



The voice for water consumers
Llais defnyddwyr dŵr

Water Voice - Accountability Session

Action plan response

Water company: United Utilities
Wednesday 27th May

Delivered by Taylor McKenzie
Research & Energy Saving Trust

Version: Update with United Utilities Action plan response – 27.05.26

ccw.org.uk

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Questions created and asked by community members



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Community members identified three priority questions they wanted to put directly to United Utilities 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 United Utilities at the Accountability Session.

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

	Topic	Community member question
Q1	Support: Bills and vulnerable people	<p><i>“Different customers may need different kinds of support, but we feel that support from United Utilities is not visible, not flexible and often comes too late. Some customers need extra help because they have accessibility needs and others may need support as they are struggling financially.</i></p> <p><i>What are you doing now to support vulnerable customers and ensure support is tailored to their needs and what more will you do in the future to make that support fair, visible and easy to access?”</i></p>
Q2	Transparency: Understanding where our money goes	<p><i>“If our bills are rising, we want to understand how those bills are calculated, where the money is going and what customers are getting back for it. Right now, it is not clear how charges are calculated, how much is being spent on infrastructure and executive pay and whether that spending is delivering real value for the people paying the bill.</i></p> <p><i>- Can you clearly show customers how bills are calculated, where our money is going and what it is achieving?</i></p> <p><i>- What will you do in future to make this information clearer and more forthcoming?”</i></p>
Q3	Communication and reassurance on topics that matter	<p><i>“Customers should not have to hunt through websites to find important information from United Utilities. On issues like water quality, pollution and sewage, people want clear information and reassurance they can trust.</i></p> <p><i>How are you providing that information now and what will you do in future to make it easier to find, easier to understand and more proactive?”</i></p>

Executive summary - insights by question



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The Accountability Session for United Utilities highlighted the need for clearer support, greater transparency on bills and more proactive, trusted communication.

Q1.

Support: Bills and vulnerable people

During the session, United Utilities outlined a range of support for vulnerable customers, including affordability schemes, payment flexibility, accessibility measures and partnership-based support.

Community members welcomed this in principle, but felt support remains too hard to find, understand and tailor to real financial and accessibility needs.

Participants emphasised the need for clearer communication, a single route into help, and more personalised and accessible support.

Customers want support that is easier to find, easier to access and better tailored to their financial and accessibility needs.

Q2.

Transparency: Understanding where our money goes

United Utilities gave a clearer breakdown of where bills go, alongside a major investment programme and a more localised approach to showing what is being delivered.

Community members were interested in the added detail, but still felt the picture remained unclear, particularly around profits, executive pay, differing charges and how bill increases translate into visible local benefits.

Participants emphasised the need for clearer, simpler communication that explains how bills are calculated, shows where money goes, and links rising bills to tangible improvements customers can recognise.

Customers welcomed the added detail, but still felt bill transparency is too limited, with a need for clearer explanations of costs, local benefits and why charges differ.

Q3. Communication and reassurance on topics that matter

United Utilities outlined a wide range of existing communication and reassurance measures on water quality, pollution and sewage.

Community members welcomed this, but felt key information remains too hard to find and that reassurance would be stronger if updates were more visible, more local and easier to trust.

Participants emphasised the need for better signposting, more proactive alerts and clearer evidence that environmental performance is improving.

Customers felt reassurance would improve if existing channels were easier to find, alerts were more proactive and progress on spills and water quality was shown more clearly.

Actions agreed during the Accountability Session



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Q1.

Support: Bills and vulnerable people

- Clearly show what support is available, who it is for and how to access it in bills and other customer communications
- Create one clear and accessible route into support across phone and website, with simple eligibility guidance and next steps
- Offer genuinely personalised payment support based on affordability, accessibility needs and customers' preferred ways to engage
- Explain payment breaks and wider support more clearly through practical examples and direct, easy-to-access communications

Q2.

