Summary report

Autumn Accountability Session with South West Water

As part of CCW's Water Voice programme, Accountability Sessions allow community members to challenge water company performance, question senior representatives and agree actions to enhance customer experiences and drive meaningful improvements.

Accountability Session | Tuesday 3rd November 2026
Report published: Thursday 12th November

Members challenged South West Water on **pollution, drought management and whether investment is delivering improvements customers can see**. They wanted clearer commitments and evidence of change in their local areas.

The Action Plan Review examined **pollution reductions** towards the company's four-star Environmental Performance Assessment (EPA) commitment. The Performance Review focused on **leakage** and what South West Water would deliver before next summer to protect supplies.

The Q&A covered overflow monitoring, customer service and learning from the previous ad-hoc accountability session. The key discussion points, company responses and customer requests are outlined on the following pages.

Performance Review Q1: Pollution targets

Members wanted measurable pollution reductions and milestones towards 2028, questioning whether reported improvements reflected local conditions.

South West Water outlined investment and operational changes but now expects three EPA stars in 2028, against its four-star commitment. Members sought clearer targets and reporting to track progress.

Performance Review Q2: Resilience and future water supplies

Members questioned why customers were being asked to save water while reported leaks remained unresolved.

South West Water described additional repair teams, investment and longer-term supply schemes. Members wanted faster repairs with meaningful consequences for delays, leak tracking and a clear explanation of what would protect supplies before next summer.

Q&A Q3: Inadequate storm overflow monitoring

Members questioned broken monitors and the reliability of spill information.

South West Water reported approximately 98% monitor operability. Members also wanted transparent reporting of dry-weather spills.

Q&A Q4: Customer Service

Members described reporting supply problems and feeling that staff did not believe them.

South West Water outlined work to resolve issues first time, reduce complaints and improve customer records.

Q&A Q5: Last accountability session experience

Members asked what the company had learned from previous ad-hoc accountability sessions.

South West recognised the need to turn discussions into visible results. Members also wanted to understand how plans and progress were being shared with the wider customer base.

What is the purpose of this report and what happens next?

This report summarises the key discussions and actions raised by Water Voice community members during the South West Water Accountability Session held **on 3rd November 2026**. The actions outlined reflect the improvements community members would like South West Water to make. These are community-led requests and do not represent confirmed commitments from the company at this stage. South West Water will create a formal action plan by **Friday 11th December 2026**, setting out its response to each action, what it intends to deliver and the proposed timescales.

CCW will then monitor progress against the company's commitments and provide monthly updates, allowing community members to see what has changed and continue to hold the company to account.

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Q1: Action Plan Review

Strengthening the company's existing actions

What specific, measurable reductions in total and serious pollution incidents will you commit to between now and 2028, so we can judge whether you are on track to deliver your commitment?

Context from the session:

Members wanted **evidence that pollution was falling in ways that mattered locally**, including fewer sewage spills affecting swimming and wildlife. South West Water reported a **34% reduction in pollution incidents**, later specifying a fall from 189 in 2024 to 124 in 2025. The company described **investment underway and operational changes already being implemented**, including improved incident investigation and staff training. However, members felt the response lacked clear future targets. The water company reported a current one-star EPA rating and indicated that three EPA stars were now more likely in 2028, with total pollution remaining a barrier to four stars. Members also **challenged information that they found difficult to locate, interpret or relate to their own experiences**.

Existing activity and planned improvements context:

SW33* includes achieving four-star EPA status by 2028, although South West Water indicated during the session that three stars were now more likely.

SW22*, SW23* and SW30* cover accessible pollution plans, online navigation and quarterly progress reporting. SW17* and SW24* cover local project information and updates. Several are marked delivered, but **members still wanted clearer evidence of outcomes**. SW30 is marked "Not started", the company stated during the session that the first update had been published in June and the next had been signed off and was due to be published shortly.

Actions requested by community members:

1A. Set clear pollution reduction targets and quarterly milestones

Publish specific quarterly targets between now and 2028 so customers can judge whether South West Water is on track.

- **Starting figures**: State current pollution levels and how much total and serious pollution incidents are expected to fall.
- **Quarterly milestones**: Break down the improvements expected each quarter, using measures customers can understand and care about, such as fewer sewage spills into the sea.
- **Delivery**: Identify the practical improvements that will achieve these reductions, explaining what is already underway, what happens next and when the work will be completed.

Explain how these targets relate to the existing four-star EPA commitment and the revised expectation described during the session.

Actions requested continued overleaf...

*See page 9, "Existing Action Overview", for the full existing action statements.

Q1: Action Plan Review

Strengthening the company's existing actions

What specific, measurable reductions in total and serious pollution incidents will you commit to between now and 2028, so we can judge whether you are on track to deliver your commitment?

1B. Make pollution performance easy to find and understand

Provide a clear, visual summary accessible from the website homepage so customers can judge whether performance is improving overall and in their local area.

- Clear measures: Show absolute numbers alongside percentages, explain how incidents and spills are measured and use consistent measures over time.
- Visible progress: Show targets met and missed through an easy-to-find display or dashboard, with monthly figures, comparisons over time and comparisons with other water companies.
- Local information: Show what incidents have occurred at individual locations, what has been done to address them, what further work is planned and how many incidents are expected as a result.

Reporting should show practical improvements that matter to customers.
(Please reference further note on action 1B under 'Company response')

1C. Explain what investment will deliver and by when

Provide clear information on what the planned investment will be used for, including infrastructure improvements, repairs, communication or other activities, and when the money will be spent.
(Please reference further note on action 1C under 'Company response')

1D. Introduce independent pollution monitoring and reporting

Introduce independent monitoring and reporting of pollution incidents to give customers greater confidence that the information is accurate and trustworthy.

Company response:

1B. The company committed to making the Pollution Incident Reduction Plan easier to find and described a postcode-based investment feature already under development.

1C. The company explained the main areas covered by its wider investment reset and said delivery would run to March 2030.

Q2: Performance Review

Challenging the company's performance and service delivery

What will you deliver before next summer to demonstrate that you are taking responsibility for managing the drought?

Context from the session:

Members felt that **requests to save water lost credibility when visible leaks remained unresolved**. South West Water described **60 repair teams, approximately 440 repairs a week and increased use of leak detection technology**. The company planned to maintain higher repair team numbers, establish dedicated leakage resources and replace just under 300 kilometres of mains over two to three years. Members welcomed additional resources but questioned how much would prevent future problems. They wanted **clear repair expectations and reassurance about the coming summer**, alongside an explanation of longer-term schemes such as Cheddar 2 and the proposed desalination plant at Par.

Existing activity context:

SW28* covers promoting the "In Your Area" feature, which provides information on leakage, interruptions and other network issues. The action is marked as delivered. Members' request went further by seeking a way to track individual reported leaks and receive progress updates.

South West Water also described **customer platform improvements**, a **future digital app** and **work to make smart meter information more useful**. These were existing plans, rather than confirmation that the requested leak tracker would be introduced.

Actions requested by community members:

2A. Set clear leak repair times with meaningful consequences for delays

- **Repair expectations**: Commit to a maximum time for dealing with reported leaks.
- **Consequences**: Set clear consequences if leak repair deadlines are missed, such as financial compensation or money off the bill for customers who reported the leak.

Members' request for regulator imposed consequences should be distinguished from measures the company can introduce itself.

(Please reference further note on action 2A under 'Company response')

2B. Create a tracking system for reported leaks

Provide a tracking system showing the progress of reported leaks, with updates when their status changes and confirmation when repairs are complete.

Members referred to Cornwall Council's pothole reporting tool as an example of the visibility they wanted.

Actions requested continued overleaf...

*See page 9, "Existing Action Overview", for the full existing action statements.

Q2: Performance Review

Challenging the company's performance and service delivery

What will you deliver before next summer to demonstrate that you are taking responsibility for managing the drought?

2C. Explain how infrastructure investment will improve supply resilience

Show what the planned schemes will deliver in terms customers can understand.

- Cheddar 2: Explain the additional water available relative to current demand and existing supply capacity.
- Network renewal: Explain how investment is divided between repeated repairs and replacing ageing infrastructure to prevent further leaks.
- Par desalination: Provide an update on the proposed plant, the barriers to delivery and whether it is expected to proceed.

Distinguish longer-term schemes from measures that will help before next summer.

(Please reference further note on action 2C under 'Company response')

2D. Show what will protect water supplies before next summer

Set out the preventative measures and contingency plans that will be in place before next summer, alongside longer-term investment plans. Explain what will change and how this will protect supplies if dry weather continues. Communicate these plans clearly through a range of channels, including social media, so customers receive updates without having to seek them out.

2E. Introduce incentives that help customers save water

Introduce incentives that reward customers for reducing or better managing their water use, drawing on members' comparisons with energy company schemes.

(Please reference further note on action 2E under 'Company response')

Company response:

2A. The company reported an average repair time of around 12 days and acknowledged that this needed to improve. It described existing penalties for missed leakage targets but did not agree a maximum repair time or compensation for individual delays.

2C. The company gave an indicative Cheddar 2 benefit of around 15 million litres a day and described technology approval and environmental challenges affecting Par desalination. The requested comparisons with current demand and supply capacity remain outstanding.

2E. The company described previous tariff trials and said incentives could be revisited as smart meters were rolled out.

Q&A: Q3

Further questions about the company's services and accountability

Why are so many storm overflow monitors broken and when will they be fixed?

Context from the session:

South West Water reported approximately **98% storm overflow monitor operability** and said the information was independently audited and scrutinised by the Environment Agency. The company explained that **WaterFit Live uses a spanner symbol to identify monitors under maintenance**.
A member questioned how this fitted with two local storm overflow monitors she understood had been broken for nearly three years. She also cited a reported 30-hour spill during dry weather and **called for these discharges to be reported as openly as storm-related spills**. The company committed to investigating both the monitors and the specific spill raised.

Existing activity context:

SW08* and **SW09*** cover making WaterFit Live easier to find and promoting its use. Both are marked delivered in the supplied tracker. **SW11***, covering a combined bathing-water and storm-overflow map, remains "Delayed - In progress".

Actions requested or developed during the discussion:

3A. Report transparently on spills during dry weather
Ensure information about spills during dry weather is as open and accessible as information about storm-related discharges.

Company response:

The company offered direct follow-up on the specific examples, with TMcK and CCW offering to help pass on the details.

*See page 9, "Existing Action Overview", for the full existing action statements.

Q&A: Q4

Further questions about the company's services and accountability

Your customer service is letting us down. What are you going to do to make it better?

Context from the session:

Members described reporting a loss of supply and feeling **that contact centre staff did not believe them**. One said the advice received contradicted information on the website. The Interim Chief Customer Officer apologised and described work to **resolve issues first time, reduce handovers and improve access to customer histories**. He reported an internal target to halve complaint volumes year on year and a current reduction of 35%, although absolute numbers were unavailable. He also reported that **the company had moved from 15th to 14th in C-MeX** and expected an improvement of a couple of points over the current and following year. Members welcomed the changes but stressed that difficulties getting an appropriate response contrasted with positive experiences of staff who attended in person.

Existing activity context:

The company described **existing billing and complaints improvement plans, contact centre listening and technology changes. SW26*** is marked delivered in the tracker and covers improving incident communications and briefing the Control Room. Members' experiences raised a related concern about whether initial reports were recognised and acted on consistently.

Additional actions requested by community members:

No additional actions were requested by community members following the company's response.

*See page 9, "Existing Action Overview", for the full existing action statements.

Q&A: Q5

Further questions about the company's services and accountability

How did you feel the last ad hoc Accountability Session went and what did you learn from being there?"

Context from the session:

Keith Haslett said he had been relatively new to the role at the previous session and had found it difficult to answer detailed questions alone. He acknowledged that the session could have gone better and that the company now needed to demonstrate results. He cited work on **postcode based investment information and challenges to monitor performance as examples of issues carried into the business**. He **offered a controlled visit to the office and control room**. The questioner valued access to senior leaders but asked how plans and accountability were being communicated to the wider customer base.

