

Action Plan response

Ad hoc Accountability Session with South East Water

This Accountability Session was arranged to address the water supply issues for South East Water customers around Kent in May during a period of extreme heat.



Ad hoc Accountability Session | Tuesday 30th June 2026

Report published: Friday 7th August 2026

Community members had the opportunity to question senior executives at South East Water directly and seek clarity on the response to the incident.

They raised the issues that mattered most to them, including how the disruption was being addressed, what action would be taken next and how similar supply issues could be prevented in future. South East Water responded to these questions on the night.

The questions asked by our community members are outlined below and the actions that South East Water have now committed to, following on from the session, are set out on the following eight pages.

Q1. Causes, warning signs and lessons from May

"Customers want to understand what caused the May supply issues, what South East Water has learned from them and whether those lessons have already changed how the company prepared for the latest June heatwave.

South East Water has said raw water levels remain in a good position, but that the challenge during very high demand is treating, pumping and refilling drinking water storage tanks quickly enough.

What exactly caused the May incident and when did South East Water first know that treatment, pumping, storage, pressure or local supply capacity could become a risk?
What has been learnt from the May incident and what did South East Water do differently to prepare for the June heatwave and reduce the risk of further supply interruptions?"

Q2. Short term resilience, restrictions and summer readiness

"South East Water says every available treatment works and source is producing treated water at full capacity, storage tanks were filled as much as possible before the heatwave, leak teams have been increased and water is being re-routed around the network. It is also now bringing in hosepipe restrictions across Kent because demand is still too high.

If all of those measures are already happening, why is Kent still at the point where restrictions are needed and what additional short-term resilience actions will South East Water deliver now - before longer-term infrastructure such as new pipes, extra storage or Broad Oak reservoir are available - to prevent customers experiencing low pressure or no water during the rest of this summer and future heatwaves? As part of this, what is being prioritised immediately to increase resilience, what is being deprioritised or delayed to allow that to happen and when and how will this be made available to customers and CCW so progress can be tracked?"

Q3. Local updates, clear restrictions messaging and customer confidence

"Customers now need clear, local and practical information not only during outages, but also during restrictions.

How will South East Water warn, update and reassure customers at a postcode or local-area level before, during and after incidents and how will it communicate the Kent hosepipe restrictions clearly to all customers, including people who do not use social media or email?

How will South East Water show customers the positive impact their actions are having — for example, whether restrictions are reducing demand, helping storage levels recover and reducing the risk of further low pressure or supply interruptions — and when will this information be published and updated so customers can see the benefits of their actions?"



What happens next?

CCW will send this report to South East Water and ask the company to produce an action plan. This plan should set out how each point will be addressed and when action will be taken. After this, CCW will monitor progress against each commitment and provide monthly updates, so community members can see what has changed and help prioritise the issues that should be followed up at the Autumn Accountability Sessions.

Action Plan response

Actions that South East Water have now committed to

Causes, warning signs and lessons learned from May

- **SE42** - Within 3 months, South East Water will publish a customer-facing May incident review, setting out the timeline, root cause, affected assets, customer impact, lessons learned and what has changed since. South East Water will link any further actions to the Performance Improvement Plan that Ofwat has asked them to produce as part of its regulatory enforcement action in relation to supply resilience and incident response.
- **SE43** - Within 12 months, South East Water will review the 6-7 affected treatment works and share a summary of identified future failure points and the resilience measures planned for each. This will be included within their Performance Improvement Plan.
- **SE44** - Within 12 months South East Water will collaborate with the responsible power company to undertake root cause analysis and develop mutual resilience plans to mitigate and address future outages. This will be included within their Performance Improvement Plan.
- **SE45** - By the end of September, South East Water will provide a plain-English explainer showing how treatment, pumping, storage and pressure interact and why a 4-5 hour power issue can lead to significant customer impacts. To be provided as part of a communications blog. The blog will be published on their website and promoted to customers through their social media channels. South East Water will also explore opportunities to include or link to the content within relevant customer email communications/newsletters, where appropriate, to help extend its reach.

Causes, warning signs and lessons learned from May

- **SE46** - South East Water sent communications regarding the incident to customers on the 18th June. Different areas received a bespoke letter to explain the causes of the issues in their area. Customers who have MyAccount (online account) would have received a notification to say their letter was available to view in their My Account from the date it was sent (41,572 customers). Those without MyAccount, letters will have been posted to them from 18th June (32,569 customers). Letters regarding compensation, as part of the Guaranteed Standards Scheme (GSS), were sent to customers on 25th and 26th June (MyAccount notifications were sent to 16,877 and 12,566 letters were sent by post to customers without MyAccount letters).
- **SE47** - South East Water sent out wider reassurance communication regarding the May outages via their May newsletter.

[May newsletter - Kent](#)

[May newsletter - Sussex](#)

[May newsletter - West](#)

South East Water will consider direct customer outreach via email to non-affected customers during an incident, and will do this for large-scale, health related incidents such as boil water notices.

