

Summary report

Ad hoc Accountability Session with Southern Water

This Accountability Session was triggered by low customer satisfaction with Southern Water, with the June Water Voice Barometer showing satisfaction at 29%, 31 percentage points below the wider community average of 60%.



Ad hoc Accountability Session | Tuesday 25th August 2026

Report published: Friday 2nd October

Community members had the opportunity to question Senior Executives at Southern Water directly and seek clarity on the issues contributing to low customer satisfaction.

They raised the issues that mattered most to them, including how repeat pollution incidents will be prevented, how the resilience of the network will be improved and what meaningful improvements customers can expect to see over the next 12 months. Southern Water responded to these questions on the night.

The questions asked by our community members are outlined below and the initial actions discussed in the session are set out on the following three pages.

Q1. Pollution prevention and repeat incidents

"Pollution of our bathing water and rivers remains one of the biggest reasons why we are dissatisfied with Southern Water. We have already raised these concerns, and the existing action plan includes reporting, monitoring and ways for us to raise issues, but reporting a problem is not the same as stopping it. As a community, we need to see that repeat and high-harm pollution incidents are being permanently fixed, not repeatedly managed. If our satisfaction is going to improve, we need clear priority locations, permanent fixes, named owners, firm deadlines and measurable reductions in pollution.

So, which of your most polluted bathing waters and rivers will you commit to permanently fixing, what measurable reduction in pollution will you deliver at each one and by when, who will be accountable for delivering it, and what will happen if those commitments are missed?"

Q2. Investment and future resilience

"It is difficult for us to feel satisfied with Southern Water when our bills keep rising yet we are being asked to conserve water, especially when we continue to see leaks and significant water loss across the network. It can feel as though customers are being asked to pay more but use less, while the underlying supply problems are not being resolved quickly enough. We want to see clear evidence that the extra money we are paying is strengthening the network, reducing leakage and making supplies more resilient before further restrictions are placed on customers

What specific improvements to leakage, infrastructure and drought resilience will our higher bills fund, what measurable reduction in water loss and supply risk will you commit to and by when, and how will you prove that Southern Water is doing its part before asking customers to pay more or use less water?"

Q3. General satisfaction

"Why do you and your leadership team think customer satisfaction with Southern Water is so low, what do you believe are the three main causes, and what are the three biggest improvements customers will notice over the next 12 months?"



What happens next?

Southern Water has provided its response and set out actions. Some delivery details and timescales remain to be confirmed. CCW will monitor progress against the commitments. CCW and Taylor McKenzie Research will provide **monthly updates on what has changed and what remains outstanding**, helping community members prioritise issues to follow up at the Autumn Accountability Sessions.

Summary report

Detailing the actions that Southern Water have committed to.

Q1. Pollution prevention and repeat incidents

Our community members want Southern Water to move beyond broad descriptions of its pollution programme and show clearly where permanent improvement is happening.

They want priority locations identified, with the causes of pollution, permanent and interim fixes, measurable reductions, clear timescales and named accountability brought together in a way customers can understand.

Community members also want to see **tangible evidence that investment is making a difference**, including regular local progress reporting and independent verification - rather than having to search across different sources for information.

Context from the session:

"It should really set out the cause of the problem, the permanent fix, any interim measures, a named senior owner and a firm start and completion date."

"It just seems a little bit like we're in the dark at the moment; we're hearing some nice words and not seeing facts and figures."

"I think people want to see that their increased bills are actually having an impact locally and are affecting the pollution that they see every day."



Southern Water has committed to clearer project information, pollution trials and local reporting, but key asks on independent verification, localised information hubs, full local accountability and the 2050 target remain unresolved.

