



The voice for water consumers
Llais defnyddwyr dŵr

Water Voice - Accountability Session

Action plan response

Water company: Wessex Water
Monday 1st June

Delivered by Taylor McKenzie
Research & Energy Saving Trust

Version: Update with Wessex Water Action plan response – 01.06.26

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 Wessex 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 Wessex Water at the Accountability Session.

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

	Topic	Community member question
Q1	Sewage pollution, local environmental harm and risk communication	<p><i>“Several of us either use local rivers, harbours and coastal waters for recreation or live close enough to feel the impacts at home. People talked about worrying whether the water is safe, and about sewage-related smells affecting daily life.</i></p> <p><i>What specific actions will Wessex Water take, and by when, to reduce sewage outflows and pollution at named local sites, warn people clearly when there is a health risk and show customers that conditions are genuinely improving?”</i></p>
Q2	Rising bills, value for money and transparency on where the money goes	<p><i>“Customers are seeing bills rise even when their own use feels steady and the information they receive still feels too generic.</i></p> <p><i>Before asking customers to pay more, what has Wessex Water done to control its own costs and how will you show customers in simple, household-level terms where our money is going, what it is funding and what measurable improvements we will see in return?”</i></p>
Q3	Drinking-water quality, treatment and plain-English local information	<p><i>“Customers want confidence not only that tap water is safe, but that they can understand what they are drinking without having to hunt through technical information.</i></p> <p><i>How will Wessex Water explain, in plain English and at local level, how drinking water is treated, what is added or removed and what local water-quality tests show, so customers get proactive reassurance rather than having to ask for it?”</i></p>

The sections that follow set out each question in turn, alongside the actions discussed and the expectations community members have for delivery through the company’s published action plan. This will be published on **Monday 1st June**.

Executive summary - insights by question



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The Accountability Session for Wessex Water highlighted a clear customer call for more transparent, plain-English communication, stronger local relevance and clearer evidence that company action is leading to real improvement.

Q1. Sewage pollution, local environmental harm and risk communication

During the session, Wessex Water outlined a five-year programme to tackle storm overflows, backed by around £8 million a month of investment, alongside more monitoring, 392 investigations by April 2027 and public information on spills and water quality.

Community members felt the response lacked clear local detail on what would change, when and how improvement would be shown in practice.

Participants emphasised the need for plain-English local updates, clearer health-risk communication and stronger evidence of site-level progress.

Customers want faster, clearer and more local evidence that pollution, health risks and environmental harm are being reduced.

Q2. Rising bills, value for money and transparency on where the money goes

During the session, Wessex Water said it controls costs through planning, spreading costs over time and using lower-cost delivery approaches, while also outlining in broad terms how customer money is spent.

Community members still felt the explanation was too generic, difficult to link to their own bills, and unclear on long-term improvements and financial sustainability.

Participants emphasised the need for clearer, household-level explanations of rising bills, where money goes, what customers will see in return and how the company's finances remain sustainable.

Customers want clearer, simpler explanations of why bills are rising, where the money goes, what it will deliver, and how the company will remain financially sustainable over time.

Q3. Drinking-water quality, treatment and plain-English local information

During the session, Wessex Water said drinking water is closely monitored and that it already shares information through a range of channels, including its website, social media and postcode checker.

Community members responded positively, but wanted reassurance to be more proactive, local and easier to understand.

Participants emphasised the need for clearer explanations of treatment, more visible local test information and more engaging communication that builds confidence in tap water.

Customers want clearer, more proactive and more local communication to help build everyday confidence in tap water.

