the financing was structured, or how the decision-making ...?

**Community Member 4:** Yeah, absolutely because there has to be accountability, because if I know "I'm not paying, you're paying," it doesn't matter for me, I can take a high loan and pass it on to you because it doesn't really matter. They could have issued water bonds at the cheaper rate, a lot of people would buy it, because it's better than ...

**TMcK Facilitator:** Okay, so we want evidence around the decision-making process for the refinancing?

**Community Member 4:** Yes, because essentially, we are the ones who are paying for this.

**TMcK Facilitator:** Community Member 1, do you want to jump in?

**Community Member 1:** I thought it was really good that the breakdown that we got so how much money is spent in the £1. And as with Community Member 2, we have a very high up-front cost initially, so I'd like to know how that proved really, as well. The upfront cost for 35% and we were charged a lot up front as Community Member 2, said before.

**TMcK Facilitator:** Yeah, so the decision-making around that, there's an action around can you tell us a little bit more about that and obviously how much did you consider the impact of the incremental increases as a result?

**Community Member 1:** Exactly.

**TMcK Facilitator:** Has anyone else got anything to say before I summarise the screens that we've got from our analysts? Okay Community Member 8, on you go?

**Community Member 8:** My understanding is like from a company perspective, you're saying about the bills going to £700 on a metered. Do you have a basic thing, a bit like Council Tax, saying how much water or what it costs Thames Water per household? So, if you've got two or three people, it costs you this amount to supply the water, the units, and things like that? So, you could then get us to explain, this is what it's costing you and this is what we're contributing and we're adding all these costs on for the 55p or something you said, didn't you, or the 37p, if you could separate it out and put it in layman's terms to us so that it makes it more relative?

**TMcK Facilitator:** We spoke about that in the briefing session, didn't we, Community Member 8, and I think straightaway it was how David started to explain things, it was pence in the £1. And it's about trying to create some kind of infographic or something simple, whether it's on your bill or whether it's on your online platform, that allows you to sort of delve into that as much or as little as you want to. Is that fair to say?

**Community Member 8:** I think so, and I think to be honest there's been a lot of talk today about your website, but the website is very detailed and how many have actually gone to the website to search for information? The onus is on you guys really to engage with us to make it simple and summarise, that's what we talked about in the discussion, we all would love that, you know, just come to us with the information so we can sort of engage more.

**TMcK Facilitator:** Now, I've got approximately one minute to summarise things. I'll try and summarise things quickly and I'll obviously hand back over to Rob. So, we can see in the

“We did” section here where David and Caroline were able to sort of run through what makes up a bill for every £1. The extra recruitment that’s been happening over the last 12 months to deliver consistent services. Ongoing recapitalisation of the company, they had to write off some debts or they’re going to be writing off some debts as a result of the restructuring that took place.

They will be taking on new shareholders and obviously Community Member 4 was able to bring an action around that. Obviously, they mentioned that no shareholder has taken dividends since 2017. No dividends to be taken until at least 2030 from those new shareholders that are coming onboard. Into the future there is this £20 billion in a five-year period making improvements in the service, so there’s less disruptions, less supply interruptions, less pollution, better customer services. We’ve spoken about that across all three questions, really.

In terms of customer response, we’ve got a few actions here.

[A] Clear, regular communications around investment and resulting outcomes. So, there was a few mentions around why was it such a big increase upfront, what impact is that going to have going forward, why was that decision made?

[B] Evidencing the costs to the company of water provision to customers in a really tangible and easy to relate to format. So, an infographic, something that’s interactive, either through the bill or the website or something that works for customers. The onus is on Thames Water to come up with the solution here, that will allow customers just to explore in their own time, why- and where their £1 goes and why it goes there.

[C] Evidence of what improvements have been done with the customers’ bills, with the expenses that have been made, so just really bring that to life.

[D] Clarify the reasoning behind this year’s bill percentage increase and how it will impact future increases.

[E] Provide evidence around the decision-making process for the refinancing. You know, what decisions were made and when and by whom. I think Community Member 4 had mentioned that’s something we want to understand in a transparent manner, why these decisions were made in the way they were? Could money have been saved if it was done differently? Because ultimately the customers are paying for it is the point.