Further request raised by the questioner

Members wanted South West Water to explain what South West Water is doing to communicate its plans, progress and accountability arrangements to customers beyond those attending Water Voice sessions. The questioner wanted other customers to understand what was happening and how the company was being held to account.

Additional actions requested by community members:

No additional actions were requested by community members following the company's response.

*See page 9, "Existing Action Overview", for the full existing action statements.

Existing Action Overview

Existing Action	Action Statement
SW08	*Improve access to live incident and spill information by signposting WaterFit Live more prominently, including through a South West Water homepage banner.*
SW09	*Run a WaterFit Live awareness programme across social media throughout the bathing water season to increase visibility and use of the tool.*
SW11	*Simplify the customer experience by moving to one combined map for bathing waters and storm overflows, while continuing to explore clearer ways to present spill and incident data.*
SW17	*Publish dedicated investment pages for live wastewater improvement projects, setting out project scope, milestones, timelines, customer benefits, environmental outcomes and expected spill reductions.*
SW22	*Provide both detailed and short bite-size versions of the pollution incident reduction plan to suit different customer needs.*
SW23	*Improve online navigation and links so local project pages and environmental updates are easier to find.*
SW24	*Provide regular progress updates on environmental projects so customers can track what is happening in their area.*
SW26	*Update the Incident Communication Strategy and brief the Control Room so incident updates are more proactive, consistent and accessible across channels, including SMS, voicemail, social media, press and clear timeline updates where appropriate.*
SW28	*Promote the 'In Your Area' website feature through social media so customers can find information about local leakage, supply interruptions and other network issues.*
SW30	*Publish quarterly website updates on the Pollution Incident Reduction Plan, reporting progress and the environmental outcomes of investment and improvement programmes.*
SW33	*Deliver the financial and performance commitments in South West Water's PR24 plan, including water quality targets, EPA 4-star status by 2028, reducing storm overflow use to 16.5 spills per year by 2029, and supporting community and affordability funds.*

Attendance list

Keith Haslett	CEO of Pennon Group
Richard Price	Managing Director of Waste Water Services at Pennon Group
Sam Bottomley	Director of Water Services, Devon, Cornwall, IoS at Pennon Group
Ketan Hindocha	Interim Chief Customer Officer at Pennon Group
Joe Greenwood	Associate Director of Taylor McKenzie Research (TMcK) – Lead facilitator
Alison Austin	Independent Board Member for Consumer Council for Water (CCW) – Meeting Chair
11 x Participants	Water Voice Community Members under Pennon Group

Session transcript

CCW Chair: Thank you very much for joining us, my name is Alison Austin and I'm chairing tonight's discussion. I'm a board member at Consumer Council for Water, which is the acronym of CCW, which you'll hear a bit about.

Tonight's session is part of our Water Voice Programme, and the purpose of Water Voice is simple but very important, is to give you, the customers, a stronger, more direct voice in how your South West Water company performs, communicates and improves, it's your water supplier.

This session is about accountability and it's an opportunity for you as community members to question senior leaders from South West Water and we're very glad that we've got Keith Haslett here, who is our CEO of the Pennon Group, of which South West Water is a member company, and they are here to listen to and answer directly to you about the issues that matter most to you, what you want to improve and what will change as a result of this discussion this evening.

It's not a complaints hearing and it's not a technical inquiry. It's very much a structured, customer led conversation which is focused on accountability, learning and agreeing clear practical actions and it must be practical, we can't ask for the moon and stars, as much as we might like them, if it's just not financially or regulatory or technically possible.

The topics that we are going to cover tonight have not been chosen by South West Water, they've been shaped by you, the community members through the pre-task, the briefing session, the Spotlight Research that you took part in and wider Water Voice discussions and this is very much your agenda, this is your evening.

I want to set a clear tone at the outset. We'd like this to be a respectful but challenging discussion, and you community members, you should feel able to speak openly and honestly about your experiences and your expectations, and equally we expect clear and transparent responses please from South West Water's senior team.

When you're not speaking, keep our microphones muted to avoid any background noise and playback, so that makes it easier for other people. The session is being fully transcribed and the agreed outcomes will be published and South West Water will also be asked and expected to publish an Action Plan, which responds to the commitments made this evening and that transparency is a key part of what makes this process really meaningful.

In terms of ground rules, we'll take one person at a time, we'll keep contributions focused and concentrate on forward looking actions, so what will change? By when? And how will you as customers know that something has changed and altered? How will you know that real change has taken place?

I'd now like to briefly introduce those joining us this evening, first is our independent facilitator from Taylor McKenzie research, Joe Greenwood, if you could just wave?

TMcK Facilitator: Hi, folks.

CCW Chair: Who will guide the customer side of the discussion and ensure that all voices are heard, so he's the champion of every voice. Representing South West Water this evening, we've got Keith Haslett who's the CEO of Pennon Group, of which South West Water is one part and he's also supported by some members of his senior team with particular responsibilities who are going to support him in answering particular questions, and they will introduce themselves when we go round the whole room in a few minutes.

Can I just thank you again for giving up your time, both to South West Water personnel and to the community members for being here this evening and working towards making this a really constructive and practical session that will improve life for everybody. I'm now going to hand over to Joe, who will explain how the session will run and run the introductions. Thank you.

Session transcript

TMcK Facilitator: Thank you, folks, nice to see you all again. I'm going to quickly run over the most written part of my discussion tonight which is around how we're going to be using our names within the transcripts and the reporting that we do off the back of the session tonight.

We've all joined with first names from a community member perspective; we're only going to use our first names tonight so it's really important from our perspective that no customer is identifiable and anything that is published off the back of these sessions in general.

In the published transcript and the report, customer names will be anonymised and after the session, we will give you the opportunity to flag anything personal that you'd prefer be removed from the transcript, we will share that with you and you'll have the opportunity to read it, if there's anything that you've said that you want to remove, you are more than welcome to do so, we won't ask any questions about why that is the case, we'll just do it and it won't appear in the published article.

There are a couple of different points to the session tonight or the way that it's going to flow tonight, we've got a question which relates back to the Action Plan and challenges South West Water on an action that was within that, that you guys wanted to push a little bit further on and ask a question of.

The second part is to a new performance question based on some of the metrics that you have seen and provided your feedback on, which we developed during the briefing session as you will remember. Finally, we have a shorter Q&A session where we've got a few shorter, more pointed questions, I suppose, that we'll give slightly less time to answer and have a slightly shorter discussion around or on.

So that's ultimately how the session will work, for each of the first two questions, we will follow the same sort of process whereby a question is asked, we'll give South West Water about five minutes to respond to the question, the community members and myself will then have a discussion about the answer, what was good, what was lacking, what would you like to see now that you've heard a response and this part for us is all about trying to create some potential actions that we think would be good, that we'd like to see South West Water deliver in the future.

We're going to capture that in the background in a live document that we will then share and you guys will get to have a quick read of that and let us know if we've captured what you actually wanted to see, then we'll hand back to South West Water for a couple of minutes to feedback on that and let us know if there are any things that they feel that they absolutely can't provide and provide a reason behind that.

During the Question and Answer it's a really similar process, it's just a little bit lighter and a little bit quicker, we're not going to have a huge amount of time to ask lots of follow-up questions or points on it but there will be a little bit of space for that and we'll do our best to make sure we can answer them all, but it will depend ultimately on how much time we spend on the questions that are probably higher priority from our perspective, so we'll do our best there.

I think before we get started, it would be good to quickly go round and get some introductions from you as customers and then from the guys at South West Water as well. All I want to get is your first name and if you can just tell us where you live, that would be fantastic. Community Member 1, I'm going to start with you if that's okay.

Community Member 1: Hi, I'm Community Member 1, I live in Par in Cornwall.

Community Member 2: Hi, I'm Community Member 2 and I live in Torquay in Devon.

Community Member 3: I live in Paignton which is in Torbay.

Community Member 4: I'm Community Member 4, I'm from Plymouth in Devon.

Session transcript

Community Member 5: Hi, I'm Community Member 5, I'm from Truro in Cornwall.

Community Member 6: My name's Community Member 6 and I live on the outskirts of Barnstaple, on the North Devon coast.

Community Member 7: Hi, I'm Community Member 7, I live in a small town, Torpoint, which is on the Devon and Cornwall border.

Community Member 8: Hello, I'm Community Member 8, I live in Luxulyan in Cornwall.

Community Member 9: Hi, I'm Community Member 9, I live in Exeter in Devon.

Community Member 10: Hi, I'm Community Member 10, I live in Landulph which is in Cornwall, on the bank of the Tamar River.

Community Member 11: Hi, I'm Community Member 11, I live in Paignton in Devon.

TMcK Facilitator: Keith, I'll go to you next, please.

Keith Haslett: Evening everybody, Keith Haslett, CEO at Pennon.

Richard Price: Evening everybody, I'm Richard Price, I'm the Managing Director of Waste Water Services at Pennon.

Sam Bottomley: Good evening, I'm Sam Bottomley, I'm the Operations Director for Water Services at Pennon.

Ketan Hindocha: Hi, I'm Customer Director in Pennon.

TMcK Facilitator: Right, everyone, thanks so much.

CCW Chair: Thank you very much indeed for that and again, I'm just going to say thank you for your time. So, we're going to kick straight off with our first question which looks back at the commitments already made in South West Water's Action Plan. During our earlier briefing session, you, the community members agreed that measurable pollution reductions towards South West Water's four-star environmental rating commitment by 2028, need a bit further scrutiny. So, Community Member 11, please would you like to ask the agreed question?

Community Member 11: Certainly, thank you. After the last accountability session, you committed to achieving four EPA[1] stars by 2028. But based on our experiences with South West Water, everything we know about the company and the lack of clear steps showing how this will be achieved, we remain unconvinced. We want to see pollution falling well before that deadline and we want to know what targets will be reached between now and the deadline you have set.

What specific, measurable reductions in total and serious pollution incidents will you commit to between now and 2028, so that we can judge whether you are on track to deliver your commitment?

CCW Chair: Thank you very much indeed, Community Member 11. In responding, it will be really helpful if South West Water could be as specific as possible, ensuring your response is to the point and free from jargon and could I ask everyone else in the community to just listen carefully, and make a note of anything that feels unclear, incomplete or not strong enough. Over to you for the next five minutes, please.

Keith Haslett: Okay, good evening, everybody, I am going to start this, and Richard will come in if required. I've completed a strategic review of the business now over the last seven months since I joined at the start of April.

1. EPA Environmental performance Assessment

Part of that has been about the Environmental Performance Assessment.

There are a number of metrics in that framework, for everybody's benefit, it includes pollution, it includes treatment compliance at our waste water treatment works, it includes delivery of our projects under what's called WINEP[2], which is the Water Industry National Environment Programme for all environment projects we deliver. It also includes things like self-reporting of pollution incidents and also what we would call operability of our event duration monitors, i.e. making sure they work.

Now clearly, 2025, we achieved a one-star rating, clearly not where we want to be. The reasons behind that really down to three red metrics, so if you're red on the EPA framework, if you get so many reds, that knocks you down from four-star to three-star to one-star. We did have, I guess, more pollutions in Category 1 to 3 than we would have liked and that put us red in that metric. However, we did see a 34% reduction in last year which is important because we are making progress which is not to the standards required under that EPA framework, so that's the first point.

The second one is we had serious pollution incidents, we had a Category 1 at Menagwins so we understand why that was and we've dealt with that but that also contributed to the one-star rating.

The third component to that was around WINEP, which is the project delivery and achieving dates on time based on the regulatory framework.

CCW Chair: I'm sorry, Keith, what was that? WINEP?

Keith Haslett: It's WINEP, the Water Industry National Environment Programme, it's effectively a way of measuring that we deliver projects on time based on agreement with the Environment Agency, so there's hundreds of projects and water-related outputs that we have to deliver on and we missed a few schemes in that space.

