

WSX07 – You said, we did

Business plan
2025-2030



Wessex Water
YTL GROUP

FOR YOU. FOR LIFE.

WSX07 – You said, we did

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This supporting document is part of Wessex Water's business plan for 2025-2030.

Please see 'WSX00 – Navigation document' for where this document sits within our business plan submission.

More information can be found at wessexwater.co.uk.

1. Introduction

Every five years we develop a business plan, looking ahead at how we will improve our water and sewerage services, while also protecting and enhancing the environment. To help develop our business plan for 2025-2030, we have talked to over 57,000 customers, businesses and stakeholders since we finalised our last plan.

In early 2023 we held a series of 'Your say, your future' drop-in events in towns across our region. These events gave customers the chance to find out more about and have their say on our draft business plan.

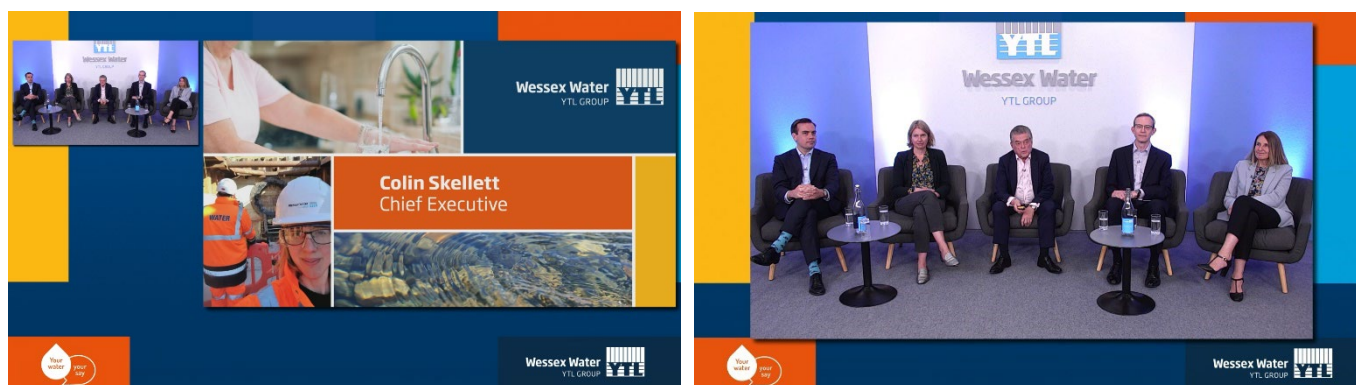
On Friday 28 April 2023, we held a 'Your water, your say' session to give customers and stakeholders an opportunity to hear how the business plan had developed and give their views.

Over 160 people registered for the session. We estimate that approximately 40% of pre-registrations were from customers (it's hard to tell exactly from the information provided). We also saw a range of stakeholders register, including councils, environmental groups, partner organisations in the affordability / vulnerability space and regulators. On the day, around 100 people took part in the call.

Following a presentation by Group Chief Executive Colin Skellett, attendees had the chance to pose questions to Colin and senior leaders from across the business. We heard from customers and stakeholders alike, with a wide range of issues raised.

To catch up on what was discussed, you can:

- watch [Colin's presentation](#)
- browse the [presentation slides](#)
- take a look at the written record of [questions and answers](#)



We have used feedback from the session, in conjunction with insight from our extensive customer engagement programme, and alongside discussions with regulators, to finalise our business plan, for submission to our regulator Ofwat in October 2023. We've considered all our customer insight in the context of wider business plan drivers such as our statutory environmental obligations and affordability.

This document lists all questions received before, during and immediately after the session. For each question theme, we have explained how concerns or opinions raised have been taken into consideration in the development of the final business plan.

We haven't included individual question responses here, but they can all be found in the [written record](#) of the session.



We're holding a follow-up 'Your water, your say' session on Tuesday 14 November 2023 at 18:00, to discuss how we have considered feedback from the session in April. We would love to see you there – we'll publish all the details on [our homepage](#) from mid-October.

2. You said, we did

2.1. Engaging with our customers

2.1.1. Introduction

Our customer research is structured to make sure we provide useful and timely insight to shape both our day-to-day business decisions and services alongside the development of our business plan. In total, more than 57,000 customers have chosen to take part in specific research projects to inform our plan and we've also captured views from over 484,000 day-to-day customer interactions.

We received a question about engaging younger people/future generations in the development of our plan and longer-term strategy. And another question about co-creation of solutions. Our Young People's Panel is an example of both. The panel brings together a group of around 20 to 30 future bill payers each autumn to work on a real business challenge. We immerse the group of 16- to 18-year-olds with senior managers from a variety of departments, hold discussions on a variety of topical issues, and then set them a group task to work on in teams. Around eight weeks



later the teams present their ideas and solutions to a judging panel of senior executives. Now in its eighth year, our YPP has generated many ideas including a cashback guarantee for new water meter customers, a digital job tracker and a sewer blockage prevention campaign which was rolled out during freshers' week.

Looking more broadly at our research for this plan, we have consulted with all types of customers to make sure they have their say including household customers, vulnerable customers, future customers, businesses, retailers, stakeholders, and colleagues. We've used a variety of research techniques to make sure everyone can take part and all our research has met Ofwat's principles for high quality engagement.

