



The voice for water consumers
Llais defnyddwyr dŵr

Water Voice - Accountability Session

Action plan response

Water company: Southern Water
Thursday 21st May

Delivered by Taylor McKenzie
Research & Energy Saving Trust

Version: Update with Southern Water Action plan response –
21.05.26

ccw.org.uk

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Questions created and asked by community members



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

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

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

	Topic	Community member question
Q1	Pollution: Accountability and prevention	<p><i>"We often hear about sewage discharges and storm overflows affecting local seas, rivers and beaches. We want Southern Water to focus on prevention, not just reporting incidents after they happen. We need clear local information on what has happened, what harm it caused, and what will change in the areas most affected.</i></p> <p><i>What will Southern Water do to further reduce storm overflows and prevent repeat pollution incidents, and by when, and how will you clearly communicate this to us as customers?"</i></p>
Q2	Bills: Fairness and transparency	<p><i>"Bills have increased with little to no explanation. We want to be forewarned when this happens and know what help is available for people who are struggling to pay. We want support to be communicated clearly and simply.</i></p> <p><i>What steps will Southern Water take to:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <i>1. Ensure customers are forewarned about any future bill increases and be provided with information about how every pound is spent</i> <i>2. Make sure everyone who needs support knows what help is available and how to access it?"</i>
Q3	Infrastructure and long-term investment: Future proofing and delivery	<p><i>"We want evidence of real long-term plans, not just business-as-usual maintenance. We want to clearly understand how higher bills will lead to real infrastructure improvements, not just vague promises. We also want to know what benefits we will actually see as a result.</i></p> <p><i>How will Southern Water clearly communicate how our increased bills will lead to infrastructure improvements and what clear benefits we as customers will see as a result?"</i></p>

Executive summary - insights by question



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The Accountability Session for Southern Water highlighted a consistent customer demand for clearer, more localised and more accessible communication on pollution reduction, rising bills, and how infrastructure investment will deliver visible benefits over time.

Q1.

Pollution: Accountability and prevention

Southern Water said it is tackling storm overflows through its Cleaner Rivers and Seas Plan, with £1.5bn of investment, expanded monitoring and updates through Rivers and Seas Watch.

Customers welcomed these measures, but still wanted clearer local context, more regular reporting, confidence in monitor reliability and better access beyond digital channels.

There is a need for clearer, more regular communication showing whether pollution is reducing locally and what progress customers can expect to see.

Customers welcomed the investment plan, but wanted clearer, more regular and more accessible evidence that local pollution is reducing and promised improvements are being delivered.

Q2.

Bills: Fairness and transparency

Southern Water said it had improved how it explains bill rises, including bill inserts, a “where your £1 goes” breakdown and existing affordability support.

Customers welcomed this, but still felt explanations of rising bills, spending and financial support were not clear or visible enough, especially where bills had risen sharply or circumstances fell outside standard criteria.

Participants emphasised the need for earlier, clearer communication on bill increases and spending, alongside more visible and flexible support for customers under pressure.

Customers want earlier and clearer explanations of bill increases and spending, alongside more visible, accessible and flexible support for households under financial pressure.

Q3. Infrastructure and long-term investment: Future proofing and delivery

Southern Water said higher bills are funding major infrastructure investment, but accepted it needs to explain more clearly what this will deliver for customers.

Customers recognised that investment is needed, but questioned whether too much of it reflected delayed maintenance and poor planning, and wanted clearer evidence of local benefits, bill impacts and visible progress.

Participants therefore emphasised the need for clearer, more targeted communication about what is being delivered, where, and what difference customers will see over time.

Customers wanted clearer evidence of what infrastructure investment will deliver locally, how it affects bills, and what practical benefits and reassurance they should expect.

Actions agreed during the Accountability Session



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Q1.

Pollution: Accountability and prevention

- Provide quarterly or six monthly local trend reporting on overflows, with targets and like-for-like comparisons over time
- Contextualise spill and investment figures so customer can see scale, priorities, local impact and how progress is measured
- Show that water quality monitors are reliable, with regular maintenance updates and a clear online route to report faults
- Provide interim water quality updates before full website integration, and offer accessible alternatives such as texts, bill inserts or opt-in postal updates for non-digital customers.

Q2.

Bills: Fairness and transparency

- Give clear advance notice of bill increases, with personalised explanations of why bills are changing and what customers will receive
- Publish simple, transparent breakdowns of how bill money is spent, including financing, profit or dividends, and customer benefits
- Make bill support easier to find and understand through clear eligibility rules, stronger signposting and proactive multi-channel promotion
- Review affordability support and bill management measures so help is more flexible, practical and fair for customers under pressure

Q3. Infrastructure and long term investment: Future proofing and delivery

- Publish clear local investment plans showing what is new infrastructure, what is routine maintenance, when work will be completed, and how bills are expected to change over time
- Provide transparent updates on what has been delivered, what benefits it has achieved, and what customers should expect next
- Use targeted regional communication and local engagement across multiple channels, including face-to-face opportunities, to explain projects, likely disruption, expected benefits and reassure customers on major infrastructure changes.



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Water Voice - Accountability Session

Action plan response

Our findings in detail

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Q1. Pollution: Accountability and prevention

Clearer reporting, context and accessible communication



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Question asked by Southern Water Community member:

“We often hear about sewage discharges and storm overflows affecting local seas, rivers and beaches. We want Southern Water to focus on prevention, not just reporting incidents after they happen. We need clear local information on what has happened, what harm it caused, and what will change in the areas most affected. What will Southern Water do to further reduce storm overflows and prevent repeat pollution incidents, and by when, and how will you clearly communicate this to us as customers?””

Southern Water said it is tackling storm overflows through its Cleaner Rivers and Seas Plan, including £1.5bn of investment over five years, expanded monitoring, and near real-time incident information through Rivers and Seas Watch.

Customers welcomed the existence of these plans and tools, but said they still lacked regular trend reporting, clearer context on what the figures mean locally, confidence in monitor reliability, and accessible updates for people who do not use digital channels.

The discussion therefore focused on the need for clearer, more regular and more inclusive reporting that shows whether pollution is reducing, what is changing locally, and how progress will be communicated over time.

Actions

- Provide quarterly or six-monthly trend reporting on overflows, with targets and like-for-like comparisons over time
- Contextualise spill and investment figures so customer can see scale, priorities, local impact and how progress is measured
- Show that water quality monitors are reliable, with regular maintenance updates and a clear online route to report faults
- Provide interim water quality updates before full website integration, and offer accessible alternatives such as texts, bill inserts or opt-in postal updates for non-digital customers

“What I’m after is something that’s easily accessible, a public website or something, or even we get prompted when we get our water bill, to show a quarterly and yearly trend line of the number of incidents and perhaps the volume of the incidents, the serious sewage overflows.”

“I’d like to see those figures quoted as part of the whole. ... Just to give a bit of reality to us customers so that we see how far along Southern Water are going and how well they’re tackling this problem. “



Customers welcomed the investment plan, but wanted clearer, more regular and more accessible evidence that local pollution is reducing and promised improvements are being delivered.

