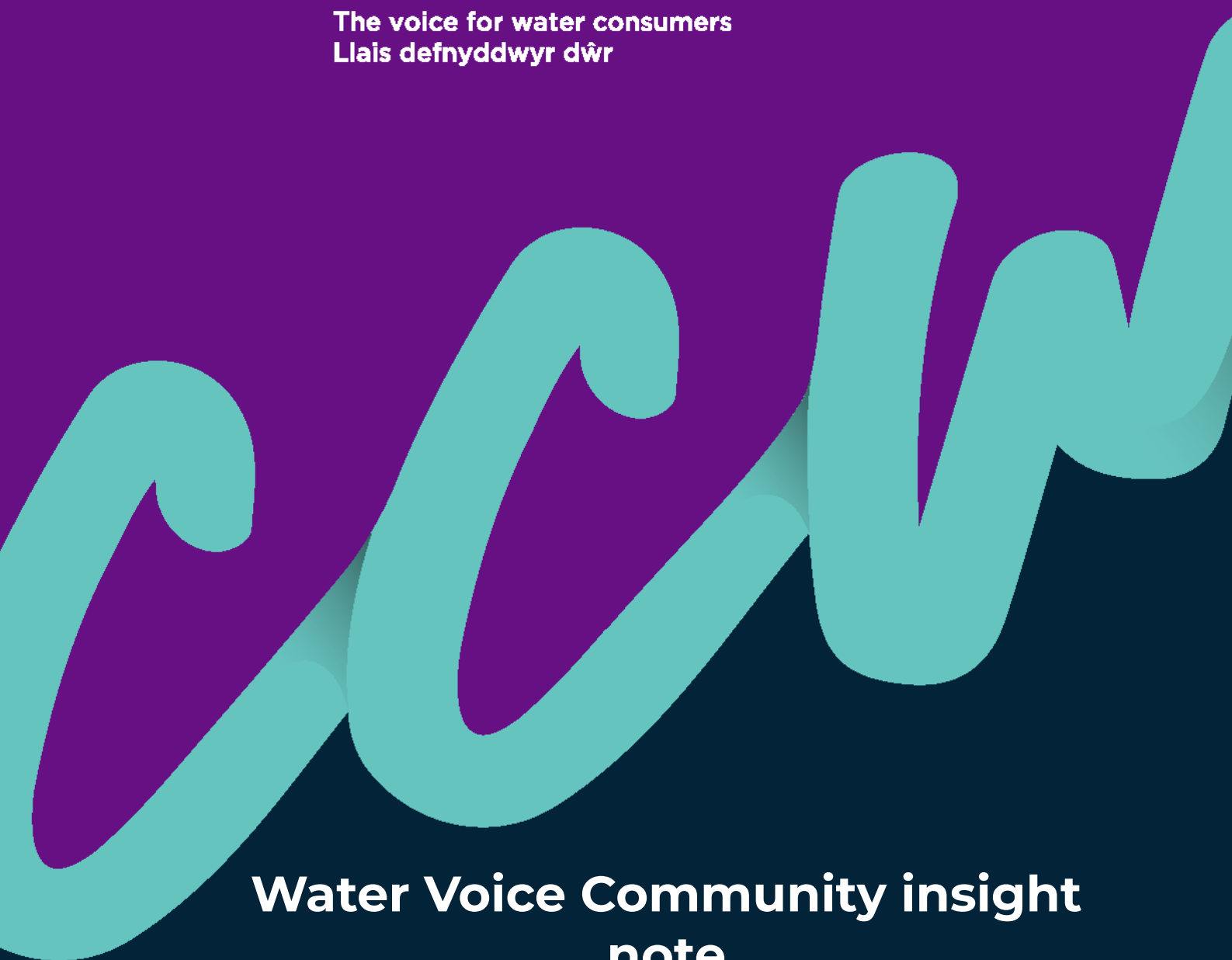




The voice for water consumers
Llais defnyddwyr dŵr



**Water Voice Community insight
note**
**Extreme heat, customer behaviours
and water use**

DELIVERED BY TAYLOR MCKENZIE RESEARCH, LATE JUNE
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Towards the end of June, much of England and Wales experienced a significant period of extreme heat. The Met Office issued a Red Extreme Heat Warning for parts of central and southern England and Wales, with forecasts indicating the possibility of record breaking June temperatures, widespread warm nights and unusually high humidity. Official warnings also highlighted the potential for impacts across health, transport, energy and water supplies. UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) red and amber heat-health alerts reinforced the need to stay hydrated, keep homes cool and check on vulnerable relatives and neighbours.