Southern Water's full response can be accessed at: <https://www.taylormckenzie.co.uk/v16/wp-content/uploads/2026/10/Southern-Waters-Full-Response-Ad-Hoc-Accountability-Session-Action-Plan-25.08.2026.pdf>

Community ask	Action Code	Action Statement	Timings / required clarifications
A. Clear map showing investment, where and when	S28	Add a clearer timeline feature to major project webpages, showing key project milestones and expected completion dates.	31-Oct-26 This is a development of two existing actions (S22 & S23) with clearer project timelines and expected completion dates to Southern Water's online investment/project information.
B. Explain 2050 pollution target, whether it can be brought forward and what innovation could help	S29	Complete four pollution-prevention technology trials/reviews and use findings to review whether faster progress towards zero pollution is achievable.	Trials/reviews by 31 Mar 2027 Community members also asked for a clear pathway to the 2050 target and whether it could be brought forward. CCW will liaise with Southern Water while tracking this action to seek greater clarity and commitment on this. If it is not sufficiently addressed, it can be revisited at a future Accountability Session.
C. Webcams at priority sites to demonstrate progress	S30	Publish project-progress videos for Sandown, Chichester, Swalecliffe and Budds Farm.	Sandown: Oct 2026; Chichester: Dec 2026; Swalecliffe & Budds Farm: Jan 2027
D. Independent verification of improvement efforts	S31	Publish externally assured performance/delivery information where required by Ofwat and clearly identify which reported improvements have received independent assurance.	Ongoing/as assurance is completed Community members asked for independent verification of Southern Water's improvement efforts more broadly. CCW will liaise with Southern Water while tracking this action to understand whether independent assurance can be extended or made clearer to customers. If this is not sufficiently addressed, it can be revisited at a future Accountability Session.

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Q1. Pollution prevention and repeat incidents

Community ask	Action Code	Action Statement	Timings / required clarifications
E. Simple, location-specific information bringing together pollution levels, problem sites, causes, fixes, actions, owners, dates and progress	S32	Bring together key local pollution information in one simple, customer-friendly format, showing priority/problem sites, pollution performance, causes, action being taken, planned improvements and progress over time.	Agree format and reporting frequency by 31 Oct 2026; further location-specific information in Apr 2027 Interim Implementation Report Southern Water have stated they will work together with their Independent Climate and Environment Challenge Group (ICECG), co-design a clearer, more customer-friendly reporting format using existing Rivers and Seas Watch information to provide customers with accessible local summaries of spill performance and improvement activity. There are 3 similar existing actions from our Spring accountability sessions showing strong demand for this to be actions before our Spring 2027 sessions. (S01,S02 and S04)
F. Educate customers on behaviour change	S33	Run a six-month behaviour-change campaign in sewer-blockage hotspots focused on fats, oils, grease and wipes, targeting at least 80% of households in priority postcodes and monitoring reach, engagement and blockage trends.	Late Oct 2026–31 Mar 2027.
G. Explain how priority areas for investment are determined	No new action	Continue using the Drainage and Wastewater Management Plan (DWMP) process to prioritise wastewater investment based on flooding, pollution, bathing waters, climate change, population growth and other risks.	Ongoing; DWMP28 consultation Nov 2027 Existing action S04 (In progress, due 31/10/2026) already sets out that Southern Water will explain how priorities areas are set. The company response addresses the requested explanation by signposting to multiple sources, outlining the Drainage and Wastewater Management Plan (DWMP) and its development process. CCW to liaise with Southern Water to create simplified consumer facing updates every 6 months, to explain this process and close the action once the consultation is complete in Nov 2027
H. Clarify reactive measures following pollution incidents	S34	Apply the 30-minute pollution response process, investigate qualifying incidents and track corrective actions through to completion.	Completed as BAU

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Q2. Investment and future resilience

Our community members want Southern Water to demonstrate that customers' higher bills are resulting in visible improvements to leakage, infrastructure and resilience.

Where leaks cannot be fixed quickly, customers want Southern Water to explain why, keep information up to date and make clear how repair priorities are decided.

They also want **regular, measurable reporting on leakage performance**, so they can see whether water loss is genuinely reducing over time, alongside clearer information about how new technology is being used to improve performance.

Context from the session:

"Tell us why, just be a bit more honest that this problem is worse than you thought it was at the first inspection... treat us like adults and tell us what the problem is."

"If the public is told lots of things by Southern Water that they are doing and how things are improving and yet when they walk down their street, they see that there's the leak that they reported two weeks ago... how can they believe anything?"



Southern Water has committed to improving incident information and reviewing leakage reporting, but has not fully addressed proactive customer updates or quarterly leakage reporting.