Q1. Pollution: Accountability and prevention



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"You said" (Community member actions)	"We did" (Water company response on the night)	What is the 'Ideal' water company response? (In the eyes of our community)	Timescale / final comments
Provide quarterly or six-monthly trend reporting on overflows	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explained the Rivers and Seas Watch provides near real-time information on activating overflows and shows where investment is planned and in progress. Confirmed releases are posted within one hour via the portal <p>No future commitments were stated on the night.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Publish regular (six-monthly or quarterly) local reporting on overflows, not just annual figures. This should be easily accessible through the website Show targets, actual performance and trend lines over time Use like-for-like comparisons so customers can judge whether performance is improving 	<p>Timescale: to be clarified in the company action plan</p> <p>Final comments from Water company:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A plan similar to the Pollution Instant Reduction Plan could be created for overflows
Contextualise spill and investment figures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Set out a Cleaner Rivers and Seas Plan aimed at around 3000 fewer releases a year, including a 49% reduction near bathing water and 50% reduction where overflows impact the environment Explained the company is focusing first on the most impactful overflows <p>Future plans:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> £1.5 billion investment over the next 10 years By 2035, 75% of relevant overflows will meet the government's 2050 targets, with average spills reduced by 8000 a year 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Show what current reductions and investment means in the context of the wider problem Contextualise figures and spill data against other water companies or other countries to make them more relatable and tangible for customers 	<p>Timescale: to be clarified in the company action plan</p> <p>Further detail expected within the company action plan</p>
Show that water quality monitors are reliable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explained the pilot for in-river monitoring has started, with some early deployment in the New Forest Explained existing EDM spill monitors are currently at about 98% availability and tested monthly <p>Future plans:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Will install 300 continuous water quality monitors over the next four years and will display this new information onto the Rivers and Seas Watch website Every river discharge point will have upstream and downstream monitoring over the next 10 years 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide confidence that monitors are operational and well maintained Show how often checks are carried out (ideally monthly) Provide a clear online route for customers to report faults or concerns (e.g. online form) 	<p>Timescale: to be clarified in the company action plan.</p> <p>Further detail expected within the company action plan</p>
Provide interim water quality updates before full website integration, and offer accessible alternatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Said that Rivers and Seas Watch is already the main public channel and is updated every five minutes Explained Southern Water already shares overflow data through third parties (e.g. Surfers against Sewage) <p>Future plans:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Will display water quality monitor data on the website once integration is complete 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide an interim way of sharing water quality information before full website integration is complete. Make it easier for customers who do not or cannot use the website to receive updates. Suggestions include letters via post, text messages, on water bill 	<p>Timescale: to be clarified in the company action plan.</p> <p>The company explained they are currently trialling electronic signs on beaches about water quality and that they are already using text messages for outages and incidents.</p>

Taken from Action Plan summary report.



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Q1. Pollution: Accountability and prevention

Clearer reporting, context and accessible communication (Q 1. Action A)

Please find the response from Southern Water's Action Plan below

Timescale

1) Regular local reporting (six-monthly or quarterly) — easy to find on the website

→ We will work closely with our Independent Climate and Environment Challenge Group (ICECG) to co-design a clearer, customer-friendly reporting template using existing Rivers and Seas Watch information (<https://www.southernwater.co.uk/our-region/clean-rivers-and-seas-task-force/rivers-and-seas-watch/>). The ICECG brings together experts from across the environment, climate change and sustainability landscape, including representatives from regulators, government, local authorities and farming. It provides science-based insight and diverse perspectives, offering independent advice and constructive challenge to Southern Water. The ICECG plays an important role in shaping our environmental plans and helping to ensure we deliver on our commitments. Details of the Group can be found here: <https://www.southernwater.co.uk/about-us/get-involved/customer-feedback/customer/independent-climate-and-environment-challenge-group/>

→ Together, we will agree the most appropriate reporting frequency (quarterly or six-monthly) so customers receive regular local summaries that are easy to access and understand.

2) Targets, actual performance and trend lines over time

→ The report template will be designed to show performance over time (trend-based), rather than single-year snapshots.

→ Where targets exist, we will include them alongside actuals so customers can see progress and gaps clearly.

3) Like-for-like comparisons to judge improvement

→ We will set out the most robust approach for like-for-like comparisons (e.g. consistent geography/time periods and clear notes where weather or other factors affect comparability).

→ We will be transparent about any limitations so comparisons remain fair and meaningful.

Points 1-3:
30/09/2026

By September 2026: draft report template and recommended reporting frequency, developed in close collaboration with our Independent Climate and Environment Challenge Group, and we will also inform our customers when this report will first be published.



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Q1. Pollution: Accountability and prevention

Clearer reporting, context and accessible communication (Q 1. Action B)

Please find the response from Southern Water's Action Plan below

Timescale

1) Put spill reductions and investment in context

→ Building on the reporting approach in the previous action, we will set out the Cleaner Rivers and Seas Plan commitments alongside clear baseline information so customers can see the scale of the challenge and what change looks like locally.

→ We will develop the contextual reporting approach in discussion with our Independent Climate and Environment Challenge Group, to ensure it is clear, fair and customer-focused.

→ The report will explain how priorities are set (focusing first on the most environmentally impactful overflows) and will describe what customers should expect to see over time, including key milestones where available.

→ We will also provide plain-English narrative on factors that can affect results year-to-year (for example rainfall and weather patterns), so changes are not presented without explanation.

2) Provide wider comparisons where fair and meaningful

→ Where comparable data and consistent definitions exist, we will consider including like-for-like comparisons with other water companies to help customers interpret performance.

→ If we reference broader or international examples, we will only do so where the comparison is robust, and we will clearly explain differences (e.g. geography, network design and climate) to avoid misleading conclusions.

→ We will use input from our Independent Climate and Environment Challenge Group to help ensure any comparisons are presented responsibly and with appropriate caveats.

Points 1 & 2:
30/09/2026

By September 2026 we will, in discussion with our Independent Climate and Environment Challenge Group, confirm the most appropriate format and frequency for this contextual report and share an outline of the contextual metrics and any proposed comparisons.



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Q1. Pollution: Accountability and prevention

Clearer reporting, context and accessible communication (Q 1. Action C)

Please find the response from Southern Water's Action Plan below

Timescale

1) Confidence that monitors are operational and well maintained

- We recognise customers want assurance that monitoring is reliable, maintained and producing trustworthy information.
- Existing Event Duration Monitors (EDMs) at storm overflows operate at ~98% availability and are supported by routine checks and fault resolution processes.
- From 2027 we will begin installing new in-river monitors (also known as continuous water-quality monitors), with completion due March 2030. Installation of the new in-river monitors is a large-scale programme (over 10,000 instruments) and many monitor locations are on land that requires landowner permission for access. Securing access and coordinating suppliers/installers across thousands of sites makes the supply chain complex — which is why there is a long timeframe from the start of installation to completion.
- Once the procurement exercise is completed and an award given, we will share our proposed maintenance and calibration plans with the Independent Climate and Environment Challenge Group for their feedback, to ensure the approach provides customers confidence that monitors are well maintained, operational, and that the data can be trusted.