This created a timely opportunity for Water Voice to explore how customers were coping in real time. The heatwave offered the opportunity to temporarily pivot community content away from the planned Trust in Governance theme and allowed the panels to capture live evidence on how extreme heat affected routines, health, work, pets, household behaviour, neighbourly support and water use. It also provided useful insight into what customers expect from water companies during periods of high demand, rising temperatures and possible drought risk.

Post shared with communities

- **24/06/2026** - What does the heat look like where you are?
 - **Purpose** - To capture real-time experiences of extreme heat.
 - **Prompt** - How is the heat affecting day-to-day life, routines, pets, work, sleep and how homes are being used?
- **25/06/2026** - Keeping cool and looking out for others
 - **Purpose** - To capture real-time experiences of extreme heat.
 - **Prompt** - What are you doing to manage the heat, has it affected water use and have you helped or been helped?
- **25/06/2026** - Heat, water and messages from your water company
 - **Purpose** - To capture real-time experiences of extreme heat.
 - **Prompt** - Has heat changed how you think about water, and have you seen messages about hot weather, saving water, supply pressures or drought risk?
- **26/06/2026** - Legal maximum workplace temperature
 - **Purpose** - To capture real-time experiences of extreme heat.
 - **Prompt** - Should a legal maximum workplace temperature be introduced, and what considerations should legislators make?

Key emergent themes

Household adaptation Customers actively managed heat through shade, fans, cooler showers, hydration, varying activity timings and household routines.	Increased but careful water use Water demand rose for drinking, washing, pets, gardens and cooling, but many also reused water or reduced non-essential use.	Vulnerability and health Heat disproportionately affected older people, children, pets and customers with health conditions, medication impacts or neurodivergence.
Community support Many checked on neighbours, parents, delivery drivers, tradespeople and vulnerable friends, showing resilience at community level.	Communication gaps Members wanted earlier, clearer, more local updates, especially where they had not seen anything from their water company.	Preparedness and trust Heat reinforced expectations around leakage, storage, investment, drought planning and visible company action.

Summary of the conversation

The discussion was richer than a simple account of customers feeling hot. Members described a wide set of adaptations: walking dogs early or late, working from home to avoid hot journeys, moving activities into cooler parts of the day, closing curtains/blinds during daylight hours, opening windows at night, sleeping downstairs or even outside, and changing which rooms they used depending on where the sun was hitting the house. Some described quite structured routines, such as monitoring indoor and outdoor temperatures, closing off warmer rooms, using fans or air-cooling units selectively, and moving between shaded rooms or outdoor spaces as conditions changed.

The strongest theme was disruption to normal life. Members spoke about poor sleep, heat accumulating upstairs, reduced ability to work from home, school closures, pets struggling, fatigue, cancelled plans and homes feeling unsuited to sustained heat. Several compared the heatwave to a temporary disruption of normal life, where routines had to be suspended and households moved into a more defensive mode of coping. For some, especially those with asthma, multiple sclerosis (MS), medication-related heat sensitivity, Postural Orthostatic Tachycardia Syndrome (POTS), menopause, cardiac issues or neurodivergence, the heat was not just uncomfortable; it materially affected health and day-to-day functioning.

“Day to day life has been completely turned on its head. I said to my wife this morning it oddly feels like Covid again. Because everything is different.”

“I need more water for our paddling pool. My kids have autism so need to cool down a lot and we've been drinking a lot more water. We are struggling to sleep as we live in a new build. Our house is 39 degrees ATM according to the temperature monitors.”

The heat also drove practical and often creative behaviour changes. Common coping strategies included closing curtains and blinds during the day, opening windows only when outside air cooled, using fans, frozen water bottles, ice packs, damp cloths, cooling mats, cold showers and chilled drinking water. Several members had developed household routines around managing airflow, shade and timing, and some were beginning to consider more permanent adaptations such as air-conditioning, cooling units, better insulation or redesigning homes and public buildings for future summers.

Water use increased, but not uniformly or thoughtlessly. Many households reported drinking more, showering more, cooling children or pets, filling paddling pools, watering gardens, washing more clothes and using water with air coolers or spray bottles. At the same time, many members were actively trying to offset this by shortening showers, using water butts, watering in the evening, saving grey water, reusing water from washing food or pets, avoiding baths, not watering lawns and delaying appliance use. The conversation therefore showed both higher demand and a willingness to conserve, especially where the ask felt reasonable and practical.

“When rinsing out my juicing equipment, I save the water for my plants as it has lots of nutrients and I also save boiled egg water/shells etc. Any water undrunk goes into plants too.”

“We are putting more bottles of tap water in the fridge overnight ready for use the next day and mid morning or late evening cool showers as required.”