Transparency: Understanding where our money goes

- Clearly explain how bills are calculated, including why similar households may pay different amounts
- Show clearly where customer money goes, including costs, financing, profits and executive pay, in simple visual formats
- Directly link bill increases to specific local projects, improvements and customer benefits

Q3. Communication and reassurance on topics that matter

- Provide real-time local alerts on pollution and water quality incidents, with updates on resolution, actions taken and planned works
- Clearly signpost existing information channels, including alerts, app, social media and website pages, in bills, website and My Account
- Use trusted, relatable voices and clear formats to explain water quality and pollution issues, not only corporate or traditional advertising
- Show clear year-on-year evidence that spills are reducing and infrastructure is improving, using visible digital and direct communications



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Action plan response

Our findings in detail

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Q1. Support: Bills and vulnerable people

Visible, tailored and accessible support



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Question asked by United Utilities Community member:

“Different customers may need different kinds of support, but we feel that support from United Utilities is not visible, not flexible and often comes too late. Some customers need extra help because they have accessibility needs and others may need support as they are struggling financially.

What are you doing now to support vulnerable customers and ensure support is tailored to their needs and what more will you do in the future to make that support fair, visible and easy to access?”

During the session, United Utilities outlined the support it provides for vulnerable customers, covering financial help, payment flexibility, tailored assistance and accessibility measures. This includes the Priority Services Register, affordability schemes, payment plans and breaks, automatic enrolment for some eligible customers, partnerships with charities and local authorities and newer accessibility measures.

Community members welcomed the breadth of support described, but felt this did not fully reflect customer experience, citing low awareness, unclear eligibility, limited understanding of payment breaks, and difficulty finding support that feels genuinely tailored.

The discussion therefore focused on making support more visible and easier to access, creating a single clear route to help, and ensuring affordability support is personalised, accessible and easier to understand.

Actions

- Clearly show what support is available, who it is for and how to access it in bills and other customer communications
- Create one clear and accessible route into support across phone and website, with simple eligibility guidance and next steps
- Offer genuinely personalised payment support based on affordability, accessibility needs and customers’ preferred ways to engage
- Explain payment breaks and wider support more clearly through practical examples and direct, easy-to-access communications

“Just simplifying it a little bit with a single point of access, where everyone can just visit either this website or call this number to ascertain what help they can get support.”

“For me, it's more of a case of what could I do, to save water, to use it better, more sparingly... Get Water Fit's given me loads of handy hints on what I could save, how to get water smart, my use, easy wins. Why isn't United Utilities sending that to me?”



Customers want support that is easier to find, easier to access and better tailored to their financial and accessibility needs

Q1. Support: Bills and vulnerable people



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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
Clearly show what support is available, who it is for and how to access it	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explained that affordability schemes, payment-flex options, payment plans, direct debit discounts and payment breaks are available Said support is promoted through radio, TV and leaflets Over 250,000 customers were auto-enrolled into affordability schemes in the last 18 months - 1 in 6 customers is being supported on affordability grounds <p>No future commitments were stated on the night</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Make support more visible across bills and customer communications (e.g. use different colour ink to make support section more visible on bills) Improve transparency so customers can easily identify which schemes may be relevant to them 	<p>Timescales:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Available support signposted on bills: within 6 months Transparency on available support: within 3 months <p>Final comments from Water company:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Panel of 1,000 customers available to test colours and visualisation
Create one clear and accessible route into support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Highlighted Priority Service register, including adjustments for bigger-font bills, mobility needs and additional water supply where needed, and noting that 19% of customers in the North West are registered <p>No future commitments were stated on the night</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create a single, clearly signposted access point for support Provide one easy-to-find route via website and/or telephone (e.g. a helpline via United Utilities, landing page on website that is easy to navigate) Make eligibility and next steps clearer and easier to follow 	<p>Timescales: within 3 months</p> <p>Final comments from Water company:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> More can be done to ensure a single-point of contact is provided Commitment to continue testing for accessibility requirements BLS available on website and Recite me used to allow customers to tailor website, more can be done with video