Actions agreed during the Accountability Session



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Q1. Sewage pollution, local environmental harm and risk communication

- Provide plain-English, local updates for customers on pollution plans, site priorities, timelines and expected outcomes
- Share real-time health-risk information through digital and non-digital local channels so residents and visitors can act quickly
- Show how monitoring and investment are reducing spills locally, with maintained monitors, progress updates and clear next steps
- Explain existing ecological restoration work locally, including who is involved, what is happening and how communities can engage

Q2. Rising bills, value for money and transparency on where the money goes

- Provide a clear household-level breakdown of bills, including what each £1 pays for, why charges have risen and what customers fund
- Present billing and investment information in simpler, less generic formats across bills, email, website and digital tools
- Show what higher bills will deliver over time, using clear examples of improvements and where investment is being made
- Explain financial sustainability more transparently, including investor funding, debt, cost-sharing and how customers can reduce bills

Q3. Drinking-water quality, treatment and plain-English local information

- Explain water treatment and safety checks in plain English, including what is added or removed and why
- Proactively share local water-quality results in clearer, easier-to-use formats, rather than leaving customers to request them
- Use more engaging communication, including short videos, local channels and schools outreach, to build trust in tap water



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Water Voice - Accountability Session

Summary report

Our findings in detail

Delivered by Taylor McKenzie
Research & Energy Saving Trust

ccw.org.uk

Q1. Sewage pollution, local environmental harm and risk communication

Plain-English local updates, clear risk communication and evidence of progress



Question asked by Wessex Water Community member:

“Several of us either use local rivers, harbours and coastal waters for recreation or live close enough to feel the impacts at home. People talked about worrying whether the water is safe, and about sewage-related smells affecting daily life.

What specific actions will Wessex Water take, and by when, to reduce sewage outflows and pollution at named local sites, warn people clearly when there is a health risk and show customers that conditions are genuinely improving?”

During the session, Wessex Water outlined a five-year programme to tackle storm overflows, supported by around £8 million a month of investment. It also explained it is increasing monitoring, carrying out 392 investigations by April 2027 and providing public information on spills and water quality through tools such as web apps and the Coast and Rivers Watch Map.

Community members felt the response still lacked clear, local and customer-friendly evidence of what would change, where and by when. They also wanted more information on how improvement would be shown and communicated to customers, particularly for non-digital customers and areas that felt overlooked.

The discussion therefore focused on clearer local communication, visible health-risk warnings through multiple channels and tangible evidence that conditions are improving on the ground.

Actions

- Provide plain-English, local updates for customers on pollution plans, site priorities, timelines and expected outcomes
- Share real-time health-risk information through digital and non-digital local channels so residents and visitors can act quickly
- Show how monitoring and investment are reducing spills locally, with maintained monitors, progress updates and clear next steps
- Explain existing ecological restoration work locally, including who is involved, what is happening and how communities can engage

“All of these plans, all of these actions, I didn’t know any of this was happening. Consumers need to be able to know what’s happening via some method.”

“That particular station, if it’s reducing those flows by 30%, that’s great, but what further work is going to be done to stop the releases?”



Customers want faster, clearer and more local evidence that pollution, health risks and environmental harm are being reduced.

Q1. Sewage pollution, local environmental harm and risk communication



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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 plain-English, local updates for customers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Published a Pollution Reduction Plan Explained pollution has been reduced by 35% from last year: using more monitoring, technology and dogs to identify misconnections Acknowledges current information is too technical and not easy for customers to understand <p>No future commitments were stated on the night</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explain local issues, planned works, timelines and expected outcomes in clear, accessible language Communicate plans and actions taken to customers via email Provide clearer, more accessible communication overall, including website improvement and accessible communication for digitally-excluded customers 	<p>Timescale: 6-12 months overall Clearer, more accessible communication: within 6 months</p> <p>Final comments from Water company:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wessex Water currently doesn't hold email addresses for the whole customer base Newsletter is sent twice a year to customers who have opted in
Share real-time health-risk information through digital and non-digital local	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explained they provide water quality data 24/7 Said they have the Coast and Rivers Watch Map that provides real-time overflow information Explained existing data feeds into the Surfers Against Sewage app and National Storm Overflow Hub <p>Future plans:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Roll out web app to make water quality information available to the public Continue work with customers to understand what information they want to be shared and where they want this information to be available Continue work with local swimming groups to ensure relevant information is provided through the best channels 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Team up with RNLI to communicate safe swimming conditions Ensure water quality information is communicated at the local level and that is shared via digital as well as non-digital channels Utilise social media to communicate with customers (e.g. Facebook groups) Use local groups to share information with the local community 	<p>Timescale: 6-12 months overall</p> <p>Final comments from Water company:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local Facebook groups are often closed so can be hard for Wessex Water to gain access Working with Bournemouth, Christchurch and Pool council to get water quality buoys in the coming weeks In these areas, live data is already being relayed to RNLI and information is displayed on blackboards on beaches