2.1.2. Changes to the plan

The development of this business plan started and finished with customers' views. Although the majority of our proposed investment for 2025-30 is statutory, where there were choices to be made, we've developed a plan that customers want.

When we tested the plan quantitatively, we found that 62% of customers thought the proposals in the plan were acceptable. Acceptability with non-household customers was higher at 73% and slightly lower with household customers at 58%. These levels of acceptability are lower than we've seen in previous price reviews – the wider context of industry trust and reputation combined with the cost-of-living crisis and financial uncertainty for households has undoubtedly had an impact.

The affordability testing of the plan found that 29% of all household customers have struggled to pay at least one of their household bills in the last year and that 41% of households expect to see their financial situation get worse in the future. These results are the backdrop for also finding that a significant minority (46%) of household customers said they expected to find it difficult to pay the water and sewerage bills proposed for 2025-30.

Post testing, we made further changes to our plan in response to changing guidance from Government and regulators resulting in a reduced investment programme and a lower bill increase. We are confident that it would have resulted in an improvement in both the acceptability and affordability ratings.

2.2. Nutrients

2.2.1. Introduction

We received many questions about phosphates, nitrates and the resultant housing issue. In summary, £900m of our plan focuses on reducing the levels of nutrients (phosphates and nitrates in particular) that enter the rivers and coastal waters in our regions from our sewage works, some of which is being driven by an increase in house building across the region.

We also received a question about the phosphate we dose into our water supply system to prevent lead leaching from some pipes into drinking water.



2.2.2. Changes to the plan

We are committed to working with regulators to ensure we deliver what is required for the environment. Through our journey to plan submission we have advocated an outcomes-based route, arguing for a delivery method that allows on site grey and green solutions (such as treatment plants – grey – or wetlands – green); catchment permitting between sites to reduce the cost and carbon of removing lower levels of phosphorus from small sites; and working with farmers and land owners in the catchment to reduce their contributions in the first instance, if this delivers better value.

This discussion continued after the session in April, and we are proposing to have a trial of this approach in our Bristol Avon catchment.

This has resulted in a plan that consists of £900m on nutrients that supports housebuilding whilst also striking the balance with affordability and deliverability.

With regards to reducing the phosphates we add to the water supply, this is needed to protect customers from the harmful effects of lead which was historically used for some pipes and in the solder and pipe fittings. Wessex Water has no lead water mains, however some customer supply pipes are still made of lead. We already have a lead pipe replacement programme, and we will be continuing this into 2025-30 and beyond, replacing 6,000 pipes. This has reduced from an earlier target of 12,000 pipes in April, to ensure our plan is deliverable and affordable.

Supply pipes consist of two sections, company-owned and customer-owned. Replacing only our section of the pipe leaves a significant amount of lead in most cases. Consequently, where the customer gives their consent, we will make a contribution towards the cost of replacing the section owned by them. Customers are also encouraged to ensure that their internal plumbing is free of lead. Unfortunately, it is very difficult to ascertain that all lead has been removed from an area and, as we have an obligation to protect public health, phosphate dosing is likely to have to continue for many years to come.

2.3. Investment in water recycling centres

2.3.1. Introduction

Our plan is to invest in our water recycling centres so that we meet all regulatory standards, to minimise environmental impact, and to ensure that they continue to deliver high quality reliable services.



2.3.2. Changes to the plan

Our plans continue to facilitate population growth in the region where needed – this intent has not changed since the session in April.

New statutory and regulatory obligations are requiring substantial investment at our treatment works, particularly on nutrients as described earlier. We are promoting best value solutions and are working with regulators on an appropriate implementation phasing, so that these are delivered in both a timely and cost-effective manner.

2.4. Overflows

2.4.1. Introduction



Storm overflows have become a major issue as more data about how often and how long they operate for has been obtained and shared from the Event Duration Monitoring programme. Their very existence is a result of the way our society and many others around the world have built houses with a single pipe to drain both their rainwater and foul water.

While overflows were designed as a flood protection device, there has been growing concern about their operation. Storm overflows are, in essence, a problem brought about by too much rainwater being connected to the sewer system. The increase in impermeable areas (where rainwater cannot soak into the ground), the lack of regulation controlling connections and the right for developers to connect rainwater, and the lack of

historical measurement have all led to a level of operation deemed to be too high.

We have heard this concern and have responded with a plan that is ambitious within the constraints of what our customers have told us is affordable.

We were also asked about our monitoring of river water quality.

2.4.2. Changes to the plan

Storm overflows continue to be a priority. Since the April session we have received further feedback from customers via our affordability and acceptability testing programme, as well as regulators, to ensure our plan delivers for customers and the environment in terms of deliverability, affordability, and environmental benefit.

Our storm overflows programme has therefore changed to £400m (from £750m) over the five-year period. This will reduce spill frequency by over 80% at the 128 overflows at which we will implement a scheme.



By 2050 and in accordance with the government's Storm Overflow Discharge Reduction Plan, we will reduce discharges to a maximum of ten per year per overflow; this will be lower where overflows are found to be causing ecological harm, once a metric for that is agreed.