Q1. Support: Bills and vulnerable people



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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
Offer genuinely personalised payment support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Said it employs social workers to support customer directly Said it already works with outreach communities, local authorities and third-sector partners Said it already works with charities, debt advisers and organisations including Age UK, Macmillan and Martin Lewis Money and Mental Health to identify and support customers <p>No future commitments were stated on the night</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assess customer's access to technology and payment methods during support calls to ensure payment solutions are accessible to all customers Ask more information to customers in order to provide tailored support Review whether eligibility reaches customers who are struggling but fall outside narrow criteria 	<p>Timescales:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assess customers' access to technology and payment methods: within 6 months Review eligibility criteria: tbc Ask mor information to customer to provide tailored support: within 3 months <p>Further detail expected within the company action plan</p>
Explain payment breaks and wider support more clearly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Said payment breaks and wider affordability options already exist Explained wider affordability support is already in place, though awareness remains a challenge <p>No future commitments were stated on the night</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide information about what customers can do to save water (similar to what "Get Water Fit" does) and send it directly to customers via email, text messages, and through a dedicated page on website for people who are not subscribed to marketing comms Provide clarity around how payment breaks work and who it is available to 	<p>Timescales: within 3 months</p> <p>Final comments from Water company:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> More can be done to make payment breaks clearer Struggle to get customers using "Get Water Fit" as they need to give marketing consent to receive information Practical examples or case studies to show how support works.



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Q1. Support: Bills and vulnerable people

Please find the response from United Utilities Action Plan below:

Timescale

We agree it is important that available financial and vulnerability support options are visible in bills and across customer communication channels.

We will complete research with our 1,000 strong Customer Research Panel into:

1. different bill designs and the impact on accessibility,
2. existing affordability webpage design.

We will make changes to bill design and webpages in line with the outcome of this research.

1. Available support signposted on bills:
within 6 month
(30th November 2026)
2. Transparency on available support:
within 3 months
(31st July 2026)



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Q1. Support: Bills and vulnerable people

Please find the response from United Utilities Action Plan below:	Timescale
<p>We agree that financial support to help with water bills should be easy to find and understand. We can do more to ensure a single-point of contact is provided, and are commitment to continue testing accessibility support needs.</p> <p>In order to achieve this we will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Make available information on 'How to contact us' on all webpages. 4. Test with real customers how we make it clear and obvious throughout the affordability and vulnerability process that phone numbers are available, and that the option to for all customers speak to us is always available 5. Review the design of advertisements and use of social media on affordability support. In particular we will update our online case studies to make sure they match up with customers experiences today. 	<p>3, 4, and 5. Within 3 months (31st July 2026)</p>



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Q1. Support: Bills and vulnerable people

Please find the response from United Utilities Action Plan below:

Timescale

Assessing customers' support needs is crucial to delivering the right level of help.

We agree that we can do more, and so to further improve our ability to get the right support where it is needed we are:

6. Putting in place extra training to identify signs of vulnerability (including assessing a customer's ability to use technology) and matching to best available support.
7. Reviewing the questions that we ask to tailor support for both affordability and vulnerability. We will look at linking this into our customer focus campaign "Think Customer".
8. Working with the independent challenge group, YourVoice, to review qualifying criteria for social tariff support.

6. Assess customers' access to technology and payment methods: within 6 months
(30th November 2026)
7. Ask for more information from customers to provide tailored support: within 3 months
(31st July 2026)
8. Review eligibility criteria: within 12 months
(30th April 2027)



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Q1. Support: Bills and vulnerable people

Please find the response from United Utilities Action Plan below:

Timescale

Many customers are looking at options to more easily afford their water bill, beyond just considering discounted tariff options. Whilst we have a range of support and advice available we agree there is more we can do to help customers easily access this.

We will:

- 9. Develop options to boost communication of water efficiency support, including a review of website visibility.
- 10. Review how marketing consents apply to water efficiency messages. We will begin including water efficiency advice in customer newsletters.
- 11. Improve visibility of the water efficiency advice already on the United Utilities website.
- 12. Review and improve the description of payment breaks, explaining how they work, and the timescales over which they are available, using practical examples.

9, 10, 11, 12:
Within 3 months
(31st July 2026)

Q2. Transparency: Understanding where our money goes

Clarity and transparency on charges, spending and results



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Question asked by United Utilities Community member:

“If our bills are rising, we want to understand how those bills are calculated, where the money is going and what customers are getting back for it. Right now, it is not clear how charges are calculated, how much is being spent on infrastructure and executive pay and whether that spending is delivering real value for the people paying the bill.

- Can you clearly show customers how bills are calculated, where our money is going and what it is achieving?

- What will you do in future to make this information clearer and more forthcoming?”

During the session, United Utilities gave a clearer breakdown of where bills go, explaining that around 45% funds day-to-day operations, 30% goes on new infrastructure and 25% on financing, alongside a major investment programme and a more localised approach to showing customers what is being delivered in their area.

