Summary report & Action Plan response

Autumn Accountability Session: United Utilities

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: Monday, 19th October 2026
Summary report published: 28th October
Action plan published: 26th November 2026

Community members had the opportunity to question senior representatives at United Utilities about environmental improvements, reliable water supplies and what rising bills are delivering.

The Action Plan Review examined pollution and infrastructure improvements under Action 23.[1] The Company Performance Review challenged missed leakage and supply interruption targets and asked when lasting improvements would follow.

During the Q&A, members raised questions about executive pay, shareholder returns and past investment decisions. The key discussion points, company responses, community members' requests and United Utilities Action Plan response are outlined on the following pages.

Q1: Action Plan Review
Local investment and environmental improvements

Members wanted clearer evidence of what local investment is delivering, including progress on delayed projects and performance against targets.

Discussions highlighted the need to strengthen local communications, provide clearer comparisons of performance against targets and provide honest explanations of underperformance.

Q2: Performance Review
Leakage and reliable water supplies

Members welcomed proactive leak detection and mains replacement, but wanted clear targets, timescales and proof of lasting improvements.

Discussions highlighted the need for clearer smart-meter information, water quality reassurance, support during interruptions and local improvement priorities and timescales.

Q&A: Q3
Executive pay and accountability for company performance

Members questioned how missed targets affect executive pay and who funds pay and shareholder returns.

United Utilities explained its arrangements. Members wanted clearer explanations, including how infrastructure investment generates returns.

Q&A: Q4
Rising bills and long-term investment

Members questioned rising bills and past investment decisions.

Discussions highlighted the need for clearer spending explanations and more accurate frontline advice about bill increases and affordability support.

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

This report summarises the key discussions and requests raised by Water Voice community members during the United Utilities Accountability Session on 19 October 2026. It records the company's responses and distinguishes between **requested actions**, reflecting the improvements members would like to see, and **agreed actions**, which are confirmed company commitments. United Utilities has set out its **full response** to each request in its Action Plan response, detailing what it will deliver and when.

CCW will monitor progress against these commitments, providing monthly updates so that community members can track changes over time and hold the company to account.

[1] Action 23: *Show year-on-year evidence that pollution incidents are reducing and infrastructure is improving across the website, email, leaflets and noticeboards.*

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Q1: Action Plan Review

Strengthening United Utilities' existing actions

Q1. Will you show, in plain English, which local improvements our bills are funding, what each stage will achieve and by when and how the results compare with your official pollution and sewage-spill targets?

Context from the session:

Community members wanted evidence that investment was improving their local environment. United Utilities outlined current storm overflow reduction projects and reported on current storm overflow spill reductions. However, community member awareness of projects in their local area varied.
Members requested accessible updates relevant to their local area, explanations of paused projects and clear reporting of missed targets.

Regulatory and existing activity context:

Action 23[1] covers evidence of reduced pollution and infrastructure improvements, supported by communications under Actions 16[2] and 17[3]. United Utilities described existing postcode-level project information, county level newsletters and performance reporting. Members wanted this information to reach them and help them judge local progress.

New actions requested by community members:

1A. Provide clear, accessible updates on local projects

Provide postcode level update of what work is happening locally, what the work is specifically addressing and improving and when each stage is expected to happen. Include changes, delays and paused projects, so residents understand what is happening before uncertainty develops.

Share information through emails, bills and suitable offline channels, alongside the existing postcode search. Members wanted local updates to reach them without having to search for information themselves.

1B. Make company performance and progress easier to judge

Much of the comparisons in performance members require can be found on the DiscoverWater website, members were happy to know this existed, however still wanted United Utilities to share with customers their own targets and performance in a simple and easy to track manner. If appropriate United Utilities should explain where performance falls short, what they are doing about it and when further progress can be assessed. Members wanted measurable progress rather than a focus solely on positive activity.

1C. Explain overground storm-storage schemes and wider rollout plans

Explain what above ground storage is in everyday language, using examples to show how it works and how it helps reduce sewage spills.

Clarify whether similar schemes are planned elsewhere and where members can find information relevant to their area.

[1] Action 23 -*Show year-on-year evidence that pollution incidents are reducing and infrastructure is improving across the website, email, leaflets and noticeboards.*
[2] Action 16 - *Update "The Big North West Upgrade" campaign stories to show where investment is already delivering improved services.*
[3] Action 17 -*Increase awareness of investment benefits by reviewing Facebook page design, exploring social media campaigns and adding the MyAccount Newsletter to the website.*

Q1: Company Response

Strengthening United Utilities' existing actions

Q1. Will you show, in plain English, which local improvements our bills are funding, what each stage will achieve and by when and how the results compare with your official pollution and sewage-spill targets?

