Wessex Water Social Purpose

Report
21st April 2021

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This report comprises three separate research projects. The customer research was iterative, with findings from the future customer research informing the survey design for the current customer project.

External view

Future customers

Young People's Panellists
- September-November 2020
- Discussion groups as part of 2 day co-creative process: **22 x Y12 & Y13 pupils** from 20 schools within the region
- Schools' Survey: online questionnaire distributed through 14 schools. **555 x sixth formers**

Qualitative & Quantitative data

Current customers

Wessex Water Customer Panel
- Fieldwork 19th March- 5th April 2021*
- 10 minute long survey
- **Sample of 1,050 full completes** (answering all questions)

*Note fieldwork complete ahead of Panorama documentary on illegal dumping of sewage on 12th April

Quantitative data

Internal view

Colleagues

3 x colleague group discussions
- February 2021
- 1 group comprising manager-level staff
- 2 groups a mix of operations, customer service, waste and supply technical staff from across the region
- **15 colleagues in total**

Qualitative data

NB: projects took place at different times, with slightly different parameters in terms of method, stimulus materials and depth of investigation.

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The External View

Future customers

Current customers

Current

Environmental concerns are more widespread than concerns over economic and social issues
• Climate change, single-use plastics and loss of biodiversity are the top 3 – followed by water pollution.

■ Total (1050)

Q1. From the following list, which of these issues are you most concerned about?
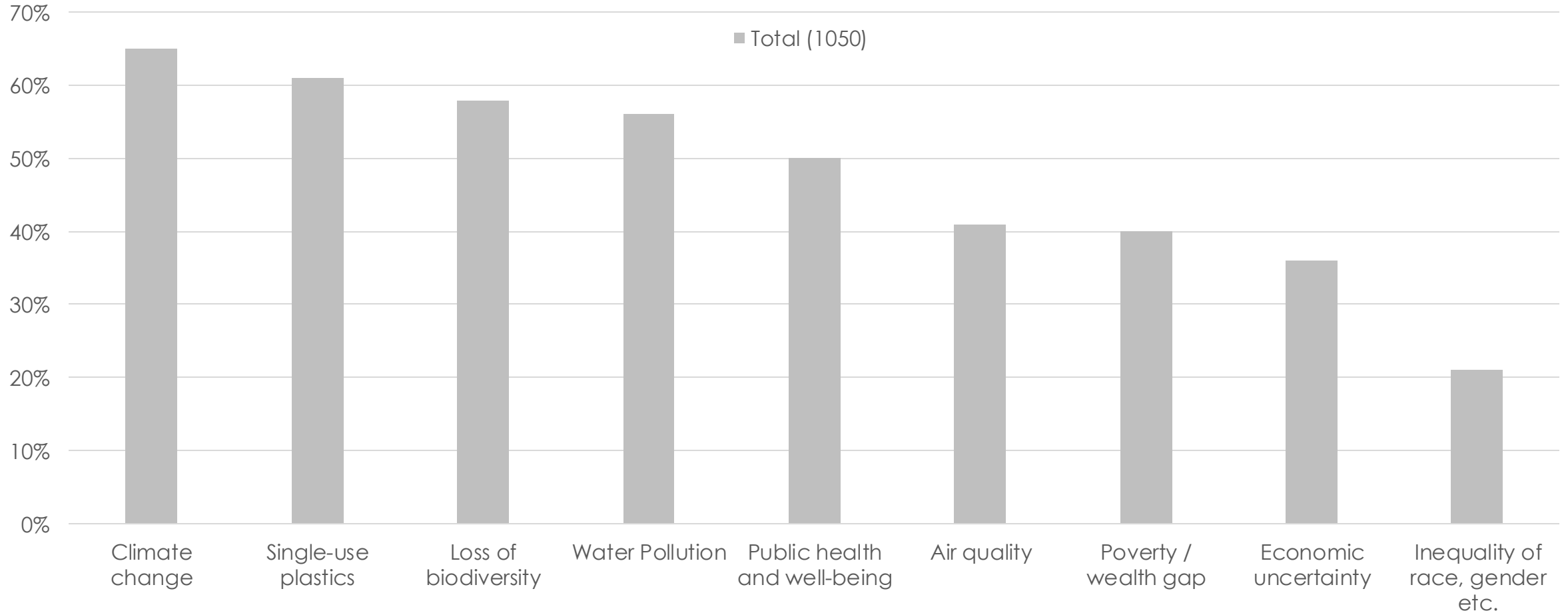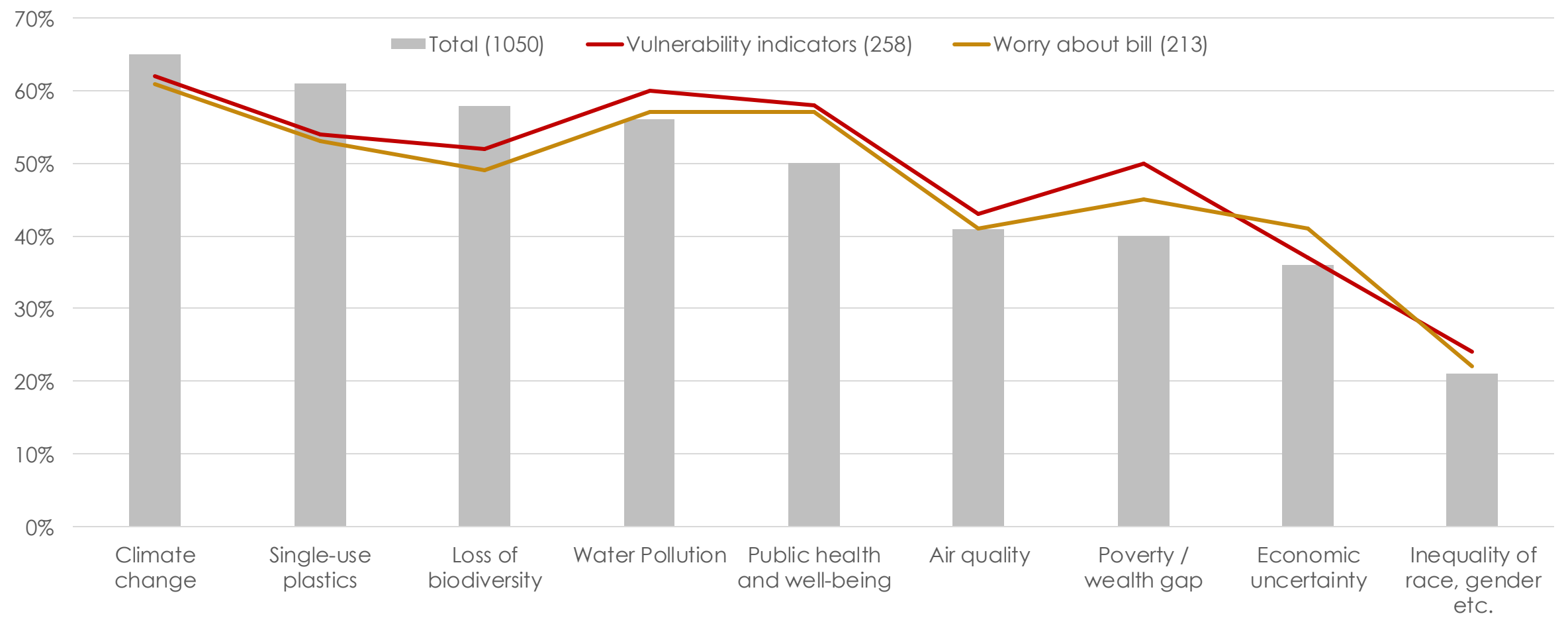Base: All panellists (1050)

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Current

Environmental concerns are more widespread than concerns over economic and social issues

• Climate change, single-use plastics and loss of biodiversity are the top 3 – followed by water pollution

• Vulnerable customers and those worried about their bill have a slightly different order of concerns: Public health and wellbeing, water pollution, and concern over poverty / wealth gap are higher up their list.

Legend: Total (1050) — Vulnerability indicators (258) — Worry about bill (213)

Categories: Climate change, Single-use plastics, Loss of biodiversity, Water Pollution, Public health and well-being, Air quality, Poverty / wealth gap, Economic uncertainty, Inequality of race, gender etc.

Q1. From the following list, which of these issues are you most concerned about?
Base: All panellists (1050)

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Who is responsible for tackling issues facing society & environment?