I fully understand what they are now after that strategic review over the last six, seven months, the team are working very hard looking forwards now as to how we improve in 2027 and then how we move into the calendar year of 2028. Important to note this is a calendar year measure from January to December, some of other metrics are actually financial year, April to March.

We understand we are behind where we would like to be compared to the target for pollution, the team are working hard to implement a huge investment programme linked to that reduction, improved operational performance which Richard is accountable for in driving those improvements and then on treatment compliance in particular, there are two metrics, one is numeric, which is effectively measuring your compliance at the end of the pipe discharge, we know where we have to improve and we're on with those improvements on compliance.

Where we are is effectively moving from where we are today which is one-star, the intention at the minute in 2028 is to probably get to three-star, based on my review, the area where we really need to try and work harder is going to be on pollution because there's a bit of a gap based on our geography and how we're measured, and that's where we're going to work hard between now and 2030. So, there will be material improvement.

CCW Chair: Keith, you've done a seven-month strategic review which is great and from the confidence with which you speak, it looks as if you've really got to the nitty gritty and understood the framework for the EPA and where you've fallen down. But I think the question is about specific and measurable reductions. Could you give some examples please, in perhaps three or four areas where you have put in place significant programmes to change the current status?

2. WINEP Water Industry National Environment Programme

Session transcript

Keith Haslett: Richard, probably bring you in at this point.

Richard Price: Alison, I think it's useful and important to link back to the previous discussions we had and the actions as well. You'll probably recall that in March, we published our Pollution Incident Reduction Plan and obviously talking with this panel, we recognised that it's also important to publish those quarterly updates, so we published our first quarterly update in June and we're about to publish our next quarterly update, I've signed it off the other day so that's coming out.

What that builds on is the steps we're taking, the success of our programme. As Keith mentioned, a 34% reduction in pollution incidents last year which is really good and importantly, things like repeat incidents were down 60%, so the tangible things we're putting in place is really good, solid root cause analysis, training of managers, improving accountability of incidents and chemical management and so on. So, we're really seeing those incidents come down.

It's also worth saying and sorry for the acronyms but there's now the Water Industry Regulatory Incidents, changes to the way pollution incidents are measured this year, so this year is a bit of a reset year. Our plan is still working, me and my team are focused on what I call being brilliant at the basics, getting all the right things in place which are driving down incidents but with the changes, this is a bit of a reset year with the Environment Agency, so our guide path that's in those documents show how in the previous arrangement, how numbers are coming down but it also sets out in the future arrangements, how we would see numbers coming down as well.

CCW Chair: Richard, you're saying that you've got lots of measurable, specific activities going on and that you're reporting quarterly. Would I, if I went on your website, would I see that easily or do I have to dig deep into an annual report for it?

Richard Price: No, you should see it really easily, signposted off the front page. We also signposted off the front page off the back of our discussions last time, links to Water Fit Live as well, so we recognised from our last discussions how important it is to signpost the links to key documents and in those documents there are six pillars of our initiatives, everything from people and culture to using AI and digital to get ahead of incidents and how we're improving asset health, and it lists out all the inputs we're making and we're reporting quarterly on that because again, we discussed last time how important it is to show and demonstrate the work we're doing to bring down incidents, which we know and everyone on this call would recognise how important it is to drive those incidents down.

TMcK Facilitator: One of the commitments that was in the original Action Plan off the back of the last session we had which Richard and Keith were on, a commitment to what was alluded to in the question which was a commitment to four-stars by 2028 but it sounds as though that is no longer, I don't know if you want to comment on that? It sounds like that's no longer a commitment from the sound of what you said here, I wanted to get some clarity on that if possible.

Keith Haslett: That's fine, I think we need to appreciate, I think I was two or three months into the role at that point, quite a lot of work has happened since then to really get underneath where we are as a business. It's very public out there in terms of how I've updated the markets, our content. We had a commitment in our business plan to get there by 2028, where we are, not quite going to get there but improve is on total pollutions and that's the metric we would need to be an amber status for that on the EPA framework. But the rest of it, we are working very hard to get right up the ladder and as close to four-stars as we can.

Effectively, the framework – rightly – has got tougher to get to the four-star and that's the slight change, Joe. It's still big improvements and just to be clear, as part of that reset, there's a further £1bn going into investment in the South West and some of the other regions so you know, we have asked shareholders to put their hand in their pocket to fund this reset, to get us back on

track with some of the performance that's really important to each of you on this call, that's what we are dealing with now in terms of delivery.

CCW Chair: Thank you. I'm going to pause here because we need to turn back to you, our community members. This bit is about testing whether you've heard what you wanted to hear in response to the question that was put which is in the chat, so it's worth referring to that. I'm going to turn to Joe to actually manage the discussion, but this is your chance to think about and voice whether what you've heard meets an answer to the question you have posed.

TMcK Facilitator: Thank you, and I'll go back to Community Member 11 as he was the question asker and I want to get your thoughts on the response, positive, negative, where you think there's maybe gaps what you would have liked to have heard in the response.

Community Member 11: I think it's given me a lot of background reading to do in terms of finding the specific metrics that we're being held to. But in terms of actual specific measures, I didn't hear much in terms of specificity, I'm sure I could find them but yeah, I didn't - (overtalking)

TMcK Facilitator: What kind of stuff were you thinking when you say specific measures? What do you mean by that?

Community Member 11: For example, we heard the improvements made last year, I think it was 34%? So, for example, what is that, what's the aim for the next 12 months there, was my kind of approach, I think.

TMcK Facilitator: So, setting out the targets in a way that you can ultimately understand or that's simple, something like that, Community Member 11?

Community Member 11: Yeah, just to break down the gap between now and the target in 2028, I think.

TMcK Facilitator: Community Member 10, you popped your hand up, I'll go to you.

Community Member 10: I think, similar to Community Member 11, I think there's a lot of words and it's good to understand that, you know, I guess Keith has carried out his review and understands more about the state of play than he did back when the ad-hoc session was.

A lot of words, we're not maybe that familiar with the numbers but I challenge that we're actually, it's easy for us as consumers to find this information because I can't see it on the website and when you talk about say the 36% reduction in spillages, 36% is a reasonable reduction but it's what was a reduction from where to where and where is it heading?

As consumers and residents of the South West, Devon and Cornwall and that, we hear all the time about sewage spillages and you can't swim, Plymouth Sound was recently a focus and there was a lot of wet weather. So great there's 36% reduction but [a] it's hard to see that in a very simple form on your website and in absolute terms, what does that mean?

TMcK Facilitator: Yeah, making it understandable, I suppose?

Community Member 10: Yeah.

TMcK Facilitator: And I think that's going to be a theme that runs through all the sessions that we conduct like this, where it is almost like how we make it something that's actually digestible for customers because I think that's a really good point. Community Member 9, I'll go to you?

Community Member 9: Yeah, it's kind of similar to the last point, a 34% reduction in incidents but how are incidents being measured? Are we talking about individual spillages or are we talking about amounts? Because you could have, you could reduce three incidents quite easily by just making it one big one, one continuous one so how is this being measured?

Session transcript

Are we doing it by how many times it happens, or the amounts that are being released?

TMcK Facilitator: Community Member 4?

Community Member 4: I'd echo what Community Member 9 said but adding onto it, I can see that yes, there's been a reduction in one area that doesn't necessarily first of all negate the fact that there might be a decline in other areas, but also, it's not a predictor of future performance.

What was a little bit concerning was I can't find the report and some other community members can't on the website, or it's not that easy to signpost if it is available and there wasn't single example of any target, I'm not expecting the gentleman to understand the complete details of every single thing in that document but to not be provided with a single target demonstrates that maybe that document needs to be looked at a bit further and in a bit more detail.

TMcK Facilitator: One of the things you talked about a few weeks ago was around having these, almost like committing to the milestones of this so you can actually see what has happened and it sounds, from parts of the answer, it sounds as if there's some progress being made but it's not knowing exactly what that looks like and what the commitment is and how that would be viewed. I don't know if anyone wants to come in on that or Community Member 4, maybe that continues on your point but yeah, I don't know what your thoughts are there?

Community Member 4: As somebody else mentioned, it's about those incremental steps, the percentage increase and so on, in one particular area because I don't quite know about the 34% reduction in pollution but as Community Member 9 said, that could be down to one incident or three little ones. It needs to be the same thing that you can monitor throughout rather than year on year, picking a nice statistic saying about a reduction in one particular area and negating the fact that there's been a decline and improvement in other areas, it's a general shift towards improvement rather than trying to play the figures, for use of a better term.

TMcK Facilitator: There's a couple of comments coming into the chat, if we can say them into the conversation, Community Member 3, you put a few things in, that would be really good because I don't want it to be missed from the conversation.

Community Member 3: Yes, I said to make it clearer, could they not have a banner on their website that will flash how much pollution they've had that month and compare it to other months and also have a comparison to other water companies? So, people can see, say for example, it was 10, is 10 good in the industry or is 10 bad? So, customers can compare, "Our water company isn't actually as bad as we thought or it could be worse." I just think it should be a lot clearer, the stats, rather than trying to hide it in reports that they know no-one will actually ever read.

TMcK Facilitator: I want some more thoughts on this because it was quite an important topic that we spoke about a few weeks ago. Does anybody else want to come in and share their thoughts on what they've heard? I'll go back to the original question which was around about how you felt about the answer that you were given and ultimately, where are the gaps? What do you want the guys at South West Water to go away and do as a result of what you think tonight?

Community Member 2: He mentioned £1bn from investment from shareholders, whatever, but for what? And over how long? Is that like this year? Is it going to be £1bn thrown into fixing everything or is that spread over 10 years? If you're going to put a big number on, it needs a bit more information.

TMcK Facilitator: What would you want to know about it if you were writing it, so that you could understand what it was going to be used for? What kind of things would it need to tell you?

Session transcript

Community Member 2: Is it for fixing infrastructure or is it just for stopping a leak, patching it? Is it for communication? Is it for PR? What is it for?

TMcK Facilitator: Yeah, okay, brilliant. Any other thoughts? I want to go back to our objective is around if we can create some actions or some things that the guys can go away and try and deliver for you off the back of this, what would they be? I'll go back to that original conversation, we were really passionate about this topic, you all spoke loads about it, and I want to get your thoughts on this during this session as well, if that's okay. Community Member 10, on you go.

Community Member 10: The background or the spirit of the question was as a commitment to four-stars by 2028, we now understand that's only three-stars but now to 2028 is a couple of years till the end of 2028, what are the milestones in between? So you can talk about a 36% reduction, I guess that's in pollution incidents which the way that's measured is per 10,000 kilometres of, I don't know, rivers or sewage pipes or something but I think for the consumer it needs to be, "The target is .." maybe zero would be nice but maybe it's not zero, maybe it's "By 2028 we're down to 10 incidents," "We're today at whatever we're at, here's where we are planning to be by end of 2027 and here's the sort of three big projects that we're doing to achieve that" and then we can sort of see, "Yes, there's tangible, measurable things that are being done."

It's like a SMART objective – specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time-bound, at the moment it's quite woolly when you just say 2028, four-stars, three-stars and we get a load of percentages. It's just something very simple and solid and hard that you can look and you can say, "Okay, that's where we were, that's where we are today" and then I guess it's easier for people to understand, "Are we on track?" but also probably easier for South West Water to communicate the performance in a way people understand.

TMcK Facilitator: What kind of things, you said a milestone thing, what is for you an understandable milestone for a customer, do you think?

Community Member 10: For me as a customer, if we're talking about environmental performance, it would be I guess, sewage spills, number of sewage spills into the sea that are stopping me from going about my normal life which for a lot of us is getting out and swimming, particularly in the summer. Those are the things that upset people around pollution. If it was water supply, I guess it would be around availability of water and hosepipe bans and why we're being forced to restrict our usage of water. Those are the things to me as a consumer that I'd like to see and we see a lot about fixing leaks but it just seems to be, you know, one year it improves a bit and then you'll get a bad year, it's very hard to really understand whether things are getting better in the long term.

