Summary report

Autumn Accountability Session with Wessex 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 | Wednesday 4th November 2026
Report published: Friday 13th November

Community members challenged Wessex Water on **pollution and leakage**, seeking a **clearer picture of how investment and new technologies are helping to reduce both**. They wanted to understand where funding comes from, how spending is prioritised and what difference customers should expect.

The session covered two Performance Review questions, with no Action Plan Review as Wessex Water's current actions are progressing as expected. Discussion focused on the **additional investment** associated with the enforcement undertaking* and the **company's approach to detecting, repairing and preventing leaks**.

The Q&A explored alternative water sources, communication about restrictions and the benefits of research and innovation. The key discussion points, company responses and customer requests are outlined on the following pages.

Performance Review Q1: Pollution

Members wanted reassurance that Ofwat's pollution enforcement package would be funded by the company, rather than customer bills and that the money would be spent effectively to deliver measurable reductions in pollution.

Wessex Water confirmed that the £11 million package would be owner funded. The company accepted requests for clearer investment information, pollution trends and case studies to demonstrate results, with delivery timescales to follow.

Performance Review Q2: Reducing leakage and protecting future supplies

Members wanted leaks detected sooner, reported more easily and fixed more effectively. They welcomed household support but wanted evidence of water saved.

Wessex Water described additional resources, technology and mains replacement. The company agreed to improve information and explore reporting improvements and incentives, while explaining that technologies work together.

Q&A Q3: Alternative Solutions

Members questioned whether desalination could provide additional water supplies sooner than a new reservoir.

Wessex Water said it remained an option alongside quarries, water reuse and greater network connectivity. However, Wessex Water stated that desalination was not top of their list as other means are regarded as more environmentally friendly.

Q&A Q4: Communication

Members reported missing hosepipe ban messages, including where Wessex Water held their numbers.

The company acknowledged shortcomings. Discussion identified the need for more reliable messaging, a campaign to collect contact details and consideration of incentives.

Q&A Q5: Research & Innovation

Members asked how university partnerships and AI translate into practical benefits.

Wessex Water described research into water quality prediction, network performance and rainwater management, alongside customer engagement. Further questions covered cybersecurity and housing design..

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 Wessex Water Accountability Session held **on 4th November 2026**. The actions outlined reflect the improvements community members would like Wessex Water to make. These are community-led requests and do not represent confirmed commitments from the company at this stage. Wessex Water will create a formal action plan by **Monday 14th 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.

*this refers to the £11million shareholder funded enforcement package that Wessex Water had in 2025, following an investigation by Ofwat.

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Q1: Performance Review

Strengthening the company's existing actions

How will you prove that the investment required by the enforcement order is genuinely additional and delivering real reductions in pollution and storm overflow discharges?

Context from the session:

Members wanted **reassurance that Ofwat's pollution enforcement package would be funded by the company**, rather than customer bills and that the money would be **spent effectively** to deliver measurable reductions in pollution.

Wessex Water confirmed that the **additional £11 million** would be funded entirely by its owners. The company also described a separate £500 million investment programme to reduce spills across 143 storm overflows by 2030. It reported a **25% reduction in pollution incidents** over the past year, while acknowledging that performance remained below expectations and serious incidents still occurred. It also highlighted its **annually updated Pollution Incident Reduction Plan**, which had been made easier for customers to understand. Members questioned why pollution incidents had increased sharply in 2024 and why progress in reducing them had been slow, asking what could be learned from previous years with better performance.

Existing activity and planned improvements context:

W01* and **W02*** are recorded as delivered and cover clearer pollution plan information and a customer webpage and leaflet. **W04***, covering storm overflow investigations, remains in progress. **W14*** and **W15*** cover communication about investment benefits and financing. Members wanted clearer evidence of results alongside this information.

Actions requested by community members:

1A. Show how the £11m enforcement undertaking investment is delivering improvements

- Provide analysis showing how the additional investment agreed with Ofwat is directly linked to improvements in pollution and storm overflow performance.
- Make this accessible through a dedicated webpage or a section in the existing annual report.

1B. Provide a clearer breakdown of the £500 million investment programme

- Detail the projects covering the 143 storm overflows.
- Explain why these locations were selected.
- Set out the measurable improvements expected from each project.
- Explain how the £500 million is funded.
- Present the information **in clear, visual formats** that are easy to understand.

1C. Show that work is prioritised effectively and delivers value for money

- Explain how and why sites are prioritised for work to reduce pollution and spills.
- Set out the **investment figures** and agree **clear timescales** for delivery.

1D. Use new infrastructure to demonstrate the benefits of investment

- Use projects such as the new water recycling works near Saltford to show what customers are getting from the investment.
- Share **case studies** showing the improvements delivered.

Actions requested continued overleaf...

*See page 10, "Existing Action Overview", for the full existing action statements.

Q1: Performance Review

Strengthening the company's existing actions

How will you prove that the investment required by the enforcement order is genuinely additional and delivering real reductions in pollution and storm overflow discharges?

1E. Explain pollution trends and when performance will improve

- Publish a **graph** showing pollution incidents over time.
- Explain the **causes** of the increase in 2024.
- Provide a **clear timetable** for improvement.

1F. Explain what can be learned from the year with no serious pollution incidents

- Review **what contributed** to that performance.
- Explain **what has changed** since then, including how **external factors** (e.g., climate change) and changes in monitoring affect comparisons.
- Identify which **lessons** can still be applied and what **different measures** are needed now.

Company response:

Wessex Water broadly accepted the proposed actions as feasible, noting that **some information was already available but could be communicated more clearly**.

- **1A.** The company accepted the request for analysis and accessible reporting of outcomes, pointing to existing charts, trends and case studies. It did not explain how improvements from the £11 million package would be distinguished from wider investment.
- **1B.** The company said its Coasts and Rivers map and Storm Overflows webpage already provided much of the requested project detail.
- **1C.** The company explained that priorities were largely driven by sensitive watercourses, including beaches and inland bathing waters. It pointed to online information showing where investment was happening and by when, but did not provide site-level investment figures during the session.
- **1D.** The company agreed to share more case studies demonstrating investment benefits.
- **1E.** Analysis of the 2024 increase was available in company reports but could be made more accessible.
- **1F.** The company clarified that its previous zero figure referred to serious pollution incidents. It described investigations into causes, equipment to restart power automatically and work to reduce sewer blockages.

Q2: Performance Review

Challenging the company's performance and service delivery

How will you proactively reduce leakage in the short term and prevent it in the long term?

Context from the session:

Members wanted clearer evidence that additional resources and technology were helping to find leaks, speed up repairs and save water. Wessex Water described bringing leakage work into **one dedicated team, increasing repair resources by 15% and using technology to improve** detection (i.e. vacuum excavation, satellite technology and in sewer listening devices). The company reported finding around **1,000 leaks a month**, an increase of a third in recent months. It also outlined plans to replace **260 kilometres of water mains** between 2025 and 2030.

Members welcomed the free home checks and the **Big Leaky Loo campaign**, which offers a £50 contribution towards plumbing costs where leaks are found, but felt these needed **wider promotion**. They also wanted **simpler leak reporting, clearer updates on local work and earlier warnings** about potential leaks in their homes.

Existing activity context:

Existing actions cover smart meter installation to help identify leaks (**W08**) and a digital portal to help customers monitor their water use (**W09***).

W08* is marked as delivered, although the update notes that around 64,000 meters had been installed and rollout was continuing. **W09*** remains in progress. Members' requests build on these actions by seeking a clearer rollout timetable, earlier leak alerts and evidence of water saved.

Actions requested by community members:

2A. Explain how technology is tackling leaks and show how much water is being saved

- **Explain the technologies** used to detect and resolve leaks and the difference they make.
- **Publish results** alongside figures on resources and activity, showing how many litres of water are being saved.
- Keep the information **concise and easy to understand**, publishing it on the website and/or bills.
- **Include local results** on the website so customers can see the difference being made in their area.

2B. Make reporting leaks simpler

Make the reporting process **as quick and straightforward as possible**. Options discussed included:

- An app that automatically records the location
- WhatsApp
- Street-based QR codes.

Consider the council issue-reporting service highlighted by members as an example.

2C. Help customers understand the work and investment behind lasting repairs

- Explain what work is needed to resolve problems and prevent them happening again.
- Where this requires more time or investment, explain why and what benefits it will deliver.

2D. Assess feasibility of incentivising for leak reporting

- Consider offering a **points scheme or a reduction in bills** as incentive to encourage customers to report leaks.
- **Assess feasibility** and, if not practical, outline and publish clear explanation of reasons.

Actions requested continued overleaf...

*See page 10, "Existing Action Overview", for the full existing action statements.

Q2: Performance Review

Challenging the company's performance and service delivery

How will you proactively reduce leakage in the short term and prevent it in the long term?

2E. Provide a visible list or map of active issues

- Show **where** problems are, **how** they will be fixed and **how much** is being spent.
- **Publish** the information on the website and through bills.
- **Update it every six months**. Where work remains ongoing, acknowledge this and explain the current position.

2F. Promote household leakage support more widely

- Clearly **explain initiatives** such as free home leak checks and the £50 plumbing contribution.
- Use **advertising, bills** and the **website** to raise awareness.
- Share information **through trade professionals and DIY retailers** to reach customers beyond social media, highlighting how the £50 contribution could encourage customers to use a plumber to fix leaks.

2G. Give customers early warning and support to resolve household leaks

- Use smart-meter data, where available, to **alert customers to suspected leaks** before they receive a higher bill.
- **Explain how to check for a leak and access support**, including free home checks and the £50 plumbing contribution.
- **Follow up** to check whether the leak has been resolved and offer further guidance where needed.

2H. Provide a clear timetable for smart meters and digital services

Explain and proactively share with customers when smart meters will be rolled out and when associated digital services will become available.

2I. Work with organisations to tackle leaks on their premises

Work with organisations (such as hospitals) to identify and fix leaks within their estates?

Company response:

2A. The company agreed to communicate more clearly about what works and what does not. It explained that technologies work together, making it difficult to assign a precise water saving to each one.

2B. Online reporting is already available through the website. The company agreed to explore simpler reporting and consumer-facing options.

2C & 2E. The company accepted the need for clearer explanations of local work, while suggesting that channels other than bills could sometimes work better.

2D. The company agreed to assess whether incentives would be practical.

Company response continued overleaf...

Q2: Performance Review

Challenging the company's performance and service delivery

How will you proactively reduce leakage in the short term and prevent it in the long term?

2F. The company said the Big Leaky Loo campaign had just launched and was being advertised on radio. It agreed to explore wider promotion of this and free home leak checks, welcoming the suggestion of using trade professionals to raise awareness. Specific channels were not agreed.

2G. The company said it already used smart meter information and available contact details to send information and alert customers to suspected leaks.

2H. The company described rollout over the next five years, but a detailed timetable was not established.

2I. Existing work with schools and other business customers was highlighted.

Company response continued overleaf...

Q&A: Q3

Further questions about the company's services and accountability

With so much coastline in our region, why aren't you looking at desalination plants rather than spending years building a reservoir that isn't due to be completed until 2035?

Context from the session:

Members questioned whether **desalination could provide a quicker alternative to a new reservoir**. Wessex Water said it had **not ruled desalination out, but highlighted its high energy use and carbon impact**, explaining that it would not be the first option considered. Desalination remained in its long-term plans, alongside exploring other water sources and improving connections across its supply network. The questioner welcomed the explanation but felt climate pressures warranted giving desalination greater priority, including considering renewable energy to power it.

Existing activity context:

- **Desalination**: The company had not ruled it out but highlighted the cost, energy use and environmental impact.
- **Potential opportunities**: It was investigating whether sea water already used by large businesses could be treated through desalination.
- **Other water sources**: Quarries were being considered as an alternative.
- **Supply connections**: The company was considering extending the water grid introduced in 2016 to strengthen resilience.

Actions requested or developed during the discussion:

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

Q&A: Q4

Further questions about the company's services and accountability

Why wasn't I told directly and what will you change to make sure important updates reach customers before restrictions take effect?

Context from the session:

Members wanted **direct communication about the hosepipe ban**, rather than hearing through the news or friends. Wessex Water acknowledged that the questioner's experience was not good enough, and the member welcomed this honesty.