Action requested	Action agreed by United Utilities	Timescale
1A. Provide clear, accessible updates on local projects	UU23A: New linked action under UU23[1]. Enhance local project information including project status and progress updates.	31-Mar-27
1B. Make company performance and progress easier to judge	UU23B: New linked action under UU23[1]. Improve access to customer-facing performance information through engaging content so it is easier to find, understand and track progress over time.	31-Jul-27
1C. Explain overground storm-storage schemes and wider rollout plans	UU16A: New linked action under UU16[2]. Refine information about storm overflow projects by using simple explanations and examples to help customers understand how schemes reduce spills and improve rivers.	31-Mar-27

This table sets out community members' requests alongside the actions agreed by United Utilities and their delivery timescales. These actions were proposed by the company and reviewed and refined through discussions with CCW to ensure they accurately reflect customers' concerns and the improvements they asked for.

[1] Action 23 - *Show year-on-year evidence that pollution incidents are reducing and infrastructure is improving across the website, email, leaflets and noticeboards.*
[2] Action 16 - *Update "The Big North West Upgrade" campaign stories to show where investment is already delivering improved services.*

Q2: Performance Review

Challenging United Utilities' performance and service delivery

Q2. Which areas will you tackle first, when will customers see lasting improvements and how will you demonstrate that our higher bills are delivering a more reliable service?"

Context from the session:

Members welcomed proactive leak detection and mains replacement, with some reassured about how bills were being spent. However, they wanted clearer targets, timescales and evidence of progress.

Members also raised conflicting smart meter app advice and concerns about water quality and interruption support. United Utilities acknowledged communication gaps and offered individual follow-up, but priority locations and timescales for resolving recurring supply and pressure problems remained unclear.

Existing activity context:

Leak detection, mains replacement, smart meter installation and home water audits were described as existing programmes. The question also referenced existing performance commitments. The additional requests concern understandable evidence of improvement, useful meter information and reassurance for affected households. Counts of repairs or installations alone do not establish that recurring service problems have been resolved.

New actions requested by community members:

2A. Explain leakage progress against clear targets and timescales

Use short visual updates and accessible communication channels so members can understand what is improving and when, without having to interpret technical reports.

Show the original leakage level, the reduction being sought and progress towards it in everyday language, using a clear timescale. Explain how detection technology, repairs and mains replacement contribute to the results.

2B. Give clear, consistent information about smart meters

Explain how smart meter data helps identify unusual water consumption and possible leaks, and what information households can currently access.

Ensure installers and customer service staff give consistent advice on which smart meter features are available in the United Utilities app and when new features will be introduced. This includes clarifying when the new 'smart meter visualisation' feature will be released.

Make it clear where households can seek help with unexpectedly high consumption or bills.

2C. Explain how recurring supply problems will be prevented and supported

Explain what is being done to reduce repeat supply interruptions and water quality problems, including what affected households should expect to improve.

Make local water quality results and advice easy to find on online resources and clearly signpost to the support available when households lose access to drinking water.

Q2: Company Response

Challenging United Utilities' performance and service delivery

Q2. Which areas will you tackle first, when will customers see lasting improvements and how will you demonstrate that our higher bills are delivering a more reliable service?"

Action requested	Action agreed by United Utilities	Timescale
2A. Explain leakage progress against clear targets and timescales	UU26: New action Provide new enhanced content to help customers access and understand information about leakage and the action being taken to reduce it.	31-Mar-27
2B. Give clear, consistent information about smart meters	UU27: New action Enhance customer communications around smart meters including the launch of a new water usage visualisation tool.	30-Jun-27
2B. Give clear, consistent information about smart meters	UU28: New action, additionally proposed by UU. Build and deliver updated training and support material to continue to develop front-line agents and installers knowledge on the new smart metering technology and consumption.	30-Jun-27

This table sets out community members' requests alongside the actions agreed by United Utilities and their delivery timescales. These actions were proposed by the company and reviewed and refined through discussions with CCW to ensure they accurately reflect customers' concerns and the improvements they asked for.

Q&A: Q3

Actions that our community would like United Utilities to commit to

Q3. How can you justify executive bonuses and allowances when service and environmental targets are missed, and what would cause these payments to be reduced or withheld?"