TMcK Facilitator: You said that around let's stay on the pollution side of things or the target side of things then, so number of incidents, leaks is maybe one thing, is there anything else as a group that we think would be a good thing for South West Water to be able to use as a measure that makes sense to you guys?

Community Member 3: I think to add to compare it to your competitors because I know they've got a monopoly, we've got no choice in who we pay our water for but it would be great if they showed how it compared because if they are the worst then you can see it, whereas if they are the best then customers might have more confidence because at the moment, if you just show a load of stats, what does that mean in terms of the actual water industry? Is that good or is that bad?

TMcK Facilitator: Sure, so something comparative. Community Member 2?

Community Member 2: I like the idea of that except I don't think there's any water companies that are like worth anything performance wise, they all have very few stars, so if you tell me that you're better than I don't know, the one that's in London that's failing, it's not much of an achievement.

TMcK Facilitator: Yeah, okay.

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TMcK Facilitator: So, the stuff that kind of matters to you as a customer, as a person almost in that regard?

Community Member 2: Yeah.

TMcK Facilitator: Any other thoughts or comments?

Community Member 4: I get a feeling just on that point that maybe the bad news is hidden somewhat in documents on the website and I think what we're trying to or Community Member 2 is trying to bring to the forefront is the accountability side of things and making that public. At the moment, it's quite hard to find and a sceptic in me says there's only one reason why it might be hard to find and that's not for a positive reason, you would want to shout from the hilltops if it was for a good reason because they were doing well across the board.

So yes, I think it's being more public and open and saying, "Yes, we have, we're making some good progress, however we're going to commit to this and we're going to show you how we're performing by making that public," rather than you having to dig through a particular website where the document is there but no-one realistically will do that.

TMcK Facilitator: So, what does that look like, that kind of transparency, if they're being transparent and talking about the bad as well as the good almost? What does that look like? Where would that be? How would that be communicated?

Community Member 4: Partly, it's just what Community Member 3 was saying about it being on their website, even if there wasn't that banner, even if that document was available on the Home page, which it isn't, it's kind of if you go onto there, it is just a generic water company's website, there's no singing of praises of "This is how we're doing and this is our commitment." I'm sure it's there somewhere but the sceptic in me says why is this hidden? Why are the promises hidden, anybody could probably do a PR spin on any company to say, "Look, this is a positive element" and ignore the bad news, the targets that were missed, even if those targets weren't set in the first place.

TMcK Facilitator: I've got a few people who haven't spoken yet, I want to make sure you feel you have the opportunity to, if you want to add anything to what we've heard already? I don't want anyone to not have the chance to speak before we move onto the next part of this? Anybody else want to add anything? It doesn't have to be perfectly relevant, just want to get your thoughts. Okay, cool.

I'm going to share my screen, I'm just going to run through some of the things that we've noted down and as we do this, as we review this, please do jump in if you want to change anything or if you want to add anything to the list of the things that we've pulled together and then once we've had a little chat about that for five minutes or so, we'll give Keith and the team an opportunity to come back on some of the points that you guys have raised and answer anything that they've heard, that they want to provide a bit of clarity on.

So let me share my screen, hopefully you guys can see that, let me know if you can't, apologies that they're still adding and doing things to this, it's a bit of a live document in the background so I'm going to zoom in where possible and run through it.

We talked about a couple of different actions as we've been having this conversation and so my team have been writing them down in the background, and we'll run through a couple of these. So, [A] you want to see a publication of specific year by year pollution reduction targets, breaking down the gap between current performance and the 2028 deadline, so customers can judge whether they're on track.

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That was a big one that you talked a lot about in the original briefing session about the target feels quite big and far away, what's actually going to happen? How will we start to see these different things coming through?

[B] Explain how pollution incidents are measured and publish the definition alongside the data. I think with all these sessions that we're running, there's probably going to be a communication thing and I think that's actually ultimately one action is around how these things are properly communicated because it does often feel like it is almost like humanising some of the data side of things.

[C] Potentially ensuring that these kinds of reports and this information is much easier to find on the website, including examples of targets that were met and use consistent, clearly defined metrics when reporting pollution reduction. I think this was obviously around about making it really clear about the direction of travel and not making it feel like, I think to your point Community Member 4, that things are maybe being hidden in percentages and these kinds of things. Again, to that point [D] on around creating an easy to find display on the website that highlights some of these things.

[E] Providing full context when citing investment figures, clarify what the investment will be used for, a bit more transparency and a bit more clarity on exactly what the investment is being used for.

[F] Publish clear, year by year milestones between now and 2028 and again, this was about making it so that it was something that was understandable to customers, to your point, Community Member 10 around exactly what's important to you and your point as well, Community Member 2 on this, what is it actually improving from the point of view of something that customers can ultimately understand and gauge quite easily as whether it's positive or not overall.

I want to go back to you guys as customers and community members and get your views on the list, if there's anything that you feel that we've missed? If there's anything that you think is incorrectly captured and you want to edit, you can let us know. I'll open up to you guys to comment on any of this, let me scroll back up to the top so you can actually see them all. Does anybody want to come in on any of these before we give South West Water an opportunity to come back?

Community Member 2: What I actually want to know though is each location, the ones that actually matter to me, obviously it all matters but the ones that are local to me, I want to be able to easily access the locations and see how much pollution has been caused, what they have physically done to fix it and what they're planning to do and how many more incidents they're expecting. I want specifics on each location, not just a target for everything.

TMcK Facilitator: So, a bit more granularity in terms of …?

Community Member 2: Yeah, because otherwise it seems like it's too easy and it's not really substantial or making anything happening.

TMcK Facilitator: Perfect, that sounds good. Community Member 4, on you go.

Community Member 4: Just thinking about devil's advocate of the targets and how achievable they are, if the water company was able to commit to measurable targets, what would happen? Would they commit to something happening if those targets were not met? Because I could promise heaven and earth but if it's unachievable targets or I've got no intention of getting there, is there something that's going to hurt them, for use of a better term? Is there going to be a payment direct to customers to compensate or is there going to be shareholder repercussions or whatnot? To give that target some value, some push.

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TMcK Facilitator: That's going to be something that Keith and the team can come on in terms of how that maybe works internally in a minute, I think that's a really good point. Community Member 6, I'll go to you?

Community Member 6: As you know a bit later on this evening, my question is going to be about the broken monitors. Are they actually going to let us know that they can't provide a location specific pollution reporting because the monitor's broken? Because the amount of digging I've had to do to find the broken monitors because they don't publish them, so how can you provide location specific pollution reports if the monitors are broken and they don't tell you, they won't disclose that the monitors are broken?

To me it's about not being truthful. That's the problem, there's no truth in any of this, this is just holding a professional business to account that could easily just obfuscate and not tell the truth, and I don't know how to make them do that other than shaming them.

TMcK Facilitator: Is there anything that they could do that would make you feel that they were telling the truth, in your words and they were -

Community Member 6: I'd love them to publish a map of where the broken monitors are rather than me having to spent four and a half hours with an EA, ex-EA employee trying to locate some of them.

TMcK Facilitator: I know that's a conversation we're going to pick up in a little bit as well.

Community Member 6: But I'm just saying you can't get truthful answers if they're not going to be truthful, they're not going to be truthful about things, you don't know how to … oh, I don't know.

TMcK Facilitator: I know exactly what you mean, Community Member 6, we'll let them come back on your point there as well. Community Member 2, you've got your hand up, then I'll go to Community Member 5 and then we'll go back to South West Water.

Community Member 2: I don't know if this is relevant to what Community Member 6 is saying but I think to actually trust what they're saying, they need to commit to not doing the self-reporting thing, they need to allow what used to happen which is a completely independent company to monitor them without, you know, but I don't know if that's relevant to this bit.

TMcK Facilitator: So, you'd want to see more independent – no, it's 100% relevant, we can put that, certainly put that in as an action to come back on if you feel that that's relevant. So more independent …

Community Member 2: It's about trust because I don't trust, I'm very much like Community Member 6, I don't trust what they're saying is actually true.

TMcK Facilitator: Okay. We'll pop that into the list, and we can get some comment on that and then Community Member 5, I'll go to you finally.

Community Member 5: My frustrations come from similar to what Community Member 6 and Community Member 2 have just said, we don't trust what they're saying. They've not actually said anything substantive tonight, it's all about the intention is to do this, "we need to work harder." They've not come to us with any further commitment as to what they are actually doing.

We're going to them now with suggestions saying, "You could do this, you could do this," they've not come forward and said, "We are actually going to do this, we're being proactive, we've put these steps in place," they've just said, "We're going to work harder, we want to achieve three-stars rather than four-stars." What are you actually going to do to achieve that? That was the question. What steps are you going to do to achieve that? We've not heard that.

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TMcK Facilitator: Okay, so we need more substance as you said ultimately, in terms of what the plan is overall.

Community Member 5: Yeah.

TMcK Facilitator: Alison, I'll hand back to you on this one.

CCW Chair: Thank you very much indeed. Before we go any further, I think it's right that we give South West Water, Keith and his team a chance to respond to this set of suggestions and I'm quite sure that to get that sort of investment money from external sources, you have some extraordinarily detailed plans for the next year '27 and the next year '28 and '29 and even through to the end of year '30. So, I am optimistic that your response will be, "We've got this in hand" but it's really over to you, Keith.

Keith Haslett: I think listening to all of the feedback, I absolutely take it on board, I think equally, to answer a question in five minutes for a topic of this size, I could honestly sit here for three hours and give you a lot of detail and clarity around the multiple faceted approach that we are taking to improve the environment, the pollution stats and all the things that you've talked about tonight.

So, I appreciate the frustration but the way this is designed, it makes it very difficult for us to get across all of the facts. In the business plan today, we are spending £900m on reducing pollution over the next well, five years but certainly in the next three and a half, it's a busy programme. That will help storm overflow stats, that will help total pollution stats, that will help serious pollution stats, those are three separate metrics on the EPA.

We have gone out to the market, we have diluted our shareholders by raising a Rights Issue, what that means is we've raised £550m of new equity in the market, we've reduced the shareholders' dividend considerably as well as part of that reset. To give you a breakdown of the £1bn, £200m of that is linked to investment from AMP 7[3], the previous five-year period, to close down the projects and make sure it's right for both water and waste water.

It's also to help plug the gap on some fairly significant projects for this period of AMP 8. That includes Plymouth, that includes Marias Lane and Exmouth, it includes a range of other sites in that £200m.

A further £200m is with leakage, it's to address leakage, not just in the South West but other areas that we are involved with in terms of Pennon so that is a big number on top of our existing business plan.

A further £100m on performance commitments linked to treatment compliance, pollution, interruptions to supply for water, leakage, other things that we are doing in that space and then the last £100m is broken down by £50m of transformation because we need to improve some of our systems in the background that make it easier for you to find things that we're talking about tonight, but also how we make decisions and the last £50m is to get ready for the next five year period, which is AMP 9 from 2030 onwards. We want to get on with that now because we know the urgency that is getting fed back in this call.

So that's £600m, that's reinvestment going back into the asset base and performance. A further £400m is through an Ofwat mechanism to seek additional funding to improve asset health, improve waste water assets, water assets. £62m of that is for sewer rehabilitation, removing the groundwater from our sewer network, therefore reducing pollutions, therefore improving the environment. So that's £62m of the £400m. There are other schemes in there that's going to improve waste water treatment compliance as well as resilience for water.

3. AMP Asset Management Period

Session transcript

So that's in essence the £1bn, that is new money on top of the business plan in this five-year period, that will be delivered by March 2030, that will help accelerate some of the discussions that we've had tonight. So that's in essence where we are with that.

On Point C and D, I understand that if it's difficult to navigate to that Pollution Incident Reduction Plan, we will definitely take that away and make that easier, for sure. If you click on Environment and if you click on Bathing Waters, you'll get to it but if it's not front and centre then we need to have a look at that.