Current

Customers on the Wessex Water panel think **central government** and **national/global businesses** bear most responsibility.
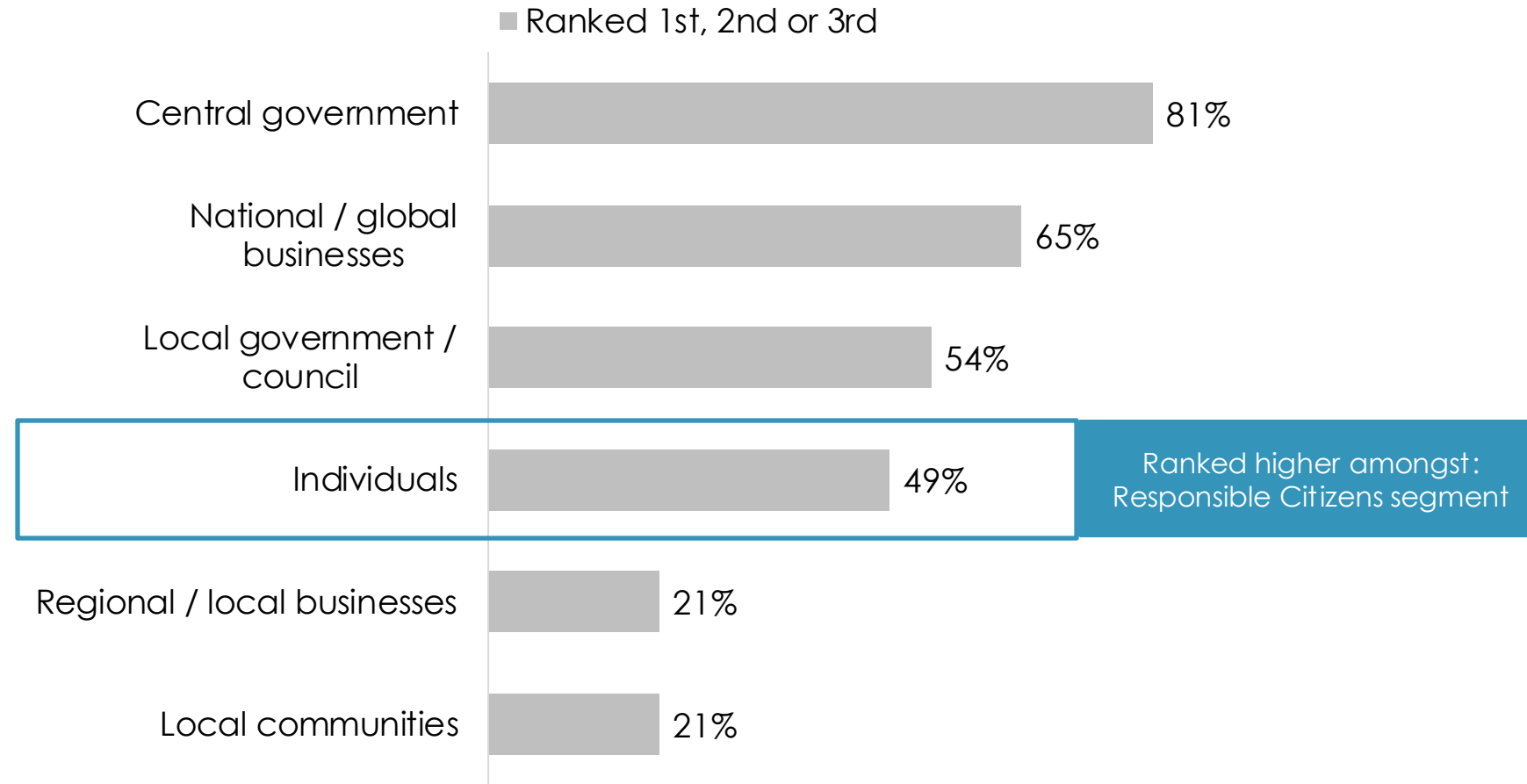
This was reflected also by comments from future customers who were taking some environmentally conscious behaviours – but wanted to see governments lead action.

Future

■ Ranked 1st, 2nd or 3rd

Greater responsibility (based on average rank)

Category	%
Central government	81%
National / global businesses	65%
Local government / council	54%
Individuals	49%
Regional / local businesses	21%
Local communities	21%

Ranked higher amongst: Responsible Citizens segment

Q2. Who do you think is responsible for tackling issues facing society and the environment? **Base:** All panellists (1050)

'Most pollution and waste comes from big corporations. Banning plastic straws - that doesn't actually help anyone. What about the companies that are dumping sewage into the sea? We need less individual change and more systemic change.'

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Future customers

- Terminology needs explaining; not all familiar with CSR – or 'social purpose'
- Some brands have cut through: Big companies come to mind initially
- Commonly associated with one core value / cause, not a wide range

H&M
Sustainable clothing
Recycle clothing
Use less water

co-op
Local, fair wages, ethical, support charities

McDonald's
Sustainable packaging
Free meals
Community football

B&Q
Employ (redundant) older people

GREENPEACE
Protecting the environment (single cause)

LUSH FRESH HANDMADE COSMETICS
Against animal testing.
UK manufactured minimising product 'miles'

JOHN LEWIS **WAITROSE**
For us, it's personal
Staff shareholders
Pay suppliers properly
High animal welfare standards

T /A L A
Slow, sustainable fashion

MISSION BURRITO
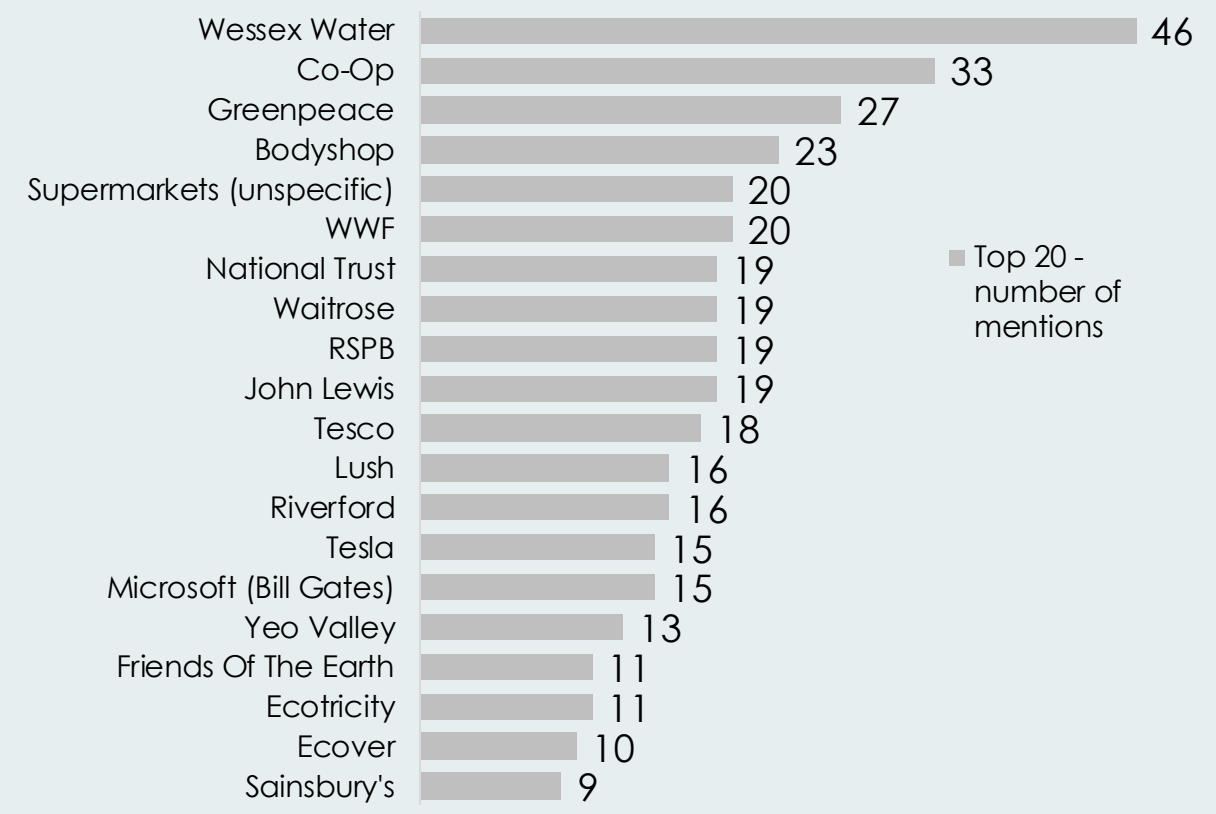Free lunches for children

finisterre
Cleaning beaches
Associated with Surfers vs sewage

Current customers

- **Only 1 in 3** could think of any organization admired for positive contribution to society / environment
- Of these, many brands mentioned: Global through to local
- Along with Wessex Water (likely overstated by panellists) most top of mind brands were **supermarkets, NGOs and retailers**

Brand	Top 20 - number of mentions
Wessex Water	46
Co-Op	33
Greenpeace	27
Bodyshop	23
Supermarkets (unspecific)	20
WWF	20
National Trust	19
Waitrose	19
RSPB	19
John Lewis	19
Tesco	18
Lush	16
Riverford	16
Tesla	15
Microsoft (Bill Gates)	15
Yeo Valley	13
Friends Of The Earth	11
Ecotricity	11
Ecover	10
Sainsbury's	9

Q3. Which companies, brands or organisations do you admire for making a positive contribution to society and / or the environment. [Open question] **Base:** All panellists (1050)

Current

A strong voice on social & environmental issues can have a positive effect.

Yet some tension as many customers also feel that brands' involvement is self-serving to help their image.

Some customer groups are more positive about companies' involvement with CSR than others.

Future

Future customers initially regard CSR with some circumspection…

Legend: ■ Strongly disagree ■ Tend to disagree ■ Neutral / don't know ■ Tend to agree ■ Strongly agree

I feel more positive towards companies that have a strong voice on social and environmental issues

| 5% | 20% | 45% | 27% |
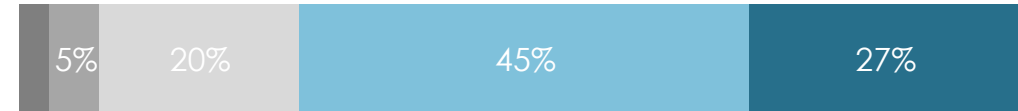
Companies only get involved in social and environmental initiatives to help their own image

| 9% | 20% | 51% | 18% |

Less positive
- Stretched & Struggling segment
- Those who make less environmental effort

More positive
- Women
- Those with children in home
- Responsible Citizens segment

- Big companies face cynicism around their motives - profit rather than doing good.
- Small businesses and NGOs appear more credible in this space.
- There's also tension between whether social purpose should be linked / relevant to core business vs a commitment to a separate / non-connected cause.

'Brands do this sort of thing because it's good for the brand.'

'I believe it more when the company has always been like it and always supported certain causes.'

'It's better when a company is tackling an issue that affects its customers.'

Q4. Here are some things people have said about social and environmental issues. How much do you agree or disagree with each? **Base:** All panellists (1050)

blue marble

Current

Providing a clean water supply is the most essential benefit for people. Hygiene treatment of sewage in modern congested Britain is essential.

Education e.g. visits to your works, school outreach etc

Improving sewage treatment; fixing leaks

Education programmes informative leaflets Free water saving advice and gadgets

Funding and supporting local nature reserves, educating children etc as mentioned in your quarterly magazine.