Context from the session

Members wanted to understand how executive rewards reflect performance and whether their bills fund those payments. Lou Beardmore, the CEO, said her pay was set by the company's board, and that missed targets had reduced her performance related earnings. Lou Beardmore said shareholders fund her pay, rather than water bills. Some community members found this reassuring but wanted the explanation shared more widely in plain English.

Follow up questions explored who pays shareholders and how investment is financed. Members supported wider communication of these explanations, rather than expecting households to consult stock-market disclosures or lengthy financial reports.

Existing activity context:

The CEO explained how executive pay is decided and said information on pay and performance is already publicly available. Members' additional requests were for an accessible explanation of those payment arrangements and the flow of money between bill payments, investment, executive remuneration and shareholder returns.

New actions requested by community members:

3A. Explain executive pay and the consequences of missed targets

Explain how executive pay is set and funded, which elements depend on performance and how missed targets affect payments.

Make the explanation accessible to ordinary bill payers, including clear examples of how the arrangements have operated.

3B. Explain shareholder returns and infrastructure funding

Explain how investment is funded beyond current bill income, who receives shareholder payments and how those returns arise.

Show how these financial arrangements relate to infrastructure investment and the value households receive, using clear language that distinguishes investment funding from payments to investors.

Q&A: Q3 Company Response

Actions that our community would like United Utilities to commit to

Q3. How can you justify executive bonuses and allowances when service and environmental targets are missed, and what would cause these payments to be reduced or withheld?"

Action requested	Action agreed by United Utilities	Timescale
3A. Explain executive pay and the consequences of missed targets	UU24A: New linked action under UU24. Develop customer information on executive pay so it is easier to understand how pay is linked to performance and customer outcomes.	31-July-27
3B. Explain shareholder returns and infrastructure funding	UU24B: New linked action under UU24. Add customer information on how investment is funded and the role of shareholder returns.	30-May-27

This table sets out community members' requests alongside the actions agreed by United Utilities and their delivery timescales. These actions were proposed by the company and reviewed and refined through discussions with CCW to ensure they accurately reflect customers' concerns and the improvements they asked for.

[4] Action 24 - *Improve website information showing where customer money goes, including price increases, investment, profits and executive pay, with links to the Annual Report.*

Q&A: Q4

Actions that our community would like United Utilities to commit to

Q4. What responsibility does United Utilities take for the decisions that brought us here and what will change so customers' money delivers lasting improvements?

Context from the session:

Members questioned why substantial investment was needed now and what responsibility United Utilities accepted for earlier decisions. The CEO acknowledged that the water system needed to catch up and described investment to address growth, climate pressures and ageing infrastructure.

Some members felt better informed, but accounts of frontline conversations revealed weaknesses: one had struggled to obtain an explanation for a large increase, while another had not been told that an affordability related bill cap could rise annually. Members wanted clear spending information and accurate advice that would help them understand and anticipate changes.

Existing activity context:

United Utilities described existing investment plans and ongoing customer research about bills. Additional actions from members included receiving accurate frontline explanations of bill increases from customer service staff and clear information about changes to financial support arrangements.

New actions requested by community members:

4A. Give clear, consistent explanations of bills and financial support

Note: This action will be delivered alongside Action 2A.

Explain why bills are rising and what improvements they fund, using everyday language and accessible formats across communication channels. Ensure customer-service staff consistently give accurate advice about individual bills and financial support, including when maximum payments can rise, so households know what to expect.

Existing Action Overview

Existing Action	Action Statement
UU16	*Update "The Big North West Upgrade" campaign stories to show where investment is already delivering improved services.*
UU17	*Increase awareness of investment benefits by reviewing Facebook page design, exploring social media campaigns and adding the MyAccount Newsletter to the website.*
UU23	*Show year-on-year evidence that pollution incidents are reducing and infrastructure is improving across the website, email, leaflets and noticeboards.*
UU24	*Improve website information showing where customer money goes, including price increases, investment, profits and executive pay, with links to the Annual Report.*

Attendance list

Lou Beardmore	CEO of United Utilities
Mike Gauterin	Customer and Technology Director of United Utilities
James Bullock	Regulation and Compliance Director of United Utilities
Nicky Taylor	Managing Director of Taylor McKenzie Research (TMcK) – Lead facilitator
Hilary Florek	Board Member at the Consumer Council for Water (CCW) – Chair
11x Community Members	Water Voice Community Members under United Utilities