I think in terms of postcode, that was some feedback previously, we are working at the minute on you being able to put your postcode in and you can then see the investment in your particular area for waste water, for water, so that is something we are working on in the background to light up exactly what it means for you as customers, communities and where we invest the money.

I think in terms of the penalties, yes there is consequence on penalties so if we don't meet targets, there are some significant penalties that come from shareholders. In Year 1, we've seen penalties just north of £60m, okay, so it is big numbers. A serious pollution incident is £1.5m in penalty. So, you know, they are quite serious numbers, and we clearly take that very seriously in terms of the improvement plan going forwards.

I have taken this role to dramatically improve the South West Water performance, integrity is everything to me in terms of being open and transparent about what we do. We're very clear on that and Water Fit Live is a map that should show you exactly where the monitors are, if it's a spanner, it should say that it's not working.

I've already asked that question on a previous Water Share Plus panel as to why have we got 2-3% not working? What do we need to do to get it fixed? So, we are very active in making sure it is working, we are the second-best performer in those event duration monitors in the industry, but I want to be first. So that's something we need to work on. Richard, do you want to come in on the targets?

Richard Price: Yeah, firstly I echo everything you've commented on there, Keith, me and my team are really passionate about driving things in the right direction. On the targets, I think it's really helpful to listen to the comments and I think that will help us as we shape, every year we publish our Pollution Incident Reduction Plan, that will springboard off performance. I think the comments and the discussion have been really helpful in terms of shaping that, I would echo Keith's comments in terms of numbers and so on, it's very difficult in the time allowed to quote the numbers.

I'll just flag because people were talking about the 34% reduction, what is that in real terms? In real terms, that's 89 incidents reduced to – sorry 189 incidents reduced to 124 and that's between 2024 and 2025, the year that we're reporting on. So, we have all those absolute numbers as well, but I think the comments are really helpful in terms of shaping our plans and the information.

CCW Chair: Richard, thank you very much for your addendums to Keith's comprehensive response. I think what I take out of it is that you do have a plan, you've got very detailed plans, you've got very detailed targets because they're all going to be cascaded down to individual managers and teams and boots on the ground. I think the big theme that's coming out here is that customers aren't hearing, aren't seeing, aren't feeling the difference.

I think everyone accepts that these are big tasks which require big effort and may not succeed in the time that you want them to because other things get in the way, not the least of which is weather but I think the big theme that comes through for me is communication and finding ways of putting information that you have to give to Ofwat, that you have to give to Defra, you have to give to the Environment Agency in their language, can you translate it into customer language?

Session transcript

Into plain English, in visual formats that the rest of us can understand and can you make that really accessible from the front page of your website, so that it's easy to get to, so it doesn't take an hour, half an hour to find it in a 100-page document or a 30-page document. Keep it bite sized but keep the information coming, tell people what you're intending to do.

So, I'm much heartened by the idea, Keith, that you are actually working on postcode, press a button put a postcode in, see what the information is, that's great but more and more communication, please. There is such an appetite and without it, it breeds distrust, it breeds, anyway, enough said, we need to move on but thank you for that very honest feedback, there is masses going on but we don't know about how it impacts us as customers.

Keith Haslett: Alison, I think what we're trying to say is it is all there, it's very open, we just need to work on how we improve that. That Water Fit Live map, you can go on in two clicks and put in your town and you will get that.

CCW Chair: Didn't know it was there so it's a question of not knowing what's there etc., it's the old Rumsfeld argument of the unknowns that we don't know about. I'm going to move us on because we do need to look at the big next challenge question, which is going to be asked by Community Member 2. I'm going to invite Community Member 2 now to talk through this next question. Community Member 2, the floor is yours.

Community Member 2: After South West Water visited my son's school, he took saving water so seriously that he asked us to save our bathwater to flush the toilet. Yet we walked past a leak that had been running for weeks despite repeated reports. Responsibility to save water is continually being pushed onto the consumer, while you are falling short on your own leakage targets.

What will you deliver before next summer to demonstrate that you are taking responsibility for managing the drought?

CCW Chair: Thank you, Community Member 2. In responding, Keith and your team, if you could please be as specific as possible about what's already been done and what you have planned to do to improve it, and by when.

Keith Haslett: I appreciate leakage is extremely important to both you and us. We have 60 repair teams in the South West, we repair 440 leaks a week, we've upped the resource on that because of the conditions that we've had with dry weather. We've also increased our number of leakage technicians, and these are people that find the leaks on the ground. But equally, customers raise leaks as well and we make sure we fix those.

It has been the busiest year we have seen, we have repaired more than 50% above what we did last year in leaks, particularly in some of these areas of stress like Wimbleball that you would have seen on the news and we are also repairing customer-side leaks as well in that, which is outside the network.

So, there is lots going on in this space, we've got Sam on tonight who has been working round the clock for the last six months trying to deal with these leaks and everything around it. So, we are resourcing up and have done this year, I've brought in additional people to help support the strategy, the delivery plan, what that needs to look like going forwards with the South West Water. It's not just about finding and fixing leaks, it's about pressure management, it's about using satellites to find leaks, believe it or not, which is what we are doing, how we accelerate basically the find and fix.

I've talked about some numbers tonight, £200m is a big number to accelerate what we're doing in this space, but we appreciate that there's work to do and I'm not going to sit here and say otherwise. Sam may want to come in and give a little bit of context from his perspective because he's been very much living and breathing it.

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Sam Bottomley: Thanks, Keith. I think the summer that we've just had has been incredibly challenging operationally for all of our teams actually, we've had the five, six heatwaves that have hit us, that's cooked the network, it's had a massive impact on our systems and leakage I understand, we have lots of reports, often we have reports of a leak running excessively, some of those are from other sources, some of those are business company leaks or private leaks and some of those are just, although they look bad and they look awful, we prioritise on leak volume so if that volume isn't as big as we've got leaks elsewhere then the teams will take some time to get there.

So, there is time in all of that when priorities have to dictate, we don't get there as quick as we can. Are we as good as we want to be? Am I as quick getting there as I want to be? No, we're not at the moment and we're working hard to improve that, and we recognise all of those comments coming in. But I think you know, the summer was incredibly, incredibly difficult for us and the impact of that on the network, when it starts to leak again, it doesn't stop leaking when the weather changes, it doesn't stop leaking till we get around all the repairs and as Keith said, it's 50% up on last year, it's incredible, the amount of work we've had to get through.

CCW Chair: Sam, can I ask you, what are the learnings that you've taken from this incredibly unusual summer that we're probably going to get again next year or certainly within the next two to three years, what are the learnings that you and your team in a review session have pulled out as lessons to implement for next year?

Sam Bottomley: For leakage specifically, we're talking?

CCW Chair: Yes, give the top five.

Sam Bottomley: For leakage, as Keith said, we are really levering technology, we usually lean on that in the winter months more but we're getting into that through the summer. Gang numbers we're increasing and we're keeping high, normally we try and tailor gang, the repair gang numbers when we expect leakage to go up and down and we're keeping those numbers increased above the averages going forward.

CCW Chair: Sorry, what is a gang, a gang number?

Sam Bottomley: Sorry, a gang, that's the people who go out to repair the leaks, so I say gangs, it's two guys in a van, they go in a [inaudible00:59:51], they dig a hole and do the repair and the backfill team come behind them. We are looking internally at our planning processes and making that slicker as well and we are, we do prioritise visible leaks because we understand the angst that that causes for people.

So we're getting in amongst all of that and as Keith said, we've got some extra people coming in that are going to elevate leakage to its own dedicated element within the business, whereas I look after all of the operations at the moment, leakage is going to be hived off and looked at in its totality by people dedicated to nothing but leakage and that should make a massive improvement to our performance going forward.

Keith Haslett: And just to add a few more stats for everybody, we are replacing just under 300 kilometres of our water mains in this next two, three years. We are and have done 8,000 water efficiency checks for customers so that's checking could they be more efficient? Are they losing water? And we have a Leaky Loo campaign as well where we go in and -

CCW Chair: And is this just South West Water?

Keith Haslett: Yes, these numbers are purely for South West Water tonight. So there's a lot of activity in leakage but I do get it, Community Member 2, if there's been a leak and it's been running a number of days, that's not where I want to be either so we are, as Sam says, ringfencing this leakage team, the repair gangs, the team that are going to deliver that plan and some of

those stats and really drive this very hard over the next few years.

CCW Chair: Can we just take the second part of the question, which is in the chat, which is about managing the drought? You're talking about managing leaks which is the output but what about new sources and water coming into your system? What are you doing in terms of preparing and managing for increased demand, less water coming into the system?

Keith Haslett: It's worth everybody understanding that the Environment Agency have said this has been the hottest, driest summer in over 100 years, so it outstrips 1976 and what you may have seen and remember back then. But the Environment Agency have worked very closely with us to help manage the water resources in the South West and we've had a lot of interest from our Water Minister, who's been down to Wimbleball herself and gone through the dam structure. So, it's just to let you know that there's a lot going on in the background.

In terms of what next? We've learned a lot from this extreme weather, it helps us plan for the future in terms of investment. We do have a large scheme that is planned to come from Cheddar 2, just south of Bristol, all the way into North Devon, so that scheme is probably £1bn plus in terms of investment to try and secure some additional water in that area. So that's maybe a supply side as we would call it scheme that would help supplement some of the gaps.

But we have to keep delivering on leakage, we have to try and influence customers or consumers around behaviour of using water and how we can use less. We have to work with businesses, non-household customers as to how we can try and influence water efficiency and be neutral where possible in how they use water.

So, there are a number of schemes that we're going to make our own water treatment sites more resilient but equally, we have to work out ways to protect the water resources and that comes through delivery of leakage and per capita consumption, which is your consumer behaviour type measure. But there are some bigger long-term measures that are planned but they take five, ten, fifteen years, that's just part of the mechanism to deliver it.

CCW Chair: Thank you very much indeed, that was a slightly longer section, but I think it was important because these are very important issues. We're going to pause now and turn back to our community members and ask them really how do you respond what you've heard? Has it answered your question? I'll hand over to Joe.

TMcK Facilitator: Thank you, Community Member 2, I'll go back to you on that initial question, it was your question and I want to know how you felt about the response that was given? What was positive, what was less so and what did you feel was generally missing from the answer, if anything?

Community Member 2: I mean I love that they're throwing more money at it and people, that's fantastic, like that's not a bad thing but if it's £200m over five years, have I got that right? Things are expensive, that doesn't seem like a lot of money, it definitely doesn't seem like enough and what I heard was that the cracks you can see are concerning but that means that there are loads, like the leaks you can see are concerning but that means that there are so many we can't see and that's probably way worse than what we can see as consumers and what we see around the streets. Also, with him mentioning that changing consumer behaviour, if you're not going to fix the leak outside in the street, I'm not going to turn the tap off when I'm brushing my teeth. I do that anyway, but it just seems really, I don't know if the word is "patronising", but I don't appreciate being told that I need to do better when I can see this being wasted. But I do love that they're spending, putting more money, more people on the job, that's great.

TMcK Facilitator: Is there anything else you would have wanted Keith or Sam to have said about answering your question?

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Community Member 2: I would like to have known how long does it take to get a leak fixed when you report it? Outside, on the way to school took three weeks and it was a constant thing, all our neighbours reported it because we had to walk through it to get down the hill.

TMcK Facilitator: What feels reasonable to you? It's so relative isn't it but three weeks sounds like a long time, right? What are your expectations of that?

Community Member 2: I just spoke to my son about this because he imagined I made a call and someone jumped in a van and raced down to fix because he was just told at school how important it is to save water, turn the tap off when you're brushing your teeth, it's like a tap running for three weeks. So, I would want to see it immediately, a couple of days at the most, I understand that's maybe not realistic since they don't have enough people to do all the jobs or maybe not the money to do it.

TMcK Facilitator: But if they could commit to a maximum time, I don't know what it would be and it would need to be realistic but is that something that would be reassuring? If there was something like that, a leak being reported, it will have been assessed and …? (overtalking)

Community Member 2: Only if there was a consequence for not meeting that target, fine but if you're going to say seven days and then not do it, it's like you know, it's an empty promise.