The company said it had **sent texts where mobile numbers were available**. However, another member reported that some customers had missed messages despite the company holding their numbers. Discussion therefore highlighted the **need to improve contact records and check why the messaging process had not reached all intended recipients.**

Existing activity context:

Existing action **W13***, marked as delivered, includes promoting the e-newsletter through the Autumn/Winter magazine. Wessex Water also described asking customers for contact details during routine contact and using email, social media, radio and TV.

Members' requests go further by seeking **more reliable direct communication** and **encouraging more customers to share their details**.

Additional actions requested by community members:

4A. Ensure important messages reach all affected customers

- Send general announcements to all customers to whom they apply, alongside targeted messages for specific areas.
- Ensure important updates reach customers before restrictions take effect.

4B. Run a campaign explaining why contact details matter

- **Encourage** customers to provide current phone numbers and email addresses.
- **Explain what important information they would receive** and why sharing their details would help.
- Run a **TV and radio advertising** to reach a wider audience.

4C. Assess incentives for sharing contact details

- Assess whether incentives could encourage customers to provide or update their contact information.
- If not feasible, outline and publish a clear explanations of reasons.

Company response:

4A. Wessex Water acknowledged that the reported experience was not good enough and that gaps in messaging needed attention. The cause of the missed texts was not established during the session.

4B. The company agreed to look at increasing contact coverage and accepted the request for a campaign explaining why sharing details matters.

4C. The company accepted the request to assess feasibility. No commitment was made to introduce an incentive.

*See page 10, "Existing Action Overview", for the full existing action statements.

Q&A: Q5

Further questions about the company's services and accountability

What practical improvements can customers expect from your research and innovation, including any plans to use AI?

Context from the session:

Members wanted to **understand how university research and new technology lead to practical improvements**. Wessex Water initially focused on **customer engagement** and **service improvements**. The questioner recognised their value but wanted **more detail on research and innovative projects** addressing wider water and environmental challenges, particularly through the University of Bath partnership. Follow up questions covered cybersecurity and working with housing developers to reduce water waste.

The company's explanation of existing activity and constraints:

Wessex Water described several areas of existing work:

- **University research:** Projects developed with the University of Bath include using AI and continuous monitoring to predict water quality. The company also described bids for innovation funding, including research into rainwater collection.
- **Customer experience**: The company uses Trustpilot feedback, including investigating ratings below three stars, to understand poor experiences and improve its processes.
- **Customer engagement:** Face-to-face sessions and the Young People's Panel help shape company materials and responses to business challenges, including AI and messaging.
- **Long-term planning:** Research and customer engagement inform the company's Strategic Direction Statement, which looks ahead to 2050 and beyond.
- **AI:** The company described its use in customer interactions, while emphasising the importance of retaining human contact. AI could also improve understanding of the network and help prevent problems such as pollution.
- **Cybersecurity and housing:** The company described cybersecurity as a priority and highlighted existing work with developers on water efficiency, reuse and drainage.

Additional actions requested by community members:

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

Existing Action Overview

Existing Action	Action Statement
W01	*Updating our Pollution Incident Reduction Plan to make it easier to understand and less technical for customers.*
W02	*Creating a dedicated webpage and a simple customer leaflet to explain our pollution reduction work.*
W04	*Complete our storm overflow investigations by 2027 to help identify future improvements while continuing existing environmental solutions.*
W08	*Install smart meters across the region to help identify leaks.*
W09	*Launch a digital portal for smart meter users to help monitor their usage*
W13	*Add information to the Autumn/Winter magazine on opting out of Royal Mail Door-to-Door and promote the e-newsletter for customers who prefer digital updates.*
W14	*Continue exploring new ways to demonstrate how investment is benefiting local communities.*
W15	*Continue improving mobile-friendly financing information across the website and other customer communications.*

Attendance list

Ruth Jefferson	CEO of Wessex Water
Ashley Lane	Director of Water Recycling at Wessex Water
Will Willoughby	Director of Water Supply of Wessex Water
Sam Hare	Senior Insight Manager at Taylor McKenzie Research (TMcK) – Lead facilitator
Rachel Onikosi	Independent Board Member for Consumer Council for Water (CCW) – Chair
11 x Participants	Water Voice Community Members under Wessex Water

Session transcript

CCW Chair: Good evening, everybody, and thank you for joining us tonight. My name is Rachel Onikosi and I'll be chairing tonight's session. I am one of CCW's board members. Tonight's session is part of our Water Voice programme. The purpose of Water Voice is simple but very important. It's to give customers a stronger, more direct voice in how Wessex Water performs, communicates and improves.

The session is about accountability. It is an opportunity for community members to question senior leaders from Wessex Water directly about the issues that matter most, what needs to improve and what will change as a result of this discussion.

This is not a complaints hearing or a technical inquiry. It is a structured, customer-led conversation focused on accountability, learning and agreeing clear, practical actions. As community members are aware, the topics we cover tonight have not been chosen by the company. They have been shaped by community members through the pre-task, briefing session, Spotlight research and wider voice discussions. This is your agenda.

I want to set a clear tone at the outset. We expect this to be a respectful but challenging discussion. Community members should feel very free to speak openly and honestly about their experiences and expectations. Equally, we expect clear and transparent responses from Wessex Water's senior leadership team.

This session is being fully transcribed and the agreed outcomes will be published. Wessex Water will also be expected to publish an action plan responding to the commitments made. Such transparency is key to what makes this process meaningful.

In terms of procedure, we'll take one person at a time, keep contributions focused and concentrate on forward-looking actions, what will change, by when and how customers will know.

I would now like to introduce our independent facilitator from Taylor McKenzie Research, Sam, hi Sam, who will guide the customer discussion and ensure all voices are heard. In terms of Wessex Water, Ruth, could you please introduce yourself?

Ruth Jefferson: Good evening all, hello, I'm Ruth Jefferson, I'm the Chief Executive at Wessex Water.

CCW Chair: Thank you, welcome, Ruth, thank you for joining. Ruth will be answering Question 1, Question 2 and taking part in a Q&A session. We also have Ashley in the room.

Ashley Lane: Hello, I'm Ashley Lane, I'm the Director of Water Recycling for Wessex Water.

CCW Chair: Thank you and welcome. Ashley will be answering Question 1. We have Will in the room.

Will Willoughby: Good evening, everybody, Will Willoughby, Director of Water Supply here at Wessex Water.

CCW Chair: Fantastic. Welcome, Will. Will will be answering Question 2 and getting involved in the Q&A session, and we should have Emma in the room.

Emma Baker: Hi, I'm Emma, I'm Director of Environment, Customer and Compliance.

CCW Chair: Thank you for joining, Emma. Emma will be getting involved in the Q&A session. Some housekeeping and points to note. Just to reiterate, one person speaks at a time. Community members, if you want to get involved at any point, please use the chat function or the reaction button. Everybody's contribution is equally valid whether you are directly affected by the issues covered tonight or otherwise. If you can please keep cameras on, particularly if you are speaking, mics to be muted if you're not speaking, and mobile devices off or on silent.

Session transcript

The company should answer the questions directly before moving into wider contexts.

Just to Wessex Water, so Ruth, Ashley, Emma and co, when you are answering the question, if I do have to interject because your answer's unclear or it's overly technical, off the topic or running over time, please forgive me but I will have to do it, just to make sure we stay on time. I hope I don't have to interject, but just a warning beforehand.

The actions will be typed live and checked with both community members and Wessex Water before we finalise the actions. Thank you again for joining. Let me hand over to Sam. Thank you.

TMcK Facilitator: Thank you, Rachel. Before we begin, I want to briefly explain how names and the transcript will be handled. In the room this evening, we'll use first names only. In the published transcript and the report, customer names will be anonymised. After the session, community members will have the opportunity to flag anything that they would like to be removed or further anonymised. For example, you state the road that you live in and later think, "maybe not," and you can get in contact with us and we can remove that.

The purpose of the transcript is to accurately reflect tonight's discussion and the actions agreed, and not to single any one individual out.

For the session tonight there'll be no action plan review question, as the current plan is progressing as expected. Instead, we have two new performance questions. Therefore, there'll be two main parts to tonight's session. First, we will ask two new performance challenge questions developed from the issues that community members prioritised during the briefing session and the pre-task and the Spotlight surveys they complete each month.

Secondly, we'll move on to a shorter Q&A where community members will ask additional questions that were also prioritised during the briefing session. For each of the two performance questions, we'll use the same accountability cycle. A community member will ask a question that's agreed during the briefing session. Wessex Water will have five minutes to respond. Community members will react to that response and identify what is clear, what is missing, and what still needs to be strengthened.

As Rachel mentioned, we'll be creating a live document which captures specific actions that Wessex Water are saying they're currently doing, what they plan to do in the future, as well as any actions that our community members want to put forward to Wessex Water to add to their action plan. Wessex Water will then have a short opportunity to explain if any of the proposed actions are not feasible and clearly state the reasons why.

During the Q&A part of the discussion, we will use a slightly lighter version of this process, so a nominated community member will ask the question, the company will respond, and the question asker and wider community can then follow up with additional questions. And, again, any additional commitments that are stated during this discussion will also be captured live.

That's the plan for tonight's session, but before we get started, it would be great if we could get all the community members to introduce themselves. So, just your name and the area that you live in would be amazing, and I've written your names down, so I'll pick on whoever's at the top of the list first, which is Community Member 1 please.

Community Member 1: Hello, I'm Community Member 1. I live in Trull, near Taunton.

Community Member 2: Hi, I'm Community Member 2 and I live in Poole in Dorset.

Community Member 3: Hi, I'm Community Member 3, and I live in Calne in Wiltshire.

Community Member 4: Hi, I'm Community Member 4, I live in a village between Melksham and Devizes, Wiltshire.

Session transcript

Community Member 5: Hi, my name is Community Member 5 but I go by Community Member 5 and I live in Bath.

Community Member 6: I'm Community Member 6 and I live in Chippenham, Wiltshire.

Community Member 7: I'm Community Member 7 and I live in Priorswood in Taunton.

Community Member 8: Hi, I'm Community Member 8. I live between Minehead and Taunton in Somerset.

Community Member 9: Hi, I'm Community Member 9, I live in Canford Cliffs next to Poole.

Community Member 10: I'm Community Member 10 and I live in Devizes.

Community Member 11: Hi, I'm Community Member 11, I live in Poole in Dorset.

TMcK Facilitator: Thank you so much. I'll pass back over to Rachel to introduce the first section.

CCW Chair: Thank you, Sam. We'll now move on to the new performance issue that community members chose to challenge Wessex Water on. This topic was prioritised for the pre-task and briefing session because community members wanted proof that investment required by enforcement orders was additional to existing funding and would deliver measurable reductions in pollution and sewage spills. Can I ask Community Member 8 to ask the question, please?

Community Member 8: Yeah, sure, and I think this question's going to Ruth and Ashley. The question is: the Ofwat enforcement order means significant investment now needs to be made to reduce pollution. We want to be convinced that this investment is genuinely on top of what is already funded through customer bills and shareholder investment, rather than existing investment being repackaged. We want clear evidence of where the additional money is coming from, what it will pay for and what measurable improvement customers will see over the next 12 months.

How will you prove that the investment required by the enforcement order is genuinely additional and delivering real reductions in pollution and storm overflow discharge?

Ruth Jefferson: Brilliant. Well, I will start if that's Okay?

CCW Chair: Ruth, apologies, just before the time starts, in responding please be as specific as possible about what is being done already, what will be improved and by when. To community members, please ensure you write a note down of the response and write down anything you think is unclear or was incomplete or not strong enough. Over to you, Ruth. The timer is on Sam's screen. Go ahead.

Ruth Jefferson: Thank you ever so much and thank you again for everyone joining this evening. We're going to do this with me and Ashley, who introduced himself. I think, Community Member 8, in your question, you are focusing on the Enforcement Undertaking, so maybe if I just give a bit of background. Back in 2020, Ofwat and the Environment Agency opened two investigations across the whole sector, and that looked various different issues, and we accepted that our compliance at some of our sites was not where it needed to be and, as a result, we agreed with Ofwat a package of undertakings is the official term, but basically promises, promises to do things.

And that package was about £11 million, and that is £11 million which I can absolutely confirm is not coming from customers at all. It is funded entirely by our owners and is additional to the investment that we were already putting in place to reduce pollutions. And Ashley can give you a little bit more detail about exactly what that is going towards funding and what we will see with that money.