Job opportunities, environmental stewardship

35% can think of something

Highest awareness amongst Responsible Citizens (42%). Lowest amongst Stretched & Struggling (23%)

Supporting staff to help vulnerable people. Deployment of AI to detect leaks. New walking and cycling routes at Bath riverside park

I think you invest/get involved in environmental schemes, and I believe you encourage employees to volunteer.

Helping wild life with looking after rivers and lakes. Also the planting of trees and trying to stop anyone putting fats into drains..

Controlling water pollution, paying attention to water leaks, encouraging water meters.

Working with communities to clean up the environment. Providing grants for local community. Raising your profile as part of society with social responsibility.

You ought to be making a greater contribution to protecting the environment - today was the announcement regarding raw sewage released into streams and rivers!

Word cloud (central): programmes areas Job drinking customer leaks work after improve providing Fixing issues sewage environmental communities away Maintaining Awareness etc pollution stop some customers around supply more works conservation waste children wildlife Good Supporting resources specifics aware less courses land Doing make help quality Grants bills refill putting about now activities leaking pipes Education footprint things Making waterways nature trying clean read projects Wessex aid all management magazine usage saving way reduce public rivers Apprenticeships carbon Keeping schools meters advice other people remember Funding Improving think Educating local Educational use school Looking treatment environment

Q5. Can you think of anything that we are doing to make a positive contribution to society and / or the environment (in addition to providing clean water and treating sewage)?
Base: All panellists (1050). *Note that 'Water' was removed from the Word Cloud as this was the dominant word mentioned.*
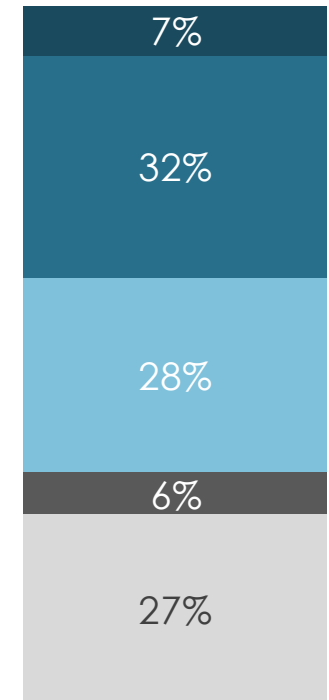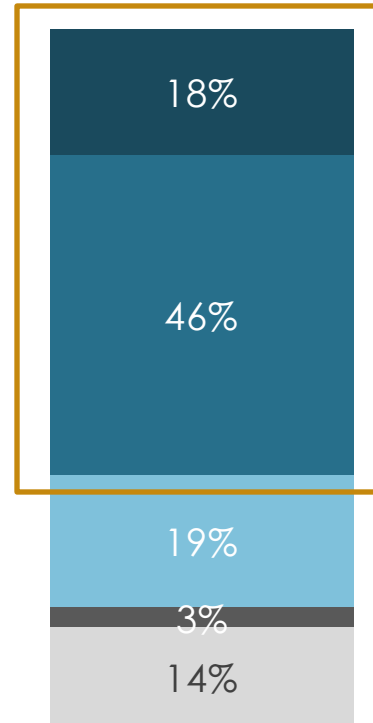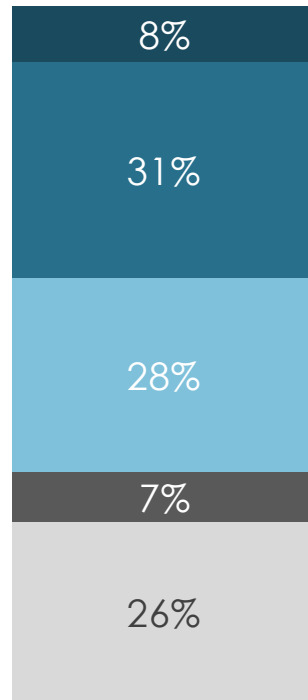
Prompted impressions of how much Wessex Water does to support…

Current

	People & communities	The environment	Local & regional economy
A lot	8%	18%	7%
Fair amount	31%	46%	32%
Little	28%	19%	28%
Nothing	7%	3%	6%
Don't know	26%	14%	27%

- Customer impressions are that the company does more to support the environment than it does to support either people and communities in the region, or the local and regional economy
- Even amongst this engaged group of customers, over 1 in 4 have no impression of Wessex Water doing anything these areas – clear scope to communicate.

Q7. What is your impression of how much we do in the following areas…? **Base:** All panellists (1050)

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What *should* the ideal water company support?

- Both Current customers on the Wessex Water panel and Future customers across the region are **initially** more impressed with the idea of a water company **supporting the environment** than supporting communities or the local economy.
- This reflects both stated priorities and what they think Wessex Water currently focuses on

% Prefer a water company that supports…   Panellists   Sixth Formers

People and communities in their region
- 12%
- 19%

The environment
- 42%
- 68%

The local and regional economy
- 19%
- 10%

No preference / none
- 27%
- 3%
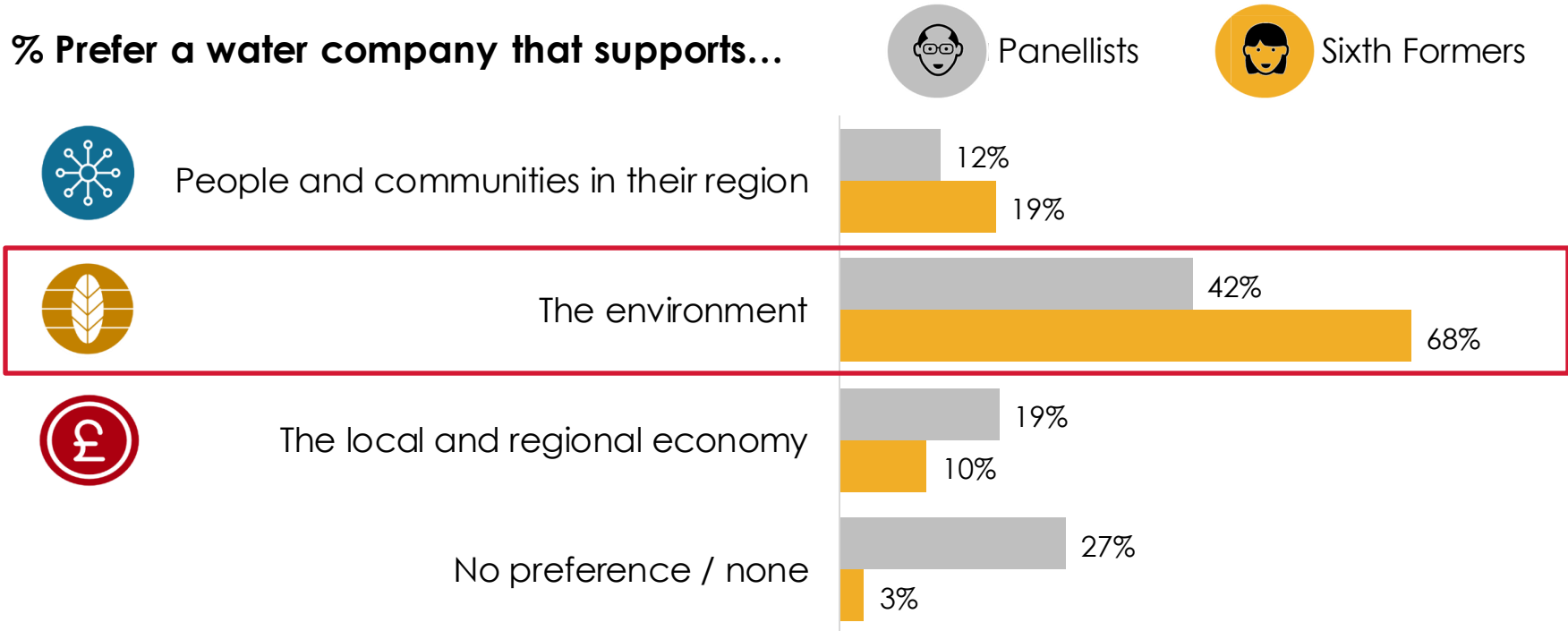
BUT on further exploration of specific actions, this picture develops, with more appreciation of (local) action beyond environmental initiatives

Q13: Imagine you could choose from three different water companies, all exactly the same other than the way they invest their profits to benefit society. Which would be the most appealing to you (as a future customer)? *Base: All Panellists (1050) All Sixth Form respondents (555)*

- Qualitatively – with more consideration – **people & community** based initiatives e.g. promoting local projects, social mobility and the **local economy** appear to have more impact than purely environmental options
  - Although it should be noted that there are environmental elements to serving communities

TOP 3 ELEMENTS – go above and beyond

	Playing a full part in the **communities** *we serve e.g.* • *offering grants to support community and environmental initiatives* • *providing staff volunteers for local projects e.g. providing hot meals to vulnerable people during Covid* • *Covid Relief Fund for organisations dealing with the pandemic*	▶ Future customers see this as a demonstration that company not just interested in making money: going beyond expectations
	Promoting **social mobility** *by growing skills and providing opportunities in a workforce through apprenticeships and educational programmes.*	▶ As well as the importance of good pay and training, apprenticeships should also result in job at the end
	Supporting and driving **economic growth** *across our region, by being a large local employer; supporting local suppliers & businesses.*	▶ Good, particularly in Covid context; want more evidence of what this means

Response when prompted with elements of social purpose | 2

Future

Future customers scrutinise claims: many seen as part of legal or moral obligation for a company like Wessex

Question whether these go above & beyond legal requirement

*Leading the improvement of the **natural environment** of our region through our work to adapt to and mitigate climate change, reduce pollution, conserve water, promote sustainable agriculture and eliminate single use plastic.*

Priority, but should be default. Go further with conservation work & provide evidence

*Promoting **culture, inclusion, and diversity** so that our business is a place where everyone enjoys working and feels they are treated fairly and given every opportunity to further their career.*

Impactful and easy to implement; but also expected and reflects basic HR law; also company benefits from this. To add value it needs to go further and celebrate and promote diversity and inclusion