TMcK Facilitator: Why commit to it, yeah. Thank you so much. Community Member 3, you've got your hand up.

Community Member 3: What I think would be really useful is if Ofwat or the water regulators have consequences so every time a customer reports a leak, any water company has to fix it within seven days. It's like if our broadband goes down, if BT don't fix it within two days, we get compensation as a customer and we get money off our next bill.

There should be actual consequences for companies who have a leak reported and they get fined for not doing it because that will then hit the shareholders because to be honest, water companies don't really care about lots of different, it's all about keeping their shareholders happy, right, not the customers.

So, I feel like there should be consequences of if a leak isn't fixed by X amount of time, they all get a fine and it has to be government regulated, it can't be them just deciding it because I don't think that will go far enough.

TMcK Facilitator: In terms of that, would that be reported leaks from customers?

Community Member 3: Yeah, or any leak really.

TMcK Facilitator: I suppose the other side of that is it would potentially then lead to leaks that are reported being prioritised, not necessarily the leaks that are actually super-important, huge and hidden.

Community Member 3: There would have to be other targets and stuff but just the easy basic version would be that there should be consequences from government level, if leaks aren't fixed. At the moment, what's the consequences if South West Water don't fix a leak? Water gets lost, that's it. Thy need to have money consequences because that affects the shareholders because they only really care about -

TMcK Facilitator: Does it feel like there are consequences currently?

Community Member 3: No. Same as what the other lady said, if you see a leak, you're not going to sit there and not fill your kids' paddling pool up when there's water going out in the street and it's not been fixed for weeks.

I think there needs to be consequences from government level and I think that's the only way they will actually want to change and have consequences for shareholders.

TMcK Facilitator: Cool, thank you so much. Community Member 10, you've got your hand up too?

Community Member 10: To me, water leaks, it's a bit like potholes, we've got an ageing infrastructure and we get potholes in roads, they come, they fill them, a few weeks later there's the same pothole or there's one close by so I mean a couple of points, [1] Cornwall Council are very good at visualising or communicating how they're doing on pothole fixing because you register on a website and it's tracked and you get the emails to tell you when the pothole's been fixed. I don't know, I haven't seen anything similar with water leaks, but I guess that's one part of it.

But the other part would be you can talk about fixing leaks and that's brilliant but if the cause is an old pipe which is miles and miles long and it just keeps cracking at different places, then how much of the investment is fixing the pipe that's past its sell by date and how much of it is new infrastructure to give us 25 years, a new pipe that's going to give you 25 years without any leaks because it's a new pipe? That's one part.

The second part was just about the reservoirs. I think it scares the hell out of me, we've got 36%, our reservoirs are 36% in the South West at the moment, it was a lot more than that this time last year, we've had no rain yet this winter, hopefully it will come but we're relying on hope. It's good that this Cheddar 2 thing is potentially a big investment in the infrastructure but you know, it would be good to understand how much is that when compared to the however many thousands of litres we're using per day or how much reservoir capacity we have, how much more is that going to give us?

I think we're fiddling while Rome burns a little bit on the whole water supply thing and yes, we all have to be mindful about how much we use but I agree, I think just being told constantly that we as consumers have to do it when there's been very little investment, the last two big reservoirs were Colliford and Rochford and I know they brought a massive increase but you know, population's gone up, the climate's changed, it feels like we need some significant investment in water storage infrastructure or desalination to give ourselves the confidence that we've got 50%, 60%, 70% spare capacity going forward because we don't have it anymore, the tank's almost empty it feels.

TMcK Facilitator: Thanks, Community Member 6, you've also got your hand up?

Community Member 6: I wondered whether Keith was able to give an update or anybody on what's happening with the proposed desalination plant down at Par because it seems to be stuck in planning hell, and I just wondered if there was any update as to whether that was ever going to come online because that would probably make some difference to water being available in Cornwall at least.

TMcK Facilitator: We'll give them a chance to come back on that one when they come back overall, it's a good question. Any other thoughts on this? When we were having the conversation during our briefing sessions, it went back to this idea of we're being asked to do things but we don't really know what they're doing, leakage targets are missed against a backdrop of drought ultimately at the point, over the summer and a few months there.

A couple of things you mentioned were things around agreeing to measurable reductions before next summer, a measurable reduction in leakage before next summer was something that we mentioned, I don't know if anyone wants to come in on that? More of a clear timescale on when you guys will see improvements to leakage metrics, whether they might be. These are a couple of things that you talked about that we've not touched too much on tonight and I just wanted to give you the opportunity to, if you wanted to, before we move on?

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Community Member 8: I think it's really encouraging to hear about all the increased resources that are being put in for leakage repairs but a lot of that seems quite reactive and I understand that the longer term infrastructure projects are going to take quite a bit of time to deliver, but my concern would be what's going to happen in the meantime particularly as we're going to have a very hot summer likely next year and what preventative measures and contingency plans might be in place then.

TMcK Facilitator: So those maybe smaller things that are happening before the bigger things are signed off, okay. Anything else, folks, that you want to talk about for this one? Community Member 7, I've not heard from you yet, but I don't want to put you on the spot, if you've got anything to add, please do. I have put you on the spot but no, you're fine, I don't know if you've got any comment on anything we've discussed here?

Community Member 7: No, I think I just agree with everything. I think it's great to hear how they do it and prioritise, I didn't know that, I don't know where you look for information, I don't know what their social media is like but for me, I wouldn't go on a website to look for details so maybe social media would help, like reporting it, I don't know if they've got a page on Facebook, I'm not really looking but for me, I wouldn't go on a website to look at information and I was pleased that they were doing stuff but I don't feel confident that the droughts, I think next summer, I don't know what's going to happen then.

TMcK Facilitator: Totally, okay, brilliant. Community Member 10 and then Community Member 4.

Community Member 10: Just a short one because I know it's something we've been discussing as a group is I don't think we like being told to sing songs in the shower and this sort of stuff to reduce water, however I've recently had a smart meter installed, if I compare my water smart meter to my electric smart meter, it ain't smart at all, it doesn't give me any ability to look at daily consumption, I manage it. I'd be quite happy and like the electricity companies do, they incentivise me to manage my electricity use and they give me a discount if I use electric at times that it's better for them. I know the model's not quite the same but there must be an opportunity with the rollout of smart meters, to make it, consumers, to engage consumers better in how they manage it and be more aware and incentivise them to use less, it's just something that …

TMcK Facilitator: So that kind of peak usage thing you're referring to in terms of energy if you use it at a certain time, you get …?

Community Member 10: Yes, I get free hours at weekends if I get my peak hours down.

TMcK Facilitator: Brilliant, I think that's cool. Community Member 4?

Community Member 4: Just thinking about the future plans really because a lot of this evening has been about past performance and predicting the future and I think it's important that we know that climate change and the weather is going to deteriorate, it's important that the water company doesn't use that as kind of an excuse to say, "This was a one off thing that's been the worst for 100 years" because actually, it's probably going to be a downward spiral and rather than use that as a surprise tactic or an excuse, to really plan proactively to overcome those and not to really refer to that, yes everybody understands that it's a challenging environment but that doesn't make things better and doesn't prepare us for the future.

TMcK Facilitator: Yeah, okay. Any other thoughts? We'll do the same again, have a look at what we've noted down and get your feedback on it but any other thoughts before we move on? Cool, okay, let me share my screen. So, we've been taking notes as we've been going, let me see where we are.

Okay, hopefully you folks can see this, we're going to zoom in on our action column, I'll run through a few of the points here. Commit to a maximum response time for fixing reported leaks

with consequences if that deadline is not met, something around compensation for customers etc.

Create a tracking system for reported leaks, similar to the pothole fixing tool which was mentioned, so customers can monitor progress and receive updates, I know that this is something that is maybe already available but I'll let you guys come back to us on that.

Publish what the Cheddar 2 scheme will deliver, ultimately what is that going to provide to customers on the call? Publish preventative measures and contingency plans ahead of next summer, so what is going to change before next summer so that customers can see that there is action being taken and what will that ultimately deliver to them? Introduce usage incentives for water customers, similar to the way energy customers reward customers for managing their consumption with off peak usage and overnight usage and things like that.

To the customers very quickly, is there anything in there that we want to add or change or have we missed anything before we hand back to South West Water? No, perfect, Alison, we'll let you carry on.

CCW Chair: Thank you for that. Could I just ask before we go any further for South West Water to give some response to that, really to talk about any commitments they believe would not be feasible as currently written and to explain why, if there are operational, regulatory, financial or other constrains but just be specific about what those are and what you could commit to instead. I'll hand over the baton to you, Keith, to work out how you would like to respond for the next five minutes or so and I know that's not long but I'm sure that a lot of this, you've already got in hand.

Keith Haslett: Yes, there's a lot of very good points here and I've got probably about a dozen more that I'd love to try and answer but we'll see where I get to. At the minute, we are pretty much on average, fixing leaks in about 12 days so obviously, Community Member 2, your example is outside of that and that's not ideal but that's where we are in what has been an extremely busy period for us over the last four or five months. So that's a bit of a quantum around that.

Is that good enough? No, love to be a lot better than that. How does it link to performance and consequence? Well, if we don't hit our leakage target, we get a very large fine from the regulator, last year I think it was around £8m or £9m so that does drive the focus to get leaks fixed and make sure we do it in a timely fashion, to try and hit those targets going forward.

It's also linked to the C-MEX measure, the customer measure, so if a customer raises a visible leak and it's not fixed in the timeframes you expect, there's every chance you could get a phone call to ask about your experience and you can score that and that flows into our C-MEX score for water. I can see that and I talk a lot about this with Sam and the team around visible leaks and how do we get better at fixing those? So that gives you a bit of an idea that there's penalties with leakage, there's also penalties with C-MEX and we need to improve on C-MEX going forwards.

In terms of a tracking system, I think this is linked a little bit to what you said I think Community Member 10 as well, we are modernising our customer billing platform, it actually goes live in two weeks, so Ketan's on the call. The next step beyond that is to introduce a customer digital app, we do need to make live the smart meter which hopefully will be summer next year, if not beyond, where you can actually start to use your smart meter in the way that you intend, real time.

But that will take us 12 months plus to really try and get all of that into place, so that is the next step for us in that space for sure. Can we make it live on a map where all the leaks are and how we get them fixed? I think that's a really good challenge, I need to take that away and work out what we do with that, so I think that's a very valid point raised.

In terms of Cheddar 2, it is a large reservoir south of Bristol, I guess the challenge a little bit at the minute is the benefit, I would like it to be a lot bigger, it's around I think 15 million litres a day extra,

that's not really enough, we need to try and find other sources so we are looking at that as part of the next sort of period of review.

We do have a plan today that goes out 25 years just so everyone understands that and I guess why I brought up customer demand is that in that 25 year plan, we look at supply schemes to provide more water but we're also held to account on leakage and customer demand and business demand, so that's why I mention that because there's commitments around that, in that 25 year plan.

In terms of preventative measures, we are very focused at the minute on restoring the water levels in those reservoirs. We can pump water from the rivers back up into the dams, that is live at the minute for a number of those, Wimbleball, Stithians in West Cornwall so we are very active in doing that. Colliford and Rochford was mentioned, that is a bit slower to restore itself so the objective is to get to March in a position of strength so that we go into next summer and we can deal with the hot weather that comes next year, so that's very much in our focus.

I just want to mention the desal plant, it is a very good point. At the minute, desalination, the technology that you use for it is not actually approved by the Drinking Water Inspectorate, it's called Regulation 31, very technical but basically, you need to have it approved as a product to use it as a technology because at the end of the day it's public health and you need to make sure that it's safe to drink. That's going through the motions at the minute.