We need to prioritise overflows to bathing waters, shellfish waters, chalk streams and designated environmental sites; all but 5 of our 128 AMP8 improvement schemes are for such waters. Our plan will ensure 75% of these priority overflows are brought up to standard by 2035.

In carrying out these upgrades, we will prioritise nature-based solutions wherever possible. For around a third, we will use low carbon, nature-rich wetland treatments. For most of the rest, we will need to use storage and treatment solutions to meet the required standards in the specified time and without regulatory clarity on how schemes will be assessed and how permits will be set.

We have also included in our plan costs to meet the latest guidance from the regulators on river water quality monitoring – installing c.450 monitors at a cost of £80m.

We continue to have an element of our plan that will allow for further potential inland bathing waters to be monitored and data provided to the public. We are in discussions with regulators over its inclusion, but believe that customers support this approach. One specific question that we received in the April 2023 session related to this area:

Question: Increasing numbers of people are swimming in open water and participating in water-based recreation. Some companies are publishing where they are discharging sewage into rivers and seas but it is hard to interpret what this data means i.e. is the water safe to swim in? Other companies are training staff and communities about water safety. How have you helped promote water safety for your consumers and employees and how do you propose to do this in your 2025-30 business plan so we can safely swim and play in our rivers and seas? [Question from Sustainability First]

We have pioneered the use of AI technology to provide near real time information on water quality as part of our inland bathing water investigation at [Warleigh Weir](#) near Bath. This provides swimmers with data on the quality of the water, compared to the Bathing Water Regulation standards, as well as information on water temperature and river flow, to enable people to undertake their own risk assessment before entering the water.

This approach has now been rolled out in Bristol Floating Harbour, supporting Bristol City Council's open water swimming trial, and is in development at Bournemouth Pier and Boscombe Pier, coastal bathing waters. We have recently appointed a River Recreation Liaison to work with local councils and stakeholders to identify locations where there is already or could be recreational use and identify the ways in which we can support this. This includes the rollout of our real time water quality approach to a further 20 river recreational locations and five more coastal bathing waters by 2030.

2.5. Surface water

2.5.1. Introduction

Tackling storm overflows is mostly about better rainwater management – and that more often than not starts at the home or on a highway. Once rainwater (also called surface water) is combined with foul water, the options to address overflows are restricted to attenuation followed by treatment or just treatment, regardless of how diluted the foul water is.

Societally, addressing rainwater at source helps with both storm overflows and water efficiency pressures – as rain can be utilised as a resource as well as disposed of back to the environment uncontaminated with sewage.

Consequently, we have been putting a great deal of focus in better rainwater management in the home to help reduce the demand for potable water and reduce the amount that combines with foul water.

2.5.2. Changes to the plan



Since the session in April, we have moved into the evaluation phase of the trial of working with customers in Chippenham to reduce rainwater run-off into sewers from their properties using water butts. The project was successful in positively engaging customers on the issue and how their home plays an important part in the water, and wastewater, cycle. We will combine the learnings from our Chippenham trial with other approaches to rainwater separation and customer engagement as we move forwards to increase activity in this area.

Despite discussions with Government and regulators on the need to incentivise higher risk property level investment, the regulatory incentives are still prioritising certainty of discharge number reduction. This means that

attenuation and treatment of combined sewage dominates our AMP8 programme rather than separation solutions due to the inherent uncertainties of achieving the output-based targets that have been set.

That said, we are keen to continue to push the agenda and demonstrate the wider benefits of following the good rainwater management principles as set out by Defra in the Storm Overflow Discharge Reduction Plan.

2.6. Long-term water supply

2.6.1. Introduction

Part of our 5-year review process requires us to look at our 'Water Resources Management Plan'. Its core focus is ensuring that we can continue to manage a resilient water supply to customers, now and in the future under various drought scenarios, whilst meeting requirements for water abstraction reductions (the water we take from rivers) to protect the environment. These reductions are set by the Environment Agency. We received several questions asking about our long-term resource planning and ensuring our customers continue to receive water under a range of weather and climate change scenarios, alongside our own activity to reduce leakage.

2.6.2. Changes to the plan

Our Water Resources Management Plan was submitted in August 2023 after our draft plan was published in October 2022, which took on board feedback from customers and regulators. It meets all the abstraction reduction targets to ensure we protect the environment, while ensuring customers will continue to receive their water under a range of plausible future scenarios of climate change and population growth.



Photo credit: Hannah Wheeldon, employee

As part of this we also reviewed our leakage targets following the April session and further discussions with customers and regulators. Again, at the core of these discussions has been meeting long term targets whilst

balancing affordability and environmental benefit over the coming 5 years. We have therefore amended our leakage target from a 7.7ML/day reduction over 2025-30, to 3.5ML/day reduction.

To ensure our supplies are resilient to a range of potential future scenarios, we plan to continue investigating the potential for new reservoir sources to ensure they can be delivered as required, if future need is higher than forecast.

2.7. Water efficiency

2.7.1. Introduction

Helping customers reduce their water use, both households and non-households, is a key part of our plan and integral to ensuring the long-term balance between water supplies and demands. We received a small number of questions about our work in this area.