*Becoming **carbon neutral by 2030** by a continuation of activities including energy efficiency practices and investment in renewable energy. Where emissions are unavoidable, seeking to offset through local sequestration projects or buying offsets.*

Should be doing this, but target is more ambitious than legislation, demonstrating more commitment; difficult to measure / evidence in advance

Expected as core business of a 'decent' water company
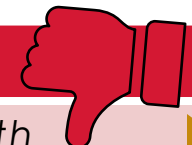
*Supporting the healthy functioning of society and the environment with **essential water services** today and into the future.*

Key function of a water company

*Ensuring everyone can benefit from and afford our services, with a range of **lower rate tariffs and discounts for people on low incomes** and partnership working with debt advice sector.*

Recognise don't have to, but should do as a moral company – generally service must be affordable (basic human need)

*Making responsible investments now in existing pipework and treatment works to **upgrade infrastructure** and prepare for the additional challenges of climate change and population growth.*

Any good company needs to prepare for future, core to their survival

An evolved set of elements were developed

Current

As a result of the in-depth conversations with future customers a refined set of elements (or principles) were evaluated amongst the current customer panel. These were abbreviated from the original versions for the purposes of online research.
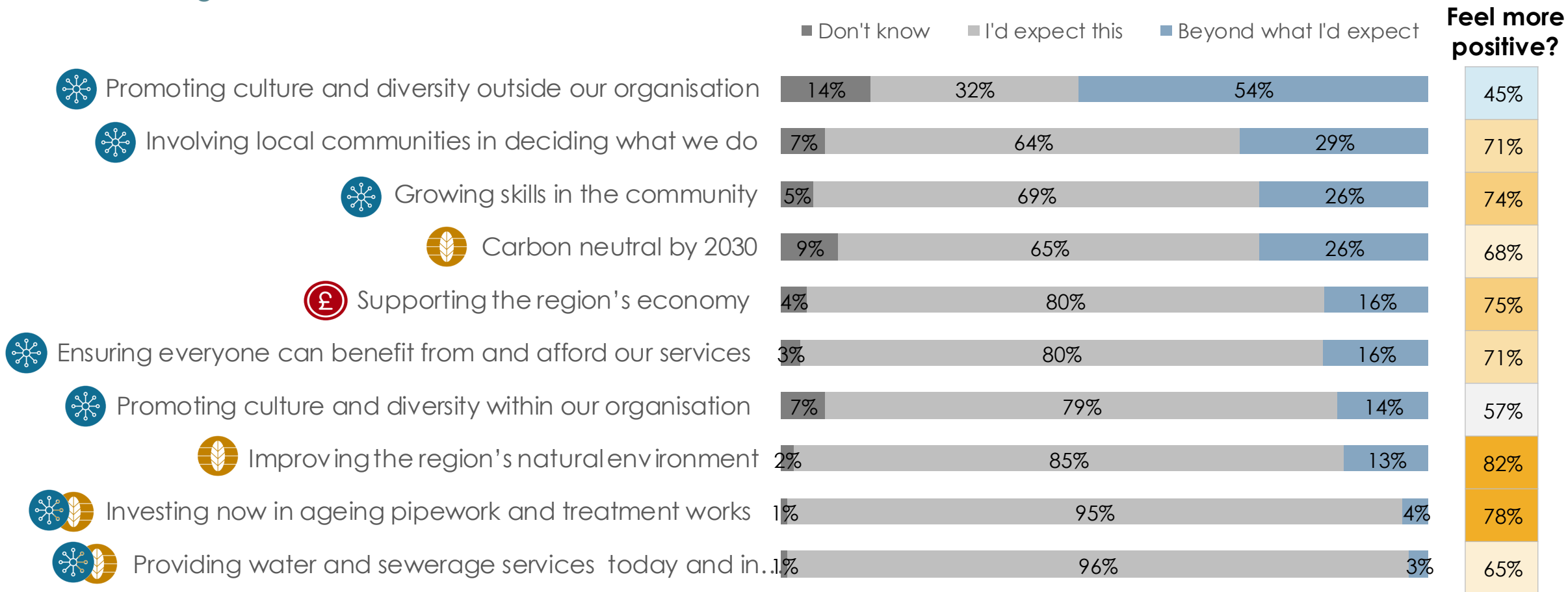
Providing water and sewerage services for public and environmental health today and in future

Supporting the region's economy by employing local people and using local businesses

Ensuring **everyone can benefit from and afford our services** (e.g. lower tariffs for low income customers, helping those in debt get expert advice)

Promoting culture and diversity within our organisation so that employees and everyone they work with are treated fairly and given equal opportunity

Promoting culture and diversity outside our organisation by publicly campaigning for diversity and equality

Growing skills in the community and providing opportunities through apprenticeships and education

Improving the region's natural environment by reducing pollution, stopping use of single-use plastic, conserving water and promoting sustainable agriculture

Becoming **carbon neutral by 2030**

Investing now in ageing pipework and treatment works **to ensure reliable services for future generations** in the face of climate change

Involving local communities in deciding what we do (e.g. choosing investments to make local water supplies and sewerage systems more resilient; deciding which local projects we give grants to)

Current

16%
Think something is missing from the list of principles

Your whole image is worth nothing as you allow water pollution and water loss without remedial action. Its not good you trying to convince us you are aligned to the environment etc. when these fundamental issues go unattended

Honestly, companies need to do better than aim for carbon neutral - as a society we should be looking at ways to increase carbon capture

You could perhaps do more to minimise your impact on the communities surrounding your treatment works. I'm thinking of the smells that sometimes escape

You need to do more to help people on benefits

You fail to mention stopping mains water leaks. You fail to mention building modern sewage works capable coping with rapidly increasing population

You need to stop discharging raw sewage into the seas

Being honest and transparent about profits, shareholder wealth.

Water companies could do more to ensure that plastic waste doesn't end up in our rivers and the ocean

You have missed one of the most important - getting the message across to customers and residents about THEIR responsibilities

Clean up the rivers dredge the drainage ditches that need it. Stop farmers and businesses from polluting the rivers with chemicals and encouraging more involvement from the communities to take a pride in keeping the rivers clean

Making sure that there is zero discharge of sewage into rivers and the sea, and, reducing water leakage from mains and pipes to as near zero as possible

Q9. Is anything missing from this list that you'd expect to be included as making a positive contribution to society and the environment?
Base: All panellists (1050). *Note that a number of words unrelated to key themes were removed from the word cloud to assist interpretation*

Response to the social purpose elements

Current

Core 'expected' commitments - in particular improving the environment and investing in infrastructure - gain the most positive response. The principles that are beyond what people expect are not always the ones that make them feel more positive, but may have more potential to encourage re-evaluation of Wessex Water - and get noticed.
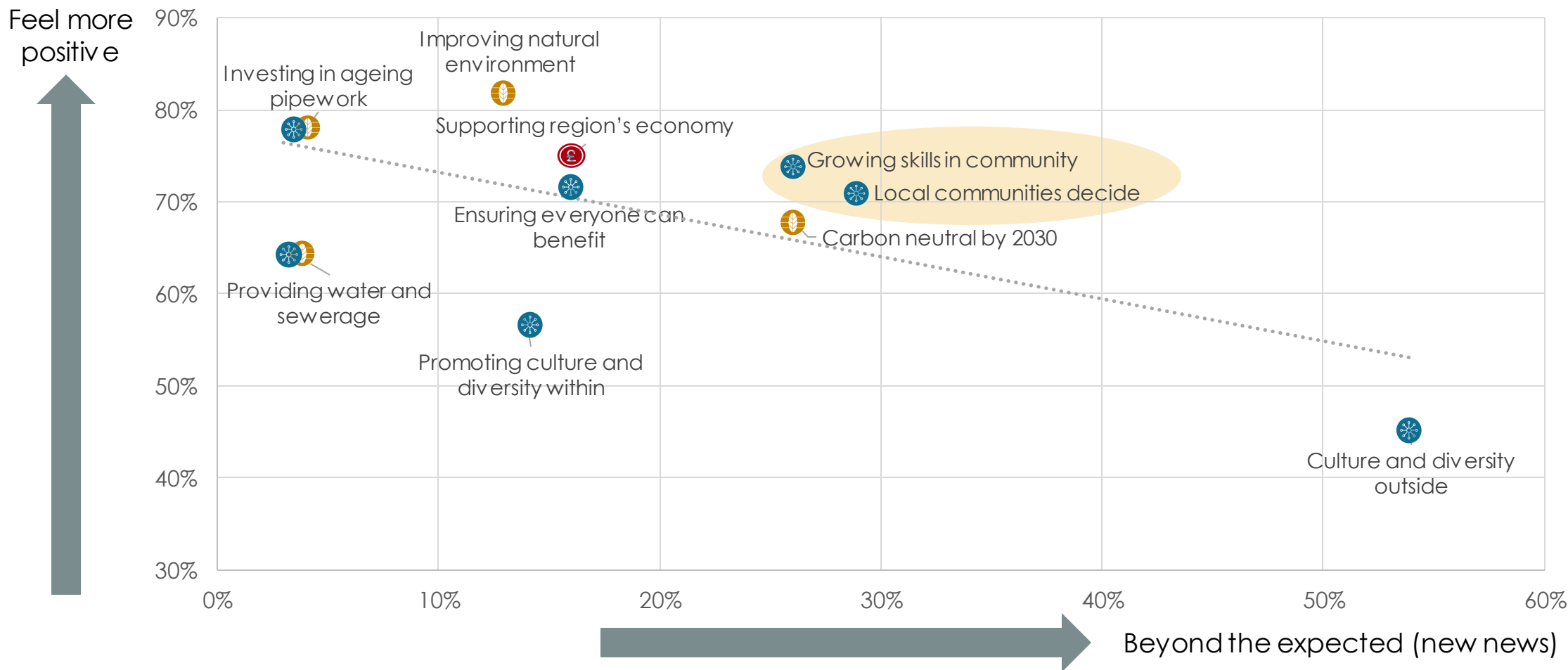
■ Don't know   ■ I'd expect this   ■ Beyond what I'd expect

Feel more positive?