In terms of Par, that is quite a tricky location for us because environmentally, it's quite difficult for us to navigate that so we are reviewing what we do in terms of desal, [1] can we get the technology? [2] Can we get that as a solution going forward? [3] How do we make sure we get the right balance for extra water and also protecting the environment? So, we are active in looking at that at the minute. We are actually trialling that in the Isles of Scilly but that's very much under protected guiderails with the Drinking Water Inspectorate, so that's important for you to know.

I think there's a really good point at the end around tariff trials. We have trialled how we can flex consumption with customers and how that can positively or negatively impact your bill, so you're a very top end customer who just wants to use lots and lots of water, they would pay a premium, whereas your person at the bottom end would potentially get it for free because they're very protective over what they consume.

That's a tariff trial that I did in a previous water company called Affinity Water, but we have also done it here in South West Water. It's a really good point and I think when the smart meter rollout happens, this is an area that we can look at again, share that with customer feedback and shape that plan potentially for the next five-year period. So, it is a really good point and I think the industry as well of South West Water can definitely have a look at that going forwards.

CCW Chair: Thank you very much. So, in a sense, we have now looked at commitments against the two big challenge questions which will go forward into the company's Action Plan, along with commitments from the first discussion.

I'd like to move on now to the final part of the session where we've got some shorter questions, shorter responses asked by our community members and the first of them is from Community Member 6. I would just like to say there's no timer for these but please, we're looking for about three minutes, less than five minutes as a response, so we've got three questions that we'd like to get through because they're each quite important and they came from our briefing sessions where the community members put these together.

Could I ask Community Member 6 to read out the first question?

Community Member 6: I know we've briefly touched on this already, but recent reports suggest that a considerable number of sewage monitoring devices aren't operating correctly, this is very

concerning given the current pollution situation. Why are so many monitors broken and when will they be fixed?

CCW Chair: Thank you very much indeed. Over to you Keith and your team to respond in brief and succinct and practical steps going forward.

Keith Haslett: Richard, do you want to come in and respond?

Richard Price: Yes, let me come in, Community Member 6, thank you for your question. So, we did touch on it earlier and this is certainly a key area of focus for me and my team. The good news here is as Keith mentioned, our operability, we measure these in terms of having the monitors up and in place and we're second highest in the industry and striving to be the first in the industry, so about 98% operability, the target is 97.5%.

Equally, they are independent -

CCW Chair: Sorry Richard, could I ask what you mean by operability?

Richard Price: In use, in use and available.

CCW Chair: It works?

Richard Price: Yeah.

CCW Chair: It works and it records?

Richard Price: It works and it records and it's available and there's all kinds of specifications that the Environment Agency define around that, but we are the second highest in the industry that regard. It's also independently audited and the EA[4] come and scrutinise that and as we said earlier, it's on the Water Fit Live page, you can see in maintenance mode, there's a spanner on it and if it's not, it'll be showing the other icons in terms of whether it's in use or not. We've also made, based on our previous discussions, we've made the links to that map visible on the front page, and we've also promoted it because that came up last time, promoted it on social media.

We've also promoted water-based events because we encourage anyone who's got say festive swims or things like that to tell us because then we will liaise with the organisers and make sure they're completely informed as to what's going on in and around the waters in relation to our assets. And of course, we touched on performance as well earlier but 17% reduction in spills last year and 25% reduction in duration. It's worth saying because obviously listening to the conversation earlier, absolute numbers, that was 30,000 spills down to 27,000 spills because these overflows operate in storm conditions and they protect homes and businesses from flooding.

We've got a plan to bring those down, we're starting rightly for our region, on the bathing waters and the shellfish waters so we're improving 291 of those overflows in this five-year period, £760m and because we're tackling the bathing waters and the shellfish waters, that's 10 years ahead of the government target.

In the next five-year period and the five-year period after that, we'll move inland and tackle those overflows that spill more than ten times above our target level, over those 10 years from 2030 to 2040. That is also ten years ahead of the government target. So that's the right plan for our region.

That is why we've got a massive focus on it and recognise the concerns, recognise the comments and hopefully you can see we've taken actions based on our previous discussions, to make it even more visible and more customer friendly in terms of what's going on and our plans are actually making a difference, they're bringing spills down.

4. EA Environment Agency

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Of course, when you get hit by Storm Goretti and have the wettest January and February and half of March ever in Devon and Cornwall, at 190% of long-term average, I'm sure many on this call will recognise just how wet that is, then obviously those overflows operate. But our plan is to bring those spills down. I'll pause there, Alison, Keith, do you want to add anything to that?

Keith Haslett: No.

CCW Chair: Thank you. Community Member 6, as this is your question, would you like to follow-up with any further questions?

Community Member 6: If I give you the location of two that have been broken for nearly three years, would you be able to sort that for us then because it's affecting us being able to go in for a swim?

Richard Price: Community Member 6, I'd love to, please send me the information -

Community Member 6: Fine, I will send you our list then.

Richard Price: - and I will personally look into it.

Community Member 6: That would be wonderful.

Richard Price: I promise you that.

CCW Chair: Could I invite any other community member to follow-up with any thoughts or comments on what you've heard from Richard?

Community Member 8: So, you said that your target is 97.5% of monitors to be working, what is the current percentage of monitors that is working at the moment? Sorry if I missed that.

Richard Price: I track it every week as you can imagine because it's so important to us, we're at 98% and I'm also tracking each one of those that's broken and each one of those that is getting repaired, myself and our Chief Information Officer and I focus on it on a weekly basis with our teams to make sure the right things are happening. I'm really intrigued to look at those two that Community Member 6's flagging because I want to understand what's going on there.

Community Member 2: I just want an actual number though rather than a percentage, like how many are actually broken?

Richard Price: I think, based on the EA's … give me a second because I'll get to the right page …

CCW Chair: While Richard is looking, can I ask Keith a question?

Richard Price: Let me tell you, we've had 24 of our over 1350 to 1400 monitors, we've had 24 this year that have not made the right level based on the spec and to stay above 97.5%, I cannot afford nine more to fail, so you can see we're absolutely scrutinising it and driving it in the right direction but I'm going to look at those two.

CCW Chair: Thank you, could I ask a question, Richard? Why do we call them "storm overflows"? I can understand that it might have overflowed in January, February and a bit of March when you had an awful lot of rain, but does that mean that they didn't overflow at all from March onwards through the drought?

Richard Price: No, they do, they are part of the sewerage system, no pipe in the land has infinite capacity.

CCW Chair: I'm just questioning on the nomenclature and whether we should stop calling them "storm overflows" when we've just had the hottest summer in 100 years.

Session transcript

Richard Price: Well, they operate, storm, you can call it rainfall, you can call it inundation …

CCW Chair: It's just an overflow pipe.

Richard Price: It's an overflow, it protects homes, businesses and public open spaces from flooding, they're a common feature of the sewerage network right across the country and right across all developed countries. But there is definitely a desire to bring down the spills so that means upsizing pipes, taking the flows out, I could talk to you for a long time about how we're doing it.

CCW Chair: I understand, I'm just making the point that from a customer's perspective, why call them a storm overflow pipe when there's not been a storm? And we've had the hottest summer drought? It's about describing it from a customer's perspective rather than from an engineering, water sector perspective.

Richard Price: It's interesting, if I can just come back slightly on that, even in hot, dry periods, I'm sure we all recognise there are localised storms that happen and we investigate and validate all spills and check that they're legitimate and linked to rainfall. So, they do operate in that scenario so …

CCW Chair: I would have loved to have had one of those storms this summer for my garden.

Richard Price: Fair enough.

CCW Chair: We must stop there, thank you very much, Community Member 6 and thank you, Richard for that answer.

TMcK Facilitator: We do have a minute, if you do want to come back on that, we have got a little bit of time.

Community Member 6: I'd like to just challenge that, Mr Price because in August, there was a spillage at Chumley that ran for 30 hours and the temperature was averaging between 28 and 30 degrees for the entire four weeks, and there was absolutely no rain whatsoever and in fact, I got these statistics from Ed Tildsley, the county councillor for Devon.

I agree, two weeks ago we had the most horrendous storms here and again, it flowed for 30 hours and that was a storm overflow but the fact that it also flowed for the same amount of time in August when it was bone dry is currently something that Ed Tildsley, who's also a water campaigner, is bringing up with yourselves I believe. I just want to say dry spillages are what got me in to hospital, so the point is the dry spillages need to be reported as much as the storm, it all needs to be open and transparent that these things do happen even when you have no rain.

Richard Price: Firstly, Community Member 6, I listened to your personal story last time and that is something that we take really, really seriously in terms of that and that is why coming to Keith's point earlier, being transparent with our overflows and having the second highest availability of those monitors is really important to us. They're obviously installed in very harsh conditions, they're in sewers, they can be affected by twigs, cobwebs, all kinds of things so we validate those spills and we'll look at any overflow that we believe, if it's saying it's spilling in that validation, we'll check and test that.

So again, I will have a look at the Chumley one as well, if we can get the examples of the two that you spoke about previously and we'll add this one to the mix and I'm going to test and have a look whether that was a validated spill or something else going on with the monitor as well. Let me have a look and check it out for you.

Keith Haslett: I think it's really important, if we've got real specific examples like this, more than happy as I said in the previous session, to get the details behind the scenes, take it away and

absolutely give you a black and white answer. There is no issue with doing that but it's difficult on the call here to …

TMcK Facilitator: We can help facilitate that as well so that's no problem, we'll make sure that happens, Community Member 6, that we can get you in touch.

CCW Chair: Joe, is there anything that's come out of that discussion that needs to be added to our Action Plan?

TMcK Facilitator: No, it's okay, we'll move onto the next question.

CCW Chair: We'll move onto the next question, thank you everybody for that. So, the next question is from Community Member 1, would you like to please deliver your question?

TMcK Facilitator: I think Community Member 3 is actually delivering this one for us, Alison, is that right? Yeah, let me just share the screen, thank you very much.

CCW Chair: My apologies, I've got mine in the wrong order here.

Community Member 3: Complaints are up, customer experience scores are poor and 80% of your Trust Pilot reviews are 1 star, reflecting some of our personal experiences dealing with the company. Your customer service is letting us down, what are you going to do to make it better?

Ketan: Keith, do you want me to take that?

Keith Haslett: Yeah, and then I'll come in at the end, Ketan.

Ketan: Firstly, I want to apologise for the frustration that has been caused by any interaction you've had with our company, we know that we have quite a lot of contact from customers and sometimes customers are chasing and escalating, so it's not great to hear that there is that experience that you're hearing and feeling.

Our complaints data, our Trust Pilot data, our C-MEX performance all tells us the same thing, that you're not receiving that experience consistently and we have an internal measure as well which tells us that when you do get through to us, our people are great, so you do score us quite highly on the ability of our people to help you and give you the right level of service.

But notwithstanding that, we are working quite hard to improve the service that we give you and if I just take you through three key areas that we've been working on and I will touch on some of the improvements that we're also seeing on those things. The first one is we're trying to get the basics right so when customers call us, we want to resolve their issues, resolve them first time. We're driving a sense of ownership as well, so we've set ourselves up so that if a customer calls, we aim to get that resolved in that time and therefore we've got support teams that are around that advisor to help them get that resolution the first time.

What that does is stops these handovers, stops the customer experience being poor, stops you having to call us back and repeat the contact and that has given us some good insight at the moment and it is working, so we are seeing more resolution, we are seeing less complaints and we are seeing less escalations that are going out of that team.

The second bit that we're working on is we have a clear complaints improvement plan. Our target, and it's an internal target, so what you've been seeing externally are figures that are Q1 figures that you would have seen from CCW or from the C-MEX, our internal target is to reduce complaint volumes by 50% year on year and we're already starting to see that. So, some of the right first-time activity we're doing, some of the repeat contact analysis and improving end to end customer experience and we are starting to see that the actual volume of complaints that we're having to deal with from an internal perspective have reduced.

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CCW Chair: Ketan, could you give some numbers, some actual numbers, not percentages on the reductions that you're now seeing internally?

Ketan: Absolutely, so 50% if what we're targeting, we're currently seeing a 35% year on year reduction on complaints.