2.7.2. Changes to the plan

Our water efficiency programme of support to reduce household and business water use remains unchanged since the session in April. However, after feedback from customers in particular during our affordability and acceptability testing and wider conversations about overall bill affordability, we have reprofiled our smart meter rollout programme to 40% of households and non-households by 2030 – compared to the initial proposal of 75% - while still seeking full roll out by 2035. This shift in rollout will still mean we meet our long-term targets for demand and leakage reduction, but balances the shorter term requirements for affordability.

2.8. Partnership working

2.8.1. Introduction

We have a strong history in working with partners across our region to improve our local environment. This includes financially supporting the catchment Partnerships across the Wessex area, hosting the Partnerships in the Bristol Avon and Dorset. Additionally, the Partners Programme has been a key feature of our Biodiversity Action

Plan since 1998. We have been working with farmers, landowners and land managers to reduce agrochemical losses in our drinking water catchments for over ten years and are supporting interventions to offset nutrient contributions in some wastewater areas.

We will continue to support these existing Partnerships and have worked with our Catchment Partnerships to develop five environmental outcomes based, collaborative projects which we will help to deliver between 2025 and 2035.



2.8.2. Changes to the plan

We have maintained our plans for partnership working since the session in April as we are aware it is important to customers and allows us to work with others to deliver shared outcomes.



We also continue to include a focus on working with farmers at ten of our water treatment centres to reduce the levels of nutrients they use as fertilisers that enter the water that we treat for drinking water. This can avoid the need for building expensive and carbon intensive treatment plants that would otherwise be required.

We were not able to secure full agreement from the Environment Agency to deliver the nutrients programme in collaboration with farmers and landowners.

2.9. Bills, affordability, vulnerability, and customer service

2.9.1. Introduction



Household budgets have been severely stretched over the last few years with Covid and now the ongoing cost of living crisis. Our research tells us many customers think they are likely to be worse off in the foreseeable future and are worried about their water bills.

The significant investment needed between 2025-30 and the resulting bill increases will put more pressure on our customers, particularly those on lower incomes. Water is an essential service and should be affordable for all. We are already industry leaders in the provision of affordability support through our tailored assistance programme, and our plan ensures nobody will be in water poverty by 2030.

Our plan also proposes even more support through Priority Services for customers who need extra help from us perhaps due to their age, disability, mental ill health, mobility, or communication challenges.

2.9.2. Changes to the plan

Affordability has underpinned all our discussions in compiling this plan; from discussions with regulators about the best value way to deliver our regulatory programmes such as nutrients and storm overflows, to the performance levels we propose across our performance commitments.

All the investment set out in our plan is essential if we are to do the right thing for customers and the environment, within the current policy framework. We have developed the programme of investment in this plan in painstaking detail, and only included what we need to do to meet legislative and regulatory expectations and deliver the outcomes our customers and communities support.

Since the April session, however, the plan has reduced in size from around £4.3bn of investment to £3.5bn, improving the affordability whilst still delivering for customers and the environment.

Furthermore, we are putting in place additional protection for those on lower incomes. We are committed to eradicating water poverty by 2030 by increasing the numbers of customers receiving discounts on their bills through social tariffs by a further 100,000.

Working with our expert vulnerability advisory panel and our many partners, we co-design and update our vulnerability strategy, Every Customer Matters, each year. Published on our website and PartnerHub, it sets out the tailored services we provide, details our performance, and includes a multitude of initiatives, across four workstreams, to raise awareness and increase uptake of our support schemes to reach those who need us most. This might be support for those on low incomes with their bills or support with our wider service through Priority Services.



Some of the questions we received were about the bill rises that are happening in this current five-year period. We have worked hard to be upfront in our communications and give customers plenty of notice around bill rises. This included articles on our website and in our customer magazine. We also encourage customers to get in touch if they're struggling to pay, by putting messages front and centre on bills. But customers have said we can do more – so we're reviewing how we can better communicate bill rises due in April 2024 and looking at enhancing the information we share and widening the channels we use.

2.10. Financing, dividends, bonuses and pay

2.10.1. Introduction

Customers were interested in how Wessex Water was financed, the relative contributions made by customers and investors, the merits of different ownership and funding models, and the level of dividends and executive remuneration compared to the amount invested in infrastructure.

2.10.2. Changes to the plan

Customers questioned why so much new investment was needed now. Compared to the proposed £4.3bn investment at the time of the April Your Water Your Say session, our business plan now includes a lower amount of investment of £3.5bn, reducing the need for funding from customers and investors by an aggregate £800m.

Customers also questioned why the company would be paying dividends instead of investing in infrastructure. In fact, investment has always been much higher than dividends. For example, in the past year, the company invested four times more in infrastructure than it paid in dividends. Nonetheless, in our business plan we now propose paying no dividends in the base case in the coming years, instead reinvesting all profits in infrastructure.



2.11. Miscellaneous

We received questions on a small number of issues that do not fit neatly into the categories above, for example we were asked if we are lobbying government to ban or more strongly regulate the manufacture and use of chemicals harmful to humans and/or aquatic life. Overall, these questions have not impacted our proposed business plan, but our response is set out in the questions and answers document shared after the session.