Q1. Sewage pollution, local environmental harm and risk communication



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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
Show how monitoring and investment are reducing spills locally	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explained around £8 million per month is being invested in storm-overflow reduction (5-year investment period). Said 7 storm overflows have been improved in the last year <p>Future plans:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete 392 storm-overflow investigations by April 2027 36 improvements will be using nature-based solutions to treat storm overflows Improve another 8 storm overflows next year 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide information on what preventative measures can be put in place and how infrastructure and future planning will prevent spills Communicate this clearly so that customers can see what is being done locally and what difference it is expected to make 	<p>Timescale: 6-12 months overall</p> <p>Further detail expected within the company action plan</p>
Explain existing ecological restoration work locally	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Said partnership work is underway through five catchment partnership projects with river trusts and wildlife trusts <p>No future commitments were stated on the night</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explore what more can be done in partnership with organisations for nature restoration Explain how damage to local ecology will be repaired, including joint work with wildlife organisations and expert input where species have been lost 	<p>Timescale: 6-12 months overall</p> <p>Final comments from Water company:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ecological partnership work is already happening (e.g. restoration projects with river trusts and wildlife trusts)



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Q1. Sewage pollution, local environmental harm and risk communication (Q1. Action A)

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

Timescale

- 1.1) Our Pollution Incident Reduction plan is available on our website: [Pollution Incident Reduction Plan | Wessex Water](#)
We are currently reviewing the plan to make it more customer facing and easier to understand, with less technical jargon.
- 1.2) We are also developing a new supporting web page and a short A5 summary leaflet for customers.

1.1) 31 July 2026
1.2) 31 July 2026

Action Plan Water Company response, following the accountability session.

Q1. Sewage pollution, local environmental harm and risk communication (Q1. Action B)



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

Timescale

2.1) We provide real-time water quality information for recreational users on our website: <https://www.waterqualitylive.info>

This currently covers three popular river sites: Warleigh Weir, Farleigh Hungerford and Fordingbridge, two of which are designated inland bathing waters. Additional real time information for Bournemouth and Boscombe Piers (designated costal bathing water sites) is available via the SeaCheck app, developed in partnership with Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole (BCP) Council.
<https://dave.unifaitechnology.net/beach-monitor/BCP/#Bournemouth>

2.2) We are working with BCP Council and the RNLI (who provide life guarding services) to develop, promote and agree how information is shared with beachgoers. Postcards about water quality buoys and SeaCheck app have been distributed to local businesses, such as surf shops and cafes at Bournemouth and Boscombe Piers.

2.3) We are expanding real-time bathing water monitoring to more locations and using AI to infer bathing water status. New sites will be added to our Water Quality Live web page as they become available.

2.4) Our data is also shared with Surfers Against Sewage (SAS) and featured in their Safer Seas and Rivers app, which has a large national audience.

2.5) While we will aim to share updates via social media and local community Facebook groups where possible, access depends on individual group settings. We will continue to use staff ambassadors and targeted Facebook advertising, which has proven effective.

2.1) Ongoing - data already available for Farleigh Hungerford, Fordinbridge and Warleigh Weir

2.2) Ongoing - quarterly meetings held with BCP Beach Manager. SeaCheck app launched on 15th May 2026 for 2025 Bathing Season at Bournemouth & Boscombe Pier

2.3) 31 December 2026 planned sites are: Fench Weir (Taunton), Langport and 2 sites near Bath

2.4) Ongoing - Data shared in real time with SAS

2.5) ongoing

Action Plan Water Company response, following the accountability session.