Members were often community-minded. The heat prompted people to check on elderly parents, neighbours, medically vulnerable friends, delivery drivers, tradespeople, pets and wildlife. This matters for Water Voice because resilience was not seen only as a company or household issue. Members described informal support networks that helped people cope

but also implied that water companies and public bodies should not rely on these networks as a substitute for clear communication and targeted support.

"I check on my neighbour (she is 83) each morning when I take her daily paper to make sure she is okay and I also text her in the afternoon just in case."

Communication from water companies was inconsistent. Some members received texts, emails or social media posts about saving water, supply pressures or using water wisely.

These were generally welcomed when they were timely, clear and recognisably from the company. However, many reported receiving nothing, or only seeing messages through social media, local news or other companies. Where messages arrived late or were generic, members felt the communication was useful but insufficient. The clearest expectation was for earlier, localised, practical updates that explain the situation before customers experience restrictions, low pressure or supply interruptions.

"I have received nothing from my water provider. Not an email or anything. I choose not to use social media so miss it if it is on there."

"Today I received an email about the hot weather and listed a few things that can be done to save water. Rather late since this hot weather has been going on for over a week. Better late than never."

The discussion also sharpened accountability expectations. During the heat, requests to save water were filtered through wider views about leaks, storage, infrastructure investment, supply capacity and fairness. Some customers accepted that everyone has a role to play, but they **wanted evidence that water companies were reducing leakage, planning for peak demand, communicating honestly and acting with similar urgency.** Where members mentioned South East Water, hosepipe bans or low pressure, the **heatwave became a concrete example of why preparedness and trust matter.**

"This weather makes you realise just how important immediate access to clean drinking water is."

"The recent hot weather has made me think more about how important water is and how easily it can become a limited resource."

Implications for water companies and the water industry

- Treat heat communication as resilience communication, not just a water-saving reminder. Customers want to know what is happening locally, what the company is doing, what customers can do and why those actions matter.
- Deliver messages earlier and make them more practical. Members were more receptive where messages arrived before or during the heat, but late messages were judged as less useful.
- Show visible company action alongside customer asks. Requests to reduce use are more credible when customers can see action on leaks, network resilience and high-demand planning.
- Recognise different customer circumstances. Households with children, pets, medical needs, gardens, limited digital access or poor housing insulation experience heat and water-use pressures differently.

- Use multiple channels. Social media alone will miss people. Members expect email, text, local media, websites and direct contact where needed.
- Prepare for demand peaks as well as drought conditions. The conversation shows that extreme heat can rapidly shift water use for health, hygiene, cooling, pets and gardens, even when customers are trying to be careful.

Practical steps and peer advice shared by members

A notable strength of the discussion was the volume of practical, peer-to-peer advice shared by members. These tips were grounded in real household experience rather than generic guidance. Members were trying to balance staying safe, keeping children, pets and vulnerable relatives comfortable, protecting gardens and wildlife and using water carefully at a time when their need for water had increased.

Area of advice	Examples shared by members
Keeping homes cooler	Close curtains and blinds on the sunny side; open windows only when outside air is cooler; use fans, loft hatches and room-by-room airflow; move downstairs or to the coolest room when needed.
Cooling people and pets	Keep tap water in the fridge; use frozen bottles, frozen hot-water bottles, gel packs, wet wipes or damp cloths; take cool, short showers; walk dogs early or late; use cool mats and regularly refresh pet water bowls.
Paddling pools and children's play	Use a small paddling pool rather than a larger one where possible; cover it between uses; keep the same water for more than one day if safe; use a basic filter where appropriate; reuse the water afterwards on plants or the garden.
Reducing waste while using more water	Use shorter showers instead of baths; avoid running taps for cold water by using a fridge jug; run full washing machine and dishwasher loads; collect water while waiting for taps to heat; reuse grey water where safe.
Gardens and wildlife	Water early morning or evening; prioritise food plants over lawns; use water butts and watering cans; reuse old pet water or kitchen rinse water on plants; leave shallow bowls of water for birds, hedgehogs and other wildlife.
Looking out for others	Check on elderly relatives and neighbours; offer drinks to tradespeople and delivery drivers; take cooling items or supplies to vulnerable people; share tips and equipment recommendations such as oscillating and energy-efficient fans, portable air-conditioning units and frozen hot water bottles with others in the community.

Several tips were specifically about reducing unnecessary water demand without compromising health or comfort. Members described storing tap water in the fridge rather than running taps to make water colder, taking brief cool showers, watering only selected plants, using water butts, reusing kitchen rinse water and collecting water that would otherwise go down the drain. Others focused on timing, such as watering late in the evening or walking pets before the day became hot.