[F] Invest in UK apprenticeships and educational institutions where possible. Again, this feeds into the value for money to show that Thames [Water] are using the money and investment from customers in a sustainable manner.

Very quickly back to the customers, this is your chance to get actions written down. Was there anything missing there, do you want to improve those in any way before I had back to Rob?

**CCW Chair:** Was there something about, and my memory might be wrong on this, because the company we’re talking about as a result of the rises, there will be less disruption, less pollution and better level of customer service. And there was a percentage rise, I think somebody said 35% rise, I think is actually slightly lower than that, it might be 31%, but we can confirm that later. But the scale of improvement from the baseline, will it be in the range of 20 or 30% better after the investment?

**TMcK Facilitator:** Okay, so just to clarify then, it was, I think it was 31% increase for that. Timescales folks, was there any idea on when Thames [Water] need to start looking at actioning the points that we raised here? Again, it’s a lot about communication, so should

that take a long time, do you think there should be something that happens relatively quickly?

**Community Member 2:** I think the updating of the website with information could be done fairly quickly, I guess, the information's there.

**TMcK Facilitator:** So again, we'll put sort of three months as a starting point and again Thames can look at resource? I'll put that in just now. Okay, I'm going to hand back to you Rob, and obviously give Thames [Water] an opportunity to come in and make sure they're happy with what they're seeing here, if they've got any other additions to make?

**CCW Chair:** I'm not asking them to respond specifically to the lights thing, but I think people were referring to Clearwater House in Reading with the place where the lights were left on. Okay, back to you then to Thames and David and Caroline?

**David Bird:** Yeah, and I'll keep it brief, so the lights at head office is, we're a 24-hour operation and therefore we have people on the site 24 hours manning the control room, etc, so hopefully that answers that. In terms of what you've suggested, I think we 100% endorse, a lot of that we already do, we're having a massive investment in UK apprenticeships. We do do an annual report.

I think the big message I've picked up throughout the whole of this really helpful session is just how do we better communicate what we're doing? There's certainly some thoughts and ideas. Community Member 4, talked about the range of communication channels, are we using them all effectively? So, I think I'm very comfortable with what's been proposed here, we just need to come back to you with plans on how we're going to communicate those back to you.

**CCW Chair:** Okay, thank you, David. I mean that's obviously very brief answers, I'm not going to come back unless somebody indicates for any customer comment, Nicky, if that's okay, because otherwise we won't finish? But what I will say is, thank you to David and to Caroline for those answers and for spending the time this evening. I think for the record we've now agreed those actions; there will be some back and forth with the company just to make sure everything is set up properly.

So, I'm going to now end Question 3 and move on to closing the session and just saying firstly a big thank you to everybody who's been here. And I want to just mention the people behind the scenes who have been doing all the typing and the real time sort of getting stuff down on paper, that's been really helpful. We've covered quite a lot of ground and very important themes, and we've agreed a clear set of actions in response to the issues that you've raised as customers. These actions, as you've seen have been captured live during the session and will form the basis of the company's formal response.

In terms of next steps, a full transcript of the session will be published on our website, that's the Consumer Council for Water website in the next five working days. Before publication, an early draft will be shared with you, so you can review it and raise any concerns relating to any personal comments if you have them. A plain English summary will be published in 10 working days. Thames Water is required to publish its action plan within 28 [working] days, setting out how it will deliver the commitments agreed to tonight. Customers will then be asked whether the action plan accurately reflects what was agreed here, and CCW will monitor progress and report publicly on delivery.

This process is designed to ensure transparency and follow through, it's not just about the discussion, if we don't get actions out of this you will feel you've wasted your time, and we don't want that. Finally, I want to thank you all for your time that you've spent this evening, all the thought you've put into this, the honesty that you've made your points with, it's

made the session a really worthwhile session. Your input is really what gives this process credibility and purpose, so thank you again for your time this evening, and your engagement, and look forward to seeing you again sometime, thank you. This session is now closed, you're free to go.

[CLOSE]

# CCW

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