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Q1. Sewage pollution, local environmental harm and risk communication (Q1. Action C)

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

Timescale

3.1) At a local level, where we make substantial investment in a storm overflow, e.g. storm tanks or nature-based solutions, we will engage with local media, write to affected residents where disruption is expected, and use targeted social media advertising in surrounding postcode areas.

Our Storm Overflow Improvement Dashboard shows our long-term plan to 2050, including which overflows will be improved in each five-year period, with views by Local Authority area and MP constituency:

<https://www.arcgis.com/apps/dashboards/de7d66343e304703935403cflbeb398c>

3.2) At a regional level, storm overflow investment is regularly featured across our communications. Our website highlights current investment, including rainwater separation, nature based and storage solutions, alongside recent schemes, with photos, showing outcomes and impact on the frequency and duration of spills: <https://corporate.wessexwater.co.uk/our-purpose/rivers-and-coastal-waters/storm-overflow-investment>

3.3) We will complete our storm overflow investigations in 2027 to inform future improvements, while continuing our current programme of nature based and storage solutions.

3.4) We will report storm overflow operation figures annually to the Environment Agency and publish this information on our website, alongside case studies and details of improvement plans.

3.5) As part of our continuous water quality monitoring obligations, installing water quality monitors upstream and downstream of our wastewater discharges, we will share this data to highlight the impact of storm overflows by March 2030.

3.1) Ongoing

3.2) Ongoing

3.3) Investigations will be completed by 31 December 2027

3.4) Ongoing - data reported annually by end February and published on our website in March

3.5) 22 real time water quality monitors were installed in 2025-6. 470 will be installed by 31 March 2030 and data will be shared on a publicly available national platform.



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Q1. Sewage pollution, local environmental harm and risk communication (Q1. Action D)

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

Timescale

We work closely with local environmental groups, including all Wildlife Trusts and Rivers Trusts across our region. This includes specific programmes such as our Biodiversity Action Plan Partners Programme (<https://corporate.wessexwater.co.uk/our-purpose/increased-biodiversity/current-partners-projects>), alongside wider engagement activities.

4.1) We are currently providing over £10 million of funding to five catchment partnership projects (<https://corporate.wessexwater.co.uk/our-purpose/rivers-and-coastal-waters/catchment-partnership-projects>) to improve water quality, river flows and climate resilience. These projects will deliver river restoration and habitat creation across the region.

4.2) We have also established a five-year partnership agreement with the Rivers Trust, including a dedicated Partnership Manager role and £100,000 per year to seed fund projects.

4.3) Through our YTL/Wessex Water Foundation, our Environment Fund we will continue to support grass roots groups to deliver local improvements.

4.4) We will continue to deliver and expand our Biodiversity Action Plan (<https://corporate.wessexwater.co.uk/our-future/our-plans/biodiversity-action-plan>) and Catchment Partnership Projects, working with partners, including farmers and land managers, to minimise environmental loss and enhance habitats.

4.1) Ongoing - these projects commenced in April 2025 and are funded to 31 March 2030

4.2) Ongoing - partnership commenced in October 2025 and is funded until 31 March 2030

4.3) Ongoing - the Environment Fund has recently closed for applications for 2026 but will re-open in spring (April/May) 2027.

4.4) Ongoing - our Biodiversity Action Plan was updated in January 2026.

Action Plan Water Company response, following the accountability session.

Q2. Rising bills, value for money and transparency on where the money goes

Clearer, simpler information on bills, investment and long-term outcomes



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Question asked by Wessex Water Community member:

“Customers are seeing bills rise even when their own use feels steady and the information they receive still feels too generic.

Before asking customers to pay more, what has Wessex Water done to control its own costs and how will you show customers in simple, household-level terms where our money is going, what it is funding and what measurable improvements we will see in return?”

During the session, Wessex Water said it manages costs through careful planning, spreading spending over time, using internal teams where possible and applying lower-cost solutions. It also offers meters, water-efficiency support and financial assistance to their customers. Wessex Water outlined, in broad terms, how customer money is used and said that last year’s spending exceeded customer income, with the gap supported by investors.