But, more broadly, you're asking about pollutions and pollution performance, and I think it's

important to say that it's not where we want it to be. Whilst last year we reduced pollutions by 25%, that's still not enough, and, on top of that, we had serious pollutions as well. They're the kind of pollutions that cause damage or harm to the environment, and you really don't want to have those, and before, we've had zero, and that's where we need to get back to. So, there's a very, very detailed plan that Ashley can talk about, which sets out how we are going to bring those pollution numbers down.

And it really does matter to us, because we know it matters to our customers. It also matters to our people who work here who are also customers. So, we're super, super focused on how we turn our pollution performance around, and that's set out, and in fact last time we talked about a Pollution Incident Reduction Plan, which is a public-facing document, which we actually took away and turned into a bit more of a consumer, customer-facing document as well, and we have to produce that every year. But I'll stop there and let Ashley give you some more of the detail, I think, which is probably, can give you that confidence and how you will see that we're making improvements.

Ashley Lane: Thank you, Ruth. The £11 million package is split into three main areas. One of them is around drawing forward investment to reduce spills and pollutions that would have taken place beyond 2030, so that's being drawn forward over the next three and a half years, so that we will make those investments much earlier than we'd intended to before, and they'll be focused on the areas that will have the greatest impact on the environment and the greatest impact on the community.

One of the other areas is around working with customers and communities to be able to seal private networks. These are assets that we don't own but will have an impact on the amount of rainwater or groundwater that comes into our system, taking out capacity. That's the other part of it.

The other element then is a £1.1m rainwater management fund. This is working with customers and communities to be able to look at interventions that we can make so that communities can better use rainwater where it lands, because that's a really precious resource, and at the moment only 3% of the rainwater in the UK ends up being used for drinking water. The rest of it gets flushed, along with sewage, through to our sewage network. So, if we can remove that, create more capacity, that will reduce spills and reduce pollution events.

As Ruth was saying, Section 19[1] is only one element of the work that we're doing on pollutions and spills. The Pollution Incident Reduction Plan is a public document that details all the interventions that we're making, and that's published every, sorry, it's updated every single year, so it gives real clarity on the work that we're doing and the interventions, and the impact of the interventions that we're making.

And, on top of the £11 million, we've also got a significant investment programme between now and 2030. As an example, we're investing £500 million to be able to reduce spills over 143 overflows within our region, and all of that information is publicly available on our website on a really user-friendly map, so that it can show you exactly where we're making interventions. I noticed that a number of the community members were from Poole. We've got quite a large activity that's going on within Poole. Over 10 of those schemes are in the Poole region, looking at Egmont Road, looking at Sandbanks Pavillion, where we're making those interventions to be able to reduce spills in those areas.

CCW Chair: Thank you, Ashley, really appreciate that. Thank you, Ruth, of course. We're now going to pause and turn back to community members. This part is about testing whether what you've just heard fully answers the question or the concern that was behind the question.

1 Section 19 - Section 19 of the Water Industry Act 1991, where the company offers conditions that have to be legally met and Ofwat accepts them.

Session transcript

I'll now turn to Sam to lead that discussion.

TMcK Facilitator: Thank you, Rachel, and thank you for the response from Wessex Water. Community members, I'd like you to think back to what we discussed during the briefing session. We talked about wanting to see physical improvements, clear funding and obviously measurable reductions, including a clear focus on the £11 million Ofwat enforcement package. That being said, I'll turn to Community Member 8 first of all. You asked the question. How was the response?

Community Member 8: I thought it was a good response. It covered lots of the points that I was looking for. The one question that I would like to ask is, there was some great description there of the reports that are published on a yearly basis, but what I'm interested to know is do those reports have like an analysis section so we can see whether those investments are making real improvements, you know, is it working?

TMcK Facilitator: Okay, Community Member 8, so this section's not about introducing new questions, but to your point, how can we develop that into an action to make sure that Wessex Water are following up on that? You talk about having an analysis section, can we build an action based on that? What would that look like?

Community Member 8: Yes, I guess that would be either a section in the report or a different webpage on the website to just report those outcomes.

TMcK Facilitator: And what would that look like?

Community Member 8: I'm going to throw that out to the community while I have a think about it.

TMcK Facilitator: Absolutely, Community Member 8. Before we do open it up to the community, if anyone's got anything to add, either physically put your hand up or use the little react button so that I don't miss you. Community Member 9, I'll go to you first.

Community Member 9: I think what Community Member 8 is driving at is a desire to get more granularity from that answer. The first part on the £11 million was a little bit bitty really. I'm astonished that actually some of the £11 million was packaged up for spend in 2030 and beyond, that seems nonsensical, but it's great that it's brought forward.

I suppose the granularity I'd be looking for is around that more tangible figure of £500 million and the 143 projects. It's not a new question. It's really saying, within the context of this meeting, we can't really analyse that statement in any detail whatsoever. It's just like a headline on a newspaper article, and it would be really useful to see exactly what those 143 projects are, why they've been selected and what Wessex Water hopes to achieve with that investment.

TMcK Facilitator: And how do they show that to you?

Community Member 9: Well, they must know. They have decided to spend the £500 million on the 143 projects, so really all I'm asking for, on behalf of the community, is some transparency, or more transparency, about what those projects are and why those particular areas have been selected.

I mean living in Poole, great to know that there are 10 projects that have been selected, but when I think about Sandbanks Pavillion specifically, which is half a mile away from me, it's not a very big footprint. So, I'm thinking, "Well, that doesn't really sound overly significant in terms of a project to divert rainwater into drinking water." I appreciate that every little helps but, in the absence of knowing the rationales, it's hard to really make an intelligent assessment.

TMcK Facilitator: Okay, Community Member 9, could an action then be to give you that -

Community Member 9: Yes.

TMcK Facilitator: - the reasons why they've selected ones over the other, and the decision making, so you have that granularity?

Community Member 9: And how they came up with the £500 million and where is the £500 million from? And so on and so on.

TMcK Facilitator: Absolutely, and we can put that forward, definitely, and to Community Member 8's point as well, when she's talking about I guess more of a customer summary than a big plan, as they talked about, on their website like Community Member 8 had mentioned before.

CCW Chair: Sam, just a quick question to Community Member 9, if I may. Community Member 9, how would you like to see that information presented? Because bearing in mind that you might want to see it in one particular way, but for the wider community outside of this room, how do you think it should be packaged for the community in the Wessex Water area?

Community Member 9: Well, obviously I'm a segment of one, everyone is different, but I'm very visual, so I like to see charts. I hate pie charts, incidentally, but I like bar charts and I like to see trend lines and so on. So, I guess my, perhaps a stimulus might be looking at all of the charts that have been produced in relation to the mid-term elections of the US. I found those incredibly helpful understanding the why and how of Trump being wiped out, and I think there's probably a similar way that Wessex could present its information.

CCW Chair: Okay, that's helpful, thank you.

TMcK Facilitator: Thank you, Community Member 9. Anyone else want to jump in here? Community Member 10?

Community Member 10: Yes, just about that Wessex Water have committed to a measurable reduction in pollution incidents. I notice from their graphs that there has been a real spike in pollution incidents from wastewater assets in 2024, and reversing this appears to be slow, as incidents in 2025 are still higher than they were in 2023, and double that of 2021.

So, I'm just really asking, you know, is there some reason why there was a spike? It seems that we've gone up and up and up with these incidents and, in order to spend money, why are we spending money to get back to something in 2021? Is there a reason why we had this spike and it's double, the incidents are double what they were in 2021?

TMcK Facilitator: Okay, Community Member 10, what could we get Wessex Water to commit to then, based on that?

Community Member 10: Well, first of all I'd like to know why it happened and how quickly they are going to reverse this so that they're not spending money on getting back to the outflow, the pollution incidents in 2021. That needs to be reversed really quickly, otherwise we're paying money to get back to somewhere where we were in 2021 and then trying to make things better from there. We're five years on. Things should be better than 2021.

TMcK Facilitator: Definitely, and I think what you're talking about is being able to see measurable outcomes, you can see that a difference is being made if pollution is going down. So, I guess how can Wessex Water show you that, that they are improving or not, in that case?

Community Member 10: Well, I mean they're going to show us that they're improving in a graph. I'm also interested in what caused the spikes and how quickly they're going to deal with that going forward to get back at least to 2021.

TMcK Facilitator: Okay, so more than just a graph.

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The information behind the graph, essentially, and what they're going to do going forward?

Community Member 10: Yes.

TMcK Facilitator: Thank you so much, Community Member 10. Anyone else want to jump in here? Community Member 4?

Community Member 4: I think it was Ruth that mentioned that spillages were at zero at some point. I'd just be interested to know when that point was, and the best practice that could be learnt from that point, and or what has changed in order for it go from a nominal notion of number of zero up to quite significant numbers.

TMcK Facilitator: Okay, so how do we package that into an action, Community Member 4? That they look at that year for best practice?

Community Member 4: It's twofold. Look at that year for best practice, and then for me it's about where the investment has gone, and is that being reflected with better practice to decrease the numbers?

TMcK Facilitator: Absolutely, Community Member 4, thank you. During the briefing session you also mentioned about identifying worst performance spill sites. It was covered a little bit, but was it covered enough for you based on what you were talking about during the briefing session?

Community Member 4: I think in the briefing session I was just aware that there is this huge envelope and umbrella of spillages, and people see it in a local area, in a river or whatever, but as an overall thing, it just seems to be a huge number. And for me it would be a simple thing to strip it right back and say what are the worst 10% offending sites, tackle those first with an agreed figure over an agreed time. Rather than just seeing it as a whole, you could address one spillage in one area or across the entire Wessex Water region, and that could have an impact, but it's just going to impact and then reflect back, not have a better impact.

TMcK Facilitator: And I guess that links to Community Member 9's point as well that the justification of why they're focusing on one area over the other?

Community Member 4: Yeah.

TMcK Facilitator: So that links the two. Community Member 7, did you have something you wanted to say?

Community Member 7: I put my question in the chat.

TMcK Facilitator: Do you want me to read it out?

Community Member 7: Would you, please?

TMcK Facilitator: Yeah of course. Community Member 7 was wondering if Wessex Water could be clear and simple on how they plan to improve pollution and get that close to zero, so what exactly will they do, in clear, simple terms. I guess that's a communication piece there, of how they plan on improving it, similar to what Community Member 10 was saying earlier. Thank you so much, Community Member 7. Anyone else want to jump in here? Community Member 9 again.

Community Member 9: Just a bit of nuance. Was the zero a best practice year or actually was it just like any other year? But since year zero the infrastructure has become even more clapped out, and the climate change has got even worse and will get worse with the El Nino effect. So, it'd be interesting to zero in on was it accidental or best practice?

TMcK Facilitator: Okay, so they can look into that when they're assessing what happened in that year to look for best practice.

Community Member 9: Yeah.

TMcK Facilitator: Community Member 8, you've popped something in the chat. Do you want to share it?

Community Member 8: Yeah, just wondering if the new water recycling site that you've invested in, I think it's in Saltford, near Bath, whether that might be a useful way of showcasing some of those stats, so you know, in a year's time or a couple of years, how has that investment, how has that particular plant helped better processing of wastewater around Bath, and how much has that actually reduced pollution that would have otherwise gone and been released into the rivers in Bath? It might be useful for us there, you know, an ongoing case study of how that is performing.

TMcK Facilitator: Yeah, Community Member 8, that's an action in itself there, and I saw Emma from Wessex Water nodding along there. I think it was Emma or was it Ruth? My apologies. That's a really good point, Community Member 8, thank you so much for sharing, using a case study to show that. Anybody else want to jump in here? Community Member 3, I'm going to come to you if that's okay? Just based on the briefing session, you were talking about evidence of environmental improvements. Was that covered for you from what Wessex Water responded?

Community Member 3: I think so. I think that was clear for me. I'm happy with that.

TMcK Facilitator: Does anyone else have anything to add before I share the actions that we've been discussing so far? All good with you as well, Rachel? All good for me to share the actions?

CCW Chair: All good, yeah, please do.

TMcK Facilitator: When Wessex Water were responding to our question about pollution, there were lots of things that they were saying they're currently doing and that they will do in the future, so what I'll focus on just now is the ideal water company response, so what you as community members wish that they heard Wessex Water speaking about during the response, and hope that we can get it integrated into the action plan following this session.

The first point was to provide an analysis showing how Enforcement Undertaking investments directly link to improvements, for example, a dedicated webpage or section within the existing annual report.