2) How often checks are carried out (ideally monthly)

- EDMs are routinely tested, and we publish a clear statement of the EDM availability (including the existing monthly testing approach referenced in the session) in the summary spills data reporting located at the bottom of the following webpage:
<https://www.southernwater.co.uk/about-us/environmental-performance/healthy-rivers-and-seas/flow-and-spill-reporting/>
- For the new in-river monitors, we will set out the planned inspection/maintenance cadence (including monthly checks where appropriate), alongside any remote diagnostics that identify issues between visits.

3) Clear route for customers to report faults or concerns

- We will provide a simple, prominent route on Rivers and Seas Watch (<https://www.southernwater.co.uk/our-region/clean-rivers-and-seas-task-force/rivers-and-seas-watch/>) for customers to report concerns and to flag anything that does not look right.
- Reports will be triaged and directed to the right team, and we will explain what customers can expect next (confirmation, investigation, and updates where possible).

Point 1:

- EDM's already well maintained.
- Maintenance and calibration approach for new in-river monitors to be confirmed by: 31/03/2030

Point 2:

- EDMs covered in this update.
- New in-river monitors: confirmed by 31/03/2030

Point 3:

31/03/2030

When we publish the data in March 2030 we will provide an accessible "How monitoring works" summary alongside Rivers and Seas Watch, covering: check/maintenance frequency, how data quality is assured, and the customer reporting route. We will keep this information updated as monitoring expands. The



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Q1. Pollution: Accountability and prevention

Clearer reporting, context and accessible communication (Q 1. Action D)

Please find the response from Southern Water's Action Plan below

Timescale

1) Interim sharing before full website integration is complete

→ Rivers and Seas Watch remains our main public channel and is updated every five minutes (<https://www.southernwater.co.uk/our-region/clean-rivers-and-seas-task-force/rivers-and-seas-watch/>). We also share overflow information with trusted third parties (e.g. Surfers Against Sewage) to widen access.

→ Until completion of the programme in March 2030, we will not be able to fully integrate the new water quality monitoring data. We will however, provide an interim way to keep customers informed (e.g. clear signposting and updates via an information hub alongside Rivers and Seas Watch), so people can understand what is available now and what is coming next.

→ In July (2026) we are launching our first-ever Bathing Water season campaign, with objectives including:

- Increasing awareness among tourists and customers on what Southern Water is doing to improve Bathing Water quality
- Encouraging positive environmental behaviour to help us keep the coastline clean

2) Easier access for customers who do not (or cannot) use the website

→ We will explore alternative and complementary communication routes so customers can choose how to receive updates, including opt-in options (e.g. text messages where feasible), targeted information on bills, and proportionate postal communications where appropriate.

→ We will also work with partners and local stakeholders to share and amplify key messages through non-digital channels, so information is accessible beyond the website alone.

Point 1:

31/07/2026

Point 2:

Complete exploration of complementary (non web) update options:

31/05/2026

Start work with local partner to amplify key messages (31/07/2026)

By end of May 2026:

we will complete work to explore additional, complementary ways of sharing water quality information, focusing on options that make updates easier to access for customers who may not use our website.

By July 2026:

- we will introduce an interim information hub alongside Rivers and Seas Watch to clearly explain what water quality information is available now and what will be added in future;
- we will launch our 2026 Bathing Water season campaign to raise awareness of water quality improvements and how customers can stay informed;
- we will begin working with local partners and stakeholders to help share and amplify key messages through trusted community and non-digital channels.



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Q2. Bills: Fairness and transparency

Clearer communication, transparency and support around bill increases and affordability

Question asked by Southern Water Community member:

“Bills have increased with little to no explanation. We want to be forewarned when this happens and know what help is available for people who are struggling to pay. We want support to be communicated clearly and simply.

What steps will Southern Water take to:

- 1. Ensure customers are forewarned about any future bill increases and be provided with information about how every pound is spent*
- 2. Make sure everyone who needs support knows what help is available and how to access it?”*

Southern Water acknowledged it could have been clearer and quicker in explaining recent bill increases, and said it has since improved communications through bill inserts, a “where your £1 goes” breakdown, regionalised messaging and existing affordability support.

Customers welcomed that progress, but still felt explanations of rising bills, spending and available support were not clear or visible enough, especially where bills had risen sharply or customers fell outside standard support criteria.

The discussion therefore focused on the need for earlier, clearer and more personalised communication on bill increases and spending, alongside more visible and flexible support for customers under pressure.

Actions

- **Give clear advance notice of bill increases**, with personalised explanations of why bills are changing and what customers will receive
- **Publish simple, transparent breakdowns of how bill money is spent**, including financing, profit or dividends, and customer benefit
- **Make bill support easier to find and understand** through clear eligibility rules, stronger signposting and proactive multi-channel promotion
- **Review affordability support and bill-management measures** so help is more flexible, practical and fair for customers under pressure

“If someone’s bill’s gone up by more than 47%, is it possible to have some explanation as to why it’s gone up by more than the headline figure, as it were?”

“I do believe that they are passionate, but I think that if they are passionate, there needs to be much more promotion of these subsidies, these schemes, the help that’s offered, because 170-180,000 people wasn’t a great number probably is a very small amount compared to those who actually need it.”



Customers want clearer, earlier explanations of bill increases and spending, alongside more visible, accessible and flexible support for households under financial pressure.



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Q2. Bills: Fairness and transparency

"You said" (Community member actions)	"We did" (Water company response on the night)	What is the 'Ideal' water company response? (In the eyes of our community)	Timescale / final comments
Give clear advance notice of bill increases	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Acknowledged the company was too slow and unclear in explaining last year's major increase. Videos, radio and bill inserts were used after the increase to communicate drivers of bill increase This year's bill increase was communicated more proactively through information included in bills <p>Future plans:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Building a more tailored, regionalised communication plan so customers receive information relevant to them 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tell customers in advance when bills will rise Consider staggered increases for future bill increase Use plain English to explain what customers are getting for the increase Provide better information on the drivers of bills increases – possibly at the level of each individual's bill 	<p>Timescale: to be clarified in the company action plan</p> <p>Final comments from Water company:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Acknowledged it is important to explain why bills differ between regions, and specifically what customers are getting (additional services/investments)
Publish simple, transparent breakdowns of how bill money is spent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Said a "where your £1 goes" infographic was included in this year's bill insert <p>No future commitments were stated on the night</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure transparency around whether the company made any profit (including whether they have not) and how much of customers' bills goes into profit Clearly publish on the website who the leadership team is and what their salaries are (similar to what public officials are required to do) Show clearly how each pound is allocated across investments, operations and financing Provide comparative data on bills against other providers in England and Wales Publish a summary of Southern Water's action plan to improve their financial position 	<p>Timescale: to be clarified in the company action plan</p> <p>Final comments from Water company:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explained no dividends have been paid since 2017 and that the company does not distribute profit but re-invests in infrastructure. This information is published in annual accounts which are all visible
Make bill support easier to find and understand	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Essentials Tariffs already provide a minimum 45% discount, rising to 90% in extreme hardship cases Said hardship funding is available for debt write-off and practical support, and was described as £1.25 million annually Explained it is working with charities, local authorities and Citizens Advice, including data sharing to identify customers in need <p>Future plans:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expect the number of supported customers to rise from 170,000 to 180,000 Enrolment and auto-enrolment will continue to be used to reach more eligible customers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Publish clear eligibility rules for support and discounts Make support easy to find on bills, websites and other customers touchpoints Promote support more proactively through direct communication and partner organisations (e.g. campaign on the radio, leaflets, engagement with other agencies) 	<p>Timescale: to be clarified in the company action plan</p> <p>Further detail expected within the company action plan</p>
Review affordability support and bill-management measures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Customer-facing teams have been retrained this year so they can better answer questions on bill increases and spending <p>Future plans:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work to make support visible to people who need it 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider more flexibility for customers who are struggling but fall outside standard criteria Ensure timely account management when it comes to bill reviews to ensure customers are paying the correct amount for their usage Offer access to free water saving devices (e.g. water butts) 	<p>Timescale: to be clarified in the company action plan</p> <p>Final comments from Water company:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Smart meters will be rolled out across the region to help people manage their water use and make savings

Taken from Action Plan summary report.