Community members still felt the explanation was too generic, hard to relate to their own bills and unclear on long-term improvements, financial sustainability and how costs are shared fairly.

The discussion therefore focused on the need for simpler, household-level explanations of where money goes, why bills are rising, what customers will see in return, and how the company will remain financially sustainable.

Actions

- Provide a clear household-level breakdown of bills, including what each £1 pays for, why charges have risen and what customers fund
- Present billing and investment information in simpler, less generic formats across bills, email, website and digital tools
- Show what higher bills will deliver over time, using clear examples of improvements and where investment is being made
- Explain financial sustainability more transparently, including investor funding, debt, cost-sharing and how customers can reduce bills

“If he knows we’re not understanding the set-out of our bills... then why isn’t something being done about it?”

“My bill is seven pages long, and bar the amount of water that I’m using, page three to seven is 100% generic, which feels like an awful lot of wasted information.”



Customers want clearer, simpler explanations of why bills are rising, where the money goes, what it will deliver and how the company will remain financially sustainable over time.

Q2. Rising bills, value for money and transparency on where the 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>Provide a clear household-level breakdown of bills</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explained it already works to keep bills down through careful planning, spreading costs over time, using internal teams where possible, lower-cost solutions, meters, water-efficiency support and financial help for struggling customers Gave a broad current breakdown of where each £1 goes, including running costs, maintenance, environmental improvement and interest costs Offer water-efficiency gadgets, water-saving tips, free meters and financial support. <p>Future plans:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Make this information easier to access in clearer customer-facing formats 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide detailed breakdown of why bills have increased via email or on bills Show what each customer's contribution pays for in simple terms Explain how the burden of costs is shared between business and household customers and show this information within bills Communicate fresh ideas on how to save water to customers that want to reduce their usage 	<p>Timescales:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Most actions can be delivered within 6-12 months Actions involving bills rely on the new billing system so will have a longer timeline of 18 months or more <p>Final comments from Water company:</p>
<p>Present billing and investment information in simpler, less generic formats</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Said information is already available through bills, the website and external tools such as Discover Water Acknowledged that too much of this still feels generic or is not presented in a way customers find easy to use <p>Future plans:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use clearer language and less jargon 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Simplify information on bills using plain English and avoiding jargon Reduce generic information on bills Provide information in accessible format, including both digital and non-digital channels Allow option to opt out of postal communications 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wessex Water is implementing a new billing system which will allow to better tailor content. It will be available in the next 18 months or more While the new billing system is implemented, information can be shared via email or shown on the website

Q2. Rising bills, value for money and transparency on where the 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
Show what higher bills will deliver over time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explained current spending includes maintaining infrastructure and improving the environment and reliable supply <p>Future plans:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use case studies to show customers what investment is funding Explain saving and spending more clearly in both the short and long term 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clearly show what improvements customers will see over the long term as a result of higher bills 	<p>Timescales:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Most actions can be delivered within 6-12 months Actions involving bills rely on the new billing system so will have a longer timeline of 18 months or more
Explain financial sustainability more transparently	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explained spending exceeded customer income in the last year and that the difference was supported by investors Said no executive bonuses were paid last year. One dividend payment was made in April 2025, that was carried over from the previous financial year <p>No future commitments were stated on the night</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clarify how Wessex Water sustains investment and balances its book over time Create a way of comparing past, present and future investment Show how investor support relate to customer outcomes Provide this information in an interactive dashboard in an app 	<p>Final comments from Water company:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wessex Water is implementing a new billing system which will allow to better tailor content. It will be available in the next 18 months or more While the new billing system is implemented, information can be shared via email or shown on the website



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Q2. Rising bills, value for money and transparency on where the money goes (Q2. Action A)

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

Timescale

We provide information on our charges, including any changes and reasons for them, on our website:

<https://www.wessexwater.co.uk/bills-and-accounts/our-charges>

<https://www.wessexwater.co.uk/bills-and-accounts/changes-to-our-charges>

We also share information on dividends and profits and how charges are set:

<https://corporate.wessexwater.co.uk/our-performance/dividends-and-profits>

<https://www.wessexwater.co.uk/bills-and-accounts/our-charges/how-our-charges-are-set>

Our bills include a pie chart illustrating where money is being invested, and we explain charges, help with bills and where the money goes in our customer magazine, delivered to all households across our region.