Another action, to provide more granular detail on investment figures, so publish a clear breakdown of the £500 million investment programme, and this will detail what each of the 143 projects are, why those specific locations were selected, what measurable improvements are expected from each, how that £500 million is funded, and present data in a visual, easy-to-digest format. Community Member 9 came up, said, and the US mid-term election results noted as a reference point.

Another action, to ensure prioritisation process around the tackling of leaks is efficient and delivers value for money for customers, so agreed investment figures and agreed timelines.

Another action, using newly developed infrastructure, for example, new water recycling sites near Saltford to showcase the return on investment for customers.

Another action, to publish a graph showing pollution incident trends over time, with the clear causes of the 2024 spike, and a clear timeline for improvement.

And finally, look at the year where serious pollution incidents were at zero and use that as best practice, and explain what has changed since then to cause the increase.

I'll turn back over to community members.

Now that I've read through the actions that have been discussed so far, I want you to think if anything is missing, anything needs strengthened, or if we need to add anything at this point before we move over to Wessex Water for final comment. Does anyone have anything they wish to add here? I'll take the silence as a no. We're good to move on. I'll pass back over to Rachel.

CCW Chair: Thank you. Before we finalise these actions, Ruth, can I give you and your colleagues five minutes to speak and highlight any commitments that you believe are not feasible or currently, as written, they just won't be workable, so could you just talk to us about that please?

Ruth Jefferson: Of course. I don't think there's anything there that's not feasible or that we can't commit to do, and in fact some of it is probably already there but it could be developed further and be better. So maybe it's helpful if I just perhaps go through some of the comments that came up in response.

I think, Community Member 8, you were saying about having some analysis and trends and a webpage with all the outcomes. That's very easy to do. That report I talked about, this Pollution Incident Reduction Plan, it's full of charts, I like a chart, like Community Member 9. It's got all the trend analysis, where we were, where we're going to, and how we plan to get there. It also includes lots of case studies, which I think is probably easier for customers to understand, so we should probably look to amplify those and share them in different formats as well, so when we do that, not only that customer summary that we do of the full plan but also draw out some of those case studies.

And I love the idea of Saltford, because what we've done with the Saltford case study is we've talked about the programme, the upgrade, how it's going to treat more wastewater from the city of Bath and how it's helping growth, but it's also going to reduce spills, so we should be tracking that and showing how that's working over the year. I thought that was a great bit of feedback there, so we'll take that one away.

Community Member 9, you talked about, as well as your love of charts, you talked about having that granular detail on how and where we're spending money, and that is actually on our coast and rivers map, and also on our storm overflow page, so you can see where it is we're investing and by when.

In the current period, a lot of that is driven by sensitive water courses, so beaches, hence there's so many in the Poole area, because you've got those coastal locations, or inland bathing waters, for example, but we use that map, perhaps again we should amplify that and do some case studies around it, particularly as we start delivering some of these improvements, so that communities can see where that investment is going and what actual outcomes are being generated.

I think, Community Member 9, you talked about turning rainwater into drinking water. That programme's actually about spill reduction. It's about making sure that there are fewer spills coming from our storm overflows, less about taking the rainwater and turning it into drinking water, but I still say we do need to manage rain better where it lands.

Community Member 10, you talked about the spike. Again, that trend analysis is in our reports and we could do a better job at explaining the changes. Some of it, this is not an excuse, it's a reason, it's around weather, and where you see some of those named storms and extreme extremities in weather, which does have an impact on incidents. There is also an awful lot more that is monitored, so we are seeing those incidents and reporting those incidents as pollutions. So, the trends need to come down.

We also, I think it was Community Member 4, you talked about that year where we had zero spills, it was zero serious pollutions. Those are the ones that actually have an impact on the environment. As I said, we've done it before in 2024, and I think it was in 2019 that we last had zero.

So, we have done it before, but what we do with every pollution, those that have an impact and even those that don't have an impact, and this is set out in our plan, is we do real deep dive root cause analysis, what's caused it, what do we now need to do to fix it, where do we need to do it elsewhere? And that actually gives us focus on where the investment needs to be made.

For example, we had lots of pollutions that were caused by power failures, so we made some changes to our assets, so that power, when the power slightly blips, it doesn't go off completely, but just turns off for a moment or two, we've put in some kit that now allows that power to automatically restart. That's really helped reduce some of those pollutions caused by power.

Blockages, still a real area for us, where pollutions are caused by blockages, so we amplify the amount of work we do with our communities around what you should be flushing down the loo, for example, but to help that we've also rolled out lots and lots of in-sewer monitors. We'll have 19,000 by the end of this five-year period, and those in-sewer monitors are telling us where things are happening before they become a problem, and we call those our good catches. We've had hundreds of good catches in this year alone, where the AI technology is saying, "There's something going on in this sewer, you need to get out there and fix it."

Those are the kind of things that we're doing that are helping to drive those pollution numbers down. I think we just need to do more communicating of that, and explaining what impact it's having and explaining where we are trying to get to. And I think all of the things you've put in your actions are fine with us, because I think they just help us to communicate that story. I'm just down looking if I haven't answered all the questions.

Community Member 7 wanted clear and simple to reduce to zero, we can do that. I think Community Member 9 asked about that zero year again. That was a particular year where we didn't have any serious pollution incidents. I was talking to the Environment Agency earlier today, and I said, "With all of these incidents, I wish it was a common feature that we could just fix once and it would stop them," but it's a number of combinations of different factors, but we have to learn from each one and then make the right and appropriate interventions to stop them happening again.

Saltford I covered. Anything else? I can't see the actions anymore, they've disappeared, otherwise I could just double check that I haven't missed any.

TMcK Facilitator: Sorry, I'll put them back on.

Ruth Jefferson: So, we can do the graphs, we can do the serious pollution incidents and what's changed since. We can do some case studies. I think everything there is fine by us. I think we just need to agree some timelines, don't we?

CCW Chair: This one doesn't have time allocated to it. I noticed at the last session, we did have allocation – is there a reason for that, Sam? Did we make different decisions about whether we would set out timescales on this session or that would be done later? Remind me, I'm not sure.

TMcK Facilitator: That will be done when the action plan has been fed back from Wessex Water. CCW will work directly with Wessex Water to come up with the timelines.

CCW Chair: Which makes sense, absolutely.

Ruth Jefferson: Brilliant, okay, fine.

CCW Chair: That's good, so we've agreed the actions arising from our new challenge question. This will be added to the action plan as suggested, and CCW will work with Wessex Water to sort out timescales of delivering those actions. We will now move on to the second performance issue that community members chose to challenge Wessex Water on.

Session transcript

This topic was prioritised for the pre-task and briefing session, because Wessex Water missed its leakage target, and community members wanted leaks detected sooner, fixed faster and prevented in order to protect future water supplies. Can I ask Community Member 5 to ask the question please?

Community Member 5: You've missed your leakage target, and the community members want to see a more proactive approach to tackling leaks. That means making leaks easier to report, quicker to fix, using smart metering and other technology to detect problems sooner and investing in the network to prevent them in the future. How will you proactively reduce leakage in the short term and prevent it in the long term?

CCW Chair: Thank you, and just before I invite Ruth and Will to answer the question, again please be specific about what you're doing already and how improvements will be made and by when. Community members, please make a note of the response. I can see Community Member 7 is ahead of us and she's asked a question already in the chat. We'll come to those questions later, Community Member 7. Over to you, Ruth and Will, thank you.

Ruth Jefferson: Thank you. I think I've already spoken about one area where we need to improve on pollutions, and this is the other one. We are acutely aware that our leakage target was not met and that we need to get better, and leakage is something that, you know, we all need to save water and use water wisely, but we also need to prevent it from leaking out of our network, so that is something that we are focusing on.

This summer has been, as we all know, the hottest on record, and it doesn't help when you have very, very dry weather, because the ground moves and the pipes fracture, so actually our leakage position is worse than it was. We've got a big amount of work to get back on track, and that means that we have to do a number of different things, from the basic sort of find and fix which sounds easy but is more complicated than one might sound, to also using technology better. But perhaps if Will might give some colour to some of the activities he is doing in his water supply area, to make sure we're focusing on leakage.

Will Willougby: Thank you, Ruth, and good evening, everyone. To start, I've been brought in with a very clear mandate from Ruth that it is not acceptable, the position that we're in, and we have to make inroads into the performance that we see in front of us.

Very quickly, we've restructured how we approach leakage across the supply business. We've brought in one structure that focuses on leakage solely, so there's no distractions whatsoever. We saw through the summer, as Ruth has explained, there are some extreme challenges within the supply area of our business, and that was distracting from the focus. So, we've now brought all of the leakage activity into one group to focus on that solely.

Now, there's two areas, and I appreciate we want to look at the short and long term so we'll touch on that shortly, there's two areas we want to focus on, and that's what we need to do across our network and what we can do with our customers to support them, because customer leakage does form a large part of our leakage figure, so we need to work with our customers as well.

As I said, we've introduced the new structure. We are ramping up our find numbers. We're up to finding 1,000 leaks a month as it stands now, so we've really, really improved that number by a third in recent months. And then the fix side of things, we've increased the resource by 15%, and that's moved into the engineering side of our business to work alongside the engineers and unlock the innovations that are used in that area of the business, to speed up our approach and speed up how we operate. That's using technology where we can pull new pipes in without excavations, we can use vacuum excavators that are basically large vacuums that pull the ground out and speed up our approach to deliver that.

We're also looking at technologies across the find element, so we're working with partners to look

at satellite usage to pinpoint where those leaks may be, so then our experts can then narrow down and work intensely in the areas that are pinpointed by the satellite imagery that we're provided, speeding up the find, because that is a huge element to the leakage at the moment, is how long it takes, so if we can speed that up, that will reduce that number.

We're also working with our customers, looking at how we can support them to reduce the leakage impact. We do free home checks where we go in, working with the customers to help them locate leaks within the property. We can support fixing them, dripping taps, leaking loos etc, and we can reduce the impact of leakage but also the impact of their bill.

We've just launched the Big Leaky Loo Fix campaign across the region, where we're encouraging our customers to look for those leaks in the toilet which would normally go unnoticed because they run down the back of the pan, we can support with them, and we contribute £50 towards plumbing costs should any leaks be found. We can help support our customers to do that and there's some significant savings that they can make financially as well. There's lots of other products that we would provide to our customers to help them find and fix their leaks as well.

In terms of technology across our network, we've added another 1,000 devices that are out listening to the network, we've increased that to 10,000, so they're strategically placed across our network at locations, and they're listening for a leakage and they can pinpoint our teams to the right area.

And then the long-term focus is about asset replacement, asset renewal, and we've got a programme over the five years from 2025 to 2030 to replace 260 kilometres of our water mains to help with that longer-term position.

CCW Chair: Thank you, Will. Just one question from me, very quickly. You've mentioned quite a few improvements you're making. What will customers experience differently? What will they feel? What will they see? How will they know those changes are actually taking place? Can you give an example for the customers in the room, please, for me?

Will Willoughby: Of course. You should see a lot more activity out in your streets. You should see our vans and our people moving around the areas where we see the most water stress. We've got areas up in the north, around the Melksham area, obviously recently with the challenges that we've seen across the Taunton area as well, we would see much more significant activity around there. But also, then the engagement with our customers, the communications that will be coming out to advertise our campaigns that will be landing on the customers' doors and on social media and alike. So, you'll see lots more traffic from us visibly as well as communications-wise.

CCW Chair: I was going to ask about visible leaks too.

Ruth Jefferson: Yeah, I was going to say visible leaks. So, the thing they should see is no visible leaks which is actually probably a plea, you know, we do rely on customers calling in these leaks. As Will knows, I love to call in a leak even when they're not in our area, and then he tells me that it's not our leak. But actually, customers calling this in allows us to go and explore, investigate and fix. So, what customers will see is less visible leaks, and they are more visible in the dry weather conditions than when it gets wet. But yeah, any customers who can help us would be great.

CCW Chair: Fantastic. Back, Sam, over to you. Apologies.

TMcK Facilitator: Thank you, Rachel, and thank you so much, Wessex Water, for your response here. This question had, I guess, two sides to it, how can we see improvements in the short term and also the long term, which is exactly what we discussed during our briefing session. If you have anything to input, either put your hand up as a react, or physically, but I'll come to Community Member 5 first of all. Thank you so much for asking the question there. How was the response for you?