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Q2. Bills: Fairness and transparency

Clearer communication, transparency and support around bill increases and affordability (Q 2. Action A)

Please find the response from Southern Water's Action Plan below (Page 1 of 2)

Timescale

1) Advance notice of bill increases

- We recognise we were too slow and unclear in explaining the major increase in 2025, and we have changed our approach so customers receive clearer information earlier.
- After the 2025 increase we saw a significant rise in Customer Contact Centre queries (why bills increased, affordability/payment plans, and accessing help). This feedback reinforced the need for clearer, proactive communications.
- In 2026 we acted more proactively by reviewing and updating website content ahead of billing (<https://www.southernwater.co.uk/help-and-support/why-is-my-bill-going-up/>), adding a clearer bill insert, example in the Annex listed as 1a, and running a "bill clinic" series on social media to help customers understand changes and access support - examples of the social posts in the Annex listed as 1b.

2) Considering staggered increases

- We will consider how we can better explain the phasing of changes over time (including whether any elements can be staggered), and we will set out any constraints that affect this (e.g. regulatory timetables and investment delivery requirements).

Point 1-3:
Closed via this update
Point 4:
Complete 11/05/2026

By September 2026:
draft report template and recommended reporting frequency, developed in close collaboration with our Independent Climate and Environment Challenge Group, and we will also inform our customers when this report will first be published.



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Q2. Bills: Fairness and transparency

Clearer communication, transparency and support around bill increases and affordability (Q 2. Action A)

Please find the response from Southern Water's Action Plan below (Page 2 of 2)

Timescale

3) Plain-English explanation of what customers get for the increase

→ Following the 2025 increase, we undertook a thorough review of our channels to improve and simplify content – making it easier for customers to self-serve and understand the bill increase. This included our website, FAQs (<https://www.southernwater.co.uk/help-and-support/why-is-my-bill-going-up/>), customer communications (Examples referenced in this response), and social media. (Examples in the Annex listed as 1b)

→ We used local press and radio to reach ~1.4 million customers, explaining the drivers openly and transparently and directing customers to support options. Example local press ad in the Annex listed as 1c and example radio ad listed as 1d.

→ We also produced a short video (<https://www.southernwater.co.uk/help-and-support/why-is-my-bill-going-up/>) to help humanise the message (including that our own people are also customers impacted by price changes).

4) Better information on the drivers of increases (including at an individual bill level where possible)

→ We updated and simplified our website explanation of bill changes (<https://www.southernwater.co.uk/help-and-support/why-is-my-bill-going-up/>) and improved FAQs/self-serve content to reduce confusion.

→ Following panel feedback, we have published a clear “how each £1 is spent” graphic on our website (<https://www.southernwater.co.uk/help-and-support/why-is-my-bill-going-up/>) to make the drivers more tangible and relatable for customers and we will align future bill communications so customers receive earlier, clearer notice and explanations.

Point 1-3:

Closed via this update

Point 4:

Complete 11/05/2026

By September 2026:

draft report template and recommended reporting frequency, developed in close collaboration with our Independent Climate and Environment Challenge Group, and we will also inform our customers when this report will first be published.



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Q2. Bills: Fairness and transparency

Clearer communication, transparency and support around bill increases and affordability (Q 2. Action B)

Please find the response from Southern Water's Action Plan below (Page 1 of 2)

Timescale

1) Transparency on profit (and how money is used)

→ We publish our financial performance (including statutory profit/(loss)) in our Annual Report and Accounts (<https://www.southernwater.co.uk/annual-report-2025/>) (Financial statements section starts at page 204).

→ The Annual Report also explains how revenue is used across operating costs, investment and financing, so customers can see how bill income supports delivery.

-We will ask the question on whether the company made any profit at our next Independent Customer Scrutiny Committee that includes our CEO. This is currently booked for the 4th August 2026. The Committee is made from senior stakeholders experienced in different parts of businesses and providing service to customers. They scrutinise the Southern Water leadership team on behalf of customers and hold quarterly sessions on particular topics. All sessions are live streamed and the recording is available on our website unedited. Details of the committee can be found here: <https://www.southernwater.co.uk/about-us/get-involved/customer-feedback/customer/independent-customer-scrutiny-committee/>.

Point 1:

Will be asked to the CEO live on 4th August. We can then share this update with the CCW Panel - to close the action.



The voice for water consumers
Llais defnyddwyr dŵr

Q2. Bills: Fairness and transparency

Clearer communication, transparency and support around bill increases and affordability (Q 2. Action B)

Please find the response from Southern Water's Action Plan below (Page 2 of 2)

Timescale

2) Leadership team and pay transparency

- Our Board is listed on the Southern Water website (roles and biographies). (<https://www.southernwater.co.uk/about-us/corporate-governance/>)
- Senior leadership pay is disclosed in the Annual Report (Directors' Remuneration Report, pages 181-195), including salary, benefits, bonus/long-term incentives and the performance measures used.

3) Clear allocation of each pound (£)

- We provide a breakdown of how income is allocated (day-to-day operations, capital investment, financing costs and other items) in the Annual Report (Income statement, page 204) and supporting customer-facing materials.
- We will keep these breakdowns consistent across our website (<https://www.southernwater.co.uk/help-and-support/why-is-my-bill-going-up/>), bill inserts ([example is in the Annex listed as 1a](#)) and reporting so the split is easy to understand.
- Following panel feedback, we have added a clear "how each £1 is spent" graphic to our website to make the drivers more tangible and relatable for customers. (<https://www.southernwater.co.uk/help-and-support/why-is-my-bill-going-up/>)

4) Comparative data on bills and performance

- For independent, like-for-like comparisons across England and Wales (including bills and key service metrics), we signpost customers to the sector comparison site DiscoverWater.co.uk (<https://www.discoverwater.co.uk/>), which uses consistent definitions across companies.

5) Summary of our plan to improve financial resilience

- We summarise our priorities and actions to improve operational performance, deliver our investment programme efficiently and strengthen financial resilience in our Annual Report and regular performance updates. Annual -Reports are usually published in July and our 6 monthly interim Financial Report is published in the Autumn. Details of the latest annual and interim reports can be found here: <https://www.southernwater.co.uk/about-us/our-annual-reporting/>
 - The latest Interim Report (found at the link above) provides detail of previous and future plans around improving the financial position of the company from page 12. For example, it explains equity injections and financing of debt.