Principle	Don't know	I'd expect this	Beyond what I'd expect	Feel more positive?
Promoting culture and diversity outside our organisation	14%	32%	54%	45%
Involving local communities in deciding what we do	7%	64%	29%	71%
Growing skills in the community	5%	69%	26%	74%
Carbon neutral by 2030	9%	65%	26%	68%
Supporting the region's economy	4%	80%	16%	75%
Ensuring everyone can benefit from and afford our services	3%	80%	16%	71%
Promoting culture and diversity within our organisation	7%	79%	14%	57%
Improving the region's natural environment	2%	85%	13%	82%
Investing now in ageing pipework and treatment works	1%	95%	4%	78%
Providing water and sewerage services today and in…	1%	96%	3%	65%

Q10. Now, for each of these principles, we'd like you to say if you'd expect this as something Wessex Water would do (or has to do), or if it goes beyond what you'd expect? **Q11.** How would hearing that Wessex Water is committing to each of these principles affect how you feel about them as a company?
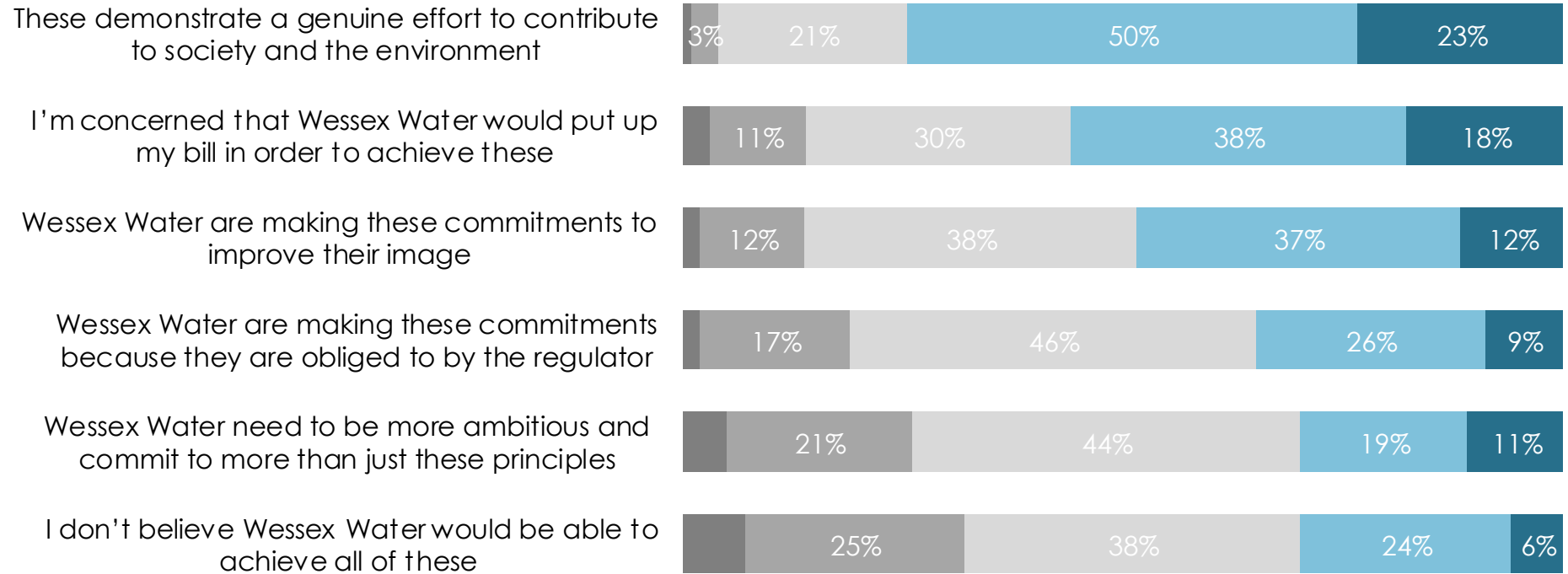**Base:** All panellists (1050)

blue marble

Response to the social purpose elements

Current

The principle of '*Improving the natural environment*' is the number one for positive impact, but for most people is expected (and some believe that first Wessex need to get the basics right of not damaging the environment). '*Growing skills in the community*' and '*involving local communities in what to do*' combine both 'new news' (potential to be noticed) with a largely positive reaction.

Feel more positive

- Investing in ageing pipework
- Improving natural environment
- Supporting region's economy
- Growing skills in community
- Local communities decide
- Ensuring everyone can benefit
- Carbon neutral by 2030
- Providing water and sewerage
- Promoting culture and diversity within
- Culture and diversity outside

Beyond the expected (new news)

Q10. Now, for each of these principles, we'd like you to say if you'd expect this as something Wessex Water would do (or has to do), or if it goes beyond what you'd expect?
Q11. How would hearing that Wessex Water is committing to each of these principles affect how you feel about them as a company?
Base: All panellists (1050)

blue marble

Current

Amongst panellists the sentiment is broadly positive about the Wessex Water's social purpose principles – over 7 in 10 feeling they represent a **genuine** effort to contribute.

Yet support is not without reservations; nearly half are concerned these activities will cause bill increases, and over 4 in 10 see a motivation being to improve image. Meanwhile 3 in 10 doubt Wessex can fulfil all of them.

■ Strongly disagree ■ Tend to disagree ■ Neutral / don't know ■ Tend to agree ■ Strongly agree

Statement					
These demonstrate a genuine effort to contribute to society and the environment	3%	21%		50%	23%
I'm concerned that Wessex Water would put up my bill in order to achieve these		11%	30%	38%	18%
Wessex Water are making these commitments to improve their image		12%	38%	37%	12%
Wessex Water are making these commitments because they are obliged to by the regulator		17%	46%	26%	9%
Wessex Water need to be more ambitious and commit to more than just these principles		21%	44%	19%	11%
I don't believe Wessex Water would be able to achieve all of these		25%	38%	24%	6%

Less positive
• Stretched & Struggling segment
• Those who make less environmental effort
• Those who worry about affording bill

More positive
• Responsible Citizens segment
• Women
• (Bournemouth supply area)

Q12. Overall, thinking about the full list of principles we have shown you, how much do you agree or disagree with the following statements? **Base:** All panellists (1050)
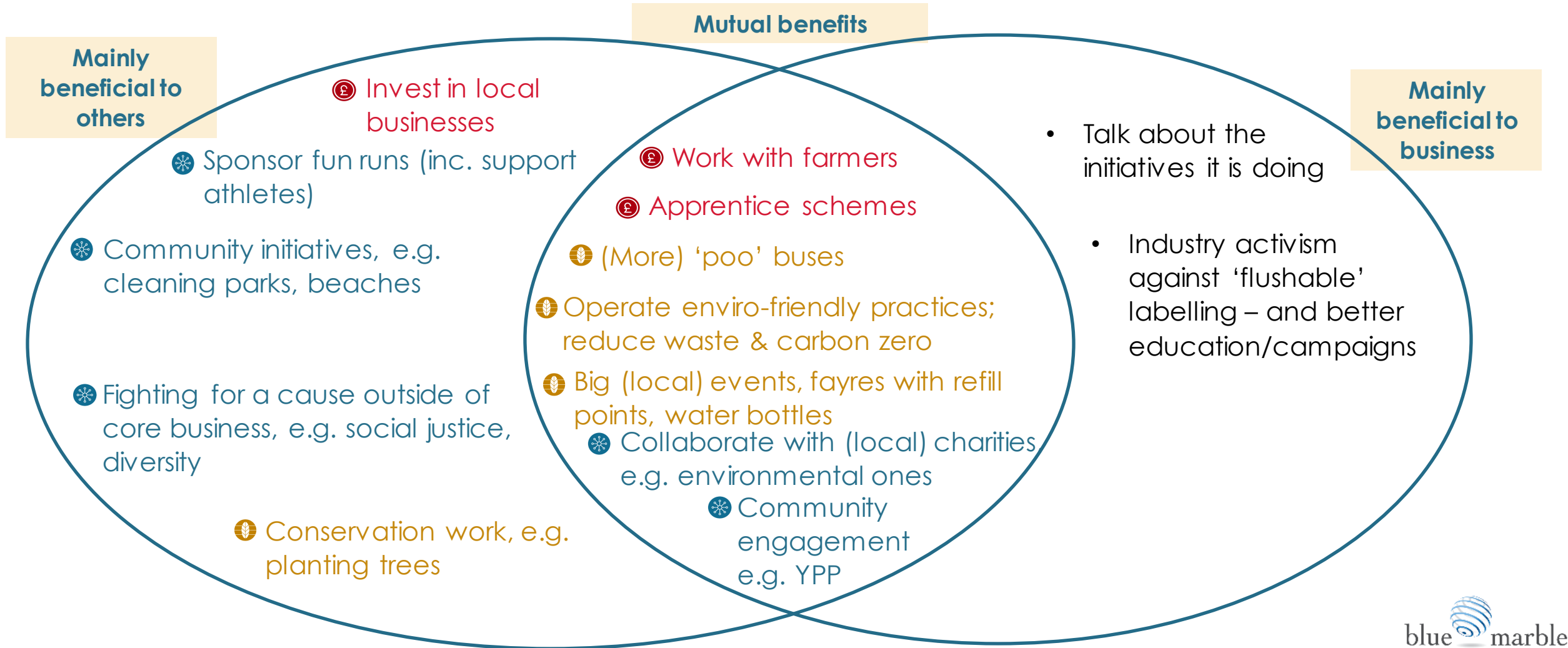
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Spontaneous ideas: Specific actions a water company could take

Future

Future customers less 'clued up' about what water companies do - although YPP participants were well briefed

- Most of the spontaneously generated ideas only weakly or indirectly associated with a water company's core business.