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Community Member 5: The response had information around seeing improvements, and there's a new structure and new technology. However, I think we would still want an explanation around that in a sense of, okay, so we have a new technology that's listening, but how's that actually affecting us? Is that the most effective change you've had, because obviously you said you've had, your numbers have gone up to, sorry, I can't remember the exact number, like thousands, is that from the listening, is that from different technology? What technology is being used that's giving us improvements that we're going to, as customers, be the ones that see?

Because you were talking about improvements, but then we kind of came back to a reactive point in the sense of you're fixing them when people report it or someone has a problem at their home, you rely heavily on people reporting it. So my question I want to understand is what technology is coming in, what smart meters or improvements are coming in so that if a leak is happening, you guys can detect it and then contact the customer and be like, "We've detected a leak at your home, this is the next action," or "We've detected a leak in that local area, this is our next action," rather than someone having to report it to you guys, so more proactive rather than reactive is what I'm trying to understand.

TMcK Facilitator: Of course. How do we turn that into an action? I guess there's a couple there, the first one being surrounding what technology they're using and why they're using it and what it's achieving. How can we make that into an action?

Community Member 5: I guess just a bit of a, not a detailed explanation, because we might not be able to understand that, but more explanation on the technology being used and why it's more effective, so if there is new listening technology, new AI technology, new smart meters, what you're using and what this technology does. Listening technology helps x amount of leaks, AI helps x amount of leaks, smarts meters help reduce x amount of leaks. It's just knowing what technology is having what effect and so where we could, again, maybe some more charts we can look at around it.

TMcK Facilitator: Thank you, Community Member 5, that's a really good point, and where would you expect to get that information?

Community Member 5: I think for me it would probably be website and possibly bills as well.

TMcK Facilitator: Thank you so much, Community Member 5, and thanks again for asking the question. Community Member 11, you've got your hand up. I'll go to you next.

Community Member 11: Yes, hi, I know I mentioned in the session before this about reporting leaks, I know I said about calling in leaks, and living in BCP[2], they've got the easy-report pothole system. I like reporting leaks myself because I hate water leakage, this is quite a big thing for me. So yeah, I just think maybe an action, is there anything we can do, Wessex Water could do to make reporting easier and as foolproof as physically possible? Humans, we are, dare I say, lazy at times, and so we want the easiest possible way of doing it. If it took me one minute to report a leak, that's better than having, I don't know, doing it another way. Literally push a button, leak's reported, done, I think maybe would encourage more people.

TMcK Facilitator: Perfect, Community Member 11, okay, what does that look like then? What's the ideal reporting a leak scenario for you?

Community Member 11: Again, I think I said a very similar thing last time, which was, dare I say, another app on my phone. If there was an app on my phone, I mean I'm never without my phone, it's literally next to me the whole time, so I would just push a button on my phone, the leak is reported, it's like a geo stamp, and Wessex Water go, "Thanks for that," and they can come out straightaway.

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I literally walk past, there's a leak there, maybe take a photograph of the leak. I have walked past a couple of leaks before and they're coming out of the ground, literally I've taken a photograph of it, then gone on and reported it, but an app, bang, bang, bang, done. That might be very, very useful.

TMcK Facilitator: We can definitely put that forward and we can hear back from Wessex Water about whether or not they think something like that's possible. If it's possible for your potholes then hopefully it's a same one-click scenario for your leaks as well. Thank you so much, Community Member 11, that's a fantastic action. Community Member 7, over to you next.

Community Member 7: Well, kind of off Community Member 11 and Community Member 5 and what I put in the chat, with Community Member 11's thing - I know that Westminster Council, when I used to live there, reporting any issues they do have a, take a photo of it and that sends exactly where it is, on an app, done, just as Community Member 11 has described. So, the technology is out there. It just obviously needs to be adapted by Wessex Water, so yeah, it's there for that.

And what Community Member 5 was saying and what I've put in the chat, where there actually is a problem that they're addressing, whether that's pollution or leaks, having it listed - what the problem is and, in simple terms, how do they propose to fix that problem. Because obviously there's not one fix for all problems, it's just spelling it out, this is the problem, this is how we're going to fix it. And just in very simple terms, and it's broken down ever so simply, "That's how we propose to fix it."

Where there may be more complications and it'll take a little bit of time, or they need to develop more technology, then again explain that. But it's being very clear and simple in what the problem is, how do we fix it. And that's really it, so they can be held to account. They've said that's how they're going to fix that problem, do it, and then report, "Yes, we've done this," and it's an automatic thing that they do when that problem arises again, or they've fixed it forever, that sort of thing. Just very clear and simple.

TMcK Facilitator: So, I guess pulling all the information from all these massive documents that are probably somewhere on their website, to really make it customer facing, just a clear, what's happening, what are you doing, what's the outcome?

Community Member 7: Exactly, very simple and clear.

TMcK Facilitator: Where would you want that? Where's that going?

Community Member 5: Probably similar to Community Member 11 or Community Member 5, I can't remember who said, probably on the website and the bill, because they're the two places that people would necessarily be looking, and also have it not hidden away somewhere. Have it really easy to spot when you go onto the website and on the bill [overtalking 00:56:33]

TMcK Facilitator: And the things you're mentioning are things that can change over time, so how often would you want them to be updated? How regularly do you want either to receive the updates or be reading about the updates on their website?

Community Member 7: Well, I mean because I'm on a meter, I get my bill every six months, so possibly on that sort of timescale, which I think is quite fair, because some things take a little bit longer than others to do, and even if there isn't an update to say, "We're still working on this, don't fear, we haven't forgotten, we're still working on it," but at least actually having that there so you know they're still working on it, they're aware that it's taking longer than expected, but you still know that they are actually working on it. I think every six months is probably quite a fair update time.

TMcK Facilitator: Absolutely and we'll pop that down in the action and see what Wessex Water

come back with. Thank you so much, Community Member 7, that's a really good point. Community Member 2, I'll pass over to you now, please.

Community Member 2: I was wondering about reporting the leaks, whether you can use, because some companies use WhatsApp, and I think that rather than someone downloading a different app, most people use WhatsApp, so I wondered if it's possible to, when you go to report a leak, rather than having to ring, you can click the number and just send a picture and where it is. I thought that might be quite a user-friendly option.

TMcK Facilitator: Have you used anything similar to that before?

Community Member 2: Yeah, I use it for quite a lot of different companies to get in contact with them. I find it works quite well and you don't have to wait around for responses. They just get round to it when they can.

TMcK Facilitator: Lovely, Community Member 2, thank you so much. Community Member 3?

Community Member3: I'm sort of going on the back of what Community Member 2 and Community Member 11 have said. In terms of thinking outside the box, I know sometimes it can be, you know people are lazy or they're busy, and finding the time to report leaks, if they're in a rush, doing the school run or something like that, it might be something that slips their mind. And again, with downloading apps and stuff, that can be a faff.

So I wondered if it might be something as simple as having like a QR code on each street that they service, I'm not sure, and then you may be able to just open your camera and report it that way, and it's like a unique QR code for each street, and that way people don't have to download apps or find a phone number or go on WhatsApp, that sort of thing. I just think it's quite a nice easy way of taking a picture with the QR code and then it's that site and that location.

TMcK Facilitator: Perfect. That's a lovely idea, Community Member 3. We can put that in and they can let us know the feasibility of something like that. Thank you so much. Community Member 8, you popped a comment in the chat in terms of drought causing my pipes to fracture, what research is being done into better pipe and infrastructure materials that are more climate resilient, to save pipes rupturing again over several years of warmer weather? Community Member 8, thanks for that comment there. What would we want Wessex Water to be doing there then?

Community Member 8: It might be what I'm asking might be completely impossible, but I know from previous sessions that we've discussed how Wessex Water work with Bath University to look at future infrastructure of products, and I'm just wondering, if things are fixed and that material isn't resilient to future conditions, whether you just open up that rupture again. And I'm just wondering whether it would look like something on the bill, a fact on the bill, "Here's how many pipes we've replaced this year, we've also been working with the University of Bath and looking at these different materials, and we'll be trialling them out in x number of years to see if that will provide a solution for the future."

It might just be a little fact like that, just to show that they're addressing the problem but also looking to future proof it as well. It might be completely impossible and there just might not be the magic material, kryptonite material out there, but at least interesting to hear.

TMcK Facilitator: Yes, definitely, Community Member 8, and it's for Wessex Water to let us know if it is something that is possible, and I guess that links to Community Member 7's point as well about having, right, what's the problem and what's happening and what are you trying to do to fix it, and then what's the outcome and what's the update, so that would tie in well with Community Member 7's point as well. Thank you, Community Member 8.

Community Member 6, I'm going to bring you into the conversation if that's okay.

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You talked a lot about the money side of things and where they're getting their investment from and things like that during the briefing session. What do you want to add here? Or it can be an entirely different point.

Community Member 6: Well, it was an entirely different point actually, because it's what Will maybe said. What made my ears prick up, well, it's to do with money, because they said they contribute £50 to plumbing costs if they find a leak, and I thought, "Why hasn't this been communicated clearly to us?" because I think there'll be lots of people who'll be very interested if they knew that, because if they can't find a leak, then they won't pay their £50, but if they do, they will, so there's nothing to lose for the customer, there's only something to gain and it's a win-win.

I think they've come up with a really good idea there, but the thing that's missing is the communication. So, I think the action there is for them to be able to communicate that clearly to us on the touchpoints as usual, bills, the website. I mean dare I say it, they could even have a small advertising campaign as well, a good old-fashioned advertising campaign. Yeah, why not, and just communicate that, because I think they've come up with some good ideas and this actually sounds positive, which I was surprised at. But I think they need to communicate some of their good ideas better, and that's one specific example.

TMcK Facilitator: Thank you, Community Member 6. Back over to you, what does the ideal communication look like for you?

Community Member 6: Well, it's different for everybody, isn't it? We're all different personalities leading different lives. But say with the leaks, for example, talking about communicating via WhatsApp, anybody over the age of 60, would they be at home with this way of doing it? So, it's what I said earlier, just the normal touchpoints, because I do read things and I do read messages, if they sent me a message that came through or on the bills, or on the website. But it would be good if they did advertise this perhaps on the radio or on the telly or something like that.

I know it costs a lot of money, though, because this is what it comes down to, overall, all the questions really, it's where's the money coming from for this, because I know they've got a finite amount, like any company, not just water companies, everybody. And when, I think it was Will, talking about the structure and all the improvements, etc, it sounds fantastic, but it sounds very expensive, and there's got to come points where they've used up their money. I've gone off point really there.

TMcK Facilitator: Not all, Community Member 6. I've got the point about communicating their strategies better with customers so that they know, for example, the £50 plumbing cost -

Community Member 6: Because what's in it for me?

TMcK Facilitator: But then is there an action there about how they manage your worries surrounding how much money they have to spend on things and how they're spending their money?

Community Member 6: I think it's impossible really. And going back to the other one as well, because you said about the £11 million going in, and we said, "Where's that money come from?" and they said it's coming from the owners, the owners are going to fund it. I'd like to know how much money they've got overall and how they are prioritising it in terms of the problem and the amount of money that they've assigned to it.

TMcK Facilitator: No, that makes sense, and maybe that could be coupled with Community Member 7's action about having, we could add how much money is being spent on that topic as well, so we've got what the problem is, what they're doing to fix it, the current outcome or whether they're still figuring things out, and then also the amount of money that they're spending on that as well.

Maybe we could couple Community Member 7's point earlier with what you're saying there, Community Member 6.

Community Member 6: Yeah, try and attach it to something, because I can see that the water board here are trying to fix things, but it's an uphill struggle for them. So, I'd like to understand more how they ascribe the different priorities with the amount of money they're willing to give to it and why.

TMcK Facilitator: Okay, thank you so much, Community Member 6. I'll move over to Community Member 4 now, please.

Community Member 4: Just a quick one on the communication. Maybe that could be done through just communicating with the professionals, so if you think of someone who's maybe not on social media, they might go on Check-a-Trade, just ring up a couple of plumbers - if they're aware that there's 50 quid that they can get back, they're doing that at the right place, and just simple stuff that Screwfix, Toolstation, B&Q where I've been before to get the stuff to fix a leaky toilet.

Community Member 6: It's a brilliant idea.

TMcK Facilitator: It's a really good idea.