5.1) We will review and simplify our website content to make charges increases easier to understand, including a clear breakdown of how every £1 of a customer's bill is used.

5.2) We will look to add the same graphic on bills but this will be post implementation of our billing system.

5.3) We actively encourage customers to save water, and money if metered, through advice and support on our website:

<https://www.wessexwater.co.uk/your-water/save-water>

This includes a water use calculator, tips, free water saving products, and free home water efficiency visits.

5.4) We are rolling out smart meters across our region, due to be completed by 2035. A new digital portal, launching late summer, will help customers track their water use and spot leaks quickly.

5.1) 31 October 2026
5.2) 31 December 2027 or sooner depending on implementation of new billing system
5.3) Ongoing
5.4) 31 August 2026

Action Plan Water Company response, following the accountability session.



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Q2. Rising bills, value for money and transparency on where the money goes (Q2. Action B)

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

Timescale

Our bills and supporting information have been reviewed by Scope to improve accessibility for customers. We have also worked with the Shaw Trust to ensure our website is accessible.

6.1) We keep our bills and accompanying materials under regular review and will continue to simplify content where possible. Any changes to the bill format will follow implementation of our new billing system.

6.2) We offer e-billing and we will review how this is promoted and signposted to improve awareness.

6.3) We are also trialling optional 'click to view' email bills for Direct Debit customers, with an email address, who currently receive paper bills.

6.4) In addition, we will include information in our Autumn/Winter magazine about opting out of Royal Mail's Door-to-Door service and promote our e-newsletter for customers who prefer digital content.

6.1) Ongoing for accompanying materials but 31 December 2027 or sooner for changes to bills. This depends on the implementation of our new billing system.
6.2) 31 October 2026
6.3) 30 September 2026
6.4) 30 November 2026

Action Plan Water Company response, following the accountability session.



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Q2. Rising bills, value for money and transparency on where the money goes (Q2. Action C)

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

Timescale

7.1) We detail our investment programme, showcase individual investment schemes, and explain the benefits they will deliver through a range of communications, including our website. We also publish our business plan and 25 year Strategic Direction.
<https://corporate.wessexwater.co.uk/our-purpose/financing-the-future/investment>

Examples include investment to protect Dorset's beaches and enhancing water supply in Yeovil:
<https://www.wessexwater.co.uk/news/investing-to-protect-dorsets-brilliant-beaches>
<https://www.wessexwater.co.uk/news/its-go-in-yeovil-for-water-supply-boost>

A summary of current schemes is here:
<https://corporate.wessexwater.co.uk/our-purpose/investment-schemes>

7.2) We recognise there is more we can do to help customers understand the benefits of investment in their local area and will continue to explore new ways to communicate this.

7.1) Ongoing
7.2) 31 October 2026

Action Plan Water Company response, following the accountability session.



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Q2. Rising bills, value for money and transparency on where the money goes (Q2. Action D)

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

Timescale

As outlined elsewhere in this action plan, we detail our investment programme, summarise and showcase individual investment schemes, and explain the benefits they will deliver through a range of communications, including our website. We also publish our business plan and 25 year Strategic Direction. Our bills include a pie chart illustrating where money is being invested, and we explain charges, help with bills and where the money goes in our customer magazine, delivered to all households across our region.

Below is the pie chart used in with our bills. It can also be found on the 'changes to our charges' webpage: <https://www.wessexwater.co.uk/bills-and-accounts/changes-to-our-charges>

8) We will continue to review and improve the information we share on financing across our website (which is mobile friendly) and other communications.

8) 31 October 2026

Action Plan Water Company response, following the accountability session.