Southern Water's full response can be accessed at: <https://www.taylormckenzie.co.uk/v16/wp-content/uploads/2026/10/Southern-Waters-Full-Response-Ad-Hoc-Accountability-Session-Action-Plan-25.08.2026.pdf>

Community ask	Action Code	Action Statement	Timings / required clarifications
A. Transparently report failures/missed targets; keep customers who report issues updated; maintain accurate leakage maps	S35	Improve incident/leak maps and introduce self-service processes to improve map accuracy.	Requirements by 31 Oct 2026; self-service improvements by 30 Nov 2026 Community members asked for customers who report an issue to be kept updated, particularly where repairs are delayed, and for failures and missed targets to be transparent. CCW will liaise with Southern Water while tracking the map improvements to seek commitment on these remaining elements. If they are not sufficiently addressed, they can be revisited at a future Accountability Session.
B. Quarterly leakage figures showing performance over time	S36	Review publication of customer-friendly quarterly leakage performance and confirm the reporting format/frequency.	Review 20 Oct 2026; decision/format by 31 Oct 2026 Community members specifically asked for quarterly leakage reporting. Southern Water has committed to reviewing this, but not yet to publishing it quarterly. CCW will follow this through as part of tracking the action and seek a firm commitment following Southern Water's review. If this is not agreed, it can be revisited at a future Accountability Session.
C. Explain how leak repairs are prioritised	NA	Southern Water have explained in their response that prioritisation is according to water loss, customer supply, public safety, environmental impact and network disruption.	Immediate and ongoing
D. Communicate AI plans and use cases	S37	Continue publishing customer-facing information about relevant AI/technology projects, their purpose and expected benefits.	Ongoing

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Q3. General satisfaction

Our community members want Southern Water to show what customers will actually experience differently as a result of higher bills and increased investment.

They want improvements translated into simple, measurable customer outcomes, rather than relying on large investment figures or general statements about progress.

Community members also want greater transparency around **where the money comes from and goes, how Southern Water compares with other companies, and how service investment is prioritised**, alongside clearer and more digestible communication about what is improving.

Context from the session:

“What specific benefits will a household, an average household notice in say three months, six months, nine months, twelve months?”

“It would be great if Southern Water could prove to the customer or stakeholder that the service investment comes first before the shareholder dividends.”

“I’d like to know that my money is being spent wisely and my bills are being pared back as much as possible.”



Southern Water has set out actions on debt recovery, investment outcomes and communication, but has not yet clearly shown what higher bills will deliver or how it compares with other companies.

Southern Water’s full response can be accessed at: <https://www.taylormckenzie.co.uk/v16/wp-content/uploads/2026/10/Southern-Waters-Full-Response-Ad-Hoc-Accountability-Session-Action-Plan-25.08.2026.pdf>

Community ask	Action Code	Action Statement	Timings / required clarifications
A. Clearly outline how owed debts will be reclaimed	S39	Deliver planned debt-recovery and collection improvements and report resulting performance to CCW.	30-Apr-27
B. Quantify measurable improvements customers can expect from increased bills	NA	Continue publishing customer-facing information about measurable improvements following higher bills.	Ongoing – no new action
C. Seek more external investment to reduce pressure on customer bills	S41	Continue seeking appropriate external infrastructure investment to support the 2025–30 programme and reduce reliance on customer bills alone.	Ongoing through 2025–30

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Q3. General satisfaction

Community ask	Action Code	Action Statement	Timings / required clarifications
D. Show customers clearly how Southern Water compares with other water companies on key performance measures.	S42	Southern Water has explained that comparison information is already available publicly through the external Discover Water website.	NA
E. Communicate positive changes	NA	Continue accessible customer communications showing improvements, remaining challenges and future priorities.	Ongoing This is already covered in 3 previous actions, S22 and S23 . CCW will continue to liaise with Southern Water to ensure they are communicating all positive changes.
F. Demonstrate service investment is prioritised over shareholder profits	S43	Maintain the commitment to no external shareholder dividends before 2030 and continue reporting investment and service outcomes.	Until at least 2030
G. Use short, clear bullet points with links to further detail	NA	Use concise summaries and key figures first in customer communications, with links to more detailed/local information.	Immediate and ongoing This action is already covered in S22 , S23 and S24 from our Spring 2026 sessions.