Point 2-5:
Closed via this update.



The voice for water consumers
Llais defnyddwyr dŵr

Q2. Bills: Fairness and transparency

Clearer communication, transparency and support around bill increases and affordability (Q 2. Action C)

Please find the response from Southern Water's Action Plan below

Timescale

1) Clear eligibility rules for support and discounts

→ Customers can quickly check eligibility via the “Are you eligible for a payment scheme?” link, which is signposted on our envelope outers, example in the [Annex](#) listed as 2a, and online (<https://www.southernwater.co.uk/help-and-support/what-if-i-cant-pay-my-bill/>).
→ We also introduced a benefits maximisation tool ([Online application link](#)) in June 2025 to help customers identify entitlements while applying for financial assistance. From May 2026 this has been extended so customers can also “passport” into Southern Water support via the tool on other providers’ websites (e.g. energy).

2) Make support easy to find across bills, website and touchpoints

→ Our website financial support journey is designed to be simple and easy to locate (in as little as two steps), supported by our recent re-accreditation of the British Standards Institute - BS ISO 22458 BSI Kitemark for Inclusive Service.
→ We are also improving accessibility further, with discussions under way to introduce a live video relay service alongside our Recite Me accessibility page (target August 2026).

3) Promote support proactively through direct communications and partner organisations

→ We launched “bill clinics” media campaigns in January 2026 to highlight support tariffs and the Priority Services Register (PSR), using social media and short videos to improve awareness and understanding. Examples of the social posts in the Annex listed as 1b.
→ Our Vulnerability Liaison Officers attend over 300 community events each year (including job centres, rehoming charities and foodbanks) to provide targeted help and sign customers up to support on the spot.
→ Auto-enrolment partnerships continue to expand: 10 local authorities are now on board, enabling us to enrol over 20,000 customers onto our Essentials tariff (minimum 45% discount) with no action required from them, with a further ~10,000 records anticipated from April–June partnership data.

Point 1 & 3:
Closed via this update.

Point 2:
Partially closed via this update. We will confirm accessibility enhancements
31/08/2026

By August 2026:
confirm the accessibility enhancements (including live video relay) and provide an update on the latest auto-enrolment expansion, including how customers can check eligibility and access support quickly.
· Customer Vulnerability will be a key discussion topic at the November 2026 Independent Customer Scrutiny Committee meeting.



The voice for water consumers
Llais defnyddwyr dŵr

Q2. Bills: Fairness and transparency

Clearer communication, transparency and support around bill increases and affordability (Q 2. Action D)

Please find the response from Southern Water's Action Plan below

Timescale

1) More flexibility for customers who are struggling but fall outside of the standard criteria

→ We agree with the points raised by the panel. We currently provide a minimum 45% discount to all customers who meet the criteria. We are exploring options around a tiering system, which could introduce a lower % discount, (such as 30 or 20%). This could introduce several tiers over time. However, this requires significant planning to work out feasibility with the systems and the processes for how customers would sign off and how these discounts are financed. There is concern to ensure funding does not shift away from those who are most struggling. The review started in early May 2026 and we expect to have completed an assessment in the summer. Any changes to charges would need to be supported by our customers through research and agreed with CCW and Ofwat. Proposals will be likely be presented in the Autumn, so they can come into effect by the start of the next financial year, when charges are able to applied by the regulatory process.

2) Timely account management when it comes to bill reviews to ensure customers are paying the correct amount for their usage

→ From 2010 to 2017 we installed meters to over 88% of our customers. We are currently now installing upgraded meters with Smart technology to homes and businesses between 2025-2030. (<https://www.southernwater.co.uk/retailers/working-with-us/smart-metering-strategy>).

→ Additionally to this we have now launched a 'Better Billing' project that will look at how we can improve the service, particularly as the bill arrives. This is exploring improving the design of the bill, communication that is sent at the same time (such as a warning text message to an upcoming direct debit). The work for this project is in the early stages and will take several months to review. This is because the first stages involve looking at existing customer feedback, then working with teams from different parts of Southern Water to see how these improvements can be delivered. This includes IT, our customer services team and communications.

3) Offer access to free water saving devices (e.g. water butts)

→ We currently offer Water Saving Audits to high consumers where we look to instal more water efficient devices such as tap aerators, fix simple leaks and offer water saving advice in the home. Thought predominantly aimed at high consumers to guarantee the biggest reduction in demand, we are offering 10% of this visits to customers from an affordability perspective and will be accepting referrals from our Affordability team. Additionally, we are looking at trialling new Water Saving Kits which if proved successful may be rolled out later this year (2026).

Point 1:

An update with the review can be shared with the panel by 31/10/26

Point 2:

An update on the Better Billing project can be shared with the panel by 31/10/26

Point 3:

Closed via this update.

By Summer 2026:

complete an initial feasibility assessment of a tiered affordability discount approach (including funding and system/process impacts).

By Autumn 2026:

develop any potential proposals (subject to customer research) and engage CCW/Ofwat on options and constraints, with the aim of agreeing next steps for implementation.

By 31 October 2026:

share an update with the CCW Panel on (1) the tiered discount review and (2) progress from the Better Billing project (including any early improvements to bill design and accompanying communications).

By late 2026 (subject to trial results):

decide whether to roll out Water Saving Kits more widely.

Q3. Infrastructure and long term investment: Future proofing and delivery

Clearer local communication and reassurance on infrastructure investment, benefits and bill impact



The voice for water consumers
Llais defnyddwyr dŵr

Question asked by Southern Water Community member:

“We want evidence of real long-term plans, not just business-as-usual maintenance. We want to clearly understand how higher bills will lead to real infrastructure improvements, not just vague promises. We also want to know what benefits we will actually see as a result.

How will Southern Water clearly communicate how our increased bills will lead to infrastructure improvements and what clear benefits we as customers will see as a result?”

Southern Water said higher bills are funding a major investment programme covering storm overflows, nutrient removal, new water sources, smart metering and regional engagement, and acknowledged it needs to explain these plans more clearly.

Customers welcomed the scale of investment but questioned whether it reflected genuine improvement rather than delayed maintenance, and wanted clearer explanation of local benefits, future bill implications and how progress would be communicated.

The discussion therefore focused on clearer, more targeted communication showing what is being delivered where, what difference it will make, and how customers will see progress over time.

Actions

- **Publish clear local investment plans** showing what is new infrastructure, what is routine maintenance, when work will be completed, and how bills are expected to change over time
- **Provide transparent updates** on what has been delivered, what benefits it has achieved, and what customers should expect next
- **Use targeted regional communication and local engagement across multiple channels**, including face-to-face opportunities, to explain projects, likely disruption, expected benefits and reassure customers on major infrastructure changes.

“I’d just like to see a really transparent sort of breakdown of this is what we’ve done, this is how much it’s saved us, and this is how much it can save you as a customer.”

“I’d like to see a commitment to a bit more contact with customers within the regions. There’s a big issue where I live locally with Southern Water representatives not turning up to County Council meetings, but a bit more action on the ground to have a few more open events about what are we doing locally.”



Customers wanted clearer evidence of what infrastructure investment will deliver locally, how it affects bills, and what practical benefits and reassurance they should expect.