- **SE48** - Within 12 months South East Water will publish targets, timelines and progress updates for the battery back-up programme, including how long batteries can support sites and how they are recharged. This will be included within their Performance Improvement Plan.

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Actions that South East Water have now committed to

Causes, warning signs and lessons learned from May

- **SE49** - Within 12 months, South East Water will assess whether renewable back-up power, including solar and battery storage, could be installed at the affected sites and explain where this is viable. This will be included within their Performance Improvement Plan.
- **SE50** - South East Water to continue to publish their list of 'summer preparedness' within their "Water Latest" webpage: <https://www.southeastwater.co.uk/about/updates/water-latest/> They will also post before bank holiday and hot weather events on social media. They will continue to publish preparedness and demand-related messaging across their main customer-facing social media channels, including Facebook, X and Instagram. For planned events such as bank holidays and school holidays, messaging is typically published in the days leading up to the event. Hot weather and demand-related messaging is forecast-led and is usually published several days in advance, when there is sufficient confidence in the forecast, with further messaging shared during the event where required.
- **SE51** - Within 6 months, South East Water to review their incident response planning to ensure customers have an alternative water supply in line with SEMD requirements and whether they need to enhance this service. This is part of their short term 3-9 month plan.

Short-term resilience, restrictions and summer readiness

- **SE52** - South East Water share regional water statuses, how they've prepared for summer, and work that they are doing on their website:
<https://www.southeastwater.co.uk/about/updates/water-latest/> They also show what they're doing to plan ahead, tackle leaks, and invest in infrastructure regularly in their monthly newsletters that goes to just over 500,000 customers at the end of each month.
- **SE53** - Although not in the format of a 'progress tracker' (as requested by Community members), South East Water share information on the upcoming, in-progress and completed investments they're making on the engineering pages within their website:
<https://www.southeastwater.co.uk/about/updates/improving-your-water-network/> A review of all investment projects is currently underway and South East Water are seeking clarification on timescales for the completion of this.
- **SE54** - Within the next 12 months, South East Water will set out what is being prioritised immediately to increase resilience and explicitly confirm whether any work is being deprioritised or delayed to deliver those actions. This will be included within their Performance Improvement Plan.
- **SE55** - South East Water to continue to educate customers on when peak demand occurs, how temperature affects demand and what types of water use are most helpful to reduce during hot weather. This will continue to be done through: social media posts; information in monthly newsletters to customers; information on their website; and ad hoc emails to customers during summer to further explain demand, water resource positions and impact of weather on these factors, that could affect their supply. These will be sent as and when needed, to appropriate customers or regions depending on the situation.

Short-term resilience, restrictions and summer readiness

- **SE56** - South East Water currently have a community reward trial underway. It began in April 2026 and will conclude at the end of September 2026. There are 3 specific areas included in the trial: Hartley in Kent; Hartfield in Sussex; and Binsted in Hampshire. The aim is for the community to achieve 5 per cent in water reduction in the 6-month period for their local school to be awarded the full £5,000. If the community reached 2.5 per cent saving at the halfway point, they'd receive £2,500. All three communities achieved this. South East Water regularly post updates during the trial in household and non-household newsletters, send monthly direct email and 3-monthly letters to those included in the trial, have dedicated webpages that are updated every 2 weeks during the trial, and have also created targeted social media for those in the trial. At the end of the trial South East Water will ascertain its success and next steps.
- **SE57** - South East Water currently offer many free water saving devices, and heavily subsidised water butts. This offering is regularly promoted on social media, on email, in bills, on My Account, across multiple pages on their website and in external comms they do with media and stakeholders. Since the accountability session, South East Water have also agreed a redress package with Ofwat, where they will soon be offering a limited number of water butts for free to customers in areas affected by incidents. They are currently developing an implementation plan for the redress package, which will be implemented within the next 12 months.
- **SE58** - South East Water currently provides comparative data showing the impact of household, business and restriction-related demand reductions. These are shown in various places across their website and also on their Save Water Save Money website

<https://www.southeastwater.co.uk/help/save-water/>

<https://www.southeastwater.co.uk/help/save-water/garden-tips/>

<https://www.southeastwater.co.uk/about/updates/water-the-silent-user-of-energy/>

<https://www.southeastwater.co.uk/help/how-to/water-saving-visit/>

<https://www.southeastwater.co.uk/help/save-water/free-water-saving-devices/>

Short-term resilience, restrictions and summer readiness

- **SE59** - Within the next 12 months, as part of the Undertakings agreed with Ofwat in July 2026, South East Water have an action to identify critical business sites which would be most impacted by a loss of water supply and to work with these businesses to agree contingency arrangements and plans. Reporting on this will be included in their Performance Improvement Plan.
- **SE60** - South East Water to continue with their online service for reporting leaks - AquAlerter, and also through My Account. When a leak is reported South East Water will update the tool to show when it is complete. South East Water report a good level of engagement via these channels and see a good volume of leaks reported by customers.
<https://myaccount.southeastwater.co.uk/auth/login>
<https://aqualerter.southeastwater.co.uk/>
- **SE61** - South East Water to continue working with developers and relevant planning stakeholders to require or encourage rainwater storage, water efficiency and lower supply impact in new developments. All water companies must offer environmental incentives in line with the Environmental Incentive Common Framework (EICF). This is based on installing fittings that achieve a flow rate of less than 110 litres per day. South East Water offer this incentive to any developers who meet the criteria for household connections. Developers must opt-in to the scheme and approximately 7 per cent of household connections have taken this up. South East Water are working closely with other water companies to ensure that applying for the water efficiency incentive is uniform and as frictionless as possible.