"Instead of running the tap to get colder water, we have put a jug of water in the fridge to get cold."

"My dehumidifier has been filling up at quite a rate over the last few days so we use that water for flushing the loo. Every little helps!"

"Used water from butts early morning and late at night to water plants. Have not cut the grass for several weeks so it is still green without watering. Mowing the grass in a heatwave turns it brown and it can die."

The advice also showed that customers see heatwave resilience as a shared household and community task. Members checked on older relatives, neighbours, people undergoing treatment, pets and local wildlife. Some offered drinks to delivery drivers or tradespeople, while others shared practical cooling tips such as freezing a hot-water bottle or placing frozen water bottles near fans. This community-led exchange matters because it shows that customers are not only looking for top-down messages; they value timely, specific advice that can be acted on immediately.

"Have been putting a half full hot water bottle in the freezer to use at night to keep cool it is usually defrosted by morning."

"I've been making fresh juice for myself, my partner and my neighbour across the road going through her third round of chemo today... and my 82 year old Godmother... we take her things to cool down such as squash or ice cream."

How this can be used

The water industry can use this learning to make future heatwave and drought-readiness messages more practical. Members are more likely to respond to advice when it is specific, local, realistic and recognises that households may need to use more water for health, hygiene and caring responsibilities. Useful messaging should therefore combine conservation advice with reassurance, practical examples and clear explanations of which actions help reduce peak demand most.

Overall conclusions

- Extreme heat materially changed household routines and increased the practical importance of water for health, hygiene, cooling, pets, gardens and vulnerable people.
- Many customers used more water during the heatwave, but this did not mean they were indifferent to conservation. Members often described careful reuse, using water butts, taking shorter showers, avoiding baths and watering gardens early or late to avoid water waste through evaporation.
- Customers are more likely to accept conservation messages where companies communicate early, locally and transparently, and where company action on leaks and resilience is visible.
- The heatwave highlighted that people were affected differently: housing quality, health conditions, work type, digital access, gardens, pets and family responsibilities all shaped how manageable the heat felt.
- For CCW and water companies, the discussion reinforces the value of real-time community insight. Heatwaves expose service expectations quickly, particularly around communications, preparedness, trust and fairness.

Annex A: Post-by-post breakdown

Post	Purpose	Main prompt	Post Engagement
24/06/2026 What does the heat look like where you are?	To capture real-time experiences of extreme heat.	How is the heat affecting day-to-day life, routines, pets, work, sleep and how homes are being used?	177 Reactions 173 Comments
25/06/2026 Keeping cool and looking out for others	To understand coping behaviours and practical advice.	What are you doing to manage the heat, has it affected water use and have you helped or been helped?	110 Reactions 130 Comments
25/06/2026 Heat, water and messages from your water company	To explore how heat affects perceptions of water and company communication.	Has heat changed how you think about water, and have you seen messages about hot weather, saving water, supply pressures or drought risk?	98 Reactions 113 Comments
26/06/2026 Legal maximum workplace temperature	To test reactions to the Climate Change Committee recommendation and understand practical considerations.	Should a legal maximum workplace temperature be introduced, and what considerations should legislators make?	92 Reactions 112 Comments

Post 1: What does the heat look like where you are?

Engagement: 177 Reactions, 173 Comments

This post generated vivid, immediate descriptions of heat as a practical disruption to ordinary life. Members described homes holding heat, upstairs rooms becoming unusable, poor sleep, changed work patterns, cancelled trips, children being sent home from school, pets struggling and routines shifting to early morning or late evening. The strongest views came from members with health conditions or poor housing conditions, for whom heat presented a safety concern rather than a simple inconvenience.

"The heat is affecting day to day life. I now get up at 5:15am on days like this to walk my dog so that he can enjoy part of the day before it gets too hot and we walk again at about 10pm."

"I feel very unprepared for the sudden spike in heat, working has been difficult and draining, driving with no AC, and general household chores have stopped completely, to just 'cope' until it passes."

The responses show that extreme heat changes the context in which water services are experienced. Customers were not only thinking about supply in the abstract; they were actively relying on water for hydration, hygiene, pets, health management and cooling. For water companies, this points to the need for heatwave readiness communications that recognise household realities, not just generic conservation messaging.

Post 2: Keeping cool and looking out for others

Engagement: 110 Reactions, 130 Comments

This discussion produced a large volume of practical tips and peer-to-peer advice. Members shared strategies such as closing curtains and blinds, opening windows only when cooler outside, freezing water bottles or hot-water bottles, using wet wipes or gel packs from the fridge, taking cooler and shorter showers, walking dogs early or late, using water butts, reusing kitchen water and leaving water out for birds and wildlife. There was also a strong social support theme, with members checking on elderly relatives, neighbours, people undergoing treatment and delivery drivers.