3. Questions received

3.1. Engaging with our customers

Question	
How far are you thinking about engaging younger people/future generations in your business plans and long-term thinking? [Question from Sustainability First]	Answered in written record
Can you provide examples of where you have genuinely co-created solutions with your local communities, customers and wider stakeholders to improve service design and support the environment? [Question from Sustainability First]	Answered in written record

3.2. Nutrients

Question	
We have thousands of houses in Somerset waiting to be built out. That's not just the large developers, but also in small communities – e.g. small houses, extensions to farm buildings, extensions to small businesses. Lots of organisations are caught up in the phosphate issue. While I fully understand that you will take the low lying fruits of the larger communities first, I look at the percentage returns to the shareholders in a very low risk business, and at the money spent to improve, and I would suggest to the regulator and to the company that you need to think again about the under 2000 population communities which are numerous in rural Somerset.	Answered in written record
South Somerset Council no longer exists – it's now Somerset Council. We have a unitary system now in Somerset. We have 35,000 more people. We have also temporarily got the largest construction site in Western Europe and as a result we are struggling to meet local needs for housing. I'm very pleased to hear that we're working on these solutions with developers and the local council, but the need is much greater than the delivery that we're currently seeing. Can you expand on what else you can do to help us make sure that our residents have affordable, decent homes? [Question from Somerset Council]	Answered as part of changes to the plan
Can we step up our efforts to actually deliver on this issue – it's not just about the talk. It's absolutely heart-breaking speaking to people who can't get the accommodation that they need. Please recognise that there is a human angle to this, that corporately, collectively we are failing to deliver. [Question from Somerset Council] Update – we were sadly unable to book a meeting between Colin Skellett and Somerset Council, but are happy to do so.	Addressed under BAU
Given Wessex Water's website commitments to reduce pollution, are you doing enough to make sure phosphate levels are lowered sufficiently?	Answered as part of changes to the plan
Will this be enough to protect the SSSI?	Answered in written record
What are you doing to ensure SSSI on the Somerset Levels will not be harmed by high phosphate levels and other pollution?	Answered in written record

Are you lobbying the government to take this [high phosphate levels and other pollution] into consideration when allowing new housing developments?	Answered in written record
Large new housing developments need to arrange for huge areas of land to be set aside to offset the nitrates leaching into rivers. Would it be more sensible if they made contributions to Wessex Water or the local water company to build a nitrate removal plant attached to the local treatment works or provide suitable land close to the local sewage treatment works to build a natural reed type nitrate removal basin. The additional facilities could also reduce the overflow events from the sewage treatment works.	Answered in written record
5% of phosphates is added to the water by Wessex Water to reduce degradation of older pipes – when will this be stopped?	Answered as part of changes to the plan
Good to hear about the work you are doing on land and in the river to reduce nutrient contamination and biodiversity loss. What are your plans for using nature-based approaches (native oysters' beds, seaweed, and saltmarshes) in coastal areas to reduce legacy nutrients contamination and support water quality and biodiversity recovery?	Answered in written record
Would you agree that catchment thinking and investment in nature-based solutions will address issues across the four areas of concern you are covering today?	Answered as part of changes to the plan

3.3. Investment in water recycling centres

Question	
Many parts of Somerset are rural and in my part of the county, about 40% of the people live in small communities. What are Wessex Water's plans to upgrade treatment plants for communities under 2000? Historically, there's been virtually no investment in the smaller plants and the emphasis, I understand, goes into the larger communities. But given there are so many small communities, what are your plans?	Answered in written record
Like various other towns in the area, Melksham is expanding at a rate that is upsetting an awful lot of people. We still only have two sewage treatment plants. What are the plans for increasing the number of sewage treatment plants, given the vast amount of building that's going on in Wiltshire?	Answered in written record
Tetbury is at the beginning of the Avon, and it's an intermittent stream that's fed by tributaries and a spring. There is a sewage treatment works in Tetbury. I know you have a biodigester at Avonmouth, and materials are carried there by truck and processed into fuel. Is there a plan to have more local biodigesters, perhaps to provide energy for the town they serve? For sewage treatment works around the size of Tetbury – which has a population of about 6000 although growing all the time, with lots of development, and lots of runoff from roads and farms around the area – could reed bed systems be used more extensively?	Answered in written record