Q3. Drinking-water quality, treatment and plain-English local information

Clearer explanations, local test information and greater confidence in tap water



The voice for water consumers
Llais defnyddwyr dŵr

Question asked by Wessex Water Community member:

“Customers want confidence not only that tap water is safe, but that they can understand what they are drinking without having to hunt through technical information.

How will Wessex Water explain, in plain English and at local level, how drinking water is treated, what is added or removed and what local water-quality tests show, so customers get proactive reassurance rather than having to ask for it?”

During the session, Wessex Water said drinking water is monitored continuously through online systems, physical sampling and laboratory analysis, with more than one million test results produced last year. It also said it already uses a range of communication channels, including social media, printed materials, its website and a postcode checker, but accepted that much of the information remains too technical and does not do enough to build customer trust in tap water.

Community members responded positively to the answer, but wanted clearer, more proactive and more locally relevant reassurance.

The discussion therefore focused on clearer plain-English explanations of treatment and testing, more visible local water-quality information and more engaging communication that builds everyday confidence in tap water.

Actions

- Explain water treatment and safety checks in plain English, including what is added or removed and why
- Proactively share local water-quality results in clearer, easier-to-use formats, rather than leaving customers to request them
- Use more engaging communication, including short videos, local channels and schools outreach, to build trust in tap water

“I’d come into this meeting wanting to ask is whether there was a kind of map or postcode checker where you could see what local domestic water samples have been like in your area, but that was answered because you have that postcode checker ... I didn’t know about that, so again, it’s probably just more information”

“I think it’s really important to again be using local communities to be saying, “Do you know what? We’ve just tested in your area and this is the information,”... because if Richard could be out shouting from the rooftops, then I think an awful lot more people would be trusting what’s there.”



Customers want clearer, more proactive and more local communication to help build everyday confidence in tap water

Q3. Drinking-water quality, treatment and plain-English local information



The voice for water consumers
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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>Explain water treatment and safety checks in plain English</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explained all treatment works are monitored 24/7 through online monitoring, physical sampling and laboratory analysis Said over 1 million drinking-water test results were produced last year Acknowledged that existing website information is too technical for many customers <p>Future plans:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Simplify the website where possible and use videos and diagrams to make information easily-digestible to customers Commitment to communicate about tap water safety in plain English Educate on the health benefits of tap water to convince customers there is no need to purchase bottled water 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clearly explain treatment and safety checks step by step, in plain English Ensure transparent communication on water safety and quality of water Provide tips on how to preserve taps from limescale Provide a clear scale or colour rating to help customers understand water test results, including which additives have used or removed 	<p>Timescales: 6 months</p> <p>Further detail expected within the company action plan</p>
<p>Proactively share local water-quality results in clearer, easier-to-use formats</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explained a postcode checker is available, which shows what is in local water <p>Future plans:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Add more to postcode checker, including treatment details and whether water is hard or surface-sourced Wessex Water already carries out community drop-ins and said these could be used in future to share local water sample results and sampling information 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> When water is tested in a household, provide test result automatically rather than waiting for customers to request it Share local results through local community groups as well as central platforms Spread community drop-ins across different days and times to allow a broader range of customers to attend Signpost the postcode checker within customers' My Account or app Allow customers to test their own water and feedback results to Wessex Water Provide localised test results on bills 	<p>Timescales: 6 months</p> <p>Final comments from Water company:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not feasible to allow customers to test their own water as specific chemicals need to be added at the time of testing and sample needs to be refrigerated immediately Providing localised test results on bills would be hard to deliver promptly

Q3. Drinking-water quality, treatment and plain-English local information



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
Use more engaging communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Said it uses a range of communication measures, including Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, magazine and their website <p>Future plans:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Commitment to work with customers to understand the best way to communicate about the safety of water and share water-quality information 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Carry out events during which Wessex Water's water is blind tested against Evian or other well-known bottled water brands Use more engaging social content to bring testing and treatment to life Carry out school outreach programs, encouraging children to drink tap water, explaining why it is safe to drink and why it is important to consume it instead of bottled water 	<p>Timescales: 6 months</p> <p>Final comments from Water company:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Opportunity to build on current school outreach and do more with education advisors Video on social media has been done in the past and can be explored again



The voice for water consumers
Llais defnyddwyr dŵr

Q3. Drinking-water quality, treatment and plain-English local information (Q3. Action A)

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

Timescale

We provide extensive information on all aspects of water supply, including water quality, on our website:

[Water quality | Wessex Water](#)

9.1) We will continue to improve the content, making it as simple and easy to understand as possible.