Q3. Infrastructure and long term investment: Future proofing and delivery



The voice for water consumers
Llais defnyddwyr dŵr

"You said" (Community member actions)	"We did" (Water company response on the night)	What is the 'Ideal' water company response? (In the eyes of our community)	Timescale / final comments
Publish clear local investment plans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explained current investment is focused on storm overflows, nutrient removal, new water sources, smart metering, lead work and reservoirs Some bill information has been used to explain investment plans <p>Future plans:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> £8.5 billion spending plan for 2025-2030 fuelled by customers' bill and investment from shareholders (£2.5 billion). £4 billion used for day-to-day running and £4.6 billion for improvement works 3 areas of improvement: storm overflows, nutrient removal from rivers, building a new source of water for the West region 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide clarity and context for long-term investment strategy. Especially around expected impact on bills Consider differentiating between a bill increase that is indefinite and one that is a temporary increase as a result of investment/optimisation that will then level/decrease Distinguish clearly between new investment and routine maintenance 	<p>Timescale: to be clarified in the company action plan</p> <p>Further detail expected within the company action plan</p>
Provide transparency on what has been delivered, what benefits it has achieved, and what customers should expect next	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Developed mapping tool (Mighty Maps) to show where investment is taking place and the impact on rivers and catchments <p>Future plans:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Need to put more information on the website, make it more digestible for customers Seek to better understand how plans and investments can be communicated to customers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide a transparent breakdown of what has been done, how much it has saved the company and how much it will save the customer. Include this on the bill or show on website 	<p>Timescale: to be clarified in the company action plan</p> <p>Further detail expected within the company action plan</p>
Use targeted regional communication and local engagement across multiple channels	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Run regional drop-in centres and workshops to explain investment in local areas <p>Future plans:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to strengthen this approach as part of wider regional engagement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide target information rather than expecting customer to find it themselves Be creative and innovative with communication methods (e.g. newsletter, social media, regional meetings) Hold more open local events so customers can understand local projects, disruption and benefits. Communicate about these events via social media, local radio, local tv, regional news. Use face-to-face engagement to answer questions and build reassurance around major infrastructure changes. Increase communication when bill rises or other major issues heighten customer concern. 	<p>Timescale: to be clarified in the company action plan</p> <p>Final comments from Water company:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explained they currently send out quarterly newsletter via email, hold drop-in centres, share videos on YouTube and have regional adverts



The voice for water consumers
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Q3. Infrastructure and long term investment: Future proofing and delivery

Clearer local communication and reassurance on infrastructure investment, benefits and bill impact (Q 3. Action A)

Please find the response from Southern Water's Action Plan below

Timescale

1) Clarity and context on long-term investment strategy (including expected impact on bills)

→ We recognise customers want clearer visibility of how and where we are investing in their communities, what has already been delivered, and what benefits this investment is expected to bring locally.
→ We have created an "Improvements in Your Area" website section with an interactive map (<https://www.southernwater.co.uk/our-region/improvements-in-your-area/>) so customers can see major projects under way, planned investment, and expected local benefits.
→ We also provide regular local updates through quarterly regional newsletters (Kent, East Sussex, West Sussex, Hampshire and the Isle of Wight) and targeted pilots (e.g. Hastings; with similar approaches planned for Thanet and Southampton North). Example in the [Annex](#) listed as 3a.

2) Distinguishing temporary vs. longer-term bill impacts

→ In our communications, we will aim to make clearer where bill changes relate to time-limited programmes or delivery phases versus ongoing costs, so customers can understand what is driving changes and over what timeframe.

3) Distinguishing new investment from routine maintenance

→ We are strengthening how we explain the difference between improvement works (new investment) and day-to-day operational activities for customers. This includes updating our dedicated project webpages (Example of one of the current project webpages - <https://www.southernwater.co.uk/about-us/our-plans/water-for-life-hampshire/water-transfers/thames-to-southern-transfer-project/>) to ensure plain English is used and practical examples are included, helping customers understand what is being delivered and why. This work will be completed by August 2026.

4) Making the information easy to find (not buried in national totals)

→ In April we launched a regionally tailored campaign across radio (example to follow in future annex due to technical formatting) and local press ([Southern Water embarks on largest ever investment programme | Daily Echo](#)) in Kent, Sussex and Hampshire (expected reach ~6 million) to proactively direct customers to local investment information online (<https://www.southernwater.co.uk/about-us/our-plans/water-recycling/isle-of-wight-water-recycling-project/>). This campaign is running through to June 2026.

Point 1, 2 & 4:
Closed via this update.

Point 3:
31/08/2026

The regional campaign launched in April (2026) and runs through to June 2026. With the aim to proactively signpost customers to the map and local updates, including clearer context on bill impacts and the split between investment and routine activities. By August 2026, we will have updated our dedicated project webpages to ensure plain English is used and practical examples are included, helping customers understand what is being delivered and why. Campaigns will be one of the main points of discussion at the next Independent Customer Scrutiny Committee on 15th June 2026.



The voice for water consumers
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Q3. Infrastructure and long term investment: Future proofing and delivery

Clearer local communication and reassurance on infrastructure investment, benefits and bill impact (Q 3. Action B)

Please find the response from Southern Water's Action Plan below

Timescale

1) Provide a transparent breakdown of what has been done, how much it has saved the company and how much it will save the customer

We agree with the feedback from the panel, and this is something we are trying hard to do. There are a number of key things we currently do, which include:

→Annual reporting - each year, we do publish a full report on what has been achieved, what this means to customers and how this performs to targets. We then accompany the annual report with press releases and sharing of key information through social media, updates to our website and proactively including in our quarterly newsletters that are emailed to our customers. (Annual report pages:

<https://www.southernwater.co.uk/about-us/our-annual-reporting/>)

→Turnaround plan - in 2025 we completed a 2 year turnaround plan, which targeted fast improvements to our performance following an injection of equity from our shareholders. (This was not funded through customer bills). We reported on the performance to customers in July 2025 and also shared through media, social media and updates through newsletters to customers.

[\(https://www.southernwater.co.uk/latest-news/successful-two-year-turnaround-plan-concludes-for-southern-water/\)](https://www.southernwater.co.uk/latest-news/successful-two-year-turnaround-plan-concludes-for-southern-water/)

→Following feedback from our customers we developed targeted updates that share information at a local and regional level. Our communications are then using this local level information on what is being delivered. We have now added a front page to all of our customers bills, that highlights the investment and provides QR codes and links to find out more through our website.

[\(https://www.southernwater.co.uk/our-region/improvements-in-your-area/\)](https://www.southernwater.co.uk/our-region/improvements-in-your-area/)

We also recognise that there is more we need to do. In our response to the following action. So we will use targeted regional communication and local engagement across multiple channels, and we will highlight the changing and new methods of communication we are using to help share the messages of what has already been done. There are an extremely large number of projects that are being worked on and completed, which is why we regionalise this information to try and make it as relevant as possible to an individual customer.

Closed via this update.