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Actions that South East Water have now committed to

Local updates, clear restrictions messaging and customer confidence

- **SE62** - South East Water have added Local area polygons to their AquAlerter map to more easily show the affected area during an incident. Customers can input their postcode to check their area for supply interruptions. South East Water to continue to communicate with affected customers before, during and after an incident.
- **SE63** - South East Water to continue to keep customers in the loop from initial investigation through resolution and mitigation, using SMS/email/app updates with links to fuller information where needed. This is done through the AquAlerter service
- **SE64** - South East Water to continue using AquAlerter service and dedicated webpages for incident and restriction messages, with signposting to more detailed information where appropriate.
- **SE65** - Since the Accountability session South East Water have implemented hosepipe restrictions in all of the areas they supply drinking water to. Providing clear information on why they've needed to do this, what is restricted, and what is exempt is always done. This is now visible on their website <https://www.southeastwater.co.uk/about/updates/tubs-26/>. When South East Water communicate hosepipe restrictions they will always do this through: Website; Social media; Email; My Account; All media - broadcast and print through a press release and media day; Sharing with stakeholders to share the update; Sharing with Retailers and NAVs to pass on to their customers.
- **SE66** - Within the next 3 months, South East Water commit to review their communications approach and agree a set of actions as part of their Performance Improvement Plan. This is within the requested action from Community members to strengthen non-digital communications through printed materials, local media, community venues and direct outreach so customers who do not use social media or email still receive restriction and incident information.

Local updates, clear restrictions messaging and customer confidence

- **SE67** - Since the Accountability session South East Water have implemented hosepipe restrictions in all of the areas they supply drinking water. They provide updates on changes in demand daily on their website: <https://www.southeastwater.co.uk/about/updates/water-latest/>
- **SE68** - South East Water to continue, via their website, to translate demand management and water-saving impacts into simple customer-friendly comparisons, so people can understand how individual and collective actions help. South East Water also have a roster of peer water-saving advice, which has been in place since April 2026., which can be viewed on their Save Water webpage: <https://www.southeastwater.co.uk/help/save-water/>
- **SE69** - Within 12 months, South East Water will explain what operational changes are being made to reduce the length of outages and how these changes will improve restoration times in future incidents. This will form the basis of their Performance Improvement Plan
- **SE70** - South East Water to continue using community engagement, school outreach and local forums to explain hot-weather demand, water efficiency, restrictions and how customers can help reduce risk.
 - Schools – South East Water deliver assemblies to schools and have packs focused on summer demand, water conservation, and simple habits that children can take and implement at home and encourage their families to reduce their water use.
 - Stakeholders and Business Groups/Local Forums – South East Water attend meetings with local MPs and councillors to explain network capacity during heatwaves, the rationale behind TUBs, and how localised demand management protects overall supply continuity. They also organise meetings with local chambers of commerce to discuss how the TUB impacts businesses, how they can reduce demand and be more water-efficient and disseminate water-saving posters to their members.
 - Community engagement –South East Water support many community events giving away free water saving devices and offering advice on support services. They have attended 60 events since April 2025.

Local updates, clear restrictions messaging and customer confidence

- **SE71** - Within the next 3 months South East Water will initiate a new wave of customer research regarding AquAlerter, refreshing and expanding upon their 2023 baseline study. This research will specifically investigate customer preferences regarding communication channels and the optimal level of detail required during interactions. Furthermore, the scope will explicitly address the distinct needs of digitally excluded and vulnerable customers to ensure communication strategies are fully inclusive and accessible.
- **SE72** - South East Water to continue to promote AquAlerter to increase its reach amongst customers. AquAlerter can be used for any customer who South East Water hold a mobile number for. They have 729,319 customer accounts with a mobile number (78% of accounts). Separately customers can register their number to receive updates about an area that they do not live in, for example if they have a relative in another area and want to stay updated. South East Water continuously ask customers for contact information on inbound calls so that they can increase their reach for AquAlerter and outbound emails. Customers can also proactively update their contact information through their My Account if they have one.
- **SE73** - South East Water will continue to communicate how they are rolling out the Smart Metering Programme across their operational area, including to those who were not metered as part of the Compulsory Meter programme. Customers can find information on the South East Water website: <https://www.southeastwater.co.uk/help/water-supply/meter-upgrade-programme/> Customer communications for Smart Metering began in December 2025, with the programme currently due to end in 2035.