Community Member 4: Because to be blunt, I would not have spent hours faffing around as an amateur plumber if I'd have known there was potentially 50 quid towards the bill to fix it by someone professional.

TMcK Facilitator: Yeah, Community Member 4, that's a really good point, so going further than just the consumer, but actually the plumbers themselves or the retailers too.

Community Member 6: Yeah.

TMcK Facilitator: That's a really good point, Community Member 4, thank you so much. Community Member 9, I'll go to you next, please.

Community Member 9: Yeah, I agree, totally on that point, let the plumbers do the work for Wessex Water. I do congratulate Wessex Water on that scheme. I think it's the most intelligent thing I've seen from a water company ever, and it also demonstrates that collaboration, because I think sometimes, we think there's a bit of them and us, that we're being asked to carry the heavy load and what are they doing with their leaks, whereas it's tangible support. So, I think it's positive.

It's not covering all the costs. Maybe it's because I live near Sandbanks, but a plumber's going to cost £120 on a callout. But then when I used Gemini to look at my loo leak, it told me that my bill would be about another £250 a year if I didn't do something about it. So, I think certainly there's a real incentive for meter users to apply this scheme, maybe not so much for unmetered users who can just let it rest.

I was particularly impressed by what Will had to say. Lots of numbers thrown at us, and I love numbers. The only thing I would say is, and I think it was mentioned also by Community Member 5, was that basically all of that constituted input. I'd like to know what the outputs are. In other words, if we've got 1,000 listening stations or several hundred projects a week, whatever, how many millions of litres of water are they actually saving? And then you can compare that to Cheddar 2 and say, "Well actually, if we save our 12 million litres a day then we may not need a reservoir."

TMcK Facilitator: How do they tell you that information, Community Member 9?

Community Member 9: Well, I think, going back to Will's session, and it's the same as what I said before on the first question, it's understanding the outputs as well as the inputs.

It's very easy to get seduced by all this lovely stuff about actions, but what are those actions actually producing? That's what we as consumers want to see and be reassured by. Otherwise, it just feels like you're spraying projects at us and we think, "Oh great, yeah, looks good, but what is actually doing?"

TMcK Facilitator: What can we make Wessex Water commit to or ask them to commit to?

Community Member 9: Just tell us what the outputs of those projects are, give us the data. And I don't think, you know, I wouldn't necessarily want to see something on the bill, because you're dealing with so many of these projects that parochially I'm probably only interested in the ones that are right next to me. So, I think on a sort of Wessex-wide basis, it's something that needs to go on the website, on the maps.

TMcK Facilitator: Would you want to see anything on your bill in relation to areas of projects locally?

Community Member 9: To me it's a nice-to-have. I'd rather just go to a website and see it. I mean the other thing I would say about reporting leakages is that a few years ago Indeed, the job recruitment company, used to have a scheme where you could photograph adverts for jobs and, depending on the quality of the job, if it was a chief executive or whatever, you might get 150 points, and if it was just a floor sweeper, it might be ten, and then those points could be converted into something. I could see a relevance of a scheme like that for reporting to Wessex Water on leaks. It would give bill holders an incentive to report. Even if it was only nominal each time you did it, you'd actually see a reduction to your bill, and Wessex Water could even keep a little league table of how many reports of leaks had actually been created.

TMcK Facilitator: Definitely, Community Member 9, thank you so much. I'm just going to read a few comments that have popped up in the chat as well, Community Member 7 adding to what Community Member 10 said, "When Wessex Water said they're doing free home checks for leaks, this also needs to be communicated widely, as that's not known". Thank you, Community Member 7. Community Member 9, you also said to communicate the loo scheme through plumbers, just like government solar grants are communicated through installers.

Community Member 7 again adding to the list of how much an action would cost, "Where is the money coming from, either the owners or customer bills?" And Community Member 3 has also put on the communication point, "Are we able to use the mobile number on the account to communicate key information, rather than expecting customers to visit the website?" Community Member 3, could you expand that a little bit for me?

Community Member 3: Yeah, so I just thought, I think it was Community Member 6 that said earlier there are people of a certain age that aren't familiar with technology, so to have to go onto websites to find out the key information might be more difficult. But I would assume every person that has an account with Wessex Water has a mobile number or a phone number linked to that. So, I just wondered if that was an easy way of communicating, rather than expecting customers to have to go to the website and find information that way. It might be a good way of, yeah [overtalking 01:12:47].

TMcK Facilitator: Yeah. Lovely, Community Member 3. Thank you for explaining that one. We can definitely put that forward in the action that you'd said earlier. Community Member 5, sorry, you've had your hand up, waiting patiently.

Community Member 5: That's fine. It's kind of to the last point there around contact points. I was thinking about on the whole, how we get contacted or may not get contacted around prompts for recognising leaks in a home, and similar to what was said there in a sense of if a leak is detected or can be detected at home, could we receive a message saying, "We've detected a potential leak at your home," because I'm more likely to respond quickly to receiving a message,

and again the next stage to that is like someone mentioned, have an app on your phone. If there was an app on your phone that can give a notification, I'll be honest, I'm going to check my notifications if I see something saying, "Potential leak detected."

And the next stage to that, I don't know how far away we are from that, but smart meters, for example, in the home. I don't know if we're up to that point yet where they are digitised, simply because if I walk into my front room now and see my electric spiking, I'm checking the house to see what's on, what's giving me that reading and why I'm burning more that I would normally. And if I had something that spikes similarly where I can see the water is running, and it's giving me some kind of alert to say that there might be a leak, I'm going to start looking for that leak rather than not noticing it. So, it's just that alert function, how are people being alerted of a potential leak in the home and how we use technology to improve that way of alerting them.

TMcK Facilitator: Community Member 5, do you have a smart meter?

Community Member 5: I have a meter but it's not like a smart meter in the house sort of thing.

TMcK Facilitator: I guess that then comes to your point about being proactive, and instead of waiting for the bill to detect the leak, getting notifications. Where would the notifications be? How would you get that?

Community Member 5: At the moment, the ideal way for me would be on my phone, I think. If I can get a notification on my phone that makes me aware of an issue, that's the best outcome for me.

TMcK Facilitator: Community Member 7's just popped another message in the chat that I'll read out. "As far as leaks in the home are concerned, and smart meter rollout, can smart meters detect and inform of leaks in the home, just as Community Member 5 has just said?" I've got a nod from Ruth, so you might want to follow up on that, Ruth, when we come back to you after I go through the actions there. Does anyone have anything else to add here before I share the actions that we've been discussing? There are some amazing ideas that have been brought out that are captured here, but has anyone got anything else to add? Community Member 1, we've not come to you. Is there anything for you to add in here?

Community Member 1: I'm not sure it's really relevant, but in relation to leakages, I'm often quite aware, and certainly this week I was with somebody in the local hospital, and very often there's continuous dripping from taps and loos, and often similar in restaurants, and I know it's not an individual consumer issue, it's more of a corporate issue which is obviously linked to their estates and facilities departments. I'm just interested in how reporting and leak reduction is in partnership with some large organisations such as the NHS, because I would assume that their provision, their water supply isn't actually metered.

TMcK Facilitator: We can definitely put that forward as an action, sort of building the partnerships and working with hospitals or hospitality or those sorts of sectors.

Community Member 1: Organisations.

TMcK Facilitator: That's a really good point, Community Member 1, thank you so much. Community Member 10, I'll go to you next, you've got your hand up there.

Community Member 10: You talked a lot about AI technology helping with determining where leaks are, etc. I just wondered, going forward, what sort of provision is being made for the funding of AI technology, and which pot is this money coming from?

TMcK Facilitator: We talk about that in one of our questions and answers, but in relation to AI and leaks, is there action we want to put forward here?

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Community Member 10: Yes, I'd like to know exactly how AI is working, technology-wise, to determine these leaks.

TMcK Facilitator: And how do you find out that information?

Community Member 10: I have no idea.

TMcK Facilitator: How would you want to?

Community Member 10: Well, I'd like to know. I think there are some people who are rather concerned about AI, and I think people might like to know how it's working, what it's doing and is there provision going forward, because this will only grow, as to how it's affecting us and what it's doing for us.

TMcK Facilitator: Okay, that makes sense. Thank you very much, Community Member 10. Anyone else got anything to add before I share the actions? I'll take the silence as a no. Okay; I'll share my screen then.

There was a lot of discussion there, so again I won't repeat what Wessex Water say they're currently doing or will do in the future. We'll focus on the actions, the new actions that have been brought up and developed by you as community members. You can see a long list here, but I'll go through all of them and then see if there's anything missing or that needs to be expanded further or added to.

So, you said to explain innovative technologies in use for leak detection or resolution, directly tying in their impact in a concise and customer-friendly way manner. It could be published on the website and or bills.

Improve the efficiency of leak-reporting process for customers, make the process simple and as barrier free as possible. Community Member 11, you mentioned an app with geo-stamped reporting. A few examples were Westminster Council issue reporting cited as a model. WhatsApp could also be used as an easy-report option or having QR codes on each street where leaks are happening.

Another action, to take customers on the investment journey, so explain why more work or longer time may be taken to ensure issues are adequately resolved and future proofed. Look at incentivising leak reporting by a point system or impact to customers' bills. Create a visible list or map showing active issues, letting customers see what or where the issue is, how it will be fixed, and how much is being spent on it, and that is to be published on the website and on bills. This should be updated every six months. If no update, please then acknowledge this and state that it's still being worked on, so we know that it's still being looked into.

Proactively and clearly communicate to customers Wessex Water's strategies and initiatives, so the ones that they mentioned which were well received by community members, they just didn't know anything about them. So, some examples, the home leak check and £50 plumbing contributions. This could be done through an ad campaign, bills or website. Communicate to trade professionals and DIY retailers to reach customers who may not be on social media, but also as an incentive for plumbers too.

Publish output data alongside input, showing how many litres of water are actually saved as a result of these measures. This should be published on the website and should show local data as well for those interested.

Use the mobile or phone number already linked to each customer's account to push key information directly to customers, including if a leak has been detected in their house or nearby. Proactively alert customers when a potential leak is detected at their property. Smart meters could be used for this purpose.

Provide clear timelines for smart meter rollout and digitalisation, and work with hospitals and third-party organisations, not just third party, we also had hospitality sectors and things like that, to identify and fix leaks within their estates, so building partnerships with other businesses or hospitals and third-party organisations there too.

Right, lots of things to go through there, but there are so many amazing suggestions there, so thank you so much. I think everybody suggested something on that list, so thank you. I'll pass back to the community now. Has anything been missed or is there anything to expand on, any gaps or anything like that that you wish to add at this point before we pass back over to Wessex Water? Everyone okay with what's there? Yeah, okay, I'll take the silence as a no. Rachel, back to you, please.

CCW Chair: Thank you. Ruth and Will, there's quite a long list there, I think I counted 11 actions. Can you talk to us in five minutes whether these are feasible actions as written, if there are operational, regulatory, financial, other constraints. Could you please be as specific as possible.

Ruth Jefferson: I'll just start at the top and work down. Innovation, love that. We do lots of innovation and I think we probably again don't talk about that enough, but I think we also probably need to talk about where it doesn't work as well, because we do try things. The specific example was pipe materials and what are we doing to look at different types that are less liable to fracture when we have these ground movements. So, I think we should definitely communicate more about where we're working in partnership with others, as Bath University was cited as one of the examples there, so definitely willing to do that.

Efficiency of leak reporting. We do already have a leak reporting process, but it is website based, but that website is accessible by the mobile, and you can upload a photo, and we can then see where it is. But I think we can take away those different examples and come up with what would be feasible. We don't currently use WhatsApp, for example. We use our website and that's how we get access. But I agree, we should make it as straightforward as possible. Whether it's your pothole or your recycling not being collected, there should be a format for us to take that information from customers, so I think that's fine.

Customers on the investment journey, I love that. Let's just make it really straightforward. What's the problem? How are we going to do it? When will we do it by? How much is it going to cost? I think I agree, I think somebody said they didn't want it on their bill. I think sometimes the bill is used as the communication channel of choice. I think there are better ways of doing it, so it doesn't get too complex. Whether that's through short videos, whether that's through website, whether it's through social media, we can look at how we can do that and explain to customers what we're investing in.

Incentivising leak reporting. Let's take that one away. I like the creativity of it, it's just the practicality of implementing it, but I think why not, let's think about how we might be creative.