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Q3. Infrastructure and long term investment: Future proofing and delivery

Clearer local communication and reassurance on infrastructure investment, benefits and bill impact (Q 3. Action C)

Please find the response from Southern Water's Action Plan below (Page 1 of 2)

Timescale

1) Provide targeted information (don't expect customers to find it themselves)

- We will start proactively signposting customers in September 2026 to local engagement opportunities and updates, rather than relying on people to search for them.
- We already deliver "Your Water Matters" events so customers can speak directly with Southern Water colleagues, and we are reviewing how these can be enhanced to improve reach and experience.

2) Be creative and innovative with communication methods

- Subject to approval, improvements we are exploring include stronger promotion to reach more diverse audiences (including younger people and future bill payers).
- We are exploring complementary formats, including a trial online regional event chaired by an independent facilitator, aligned with regional pilots (Hastings & Eastbourne, Thanet, and Southampton North).
- We are also testing ways to make engagement more welcoming and memorable (e.g. a Southern Water goody bag with meaningful, sustainable items that support water efficiency and environmental awareness).
- An ad hoc joint session of the Independent Climate and Environment Challenge Group and the Independent Customer Scrutiny Committee will take place on 1 June 2026 to review and provide feedback on customer water-saving communications, ensuring they are as clear and impactful as possible.

3) Hold more open local events and communicate them through multiple channels

- We will promote events through appropriate local channels (e.g. social media, local radio/press and partner networks) and test practical improvements such as pre-booked appointments with our Billing team to reduce waiting times.
- We will improve how we capture customer contact details at events (with consent) so we can share follow-up information and ongoing updates through channels such as quarterly regional newsletters.
- We will send follow-up communications to attendees to thank them for taking part and signpost further information and support.

Points 1-4:
30/09/2026.

By September 2026 we will deliver a strengthened regional engagement approach, including:

- Proactive signposting to local engagement opportunities and updates (so customers don't have to search for them).
- Enhanced promotion of events and local investment information through appropriate regional channels (social, local press/radio and partner networks).
 - A trial of complementary formats (including an online regional event, subject to approval) aligned to the regional pilots.
- Practical event improvements such as capturing customer contact details (with consent), follow-up communications and clearer routes to ongoing updates (e.g. newsletters).
- Testing appointment options (e.g. pre-booked Billing support at events) to improve customer experience and reduce waiting times.



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Q3. Infrastructure and long term investment: Future proofing and delivery

Clearer local communication and reassurance on infrastructure investment, benefits and bill impact (Q 3. Action C)

Please find the response from Southern Water's Action Plan below (Page 2 of 2)

Timescale

4) Use face-to-face engagement to answer questions and build reassurance

→ We will continue to use in-person events to help customers understand local projects, disruption and benefits, and to provide direct, practical support (including billing conversations where needed).

5) Increase communication when bill rises or other major issues heighten concern

→ When customer concern is heightened (e.g. bill changes or major service issues), we will strengthen targeted communications and ensure customers know where to go for clear information and support.

Points 1-4:
30/09/2026.

By September 2026 we will deliver a strengthened regional engagement approach, including:

- Proactive signposting to local engagement opportunities and updates (so customers don't have to search for them).
- Enhanced promotion of events and local investment information through appropriate regional channels (social, local press/radio and partner networks).
 - A trial of complementary formats (including an online regional event, subject to approval) aligned to the regional pilots.
- Practical event improvements such as capturing customer contact details (with consent), follow-up communications and clearer routes to ongoing updates (e.g. newsletters).
- Testing appointment options (e.g. pre-booked Billing support at events) to improve customer experience and reduce waiting times.

What happens after the Accountability Session?

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



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Publication and transparency

Within 5 working days

A full (anonymised) transcript of the session was [published](#) on **Monday 20th April**

Within 10 working days

A plain-English summary is published, setting out:

- The questions asked.
- The key points raised by Community members.
- The actions agreed for inclusion in the action plan.

Anything recorded as *not yet agreed*.

Monday 27th April



Action plan

Within 28 days

The water company must share its **action plan**, setting out how it will deliver the agreed actions.

The action plan will be **shared with the Water Voice community on Thursday 21st May**



Customer feedback

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

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

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



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Water Voice - Accountability Session

Summary report

Annex: Research approach

Delivered by Taylor McKenzie
Research & Energy Saving Trust

ccw.org.uk

Background



What is an Accountability Session?

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

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

Why do they exist?

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

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

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

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

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

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

Objectives

What the session aims to achieve



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1. Give customers a real voice

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

2. Make companies answer directly to the people they serve

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

3. Agree clear actions that lead to real improvements

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

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

4. Build trust through transparency

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

5. Make sure all types of customers are represented

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

Outputs

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

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

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

Methodology

How does it work?

CCW

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01



Prioritising what matters most

1. We listen to what customers tell us each month

Through Barometer & Spotlight surveys and the online community

2. We play back what they said

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

3. Confirm their priorities

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

02



Getting ready (Briefing session)

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

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

The facilitator talks them through:

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

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

03



The Accountability Session (Main meeting)

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

TMcK facilitator & Chair guiding the conversation:

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

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

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

04



Agreeing what should happen next

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

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

05



Publishing the outcomes and following up

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

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

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

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

[Priorities will be shared with the ISG]

Sample

Who takes part in an Accountability Session



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

1a. Bill Insert – April 2026



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Hello,

We're a year into delivering the most ambitious investment programme in our history. Between 2025 and 2030 we've committed around £8.5 billion to significantly improve the service we deliver to our customers and the communities we serve.

Over the last 12 months we've made significant progress replacing pipes and improving treatment works to cut leaks, minimise flooding, prevent pollution, and reduce storm overflow releases. You can see what we're doing in your area by visiting southernwater.co.uk/local-improvements

A lot of the funding we need to continue to deliver improvements comes from our shareholders, who have invested £2.3bn since 2021 and will continue to invest, with no payments to external shareholders since 2017.

However, to fully deliver on our commitments to you, we need to further increase some bills. We know that any increase to household bills can be challenging, and we truly understand the impact this can have. If you're worried or have concerns about paying, support is available, and we're here to help. Visit southernwater.co.uk/billhelp to find out more.

The change to your water bill will vary depending on the service you receive from us. These changes are in place from 1 April 2026. If you need further information, you'll find answers to your questions at southernwater.co.uk/billfaq

Thank you for your understanding as we strive to deliver a more sustainable and resilient water service.

Alexis Knight
Chief Customer Officer



How much we'll invest in improvements by 2030



Scan to read about projects that will improve service in your area or visit: southernwater.co.uk/local-improvements

8106_001_billinsert_April_2026_v1.2.indd 1

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1b. Bill Clinic series – social media links



Instagram:

- https://www.instagram.com/reel/DUIIdQT5E1ae/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MzRIODBiNWFIZA==
- https://www.instagram.com/reel/DUTLmSzl9SV/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MzRIODBiNWFIZA==
- https://www.instagram.com/reel/DUWF6vSj2qe/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MzRIODBiNWFIZA==



Facebook:

- <https://www.facebook.com/share/v/1CVdY6V3Ad/>
- <https://www.facebook.com/share/v/18MKVZZb6V/>
- <https://www.facebook.com/share/v/1aZE83KyHk/>

1c. Local Press ad – 2025 Increase Campaign



Hello,

My name is Antonia, and I'm Chief Customer Officer at Southern Water.