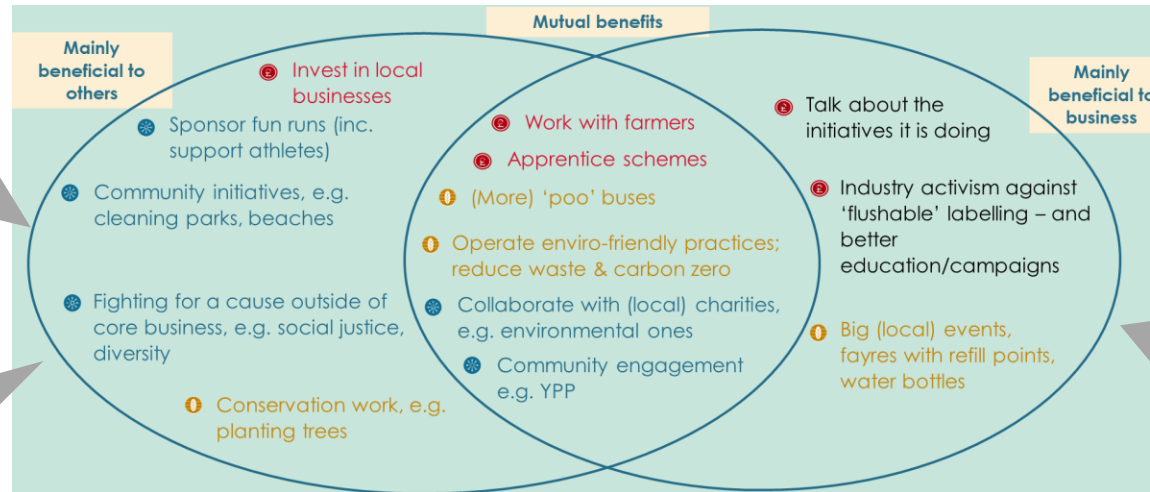| The environment	Local & regional economy	People & communities

Mutual benefits

Mainly beneficial to others

Mainly beneficial to business

£ Invest in local businesses

❄ Sponsor fun runs (inc. support athletes)

❄ Community initiatives, e.g. cleaning parks, beaches

❄ Fighting for a cause outside of core business, e.g. social justice, diversity

🌾 Conservation work, e.g. planting trees

£ Work with farmers

£ Apprentice schemes

🌾 (More) 'poo' buses

🌾 Operate enviro-friendly practices; reduce waste & carbon zero

🌾 Big (local) events, fayres with refill points, water bottles

❄ Collaborate with (local) charities e.g. environmental ones

❄ Community engagement e.g. YPP

- Talk about the initiatives it is doing

- Industry activism against 'flushable' labelling – and better education/campaigns

blue marble

Spontaneous ideas: specific actions a water company could take

Future

'Its credibility will be improved by doing both [initiatives linking and tangential to core business]. I associate it with school trips to sewage works - make it less about sewage works. I'm bored with leaflets about how not to waste water.'

'Wessex Water is not some random accounting firm - it's a business that is a part of the community. It's services are vital. Nothing is unrelated to it.'

Mainly beneficial to others

Mutual benefits

Mainly beneficial to business

- Invest in local businesses
- Sponsor fun runs (inc. support athletes)
- Community initiatives, e.g. cleaning parks, beaches
- Fighting for a cause outside of core business, e.g. social justice, diversity
- Conservation work, e.g. planting trees

- Work with farmers
- Apprentice schemes
- (More) 'poo' buses
- Operate enviro-friendly practices; reduce waste & carbon zero
- Collaborate with (local) charities, e.g. environmental ones
- Community engagement e.g. YPP

- Talk about the initiatives it is doing
- Industry activism against 'flushable' labelling – and better education/campaigns
- Big (local) events, fayres with refill points, water bottles

'Anything linked with the environment will work for Wessex… it's closely linked to what it does, not hopping onto a social trend.'

'Wessex Water is in a privileged position - it's a natural monopoly. Show consumers its different values... to generate better attitudes (to using water).'

- Future customers see credibility in Wessex Water benefitting society through a range of initiatives because:
  - Water is vital: nothing is unrelated
  - Environmental activities are integral to the business (and not jumping on a trend)
  - Its monopoly status is a strong reason to contribute to communities
  - It needs to demonstrate its wider values to engage customers

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Based on the ideas generated by Future customers, we prompted current customers with a list of specific initiatives / actions.

Those which would demonstrate most genuine effort include a mix of more economic, environmental and social benefits.
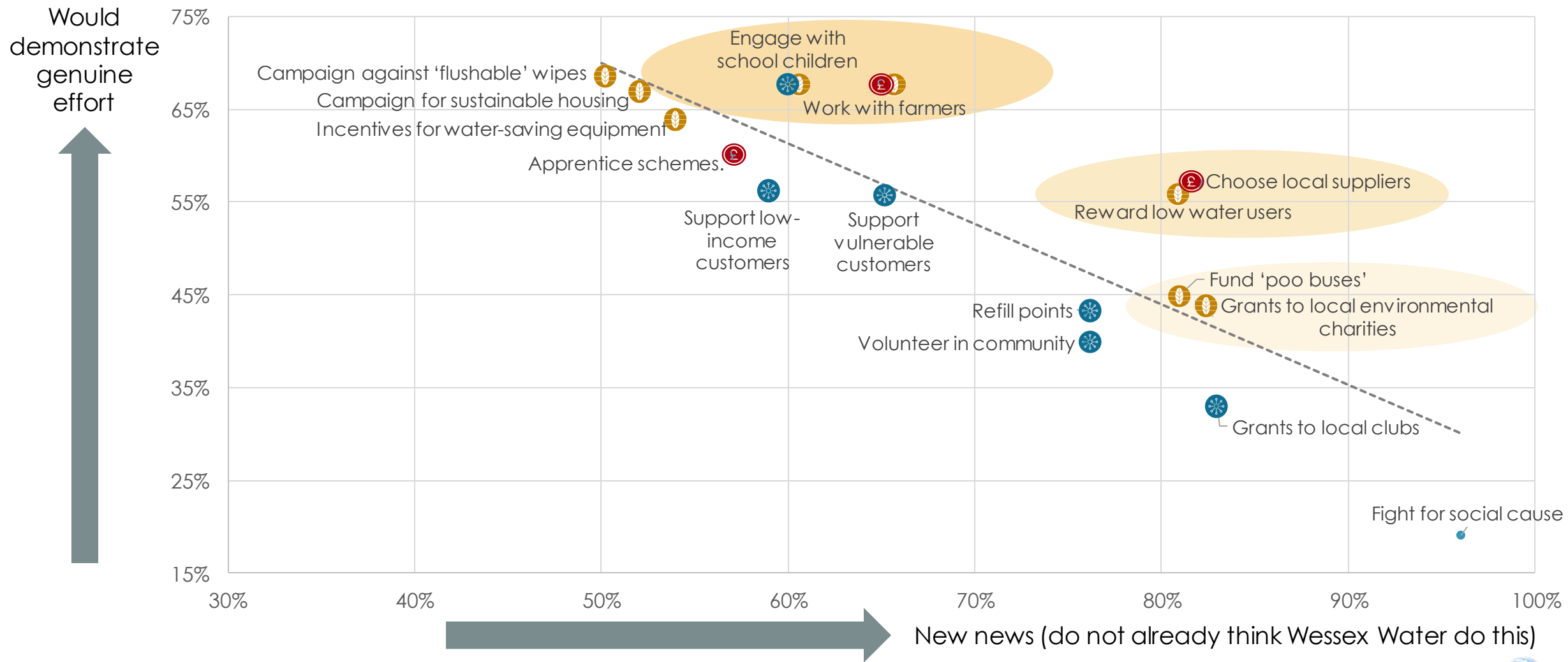
■ **Would demonstrate genuine effort**

Action	%
Work with farmers to support biodiversity and water quality	68%
Engage with school children and young people about water use	68%
Campaign against manufacturers labelling wipes as 'flushable'	68%
Campaign to reduce water consumption by encouraging sustainable housing	67%
Provide incentives to install water-saving equipment	64%
Provide apprentice schemes	60%
Support the local economy by choosing to use local suppliers	57%
Support vulnerable people and those with medical needs	56%
Provide discounts / rewards for low water users	56%
Support low-income customers	56%
Fund 'poo buses' that run on bio-gas	45%
Provide grants to local environmental charities	44%
Provide water refill points within communities	43%
Staff volunteer in community initiatives	40%
Give grants to small local teams, clubs or societies	33%
Fight for a social cause e.g. social justice, diversity	19%

Q14. Which, if any, of these activities do you think would demonstrate we are making a genuine effort to contribute to society and / or the environment? **Base:** All panellists (1050)

Current

Building a picture of what would both demonstrate genuine effort and be more 'newsworthy', the activities of **working with farmers** to support biodiversity and water quality and **engaging with schoolchildren and young people** about water use present the strongest potential.

Would demonstrate genuine effort

75%

Campaign against 'flushable' wipes

Engage with school children

Campaign for sustainable housing

Incentives for water-saving equipment

Work with farmers

65%

Apprentice schemes

Choose local suppliers

55%

Reward low water users

Support low-income customers

Support vulnerable customers

45%

Fund 'poo buses'

Grants to local environmental charities

Refill points

Volunteer in community

35%

Grants to local clubs

25%

Fight for social cause

15%

30%   40%   50%   60%   70%   80%   90%   100%

New news (do not already think Wessex Water do this)

Q13. Which, if any, of these activities are you aware we already do? **Q14.** Which, if any, of these activities do you think would demonstrate we are making a genuine effort to contribute to society and / or the environment? **Base:** All panellists (1050)

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The Internal View

Colleagues

Colleague response to the idea of a social purpose

Response to examples (e.g. Yeo Valley and M&S) reveals strong desire for any claims to be authentic. Local businesses more likely to achieve this.