3.4. Overflows

Question	
Last year, within a three mile radius of Melksham, there were 3695 hours of unauthorized spillages That's 154 days going largely into the River Avon, where children swim. And last year, I believe, Ofwat said it did have serious concerns over Wessex Water's sewage treatment and storm overflow spills. So what are you doing to improve performance in these areas? And are spillages being UV treated to prevent E. coli contamination?	Answered in written record
It's great to see increased monitoring on storm overflows. Because of that, though, we now know that last year Wessex Water discharged 21,878 times into waterways in 2022. But the Water Industry Act 1991 outlines that discharges should only be happening in periods of extreme heavy rainfall. Do you acknowledge that that's an extremely high number of discharges to be consistent with extreme events? And are you sure that you are compliant with that piece of legislation? [Question from Surfers Against Sewage]	Answered in written record
So you think you're compliant in terms of rainfall, but given the Water Industry Act only allows discharges in periods of extreme rainfall, does that mean those high water table things aren't compliant? [Question from Surfers Against Sewage]	Answered in written record
I appreciate that. I just think since 1991 we've seen these discharges and as you say, we've got better monitoring now so we can see the extent of the problem. So we're just making sure that we're calling you out on the fact that you're not currently compliant with your discharges. [Comment from Surfers Against Sewage]	Answered in written record
None of the questionnaires or other disclosures that I've seen over the last few years or so from Wessex Water have made reference to the fact that Wessex Water has been dumping sewage into rivers and seas. So this is misleading. Do Wessex agree that if this is indeed the case, will an apology, be forthcoming to Wessex customers? Will Wessex be stopping all dividend payments to shareholders and cancelling bonuses to board members and others, given the company's behaviour over the last few years?	Answered in written record
I would like to understand WW's priorities for the next AMP period (2025-30), in particular what targets the company is planning to set itself in terms of reducing the amount of time its storm overflows and Water Treatment Works overflow, polluting rivers and seas.	Answered as part of changes to the plan
You say you are spending £3 million a month on sewage discharge reduction. Why so little when you have averaged £6 million a month to shareholders?	Answered in written record
Increasing numbers of people are swimming in open water and participating in water-based recreation. Some companies are publishing where they are discharging sewage into rivers and seas but it is hard to interpret what this data means i.e. is the water safe to swim in? Other companies are training staff and communities about water safety. How have you helped promote water safety for your consumers and employees and how do you propose to do this in your 2025-30 business plan so we can safely swim and play in our rivers and seas? [Question from Sustainability First]	Answered in written record
Surely if WW/YTL Group had been investing in the infrastructure improvements to prevent sewage from polluting our waterways they wouldn't require so much more money now to fix these problems?	Answered in written record
Will you be able to meet the requirements of the Environment Bill to monitor upstream and downstream of each CSO?	Answered as part of changes to the plan

3.5. Surface water

Question	
Will Wessex be looking to incentivise customers to manage their surface water by a greater reduction in sewerage charges?	Answered in written record
Water butt use is already largely happening in private residences. But do big industries like factories and warehouses use them? I see thousands of gallons of pure rainwater cascade off buildings in business parks and Industrial Estates all the time. This water could be collected and reused. Companies should work with the Government to make their wastewater get reused. Fewer dividends, more service to customers.	Answered in written record
Having read an encouraging report by Southern Water on their Pathfinder Project for slowing down rainwater surges by installing slow-drain water butts free of charge. Are you considering similar initiatives to work with the communities?	Answered as part of changes to the plan
Regarding the CSO challenge, how are you going to balance surface water separation storage with increasingly difficult carbon targets and reduction targets?	Answered as part of changes to the plan
Will Wessex Water offer free water butts to householders?	Answered in written record
Is there a plan for more SUDS within our cities, in particular are you working closely with Bristol?	Answered in written record
Are there plans to create additional water storage solutions possibly linking in with flood mitigation/adaptation schemes?	Answered in written record

3.6. Long-term water supply

Question	
How will Wessex Water ensure that customers receive a reliable, secure water supply in the long term in the context of our changing climates and possible population growth in the future? What is the current and long-term risk of drought and/or supply restrictions?	Answered in written record
Climate change is resulting in increased extreme weather events including drought, heatwaves, and increased water supply interruptions. How will you proactively help your domestic customers and small high water dependent businesses to prepare to be more resilient to these changes so their negative impacts are lessened or prevented? [Question from Sustainability First]	Answered in written record
Some of the region's rivers are used to abstract water for the public supply. What actions are Wessex taking to protect the biodiversity of our rivers and their habitats from the risk of over-abstraction?	Answered in written record
What discussions are being had to widen your regional network to a national network?	Answered in written record

What are Wessex Water's aims to reduce the amount of water lost from leaking pipes?	Answered as part of changes to the plan
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3.7. Water efficiency

Question	
According to Ofwat's 2021-22 service delivery report on company performance, Wessex Water is ranked eight out of ten water and wastewater companies at the level of per capita consumption (the volume of water used by people and businesses every day). How will the company reduce this level of consumption and what is your target for this? [Question from CCW]	Answered as part of changes to the plan
It's good to hear of free water butts and pilot projects working with households to see how water can be saved. It would be even more reassuring to hear if you have a major education programme to enable households to do so much more at the micro level of everyday consumption. Making it crystal clear that water is a finite and utterly precious resource and we absolutely need to limit our everyday usage: some examples - turning off taps whilst teeth cleaning; washing vegetables in a bowl rather than under a running tap; putting washing up water on the garden plants and vegetables and household plants - alongside having shorter showers, flushing less etc. as is already being encouraged.	Answered in written record
I am a Chartered Environmental Consultant and have worked with numerous water companies so far in my career. One thing I have learnt in recent years is that given cuts to the Environment Agency over the last 2 decades, environmental monitoring (particularly water quality) has reduced and powers for reporting has been passed to the water companies so do Wessex have a robust/ thorough monitoring programme in place, which will also inform drought permits etc. Could Wessex be more forceful (in a good way) in showcasing the importance and benefits of reducing water usage. I know South West Water have provided customers with a free water butt if they wish - could Wessex offer something similar and put savings into real terms for customers, to help incentivise.	Answered in written record