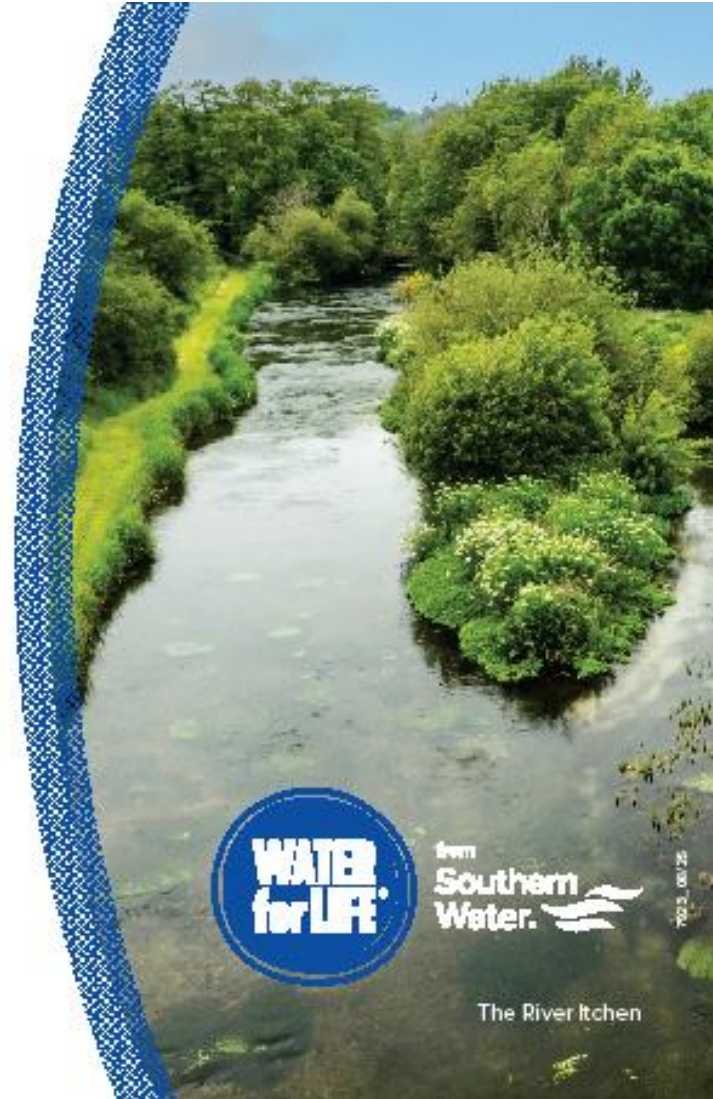
We've been listening to our customers to understand what matters most to you. We know you want to hear about how we're using money from the recent bill increase to make improvements in your local community.

I'd like to share how you will benefit from the investments we're making and how we're planning for the future.

Here in Hampshire, we want to protect local rivers such as the Test and Itchen by taking less water from them. That's why we're funding a new reservoir at Havant Thicket and building a new 17km pipeline between Otterbourne and Southampton so we can move water around our network to where it's needed most, limiting future supply interruptions.

We're also investing £160 million to upgrade our site at Testwood, so we can get more high-quality water to your taps, faster. In Portsmouth, we've teamed up with the Department for Education and local schools to reduce storm overflow releases and flooding by installing sustainable drainage systems like raingardens and planters to capture excess rainwater.

We've had to increase bills to make investments across our region, including in your community. We're here to help explain why your bill is going up and how we can support you if you're concerned about paying your bill. For further information please scan the code or visit southernwater.co.uk/billincrease



2a. Eligibility signposting – envelope outer



The voice for water consumers
Llais defnyddwyr dŵr

Are you eligible for one of our payment schemes?

If you are struggling to pay your bill visit southernwater.co.uk/here-to-help or call 0800 027 0800



Confidential: to be opened by addressee only



Return Address:
Southern Water
PO Box 564
DARLINGTON
DU 9 2G

OUT-CCMSW-1-0224



The voice for water consumers
Llais defnyddwyr dŵr

3a. Test Improvements doc

 [Southern Water Logo](#)

[Latest news](#) | [Your local improvements](#) | [Your Account](#)



Welcome to your latest community update

It's been a while since our last update in December, and we've had a busy start to the year! From reducing flooding and strengthening water supplies to trialling innovative new ways to protect our network, there's been plenty happening behind the scenes.

Here's a quick look at some of the work happening in [Hampshire](#), the benefits you can expect to see in your community and how we're preparing our network for hotter summers, wetter winters and a changing climate.

A very wet winter, and what it means for the network

Six months' worth of rain fell in **January** and **February**. This has been one of the wettest starts to the year on record. Relentless heavy downpours pushed groundwater to extreme levels, meaning we've needed to act fast. We're sorry for the impact emergency operations like this can have. Although we understand they can cause disruption, we must use tankers to protect communities from internal sewer flooding.

With the ground saturated and aquifers brimming, crews have been on duty 24/7 to protect homes and businesses and manage sewer flooding. At its peak, we had to deploy over 130 tankers across more than 30 sites.

Average vs actual rainfall during winter 25/26

The below graph shows Hampshire's average monthly rainfall versus the amount of rain that actually fell this winter.

Meet the team

During incidents like this, our **Customer Case Team** is out on the ground alongside our operational crews, keeping customers updated and answering questions. You may have spotted them in your area over winter!

[Learn more about groundwater](#)

How our Pathfinder projects are benefiting Hampshire

Back in 2023, we launched our [Pathfinder projects](#), small, local trials designed to find smarter and more sustainable ways to cut storm overflow releases and reduce flooding.

Two years on, [our Pan Parishes Pathfinder](#) has come to an end and the results are already making a real difference in the community. Working closely with residents, we've:

- Sealed over 300 private pipes connected to homes and businesses
- Repaired and sealed 2km of sewers across the network
- Used innovative no-dig technology to reduce noise and disruption
- Installed slow-drain water butts, planters and soakaways to manage excess rainwater naturally

Before this work began, the area needed 30 tankers a day to manage excess groundwater. Since completing the project, there has been a significant reduction in how many tankers are needed, even in the wettest conditions.

This marks a huge step forward in reducing the use of storm overflows and protecting homes from flooding. And it's just the start, over the next five years, we'll be taking what we've learned and applying it to other communities across the county.

Watch this short video to see the results and how we're rolling out these improvements across the region.



[Read more about our Pathfinder projects](#)

Our £1.5 billion [Clean Rivers & Seas Plan](#) was informed by what we learned in the Pathfinder projects, and has already prevented more than 700 storm overflow releases.

Take a look at the plan [here](#).

£100 million investment to keep taps flowing

We're making strong progress on the [Southampton Link Main](#), a major £100 million project that will create a new 19km pipeline linking three major water sites. This project will allow us to move water flexibly between sites helping to:

Household bill increases - Radio ad



[0694364 - Southern Water - Antonia - We Understand - Phase 2.mp3](#)

[0703534 - Southern Water - Bill Increase Pt 2 - Lawrence Gosden_V2.mp3](#)

ccw

The voice for water consumers
Llais defnyddwyr dŵr

Thank you!



ccw.org.uk