Community members welcomed the added detail, but many still felt the overall picture remained unclear, with questions about profits, executive pay, why similar households can pay different amounts, and how bill increases translate into visible local benefits.

The discussion therefore focused on the need for simpler, more accessible communication that clearly explains how bills are calculated, shows where money goes in easy-to-understand formats, and links rising bills to tangible improvements customers can recognise.

Actions

- **Clearly explain how bills are calculated**, including why similar households may pay different amounts
- **Show clearly where customer money goes**, including costs, financing, profits and executive pay, in simple visual formats
- **Directly link bill increases to specific local projects, improvements and customer benefits**

“It's just transparency, because I did see the thing about the Manchester Ship Canal, I was very impressed with that, but as I say, a lot of the things, unless I was a member of this focus group, I wouldn't know one thing about it.”

“Marketing this information on maybe social media, just so there's more, sort of transparency with these changes that you're making, so people know what they are paying for... Perhaps that could put some people's mind at ease, that what they're paying for every month is going towards X, Y, and Z sort of projects.”



Customers welcomed the added detail, but still felt bill transparency is too limited, with a need for clearer explanations of costs, local benefits and why charges differ

Q2. Transparency: Understanding where our money goes



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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
Clearly explain how bills are calculated	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explained that bills and tariffs are complex and sit within a wider regulatory framework <p>No future commitments were stated on the night</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explain clearly how bills are calculated and ensure to use plain English rather than technical language Clearly explain why certain areas or household may pay different amount Provide this information on the website ('get help' page) or within the bill 	<p>Timescales:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explain how bills are calculated in plain English: within 3 months <p>Final comments from Water company:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clarification that bills are calculated through ratable value of property and meter More can be done to explain to customers why some people are paying more
Show clearly where customer money goes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explained that around 45% of bills goes on running the business, 30% on new infrastructure and 25% on financing costs Explained investment is around £900 per household, whereas average customer bills are £660. Since investment exceeds what is collected through bills, the company needs to borrow money to fund infrastructure projects <p>No future commitments were stated on the night</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide transparency around executive pay on website Provide breakdown of costs showing what profits have been made and communicate this annually through a leaflet share with bill Provide breakdown of costs within customers' online account Use simple visual format (e.g. pie charts) to show how customers money is being spent Clarify why profits are not used for investment in infrastructure and use multiple channels to relay this information (news, social media, email) 	<p>Timescales:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Transparency on executive pay: within 3 months Breakdown of costs & visual formats: within 12 months Clarify why profits are not used for investment & breakdown of costs within online account: 6-12 months <p>Final comments from Water company:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Executive pay information is already available on website Breakdown information will be tested with United Utilities customers' panel Glass visual showing where money is going is already available Clarification that profit is being investment (additional investment in last 5 years)

Q2. Transparency: Understanding where our money goes



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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
<p>Directly link bill increases to specific local projects, improvements and customer benefits</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explained that infrastructure spending is being driven by population growth, environmental standards and climate pressures Explained it has moved to a 5-county approach to connect bills more directly to local delivery Said local radio and newspapers were used to talk about the "big upgrade" and that information is also available on the website Said 3.5 million local letters had gone out with bills <p>Future plans:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> £13.5 billion investment over the next 5 years and an additional £2 billion investment on a new pipe, aqueduct 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Show concrete evidence of how infrastructure investments are benefiting customers using simple, relatable language Ensure clearer communication with customers about future plans. Use marketing, social media campaign regarding improvement being made and works being carried out to show what people are paying for every month. This will give people more reassurance about where bills are going. 	<p>Timescales:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Concrete evidence of infrastructure investments: within 6 months Clearer communication about future plans: within 3 months <p>Final comments from Water company:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Instagram, Facebook, YouTube, TikTok used. Communication is made regional and relevant. Newsletter available, but customers need to register. Information can also be made available on website in the future United Utilities is trying to do more with video and drones



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Q2. Transparency: Understanding where our money goes

Please find the response from United Utilities Action Plan below:

Timescale

The way in which bills are calculated, and the reasons why different households are asked to pay differing amounts can be complex to understand, but it is important that customers can have confidence that their bills are fair and accurate.