3.8. Partnership working

Question	
Storm drains and wastewater going into the sewerage system led to blockages during the torrential downpours we suffered in our region, pre-Christmas 2022. A major contributing factor of surface water flooding was Councils not clearing the late falling autumn leaves. Do Wessex Water work directly with local councils to nudge them into action?	Answered in written record
Why do developers not have to check that existing drainage systems are adequate before they build?	Answered in written record
We're inland rather than being along the coast. A lot of the pollution in our river is caused by agriculture. Can water companies put pressure on the government so that the rules around farming next to rivers are rules and not recommendations? I know that locally people have complained. The Environment Agency has turned up and they have said that there are no rules. These are just recommendations. Can the water companies put pressure on the government to make them enforceable?	Answered in written record

Are you doing anything to help farmers reduce pollution through farming?	Answered as part of changes to the plan
There is a growing citizen science movement, a lot of which is driven by concerns about sewage spills and ensuring that the company is delivering on their promises. Rather than working on different sides of the same issue, are Wessex Water able to share their monitoring data and help build a whole picture of the health of rivers, lend any expertise in analysis of this data and increase support for partnership working to improve the wider health of our water environment.	Answered in written record
I currently volunteer as a Wessex Water Guardian under the CSI scheme in combination with Somerset Wildlife Trust. Will you continue to support this important work and how important is it to your plans to improve our rivers water quality long term strategy?	Answered in written record
As WW has land areas that could be suitable for PV and wind - would WW engage with community energy orgs to deliver decarbonised energy?	Answered in written record

3.9. Bills, affordability, vulnerability and customer service

Question	
In response to the presentation – did the bill increase figures presented include inflation?	Answered in written record
Will the bill increases be across the board or in line with usage?	Answered in written record
Interested to hear how much Wessex's profits impact bills broken down in the same way we have just seen for customer benefits. [Question from Surfers against Sewage]	Answered in written record
There was a comment earlier around costs increasing due to the requirements to pay people to go into read meters and also to put things in the post. But in the 21st century, now we're doing so much of these things virtually, particularly even online banking. Has Wessex Water not considered sending bills by email and having online access account?	Answered in written record
<p>I've been a Wessex Water customer since privatization, and over that time I've been constantly bombarded by how wonderful they are. They're the best in the country. Which isn't really saying a lot, is it? In terms of the water industry, I've had numerous problems with bills. For example, I received a bill yesterday for the first time that had to be paid by yesterday.</p> <p>I have complained to Mr. Skellett about the company's failure to publicise in advance increases in charges for water. The response in 2022 was that it's too expensive. We'd have to put the bills up if we spent 14p on every customer telling them what their new bill charges were going to be. He did courteously respond to a suggestion I made that the publication date of the periodic magazine could be advanced to before the price increases took effect, and he could put the details in there. He said he would do that.</p> <p>In 2023 you put the bills up. I've been on the new charges for a month now, and until I got the bill, I didn't know what my unit costs were. Now, these are not the actions of a company that cares about its customers and is wonderful. These are the actions of a company that is not really customer focused in any way at all.</p>	Answered in written record

Tell me why you've increased the standing charge by 12 and a half percent over 18 months. Customers who respond to your exhortations to use less water still often find themselves stung by a very significant increase in the standing charge. You say that is to service and read meters. Well, at £27 per household if, say, half of your customers are on meters, £2 million worth of standing charge certainly would cover that and more.	Answered in written record
Please ask Wessex Water why in 2023 as in 2022 they raised charges without telling metered customers directly?	Answered in written record
How does the company engage with its customers to ensure bills are affordable? What do customers tell you? What are doing in response?	Answered in written record
How much financial support in total in £ do you propose to make available to customers struggling to afford their water bills 2025-30? How much/what percentage of financial support will be funded from shareholder profits? [Question from Sustainability First]	Answered as part of changes to the plan
Have you or will you be engaging with stakeholders in your region to develop a consumer vulnerability strategy outlining how you will deliver inclusive accessible services and protect customers and communities for 2025-30? When will this be published and how will it be updated? How do you see consumer vulnerability in your area changing in the next 5-15 years and what impact has that had on your business plan proposals and strategy? [Question from Sustainability First]	Answered as part of changes to the plan
Wessex Water tells us how wonderful their performance is. I've had many instances of less than wonderful performance and would like to get the company's comments on this.	Answered in written record