Visible list of issues. Again, that's something that we can have on our website, so I think again we're willing to look at how we might fulfil that action.

Leaky loos, the Big Leaky Loo campaign, it's just launched, like if not today, yesterday. It's brand, brand new. We have been advertising it on the radio, but we'll definitely take this away and think of other communication channels. I did like the idea of how we might use professionals to advertise that on our behalf, and similarly Homecheck, whist it's advertised on our website, how do we get it more widely known about, because, as we say, where we can help you to reduce a leak and save money, then we should be working in partnership, as Community Member 9 said, so that's absolutely fine.

Smart meters, we didn't even talk about it, which was an error on our part, we are rolling out smart meters over the next five years.

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We're focusing on specific geographic areas at the moment, largely around the Salisbury area, but the intention is that we will have full rollout of smart meters over the coming five-year period.

We're already using those smart meters to let customers know that we think they might have a leak, so we're notifying them and then suggesting they look at that and try and fix that leak. So, it is working. If you don't have a meter, we do look at your bills and we do look at your usage, and if we think that something's gone wrong, we do contact you. It's not always by an alert or a notification, I think was Community Member 5's preference, but if we have a mobile phone, because we don't have mobile phone numbers for everybody, we don't even have phone numbers for everybody, so we will contact you in some way if we spot an anomaly, something different in a bill.

For example, the example that sometimes is given to me is suddenly there's children move back home from university, and we see water usage go up. We will pick that up. But the smart metering stuff is really good and we're already seeing how it's helping customers to save money by reducing leakage.

Publish output data, I'm going to leave that to Will, because he could probably give you some stats on some of the leaks that we're fixing and how that is improving the leakage position. Mobile phone numbers I've just talked about. Proactively alert, that's the smart metering and also the work that we do contacting customers. Smart metering rollout, yes, we can put some more information on our website about that and what we're currently doing and where we plan to go next.

And then I think businesses were raised by Community Member 1. We work really closely with businesses. Most of them are metered, so it's in their interest to fix leaks. I think schools is a really good example, where we go into schools and help them reduce their usage, and in fact when we're there we tend to do a full audit, and I was only told yesterday, we went to one school where we found they had a misconnection, so some of their foul water was going to a surface water sewer, so we prevented a pollution and we reduced a leakage in the same visit.

So, we do work really closely with our businesses, and they're really open to it as well, and with the current drought conditions, we've been working with our biggest business users as well, and they are finding millions of litres of water that they can save. Have I missed anything?

CCW Chair: I don't think so.

Ruth Jefferson: Will will want to give you some stats? Put him on the spot.

CCW Chair: Will, are you happy to do that if it would be helpful for community members?

Will Willoughby: Rather than stats I can give a bit of an explanation, a bit of an overview in terms of the input versus output. Unfortunately, in the world of leakage, we don't have any silver bullets, so there's no one input creates a definite output, but what do do is bring all of that technology together and use it as a toolkit, so the satellite technology, for example, will narrow down an area for us. We then send our people in, and we use the acoustic network, the listening monitors to then narrow it down further, and then our people narrow it down even further and pinpoint.

So, there's no sort of direct A equals B, but what we can do is have a look at what the overarching technology or innovation supports with, and what that element would equate to in terms of leakage found and leakage saved. So, it's a bit of a fluffy answer, I'm afraid, but there is no definite number in terms of each of those innovations, in terms of the outputs. But absolutely I think we could definitely get a bit more open in terms of what we are using and what we'd anticipate getting from that, to make sure that our customers understand that we are looking at the right technologies and the right approaches to get the outcomes that we need.

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CCW Chair: Unless there's any more comments on the actions, let's agree these actions from our second challenge question, and these will be added to the company's action plan. Moving on to the third section of our session, which is our Q&A questions, there'll be no timer for this, Ruth and others, but we want your answers to be kept brief, robust and brief if we can, no more than three minutes. We'll start with our community member, Community Member 9, to ask the question, please.

Community Member 9: I'm just going to paraphrase this quickly. We're an island, we're surrounded by water. Many island states use desalination plants. Even Anglia Water is investing in two desalination plants. The reason why I'm interested in this and what Wessex Water is doing is that £2 billion is being spent on Cheddar 2, and Cheddar 2 is going to produce 20 million litres of water a day. But it won't do that until 2035.

Israel has a desalination plant that cost $500 million and produces 165 million litres of water a day. So, by my maths, it's about 20% of the cost, it's available within three years for a large plant, and it produces eight times more water. [3]

CCW Chair: Community Member 9, I don't want to be a party pooper. The question is on the screen. Can we stick to the question? I'm sure Ruth and others know the (overtalking)

Community Member 9: So, there's the question and the background to the question is really, are Wessex Water's priorities right when there are faster, cheaper options available?

CCW Chair: Over to Ruth and whoever's assisting you, Ruth, please. Three minutes if we can.

Ruth Jefferson: I'll do this one, and if Will and Emma want to chip in, by all means. We are looking, Community Member 9. We look at all options. I think reservoirs are one and you cited Cheddar in our region. But the other things we're looking at are quarries. They're already there. They exist. They will come to the end of their life of quarrying, and then you've got a natural solution for us which is potentially cheaper, and we're blessed to have a number of those in the Mendips, so that's one of the options we're also looking at.

Desalination is an option but it's probably not the most environmentally friendly or energy efficient, but it's one that we have to look at. It's high energy, high carbon. I don't think we have any in the UK that are actually active, but it's one that we shouldn't rule out, so it is part of our longer-term planning, and particularly where we've got some large users in our patch who will be taking seawater, and therefore is there an option for us to then take that and use it in different ways?

We continuously push ourselves on these different options, but I think for us it's about how we can use the natural environment, so the Mendips quarries option is a good one. We're also within the next few years looking, well, will be delivered by 2035, we're also looking at water reuse, so where we're actually taking wastewater from Poole, we'll treat it and then we'll reuse it and put it back into the Stour. That's one of our other longer-term options.

So, I think, again, we don't rule anything out. I think this summer has taught us that we need to plan for these extremes of weather, climate change is real, and therefore we do need to have longer-term resource options available to us.

In the shorter, medium term for us at Wessex Water, that's also looking at where we can bring more water into the area, through the natural environment, through rivers, bringing stuff down from the north, from Severn Trent Water area and Welsh Water, how can we bring water into our patch, as well as, as we talked about just before, making sure that we're reducing leakage, making

3 The question asker added wording to the written questions which was, "With so much coastline in our region, why aren't you looking at desalination plants rather than spending years building a reservoir that isn't due to be completed until 2035."

sure that there's less water lost, also helping customers to save water. We all need to use water wisely.

So, I think desal, not ruled out, but probably not the first option we would look at. However, it is something that we're looking at as part of our longer strategic plans.

CCW Chair: Excellent, thank you so much, Ruth. Community Member 9, since you asked the question, you can ask a supplementary question if you like.

Community Member 9: I like the answer. I just feel that given the very difficult circumstances we are facing with climate change, that maybe its place on the priority list needs to be elevated regardless of, I mean again, on the energy, I understand it's high energy use, but we've also got a coastline surrounded by windmills producing free energy, so the two things can be tied together.

Ruth Jefferson: As I say, not one to rule out. I think we have to keep all options on the table. The other thing that we have and we're looking at, at the moment, is again in response to some of the extreme weather over this summer, is back in 2016 we invested in a grid, essentially a network that allows us to move water north-south and east-west. Do we need to extend that? That will give us greater resilience as well, so that's not a reservoir, it's not a new source, but it's just how do we get greater interconnectivity, and do we need greater interconnectivity with ourselves and other companies? Those are also options we're looking at, Community Member 9.

CCW Chair: Brilliant, thank you. Community members, any questions in relation to this topic? If you do, please raise your hand. I can't see anybody who wants to ask a question. All right, if there's nobody, let's move on to our next question, Q&A question. Community Member 3, can you ask the second question, please?

Community Member 3: This one's quite a big point for me. It's all linking back to communication. I found out about the hosepipe ban through the news and friends rather than directly from Wessex Water. As a customer I expect the company to tell me about restrictions that affect me. Why wasn't I told directly and what will you change to make sure important updates reach customers before restrictions take effect?

Ruth Jefferson: Look, that's not good enough really, is it, Community Member 3, that you had to hear about it from your neighbour and not from us directly, and I think we've learnt a lot this summer about communication and how we need to make sure that communication is across all channels in different ways. Some people get their information from the news. Others who are much younger and savvier than me get it from TikTok. But we need to be communicating across all channels.

It was quite tricky over the summer, because we saw demand that was really, really high, and we had to time some of our messages, because what happens when you announce something like a hosepipe ban is, we're all humans, the natural thing we do is we start filling things up and using more water. So, it was a very delicate balancing act about how we communicated, but I accept perhaps we didn't do it well enough and we need to do more.

We did send lots of text messages out, but my earlier point, we don't have mobile phone numbers for everybody. We did do e-newsletters, we did do social media. Will did a whole media round and was interviewed by lots of people on the radio and TV. But again, we obviously didn't get it right, so we need to look at how we make sure we're communicating at the right time in the right format and in a way that works for as many customers as we possibly can.

CCW Chair: Thank you. Community Member 3, any supplementary question based on Ruth's answer?

Community Member 3: No, I would like to say I appreciate the honesty.

That's really nice that you've taken ownership of the lack of communication and hopefully moving forward you can use more channels to communicate that message, just the wider advertising campaign I think is needed.

Ruth Jefferson: Absolutely.

CCW Chair: Community members, any questions on Ruth's response to that second Q&A question? I think Community Member 7's hand's up. Community Member 7?

Community Member 7: As we found out on this panel, pretty much of all of us, Wessex Water had all of our phone numbers, and we found that some of us would get a text message, others wouldn't, and then another message was sent out and, again, some of us would get it and others wouldn't, and it would be a different selection of people that would be getting some of them, and some wouldn't. So, it's saying, well, if you're sending one message, send it to everybody. If you've got the number, send it to everybody. Don't sort of pick and choose who you send it to.

Ruth Jefferson: Yeah, and sometimes there are general messages that go out to everybody, so the hosepipe ban would have gone to everybody where we had a mobile phone number, because it was across the whole patch. You didn't get one?

Community Member 7: That didn't happen.

Ruth Jefferson: Well, there you go, that's our bad then, isn't it? It shows that our system didn't do it properly. We did have some trouble. We do do focused messages as well, so in particular areas, so for example, at some points during the summer, Bath was really struggling, as in we needed to message our customers in specific areas, so we do try and do that as well. But if we're not reaching everybody, then there's something we need to look at.

Community Member 7: I appreciate obviously a focused one but when it's a general one, like the hosepipe ban and watching your water usage and stuff, that was pick and choose, it was a few people [overtalking 01:39:30], it wasn't sent to everybody.

Ruth Jefferson: That shouldn't, yeah, that shouldn't be the case. No, that shouldn't be the case. Where it's a general message that applies to all customers, you should receive the same. We have just done some more targeted messaging at the moment, actually. I mentioned our grid. Because of some of the water resources issues that are happening, we're moving some water east and west, and some customers might notice that it changes the taste. So, we've written to customers, but we've also messaged them. Again, that's an example of something that's specific to a particular customer base. But when it's a generic message, we should get it better. We should be better than that.

CCW Chair: Community Member 3, before I bring you in, Ruth, is there something about a campaign to obtain all of the customers' numbers? Is that something you think you need to do as an organisation, bearing in mind that you've said it twice today on this session, "We haven't got all of their numbers, therefore we can't communicate with them," so clearly there is some work that is needed around that?

Ruth Jefferson: We have tried that, and every time a customer contacts us, we always ask for an up to date, we always check their contact details or ask for an up-to-date mobile phone number. We have done campaigns before; it might be time for a refresh. Our customer magazine is landing in the next few weeks. I think we've used that as an opportunity, it's actually landing now so it'll roll out, but we've used that as an opportunity, following our last panel, to say, "If you want to give us your email address and sign up to an e-newsletter," perhaps we could use it next time to do a bit more on the mobile phone point as well.

Numbers are growing.

I wouldn't want you leaving thinking we only have a small number, we do have a lot, but it does go to that point that text messages won't work for everybody. A, if we don't send them, it's not going to work, but also, B, others will get their information from other sources.

CCW Chair: Grateful, thank you. Community Member 3?