> *Yeo Valley stands out most …as doing something for the community.*
> Non manager

> *…you [can] actually believe it.*
> Non manager

> *They look after their employees with different ways of working*
> Manager

> *Some football clubs supporting communities 'by building infrastructure that is run down and derelict.'*
> Non manager

> *The bigger the company the harder it is to believe it is genuine.*
> Non manager

Almost no one aware of the terminology 'social purpose' but do know of companies 'giving back'
- Not intuitive as a phrase: sounds like community/ charity activities
- No real awareness that Wessex Water has an 'official' social purpose
- Strong theme: must be authentic '*not just greenwash or social-wash*'

'Social purpose' language
- Associated with 'social' hence community-based activities rather than wider support for e.g. economy or environment
- Even with a definition 'to make a positive contribution to society & the environment' can be vague
- Terms like 'positive impact' more coherent as an umbrella term
- Or specify areas of responsibility e.g.
  - Environmental responsibility
  - Employee responsibility
  - Social responsibility (relating to communities)

Views on Wessex Water's current values / corporate responsibility

Colleague

We do do a lot [already] but in small chunks. We don't coordinate or promote very well. It's not part of our overall focus.
Manager

What we do already is really good but this is not perceived in our customer base.
Manager

We could do a lot more in terms of advertising.
Non manager

There are a lot of different initiatives all around Social purpose but these are not branded as such.
Manager

Colleagues know Wessex Water already does good work in communities e.g. via staff volunteering, Covid response, refill points and grants
- However, many colleagues are quite sketchy about the details
- Perceive that very few staff do/are able to take up the volunteering scheme – on account of workload?
- Most believe these initiatives are spread very thinly - and customers don't generally see this side of the company (which is seen as a shame)

I like the essence of what they are trying to achieve.
Non manager

Most colleagues are positive about the concept of Wessex Water having a social purpose
- Colleagues (who participated) are passionate about what they do and see it as a chance to communicate the importance of their work and Wessex Water
- Believe monopoly context means companies such as Wessex Water need to demonstrate they are 'doing more'

blue marble

Colleague

We have education centres that never seem to be used.
Non Manager

I think the [drinking fountains] are brilliant…it reminds people we provide a valuable resource, helping people to reduce plastic. It's a win win as it's good PR as well.
Non Manager

We are very very customer focussed. There's a balance, looking at more employee wellbeing.
Manager

It's easier to be in the public eye for things that have gone wrong.
Manager

Spontaneously, colleagues indicate they want an ambitious social purpose

- Want to see the company do more (particularly in areas where it sees room for improvement) e.g.
  - To influence and promote water efficiency/good flushing behaviours
  - Increase schools' education activities
  - Accelerate adoption of green behaviours as a business
  - Include elements that relate to the local economy e.g. apprenticeships; local supply chains

- Their internal view/knowledge means they are alert to a new 'manifesto' that could be hard to live up to

Overriding principles:
- **Reflect expertise:** keep a strong water focus
- **Relate to local environments:** biodiversity, ecological issues
- **Promote wider societal benefits:** part of company profile raising
- **Include employee wellbeing:** focus on customer-centricity is sometimes to detriment of staff

blue marble

We commit to:

1. Providing essential **public health and environmental services**.

2. Playing a full part in the **communities** we serve.

3. Supporting and driving **economic growth** across our region.

4. Ensuring everyone can **benefit from and afford** our services.

5. Promoting **social mobility, inclusion and diversity**, both within Wessex Water and with the stakeholders with whom we interact.

6. Growing skills and providing opportunities in a workforce that reflects the communities we serve through **apprenticeships and education.**

7. Delivering net environmental gain every year, **improving the natural capital** of our region through our work to reduce pollution, conserve water, promote sustainable agriculture and eliminate single use plastic.

8. Continuing our development of a clear plan to respond to the climate emergency and become **carbon neutral by 2030**.

9. Investing more in existing infrastructure to renew ageing assets and provide **resilience in the face of climate change**.

10. Championing greater use of **real competition**.

11. **Engaging directly with the communities we serve and other stakeholders**, so our priorities reflect their priorities.

12. Working closely with our **supply chain** to support their international opportunities for the benefit of "UK plc".

13. **Speaking out clearly and visibly** on all these issues, powerfully articulating our story and taking others with us.

blue marble

Colleague
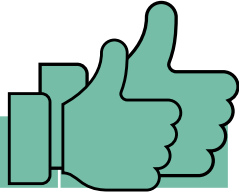
Consistently rated as very important

1 Providing essential public health and environmental services.	✓✓
9 Investing more in existing infrastructure to renew ageing assets and provide resilience in the face of climate change.	✓✓

- While rated as very important, largely seen as doing the day job – and intrinsic to the business
- Colleagues understand the complexity of delivering these promises (and often proud of their role in doing so)
- These statements fit within the broader desire that the social purpose should reflect the expertise of Wessex Water
- Statement 9
  - Sounds proactive whereas reality is that assets only renewed/replaced when in very poor condition
  - Some raise issue of diminishing budgets: these aims getting harder under Ofwat determinations

We need to [improve resilience & aging assets] otherwise we won't be able to do future jobs.
Non manager
9

That's why we are here! If we can't do that we should pack up.
Non manager
1

blue marble

Colleague

Generally the most motivating aspects 👍

7	Delivering net environmental gain every year, improving the natural capital of our region through our work to reduce pollution, conserve water, promote sustainable agriculture and eliminate single use plastic.	✓✓
11	Engaging directly with the communities we serve and other stakeholders, so our priorities reflect their priorities.	✓✓
4	Ensuring everyone can benefit from and afford our services.	✓✓
6	Growing skills and providing opportunities in a workforce that reflects the communities we serve through apprenticeships and education.	✓✓
3	Supporting and driving economic growth across our region.	✓✓

- These elements are credible, already embedded in business practices and/or areas to feel good about
- Some think there are barriers to achieving these :
  - Local suppliers blocked by procurement
  - Lots of waste across the business (and some claims questioned e.g. 'zero waste to landfill' which relates to HQ only)
- Or they like the sentiment but want examples/ evidence (e.g. driving economic growth)

Engaging with our communities is massive. People need to get to know the company and know we aren't just thee to take money.
Non manager 11

I don't know anything we do that drives economic growth in the region.
Non manager 3

Communities is a buzz word: we serve customers not communities.
Non manager 11

I'm amazed how much we waste at recycling centres.
Non manager 7

It's not our bread and butter but it is important.
Non manager 11

blue marble

Colleague

Good – but seen as a given

5 Promoting social mobility, inclusion and diversity, both within Wessex Water and with the stakeholders with whom we interact.	✓

- Good – but inclusion & diversity seen as a given (by law)
- Question what this means in relation to stakeholders (investors, supply chain etc?)
- When probed on whether should include campaigning more widely on inclusion & diversity, colleagues unsure (reflecting customer views more closely than future customers)

… we are going in the right direction.
Non manager 5

As one of the largest employers it should be something we are actively promoting.
Non manager 5

Too ambitious

8 Continuing our development of a clear plan to respond to the climate emergency and become carbon neutral by 2030.	✓✗

- Most see as ambitious or 'too ambitious': many do not think this is achievable within the timescale
- Some point to current lack of commitment to this e.g. renewing fleet with non EVs

This is a fantasy. We are way behind and we won't ever achieve it.
Non manager 8

This is the only one with a target. It's great but woolly.
Manager 8

I don't see how we can do it. I don't believe it.
Non manager 8

blue marble

Colleague

Significant comprehension issues	
2 Playing a full part in the communities we serve.	?
10 Championing greater use of real competition.	?
12 Working closely with our supply chain to support their international opportunities for the benefit of "UK plc".	?
13 Speaking out clearly and visibly on all these issues, powerfully articulating our story and taking others with us	?

- Colleagues usually left guessing what these aspects actually mean
  - 2: meaningless
  - 10: does it relate to retail market competition?
  - 12: does it relate to post-Brexit context?
  - 13: seems separate from the rest of the statement. (Reminds of recent internal communication about voting in the General Election - not always positively).

2
It's a ridiculous comment as far as I'm concerned.
Non manager

13
Speaking out clearly can be a bit intrusive.
Manager

blue marble

Colleague

Will colleagues be happy to get behind the social purpose?

- **Managers:** generally enthusiastic and want to get behind social purpose

- **Non-managers:** manifesto-style claims can raise the question of authenticity when individuals have different perceptions of what company is able to deliver, seeing contradictions with stated aims and the real Wessex Water

One colleague felt ethos of social purpose undermined by his recent experience. As a member of St John's Ambulance: he'd been asked to volunteer as a vaccinator, but his line manager vetoed request.