9.2) We will also review and update our water treatment videos, making sure they are clearly signposted on our website, as well as YouTube.

An example is: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VArQ-nzQh9Y>

Our water hardness page was updated in 2025 and now includes helpful videos:

<https://www.wessexwater.co.uk/your-water/hardness-and-limescale>

9.3) We don't consider a colour scale or rating to be helpful, as all our results meet required standards and differences only relate to composition. Instead, we will explore clearer ways to present this information to customers.

9.4) We will also expand content on the health benefits of tap water on our website.

9.1) 31 October 2026
9.2) 31 October 2026
9.3) 31 October 2026
9.4) 31 October 2026

Action Plan Water Company response, following the accountability session.



The voice for water consumers
Llais defnyddwyr dŵr

Q3. Drinking-water quality, treatment and plain-English local information (Q3. Action B)

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

Timescale

10.1) When a customer requests a water sample, we provide the results within the timescales set out in our Wessex Promise. We will review the information and leaflets provided to customers (both on request and during routine sampling) to make sure they are clear and easy to understand.

10.2) We are active in the community through our drop-ins, community talks, guest lectures and wider community partnerships. Drop-ins are advertised on our website and in local venues, with regular times in each location, alongside additional flexible sessions (including evenings and weekends) often delivered with local partners.

10.3) Our talks and guest lectures explain the journey from water source to tap, including where water comes from and how we keep it safe and clean. We will publish more information about these sessions, including photos.

10.4) Individual property sample results are not a good indicator of the wider area's water quality. However, we can help customers understand their results at community drop-ins.

10.5) We review our bills each year and the information that goes alongside so we will strengthen signposting to water quality information.

10.6) Our postcode checker is a valuable and useful tool: <https://www.wessexwater.co.uk/your-water/water-quality>
We will improve visibility across our website and other communications. There is a link in "my account".

We recognise that customers may want to test their own water but there are currently no domestic test kits available that provide the required level of accuracy.

10.1) 31 October 2026
10.2) Ongoing
10.3) 31 October 2026
10.4) Ongoing
10.5) 31 December 2027 or sooner
depending on implementation of new
billing system
10.6) 31 October 2026

Action Plan Water Company response, following the accountability session.



The voice for water consumers
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Q3. Drinking-water quality, treatment and plain-English local information (Q3. Action C)

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

Timescale

11.1) We can blind test water for fun. For example we set up a mock taste and odour panel at our apprentice open day. We will trial blind testing against bottled water at the Taunton Flower Show in August. Subject to GDPR consent, we will film and publish on our social channels.

11.2) We will also review our messaging around why tap water is superior in terms of quality, testing, consistency and cost.

Information on water sampling is available on our website: <https://www.wessexwater.co.uk/your-water/water-sampling-visits>

We actively use social media and keep our content under regular review. For example, we published a 'day in the life' video featuring a Water Quality Inspector (10th March) and a series of limescale advice videos (24 March and 28 April) with one more currently booked:

<https://www.facebook.com/share/v/1FvNZoRsPk/>

<https://www.facebook.com/share/r/1cDHSPVNIT/>

11.3) We will commit to look at further topics such as brown/cloudy water in the future.

11.4) Water quality and encouraging children to drink tap water are key elements of our education programme which reaches more than 10,000 children every year:

<https://www.wessexwater.co.uk/visit-and-learn/education>

11.1) 31 August 2026
11.2) 31 October 2026
11.3) 31 October 2026
11.4) Ongoing

Action Plan Water Company response, following the accountability session.

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 27th 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*.

Tuesday 5th May



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

Monday 1st June



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

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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