Community Member 3: Yeah, so it's kind of following on from your point, actually, about the CRM[4] database that you've got in house. I don't know how, but surely, you should have either a telephone number or an email address for every customer, but if you don't, then maybe going back to your point there a minute ago, Ruth, about doing another campaign, maybe you could do like an incentivised campaign where customers get something back off their bill if they provide that contact information. Just a thought.

Ruth Jefferson: Let us look at it. It is the fact that we don't have contracts with customers, so you don't have to provide your name and your phone numbers. It is about winning that trust and saying, "please give it to us, it'll allow us to communicate with you better," and I think we do need to think about whether we do need to do something specific on that, because, as we've learnt, being able to communicate via text message is actually really effective. We were able to get quite good results by getting those text messages out.

I think the other thing is, we are doing more bills by email as well, and that will encourage people to sign up to our portals. As the smart meters get rolled out, that will be another way in which we'll get information and another channel by which we can communicate. So, we're sort of diversifying. But we'll take away looking at how we increase our phone coverage.

CCW Chair: Thank you. Looking around the room, any further questions on this topic? Okay. Sam, turning to you, in relation to -

Ruth Jefferson: Community Member 7 had her hand up, Rachel, sorry.

CCW Chair: I beg your pardon, who was that?

Ruth Jefferson: I think Community Member 7 was waving.

CCW Chair: Okay, sorry, Community Member 7, please.

Community Member 7: I just added in the comments that maybe having a general TV, radio advert out to people saying, "If you supply these details to your water company, you will get this important information," giving examples of, "This is the important information you will receive," just so that people feel a bit more obliged and want to give that information because of what they will get out of it.

CCW Chair: A suggestion in terms of the type of campaign, okay, thank you very much. Turning to Sam, if there are no more questions on this topic, I think in terms of actions perhaps on Question 2 of the Q&As, perhaps a campaign around mobile phones again and the company will look at how they do that. Have you captured that, Sam?

TMcK Facilitator: Absolutely. We've got an informative or educational campaign with customers to show the importance of supplying the company with phone number and email address so that important communications are able to reach as many as intended recipients as possible. Also, for Wessex Water to advise on the feasibility of incentivising customers to enrich the contact information which the company has on them. And still to be added but will be added, Community Member 7's point there about looking at ways, TV or radio adverts to explain again the importance of customers supplying email and phone numbers so that they're getting the important information easily.

4 CRM Customer Relationship Management

Session transcript

CCW Chair: Excellent and looking to Ruth, I see Ruth nodded, so you're happy with those?

Ruth Jefferson: That's fine. Yeah, we can do that [inaudible 01:44:22].

CCW Chair: Thank you. Sam, I didn't come back to you on Q&A Question 1. I don't think there were any actions that arose out of that discussion. Can you confirm that was also your view?

TMcK Facilitator: Yeah, there are no new proposed actions. It was just what the company are currently doing.

CCW Chair: Fantastic, thank you. Moving on to our Q&A Question 3, can I invite Community Member 1 to ask that question, please?

Community Member 1: We've heard about your work with the University of Bath but want to understand how research, well, research initiatives and new technology translate into real improvements for customers. What practical improvements can customers expect from your research and innovation, including any plans to use Artificial Intelligence?

CCW Chair: So, we've spoken about AI already. Ruth, do you want to take that?

Ruth Jefferson: Yeah, happy to take that. I think research and innovation is quite broad. You're specifically talking about the University of Bath there, but we do an awful lot of engagement with our customers. We need their voices; we need their views on things we're thinking about and how we're going to prioritise.

One of the best things that we do, which is great, is our Young People's Panel, which is getting a group of sixth formers together, and they come and actually help us with real business issues, proper challenges, and one of the things we talked about with them this year was around AI and messaging, and they just bring a different perspective. They're a different generation, they think very differently, so that's great.

One of my other favourites is Trustpilot in terms of innovation and research, because that's in-the-moment feedback, so we use Trustpilot to get that customer service feedback. It might not be typically what you're thinking about research, but it does inform and make improvements to our processes. Every time we get a Trustpilot review, we respond to it. If it's less than a three we actually go back to customers and say, "What could we have done better and how can we improve next time?" which is really great, but I think I've got Emma who might be able to talk to you more about some of the other stuff we do in research and innovation, and AI I can always come back to if we don't get through it with Emma. Emma, are you there or have we dropped off?

Emma Baker: No, I'm here. Thanks, Ruth. Thanks, Community Member 1, for your question. I guess I was just going to reiterate the importance of research and innovation to us. Every time we can hear from a customer or see something new or inform our future plans or, as Ruth said, just use an interaction to improve our service, that's really important.

Ruth spoke to you about Young People Panel where we're doing that research and innovation. This is really helpful research this evening. Thank you for all your feedback. We've also used it in our long-term planning around our strategic direction statement where we're looking 2050 and beyond, and again we've had lots of face-to-face evening engagement with our customers in the patch to learn about what it is you want us to focus on, how you want us to use AI, all the things that are important to you.

I guess the Young People's Panel, and I sit on that as a judge, I have done for the last few years, it's a lovely few days, and we've been talking to them about how we should use AI this year. We're already using some of that in our interaction with customers. But actually, what they were saying was, "AI has got a role but please don't take away the personal touch of being able to call up and speak to us 24/7." It was, "Don't take the human away from us, but let's use it to help us."

And that's a really powerful insight, because these are our future customers, so we need to listen to them as well.

Ruth mentioned the day-to-day feedback. Every day, anything we do that's less than the highest star we'd want, we need to take feedback and learn from it, and all of our staff try to go the extra mile for customers, so again, how can we do that, how can we make it a positive customer journey? But yeah, lots of research and innovation going on, lots of ways of exploring the use of AI, but without losing that focus of our people being able to speak to our customers.

Ruth Jefferson: And I think, Emma, the AI piece is a little bit, what I was saying about pollution and understanding our network, how can we use AI to understand that network, get more proactive rather than reactive to issues. So that isn't a human thing. That is just charts and models and technology that really helps us.

Some people are nervous. I can't remember who said that AI, "I wonder what it will do." We will always need humans in this business. We'll need skills, we need the plumbers, we need the electricians, we need the people who are fixing the leaks. But AI can let us understand our network better. And it does have a place also with some of our customer journeys, but I think we're very keen that we keep that human touch.

CCW Chair: Thank you both. Community Member 1, any supplementary questions based on the responses?

Community Member 1: Okay, thank you very much, and I appreciate how important it is to have the consumer voice and the Young People's Panel. I believe that I read that Wessex Water supports the University of Bath, around £250 million, for their research strategy. I'd like to know how that research strategy is developed to ensure that the outcomes of those studies, whether they're PhD studies, whether they're post docs, whatever they are, actually influence the technology going forward.

We've talked about the kind of materials that are more resistant to longer-term use in this current weather and everything around climate change. Where is the knowledge being developed for the future of the water industry in this region? And the supplementary question is that given a lot of research studies can take five, six years, that's quite far into the future. I'm really interested in how that research and development strategy is actually developed so that you get what you need from that knowledge base that is being developed in conjunction with the university.

CCW Chair: Ruth, before you come in, just to say, we have nine minutes left -

Community Member 1: Sorry.

CCW Chair: - and about one minute of a close, no, don't apologise, Community Member 1, not at all, just so that responses can be -

Ruth Jefferson: Be really succinct.

CCW Chair: - quite succinct. Don't go [inaudible 01:51:22] off course, yes.

Ruth Jefferson: I don't recognise the £250 million but you're absolutely right that we do work very closely with the University of Bath. I think it's £2.5 million, someone's just telling me, £2.5 million, but we do work really closely with the University of Bath, not only because they're on the doorstep to our head office, but they also have some fantastic people at the forefront of all of this thinking, and they have a wonderful professor there who has, I can't remember, Emma, you might have to correct me, she has a sort of wastewater school even, it's a specific department that's looking at the cutting edge.

What we tend to do is we set them challenges.

We say, “This is what we are struggling with, how can you help us?” One of them is about how we might use AI to predict water quality, so continuous water quality monitoring. They’ve been at the forefront of that. They're also doing some fantastic work on public health, and one of the studies that they're working on at the moment is about pharmaceuticals finding their way into water courses.

So, there are a number of projects that we co-develop with those experts. We provide some funding, but we also benefit from the output, and actually I think it’s a really, really good, collaborative partnership way of working, and we also bring in PhD students etc to help us too.

The other bit of innovation and research is something that’s done industry wide. There’s an innovation fund and we make bids to that innovation fund in areas where we think that we can do something and be at the forefront. One of the bids we’ve put in recently is about managing rainwater better where it lands. How can we get that as a sort of principle and national strategy on that, because we mentioned earlier, Ashley mentioned that all the rain that comes out of the sky, only a small fraction of that goes into public water supply, so how can we embed that thinking, and the necessary tools and strategy? So, we've applied for some funding to move that forward.

So, I think we’re always pushing forward with trying to do things differently. It’s not always AI based, but AI is increasingly playing a role, and it also allows us to become more efficient. If we can use innovation and technology to be more efficient then why wouldn't we?

CCW Chair: Thank you, Ruth, very helpful. I can see Community Member 9 nodding.

Community Member 9: On the AI front, I think one of the concerns I did have, since we are talking about AI, is given the outbreak of freezers being moved 50 degrees in Europe, is Wessex Water feeling comfortable that its water supply pumps and sewage pumps etc are not capable of being hacked so that they could be turned full on in terms of polluting water supplies or wasting water?

CCW Chair: I was just going to say, Ruth, very, very quickly. I've got Community Member 10 waiting, and I really want to have her question heard.

Ruth Jefferson: I think, Community Member 9, “comfortable” would never be my word of choice. You have to be absolutely on edge on all of this, particularly as we see, as you say, some of these examples, but it’s an area where the government are very, very heavily focused and, as we provide critical services, we are also very well involved in that and, as you might expect, cyber security is at the forefront of the work that we do.

CCW Chair: Fantastic. Community Member 10, thanks for your patience.

Community Member 10: Yes, talking about innovation, I just wondered what Wessex Water, whether they are collaborating with architects and housebuilders to ensure that the water supply within the house wastes as little water as possible. My kitchen sink is about as far away from my hot water tank as it possibly could be, so in order to get hot water, I'm wasting water. Yes, I can always fill up a bucket, and my plants don’t always need watering. Are you collaborating with housebuilders and architects?

Ruth Jefferson: We are. We do work with all the big housing developers on how we might make improvements. There are policy improvements that could be made as well. I mean it’s absolutely mad that we’re going to build loads of new houses and use drinking water to flush loos. We shouldn’t be doing that by routine. So, there need to be some policy changes that say when we build these new homes, we should be looking for alternative solutions and how we might reuse grey water.

So yes, we do work in that space. It’s not just about grey water. It’s also about sustainable urban drainage, so using ponds and lakes to get rid of surface water.

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So yes, there's lots of work that we do in that space. As I say, I'm pretty obsessed with rainwater at the moment, so we're particularly active there.

CCW Chair: Thank you, Ruth. Thank you for the question, Community Member 10. Turning to community members, unless there's anything pressing on this topic, I'm going to turn to Sam just to see whether she caught any actions in relation to it. I didn't, but Sam, did you?

TMcK Facilitator: No, no new actions, but we've recorded everything that Wessex Water say that they're doing or will do in the future.

CCW Chair: Fantastic, thank you. We have three minutes until 8pm. We finish at 8pm, so can I just thank everybody for your participation. It's been extremely helpful. I've been happy with the responses from Wessex and of course happy with the community members' engagement and their questions. The actions you've seen have been captured live and will form the basis of Wessex Water's follow-up action plan.

In terms of next steps, a summary report, fully anonymised transcript and full list of actions will be published within seven working days. That's Friday 13th November next week. Before publication, session members will have the opportunity to request changes such as redaction of personal information.

Wessex Water must publish its action plan within 28 days and that's by Monday 14th December, setting out how it will deliver against the agreed actions. CCW will publish this on the website. Once the action plan is published, community members will be sent a link and a short survey asking whether the plan accurately reflects what has been agreed tonight and whether it's enough to address the concerns raised. You will have 10 days to respond.

CCW will then track progress against the action plan through the Water Voice process. This process is designed to make sure tonight's session leads to follow-up and not just a discussion, not just talking shop, as you can appreciate.

Again, thank you very much. It's been good. I hope you found it useful and enjoy the rest of your evening. Thank you. Bye-bye now.

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