"Have been putting a half full hot water bottle in the freezer to use at night to keep cool it is usually defrosted by morning."

"No advice from Northumbrian Water but I do make sure the bird baths in my garden are full. I fill them from the water butt. I think we all need to think of our neighbours and the wildlife a bit more than usual at these times"

Members were not passive recipients of advice. Many were already using detailed household-level strategies and some had developed sophisticated water-reuse practices. This suggests water-saving communications are more likely to land if they build on what customers are already doing and provide specific, credible next steps rather than broad reminders to "use less".

Post 3: Heat, water and messages from your water company

Engagement: 98 Reactions, 113 Comments

The heat made water feel more important to many members, particularly for drinking, cooling down, caring for pets, watering gardens and maintaining hygiene. Some said their underlying view of water had not changed because they already saw it as essential or precious, but the heat made the consequences of pressure on supply more tangible. Company communication varied substantially. Some members reported receiving useful texts or emails, while others heard nothing or only saw information indirectly through news, social media or other water companies.

"Water is literally LIFE. If we are not careful now, we cannot complain in the future."

"No - I haven't received any communication from water companies at all!"

"I received a text message from Wessex Water on Wednesday stating "As the hot weather continues, please use water wisely where you can to help keep it flowing for everyone.""

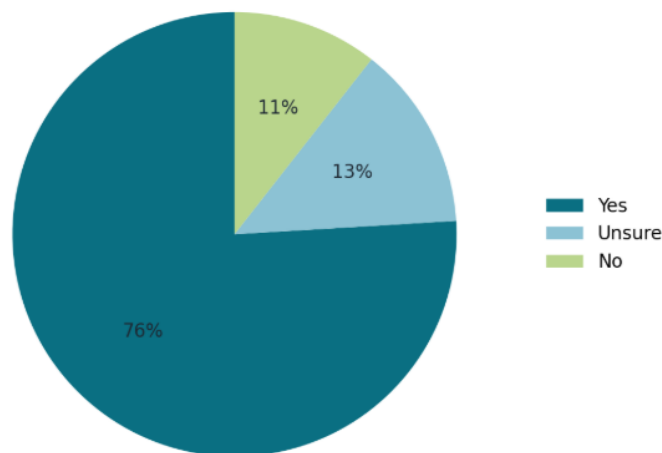
This post exposed an important gap between need and visibility. During heatwaves, customers want to know whether supply is under pressure, what the company is doing, what customers are being asked to do and whether the situation is local or general. Where communication is absent, customers may fill the gap with assumptions about infrastructure, leaks, under investment or future hosepipe bans.

Post 4: Legal maximum workplace temperature

Engagement: 92 Reactions, 112 Comments

This post prompted a wide-ranging discussion about whether the UK is adequately prepared for extreme heat at work, in schools, hospitals, public transport and public buildings. The poll showed strong support for introducing a legal maximum workplace temperature (76%):

Legal maximum workplace temperature
Platform poll responses (n=104)



1

Supporters argued that high temperatures are a health and safety issue, particularly for outdoor workers, manual workers, healthcare staff, schools, care homes and people with health conditions. More cautious members raised questions about essential services, hospitality, small businesses, self-employed workers and how rules would be implemented fairly across different roles and regions.

“Workers shouldn't have to choose between earning a living and risking their health during extreme heat.”

“The jobs people do are so wide ranging that this would be impossible.”

“There should be rules in schools and on buses too as they are like ovens right now.”

Although this question was not directly about water companies, the discussion is relevant to resilience and adaptation. Members were connecting extreme heat to buildings, transport, public services, vulnerable groups and infrastructure. The same logic applies to water: customers increasingly expect essential services to plan for heatwaves as a recurring risk, not an exceptional inconvenience.

Annex B: Context sources

- BBC Weather article supplied by CCW/Taylor McKenzie as contextual background: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/weather/articles/c5yzq1q4zm8o>
- Met Office, Red Extreme Heat Warning issued with June temperature records forecast to break, 22 June 2026.
- UK Health Security Agency, UKHSA extends red heat-health alerts across England, updated 26 June 2026.

¹ Figure 1. Platform poll responses on whether a legal maximum workplace temperature should be introduced. Base: 104 votes

- Forbes, Climate Advisers Call For Maximum Workplace Temperature Rules In UK, 20 May 2026.
- Climate Change Committee, A Well-Adapted UK, May 2026.