To support this we will:

13. Share with the Water Voice panel links to the charges pages, and the research that influenced their design.

13.
Within 3 months
(31st July 2026)



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Q2. Transparency: Understanding where our money goes

Please find the response from United Utilities Action Plan below:	Timescale
<p>We agree that communicating to customers how their bill is being used to improve the service they receive is crucial.</p> <p>Following the Water Voice accountability session we've now:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Enhanced the web content about understanding why prices have increased, including using graphics to show where customers money is going (https://www.unitedutilities.com/my-account/your-bill/our-household-charges-20262027/why-are-bills-going-up/) → Added links from the UU Customer website to the UU Corporate site annual report, where information on executive pay, profits, and re-investment can be found. <p>We will also:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 14. Review accessibility and customer friendly nature of the 'understanding your bill' webpages, and link this into annual billing letters. 15. Provide more links to helpful information on the online account pages, for example to clarify how profits are used for investment. 	<p>Transparency on executive pay: complete</p> <p>14. Breakdown of costs & visual formats: within 12 months (30th April 2027)</p> <p>15. Clarify how profits are used for investment & breakdown of costs within online account: 6-12 months (30th November '26 – 30th April '27)</p>



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Q2. Transparency: Understanding where our money goes

Please find the response from United Utilities Action Plan below:	Timescale
<p>We agree that showing real examples of how infrastructure investment is benefiting customers is important. So, we will:</p> <p>16. Update the stories in our ongoing 'The Big North West Upgrade' campaigns to show examples where investment is now actually delivering improved services</p> <p>17. Do more to promote awareness of the benefits of investment through reviewing the design of the UU Facebook page, revisiting options for social media campaigns and adding the 'MyAccount Newsletter' to the website.</p>	<p>16. Concrete evidence of infrastructure investments: within 6 months (30th November 2026)</p> <p>17. Clearer communication about future plans: within 3 months (31st July 2026)</p>



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Q3. Communication and reassurance on topics that matter

Clear, local and proactive information customers can easily find and trust

Question asked by United Utilities Community member:

“Customers should not have to hunt through websites to find important information from United Utilities. On issues like water quality, pollution and sewage, people want clear information and reassurance they can trust.

How are you providing that information now and what will you do in future to make it easier to find, easier to understand and more proactive?”

During the session, United Utilities outlined a broad range of current communication and reassurance measures, including website and app channels, proactive messages, physical pop-ups, water quality testing, postcode search tools and live combined sewer overflow data.

Community members welcomed the breadth of activity described, but several were still unaware of key channels and felt reassurance would be stronger if information were easier to find, more local, more immediate and delivered through formats people trust.

The discussion therefore focused on making existing channels more visible, improving proactive alerts and sign-up, and giving customers clearer evidence that pollution incidents are reducing and investment is making a difference.

Actions

- **Provide real-time local alerts on pollution and water quality incidents**, with updates on resolution, actions taken and planned works
- **Clearly signpost existing information channels**, including alerts, app, social media and website pages, in bills, website and My Account
- **Use trusted, relatable voices and clear formats** to explain water quality and pollution issues, not only corporate or traditional advertising
- **Show clear year-on-year evidence that spills are reducing and infrastructure is improving**, using visible digital and direct communications.

“Is there opportunity here for United Utilities to be more proactive in terms of issuing alerts?”

“I never thought about following United Utilities on social media, so again, maybe just a bit of an awareness to the customers about these different platforms that you can use, that you've already got, would really help with communication.”



Customers felt reassurance would improve if existing channels were easier to find, alerts were more proactive, and progress on spills and water quality was shown more clearly

Q3. Communication and reassurance on topics that matter



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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 real-time local alerts on pollution and water quality incidents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Said it sent 8.5 million proactive messages last year to customers on issues such as bursts and changes affecting water supply and quality <p>Future plans:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> More can be done to encourage customers to register mobile numbers and email addresses so they can receive proactive messages 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Issue real-time alerts when it comes to local pollution or water quality incidents Send notifications when issues are resolved and explain what steps were taken Provide regular updates on planned works and local improvements Use the app and live map on the website for updates and alerts 	<p>Timescales: 6-12 months</p> <p>Final comments from Water company:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> App is used for visualising, paying bills, reducing charges, while proactive messages are about issuing alerts and updates Links are provided on website, showing real-time data on overflows. Environment Agency provides data on flooding
Clearly signpost existing information channels	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Said there are 22 million website accesses a year Said it has pursued Shorecross accreditation, uses Recite Me and is challenging itself to use plain English rather than jargon Confirmed United Utilities are already using an app Confirmed all call centres are based in the North West, and customers can rate interactions through Trustpilot Confirmed water quality pages were already tested with the customer panel <p>Future plans:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Accepted a need to create a better balance in communications, as some customers feel bombarded while others are unaware of existing channels 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Raise awareness with customers about the existing social media platforms and app so they can use these to gain information Add clear signposting in bills, website and customer accounts to direct people to these channels 	<p>Timescales: within 3 months</p> <p>Further detail expected within the company action plan</p>