CCW Chair: What is that in real numbers?

Ketan: Actual values, I don't have the number, sorry, but we are seeing a percentage decrease in total volume of complaints.

CCW Chair: I interrupted you, I think you were going to come onto your third item, I'm sorry.

Ketan: And then the last bit which I think Keith did touch on, we are looking at simplifying our service and becoming more proactive so there is a technology intervention that we're putting in over the next four weeks, which will allow us to connect with customers but when customers call us, we have a single view of that customer so we can see all of the interactions, we can see a full history of that customer which means that we can then help you better and provide you with a better experience. So that should come in but that is also being delivered through our first right time programme as well.

A couple of other points just to give you an indication, you've touched on C-MeX, some of these interventions, we're already seeing an improvement in our Q1 results. All the intervention that we've done in billing has seen an improvement in our C-MeX results, some of the work that we're doing with Richard's team in waste has also meant that we've got cross-functional teams so where we've got journeys that hit across the functions, we're seeing improvement as well. So, C-MeX Q1, we're already seeing some of those green shoots coming through from all of the work that we're doing around improving customer experience, we're improving the contact when they do contact us.

CCW Chair: So, what do you think you will exit this year at in terms of how you entered the year on customer service?

Ketan: We should see an improvement, C-MeX is a tough measure to actually fully divert but we are seeing improvement and I would expect us to, if nothing else, improve by a couple of points from a C-MeX perspective, I don't know if you know how it works? It positions us against and compared to the other companies, we're currently sitting on 14 overall, we were 15 at the end of last year so we've seen an improvement in 1 and we expect to see another couple of point improvements over the next, over this year and into the following year.

CCW Chair: Could I ask for a response back from Community Member 3, has that answered your question? Did you understand it all?

Community Member 3: Yeah, it was very detailed, thank you for that and I think from my, the last time I called customer service up, we had no water in my house, the customer service person on the phone thought I was lying, I had to knock on all my neighbours' doors to get them to call South West Water to say we had no water and eventually they sent someone out.

So my experience contacting them has been bad so at least you're making improvements because I don't think you can get any worse than what customers have experienced already, so it's good to hear that you are making changes but I think a lot of customers have found that when you actually send someone out, the staff members are amazing, they're super-helpful, it's when you call or WhatsApp the people who you need to speak to, to get to the next step, that's where the issue is. So, it's good that you're making improvements on that because my experience is it's been pretty bad on that.

Session transcript

CCW Chair: Can I open up to other people within the community? Would you like to comment or ask a follow-up question? Community Member 1?

Community Member 1: Just following what was said, I had exactly the same experience. I called to say about water issues and I was told, "We've not had any other reports so we're not too sure what's happening, you're going to have to wait and call us back tomorrow." I was like, "I can't call back tomorrow, we need to get this sorted," and I know other people in this area because I live in Par, there's so many water issues here, it's unbelievable and I've only been here a year, considering where I used to live, never had an issue really before and other people locally have said exactly the same thing.

Even though on the website it would say there's reported concerns or issues where I am, the person on the phone was saying, "No, there's not." So, you know, it's not just happening to a couple of people, it is happening across the South West quite a lot, I think.

CCW Chair: Anybody else would like to say something? Can I just ask, Ketan, do you spend regular time every week sitting in your customer call centres, sitting alongside and listening to randomly picked voice recordings and what is your finding? Are you finding similar things to what you're hearing tonight?

Ketan: Yes, two things, I do go and listen to contacts, I sit in the contact centre, I'm there at least two or three times a week, if not more frequently. What I have also done recently, which is a programme of activity, is I'm encouraging the rest of the organisation to actually do the same as well to make sure that they get closer to our customers through our frontline teams, whether it's in the contact centre or whether it's on the field as well - to actually understand the pain of the customer, but also to understand the colleague experience, how we're making it hard for our colleagues to actually serve customers as well. So, we're absolutely doing that and we've had that initiative for a while, and we've had a lot of the execs sit with our colleagues and listen to calls as well.

We are seeing inconsistent feedback as well, Alison, so from what you're saying, firstly apologies to both of you where you've called us and we've not trusted your information, and I will look into that.

CCW Chair: Is your call centre here in the UK?

Ketan: Yes, in Exeter.

CCW Chair: All of the customer complaints and enquiries are dealt with here in the UK?

Ketan: All of our complaints are dealt with in the UK, we do have a small reserve team offshore for voice so that we can manage troughs and peaks as well but only for billing, I want to be really clear, anywhere where we've got a moment of truth and we've got water or sewage type contacts, they are all handled in the UK, in Exeter.

CCW Chair: Good. Do you attend the complaints assessments that CCW run with your team?

Ketan: I do and I do a start through and review at the end of it as well, so we can actually take the next steps and agree a plan. Again, we've had a plan in place, two plans in place, one billing improvement plan which Ofwat requested and that's been commended and then we've got a complaints plan with CCW, which we're reviewing regularly, we're not just doing it once, we've encouraged that we work with them on a regular basis to make sure that we're seeing progress rather than just at the assessment times.

CCW Chair: Do you ask and compel your peers to sit in on customer contact calls in the centre?

Ketan: Yes, this is what I was saying, everyone across the organisation is encouraged and invited to come into the contact centre, listen to calls, sit with advisors and understand both experiences.

Sometimes we don't make it easy for our people to deal with customers so what is it that we can do to make it easier? But also, to understand firsthand from what customers are experiencing and I've taken it a stage further - if they do get any feedback this time, they have to take ownership of that feedback to a resolution rather than just documenting it and walking away.

CCW Chair: Thank you, you have a big task ahead of you and you have my support and everybody in the community is wanting you to succeed in that, I'm sure we'll come back to it in the future, in the spring. I'd like to move onto the last question which is being asked by Community Member 10.

Community Member 10: This is about the last accountability session, a question to Keith, how did you feel the last ad-hoc accountability session went and what did you learn from being there? And I guess maybe a bit more generally, what are you learning from these accountability sessions?

Keith Haslett: I think it's important to recognise that I was only two or three months into the role, I was asked to come along on my own which is tricky when you get a lot of very specific questions that are important individually to you, so it's very hard to respond to specifics when you're very new into the role. I think, hopefully, we've had a little bit more colour tonight but again, I think having specifics like that, it makes it difficult to satisfy each of you on the call and I appreciate that and I understand the frustration.

Equally, I always offer if you want to come into the office, if you want to see our control room, if you want to understand how we do things, I am more than happy to open that door so that's really important.

I think it's important to recognise that we are working extremely hard, we're putting extra investment into the ground. From my experience of the last session, I think it could have gone better for sure, I think that's both sides, I think that could have been handled a lot better. We are giving you hopefully plenty of information in very short, compressed timeframes which is difficult because this is a very complex industry and trying to get across all the various workstreams, investment areas, understanding of what we're trying to do is important.

So, from my perspective, when I look at this session and we have a separate WaterShare+ panel as well, that's facilitated in a similar way and it feels different, I'll be honest, in terms of how we run it but that's fine because it's just difficult to answer specific questions. I think that's where I would start with it.

It's a highly regulated, complex industry, I need to try and get across for you what's important to you, there's some really good actions I think do come out of the sessions to be fair and I've been in meetings to talk about postcodes and investment and I challenge the guys around operability of EDMs[5]. So, look, this definitely is working both ways, it's giving us actions, me actions to go away with but I recognise that it's words at the minute and we need to start seeing the results and I think that's, I've been in a meeting today with the Environment Agency to go through exactly what we've talked about tonight and what next? And it's trying to transform that into action now which Richard, Sam, Ketan are very busy with.

These sessions are great, I just want to make sure that if there are specifics, it would be brilliant if we can try and get them in advance because that would make this session, I think, so much more productive, to give you some of those specifics that are important to you but then also at a wider level, what are the themes for all the customers of the South West?

I think we can lose sight at times around what are the general themes and I think that's what I want to try and get across as well, so if we can do a bit of both in that balance, I'm more than happy to help answer those questions and I appreciate trust is not where you expect it to be at the minute, there's different reasons for that that we've heard tonight but recognising the fact that

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there is a lot of investment going in the ground, making that visible to you and where there are specifics, let's get them answered.

Alison, the door is open, I'm more than happy in a controlled way to bring a few of you in and show you how we do work 24/7 in our control room, to give you a bit more trust and confidence that there's eyes and ears watching performance in your area every day.

CCW Chair: Thank you, that's really candid and it's much appreciated but I'm going to go back to Community Member 10 and say, is there any follow-up question or response you would like to give Keith?

Community Member 10: Yeah, this is my first accountability session, I wasn't on previous ones and I think we're very privileged to have this access and to be able to pose these questions which are very important to us, and I appreciate how difficult it is that we are asking very specific questions and to answer on the spot. I can see the value in it, and I appreciate the response we've had.

I guess a question, Keith mentioned at the end there, every other South West Water customer doesn't get this access and I think it is an industry where there's a lot of focus, everyone I guess has a view and now that Keith's seven months in, what else is he doing to communicate plans to all of South West Water customers, we're privileged and this is a good process, it's accountability but we haven't been elected by all the South West Water customers, we're here I guess as part of a process which is an important process but what else is going on?

Because I've read stuff on LinkedIn where people would say that "Keith's a bit invisible and he's been there seven months and what's happening?" I know stuff's happening but is this process widely communicated so other people know how much is going on, I guess?

CCW Chair: Thank you, that's really articulate and it puts some pressure on us at CCW to, it also behoves us to communicate better our findings. Thank you for that, is there anything anybody else would like to comment upon because I also would like to endorse Community Member 10's comments, that we are privileged, we have had the senior people within South West Water talking to us, we've learned a lot. I would say that you shouldn't underestimate the amount of learning and understanding that comes from the discussion, Keith, it is immense and it is a pressure to articulate in a very short period of time, the things that you have done, are doing, want to do, will do and to give detail.

But there is an appetite for more information, and I know I've said that before in other circumstances, but I don't think you can underestimate that, the challenge is how you get that over.

So, I think I'm going to draw a line here and call a halt and say an enormous thank you to everybody. All the actions that you've seen on the screen have been captured live and they will form the basis of a follow-up Action Plan.

The summary report, the fully anonymised transcript and the full list of actions will be published within seven working days, which is 12th November and before that, all of you as session members will have the opportunity to request changes in terms of redaction of anything personal, of a personal nature and we would ask South West Water to publish its action plan by Friday 11th December, which is 28 working days, in terms of how you will deliver against the agreed actions and I think a lot of it you already have in your plans, it's a question of pulling those out and highlighting them and we will publish that on our website

Once the Action Plan's published, all of you as community members will be sent a link and a short survey asking whether the plan accurately reflects what was agreed and whether it is enough to address the concerns raised and you've got 10 days to respond, as before. And then CCW's required to track progress against the Action Plan through the Water Voice process.

Session transcript

The whole process is designed to make sure that tonight leads to real follow through, not just discussion, although that's valuable for both sides. And I think the last point I want to make is to thank everybody for being very respectful and for giving everybody time to speak and I know Keith, you would like more time and I've tried very hard to give a bit longer on some of those big challenge questions, and I think that's something we will take away and discuss internally as well because there is, as we go through into the second iteration and again the third iteration next spring, we need to find a way of enabling you to articulate exactly what has been done and then differentiate that against that you are committed to doing in the next short timescale, that customers will feel the impact of.

Thank you for all your time, particularly on a Tuesday evening. I know it's dark and it's miserable out there but thank you, it's really appreciated, it's extremely valuable not just for South West Water, for you as community members but for all of the observers from the other organisations, so I'd just like to thank them also as a third category but a very important one, for their time in listening in on this because we feel at CCW that this is a really important process to allow real consumers to talk to their water companies and for you to hear their views and the responses back.

So, thank you, your input is what makes this session really worthwhile, thank you and a very good evening to everybody, please go and have a cup of coffee or tea or a drink or something stronger, thank you very much indeed, it's been much appreciated. Thank you, Keith and thank you again to your team.

[CLOSE]