3.10. Financing, dividends, bonuses and pay

Question	
Why is the extra investment needed now? You say things like you've reduced leakage by 60% and you want to reduce it by 8%. But in order to reduce that by 8%, you need a significant investment of new money. Why is new money required and why can't you do most of this work within existing budgets?	Answered in written record
Since privatization, how much total investment has been put into Wessex Water by shareholders to make improvements and also how much has been paid out to shareholders by Wessex Water in dividends? [Question from Surfers Against Sewage]	Answered in written record
What percentage of Wessex Water is owned by overseas investment firms, private equity, pension funds and businesses lodged in tax havens?	Answered in written record
You acknowledge that as a water company you've dropped in environmental ratings which you say you're going to prioritize and work on changing. But why did you prioritize taking a total of £975,000 in chief executive remunerations last year before prioritizing investing in infrastructure that would help you meet those environmental targets? [Question from Surfers Against Sewage]	Answered in written record
My understanding is that Wessex Water has borrowed large sums to fund shareholder dividends, passing on interest payments to customers and increasing bills by around £70 a year. This is clearly not a sustainable finance model. The promise of privatization was that shareholders would make the investments needed, but the reverse has happened. Are there any plans to change the funding model and stop borrowing to fund dividends?	Answered as part of changes to the plan

<p>Customers are going to be asked to bear a bit more cost in terms of higher bills, which is slightly contentious possibly, but I think probably fair enough for many of us. But there's got to be a fair aspect that if customers are paying more, will shareholders see lower dividends? My understanding of how the investing book says, you know, high risk, high reward, if a gravy train of dividends just keeps flowing no matter what's going on and customers are paying more, that doesn't feel right. So what is the thinking about your future returns for investors versus higher bills for customers?</p>	<p>Answered as part of changes to the plan</p>
<p>Is there no room for reducing dividends and bonuses to reduce the impact on customer bills?</p>	<p>Answered in written record</p>
<p>Out of Touch - Incomes for most people are not going up - mainly we are not the beneficiaries of pay review by Board Committees - I'm sure Bonuses and pay increases could be absorbed by reduced dividends - at least as a way of saying we are 'all in this together'</p>	<p>Answered in written record</p>
<p>As water is a "natural monopoly" and vital to life, it should obviously be either in public ownership or run "not for profit". Will Wessex Water please stop executive bonuses & shareholder dividends and invest the money in infrastructure instead?</p>	<p>Answered in written record</p>
<p>Why are customers having to pay for improvements to critical infrastructure when shareholders were paid 63.5 million in dividends?</p>	<p>Answered in written record</p>
<p>Why were six figure bonuses paid to 4 individuals who are tasked with protecting and enhancing the environment despite the 29,000 sewage spills in 2022; the drop in EA rating from 4* to 2* in 2021 and the red flags for missing targets over increasing stretches of clean rivers and beaches in 2022?</p>	<p>Answered in written record</p>
<p>Please ask Wessex Water why their only contribution to the Water Aid charity is £14,000 worth of free publicity when they can afford to pay their directors excessive salaries and repatriate to Malaysia multi millions in profits? The figure of £14,000 was obtained directly from Wessex Water.</p>	<p>Answered in written record</p>
<p>How can you pay thousands of pounds in bonuses when we only ever see a failing system with raw sewage in rivers, fish dying and algae growing due to the number of discharges which is growing? With modern technology, I would have thought this would be the foremost thing to conquer along with leaking pipes. Why isn't this working satisfactorily?</p>	<p>Answered in written record</p>
<p>Since privatization, money goes to shareholders, instead of fixing leaks and separating foul water sewers from rainwater sewers. Building work has been halted in my area due to Natural England as Poole Harbour is polluted. The government has committed to building more houses, yet the sewerage system can't cope. There's no joined-up thinking and as stated in your For You For Life magazine, you only aim to reduce the number of hours of discharge from storm overflows by 25% by 2025 at Portland Bill, for instance. Aiming is not good enough. 25% is pretty little, people can't swim in rivers and several beaches get closed. The company needs to get its act together instead of paying shareholders.</p>	<p>Answered in written record</p>

3.11. Miscellaneous

Question	
Theme: Harmful chemicals	
Are you lobbying the government to ban or more strongly regulate the manufacture and use of chemicals harmful to humans (for example PFAS) and/or aquatic life (for example fipronil)?	Answered in written record
Are you attempting to engage and educate consumers about how to help to prevent these chemicals getting into the rivers/sewage treatment plants (for example not using harmful waterproofing or certain flea and tick treatments, or how to apply a better practice to prevent these getting into the water systems)?	Answered in written record
Theme: Microplastics	
I would like to know what efforts you are making to remove micro plastics from the water supply. This is of immense importance in this "plastic age" we live in.	Answered in written record
Theme: Energy generation	
Has there been any thought on when improving and updating storm drains and then using these times of overflow into rivers to generate electricity. Also being on a high tidal natural resource with our tidal rivers, is there any more thought on using these to generate electricity over the next 30 to 50 years?	Answered in written record
Theme: Multiple issues	
How does your public purpose influence your business plan proposals in terms of where you go above and beyond core water business services? How are you planning on supporting citizens rather than just customers during the next AMP? [Question from Sustainability First]	Answered in written record
I would like Wessex Water to answer my questions on skills development, specifically: How many trade apprentices, other interns and work experience students, bursary students and other trainees in supernumerary positions does Wessex Water currently have on its payroll and what percentage of total headcount does this represent. Are you able to report these numbers for the previous 4 years? Over the past 5 years what percentage of total payroll cost has been spent on the training listed above and any other training?	Answered in written record