Q3. Communication and reassurance on topics that matter



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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
Use trusted, relatable voices and clear formats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Said it uses TV, regional radio and physical pop-ups to communicate practically with customers Said it is working to make communications clearer and in plain English <p>Future plans:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Said there would be a TV advert this year on water quality and reassurance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use real people or customers in adverts and social media, rather than relying only on well-known faces or corporate spokespeople Use format and channels that feel more genuine and trustworthy to customers 	<p>Timescales: 6-12 months</p> <p>Final comments from Water company:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Real teenagers used in adverts for the 'Stop the Block' campaign
Show clear year-on-year evidence that spills are reducing and infrastructure is improving	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Said combined sewer overflow spills were 22% lower than the previous year, with a 27% reduction in frequency, and a 38% reduction over two years. Confirmed £250 million investment in Greater Manchester sustainable drainage scheme Explained water quality tests are frequent (one every 16 seconds) <p>No future commitments were stated on the night</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide evidence that pollution incidents are being reduced year-on-year and that infrastructure is improving Publish this information on the website and noticeboards at lakes, and send it directly to customers via email and leaflets 	<p>Timescales: 6-12 months</p> <p>Final comments from Water company:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Noticeboards at lakes are not achievable as data changes quickly and would not be possible to keep boards up to date



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Q3. Transparency: Understanding where our money goes

Please find the response from United Utilities Action Plan below:	Timescale
<p>Real time alert services are currently available, but we agree we can do more to raise awareness and make them accessible for a wider group of customers.</p> <p>We have now included links on the UU website county pages (e.g. https://www.unitedutilities.com/my-local-area/news-in-your-area/Cheshire/) to a range of live update tools, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Wastewater storm overflow maps → the drinking water quality checker tool → 'Up My Street' local service disruption tool, → Information on how to find the nearest reservoir/recreation site, and → Lists of planned upgrades <p>We will go further by:</p> <p>18. Adding links in customers' personal MyAccount webpages and Mobile app to many of these live update tools.</p>	<p>Website update: complete 18. Mobile app: 6 - 12 months (30th November '26 – 30th April '27)</p>



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Q3. Transparency: Understanding where our money goes

Please find the response from United Utilities Action Plan below:	Timescale
<p>We agree that raising awareness of the activity United Utilities is undertaking to make changes and improve service is important.</p> <p>We will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 19. Promote social media channels in the regular United Utilities newsletter 20. Provide more clarity about which communication channels are available to customers 	<p>19, 20: Within 3 months (31st July 2026)</p>



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Q3. Transparency: Understanding where our money goes

Please find the response from United Utilities Action Plan below:	Timescale
<p>We agree that communicating with people in a relatable way and in a manner which can build trust is vital.</p> <p>To help achieve this we will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 21. Develop new case studies, showing real investments in local areas, and showing how we have engaged with local communities. 22. Feature real people more in our communications. 	<p>21, 22.: 6 - 12 months (30th November '26 – 30th April '27)</p>



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Q3. Transparency: Understanding where our money goes

Please find the response from United Utilities Action Plan below:	Timescale
<p>Showing that investments are working to improve service is important to help build trust with customers.</p> <p>We will:</p> <p>23. Provide evidence that pollution incidents are being reduced year on year and infrastructure is improving. We will do this via the UU website, email, leaflet, and noticeboards at lakes and recreational sites.</p>	<p>23: 6 - 12 months (30th November '26 – 30th April '27)</p>

What happens after the Accountability Session?

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



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Publication and transparency

Within 5 working days

A full (anonymised) transcript of the session was [published](#) on **Wednesday 22nd 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*.

Wednesday 29th 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 Wednesday 27th 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

Action plan response

Annex: Research approach

Delivered by Taylor McKenzie
Research & Energy Saving Trust

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.

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Thank you!



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