- **Colleagues believe the social purpose in its entirety will require a culture shift and (people) investment to deliver**
    - Resistance comes when colleagues perceive additional work / responsibility: don't see this as a small add-on but a major shift in business practices
    - Relies on line managers / whole leadership chain leading by example
    - All aspects will require budgets, targets and timescales if to be delivered
    - Anticipate more staff (refer to NWL and Anglian Water whose community engagement on much greater scale than Wessex Water)

- Some raise a gap in the social purpose statement re commitment to (existing) employees

- Statements need reworking to be more meaningful (and motivating) – and for some, much more about how each aspect will be achieved

It didn't say anything about employees – about wellbeing and career satisfaction.
Non manager

It will take huge effort, leadership and resources.
Non manager

It doesn't promote as an employer: they are very supportive to staff but it's not getting out there.
Manager

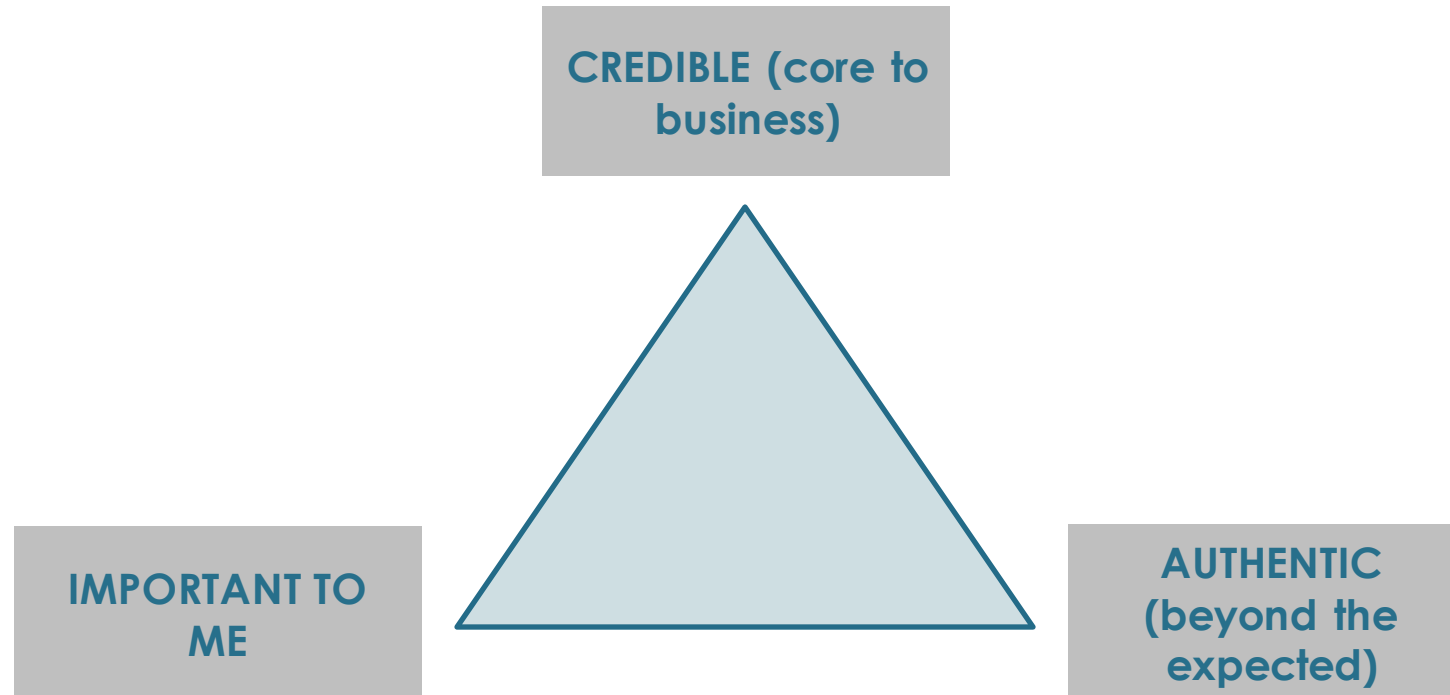blue marble

Support for aspects within the social purpose often relies on credibility: they link closely (or are relevant to) Wessex Water's core business.

CREDIBLE (core to business)

IMPORTANT TO ME

AUTHENTIC (beyond the expected)

Support for aspects within the social purpose often relies on activities that are personally relevant / relate to current concerns held by individuals.

Activities that go beyond the public's expectation for what a water company ought to do demonstrate genuine motives. Activities that 'cost' Wessex Water in effort or money counters the thought that these activities are self-serving.

blue marble

A social purpose for all audiences?

Future customers

Current customers

Colleagues
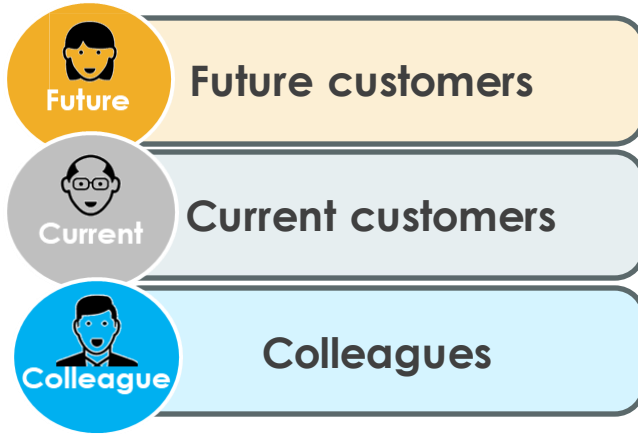
- There is widespread support for Wessex Water's social purpose and everyone finds aspects that they particularly support
- In general terms, the audiences evaluate the social purpose slightly differently depending on their starting point:

Colleagues: identify areas relating to the core business, knowing the expertise and complexity that these entail

CREDIBLE (core to business)

Future customers: with very limited prior expectations of a water company, identify more strongly with issues they can relate to (affordability, employment opportunities, inclusion)

IMPORTANT TO ME

AUTHENTIC (beyond the expected)
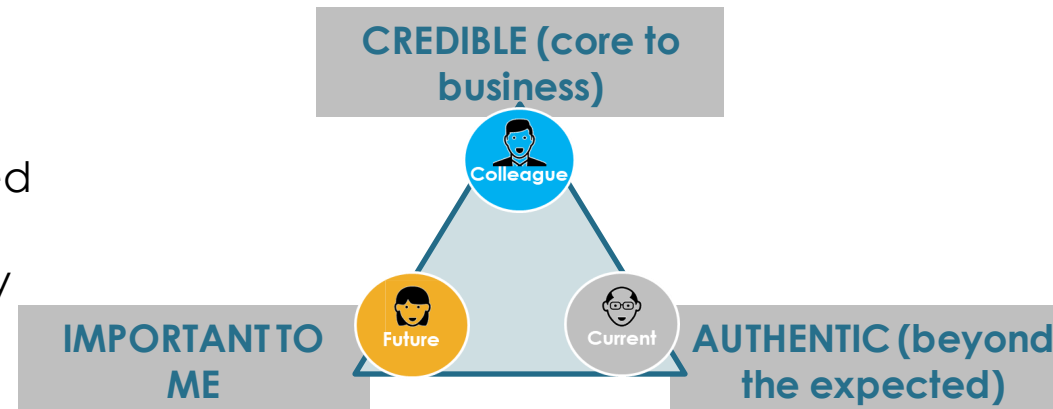
Customers on the panel are well informed about Wessex Water. As well as environmental elements, they prioritise areas that were less expected e.g. bringing economic and community benefits

blue marble

External audiences: key insights

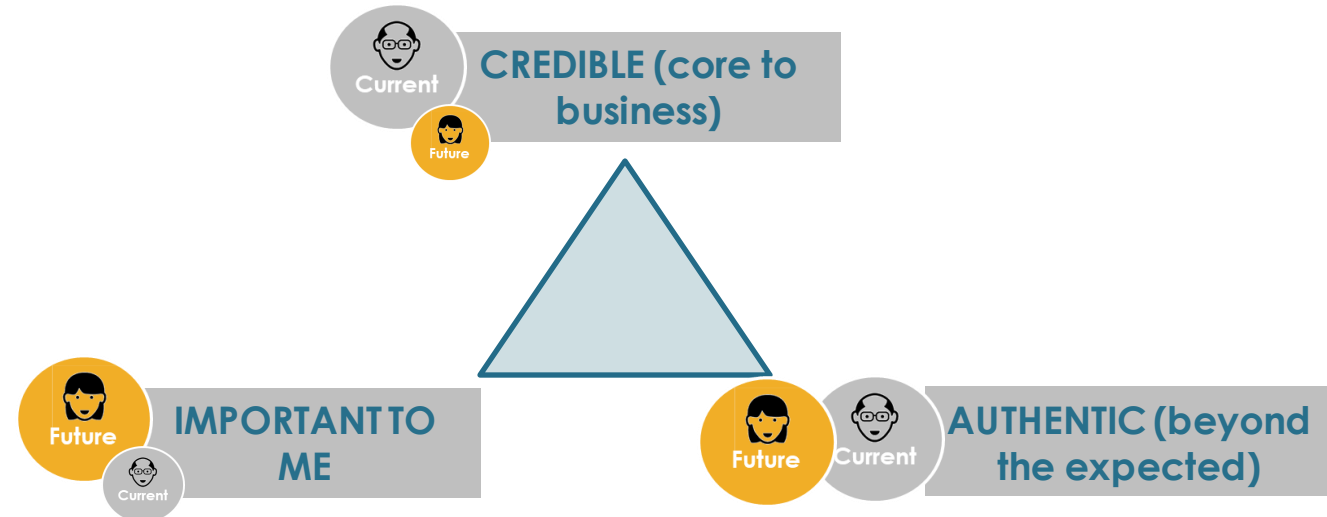**Current** Current customers **Future** Future customers

- Environmental aspects of social purpose have immediate appeal, fitting with Wessex Water's core business – though this is less clear cut for Future customers.

- When considered, Future customers think Wessex Water supporting people through employment opportunities and bill discounts more relevant – and lower income 'Struggling' customers agree with them

- Current and Future customers align more closely on initiatives that are beyond what they expect – which therefore convey an authenticity about Wessex Water's motives. The effort and commitment to supporting local economies, running 'poo' buses and using local suppliers; or the financial commitment of offering grants and incentives is more impactful

Positive potential (important and largely align with Wessex Water's core functions)

- Environmental initiatives strongly supported
- (But for Future customers ethical / green claims can lead to cynicism about organisations)

Current **Future** **CREDIBLE (core to business)**

Future **Current** **IMPORTANT TO ME**

Future **Current** **AUTHENTIC (beyond the expected)**

Less immediately relevant to – or expected from – a water company AND matters to customer*

- Social mobility aspects (skills, job opportunities)
- Affordability (Stretched only?)
- Promoting inclusion & diversity (Future only)
- **NB relates to Future and Stretched & Struggling**

Other initiatives that could cut through more (by being 'new news')

- Supporting the local economy through using local suppliers /employment
- Providing rewards / discounts for low water use
- 'Poo buses'
- Grants to local environmental charities

blue marble

Colleagues

- Colleagues can be more critical than customers: they know too much!

- Much of what is in the social purpose statement is already happening – but perceived to be under-appreciated by customers

- Colleagues want to see Wessex develop a stronger profile: and they don't want social purpose promises to detract from day job (or create more work/stress)

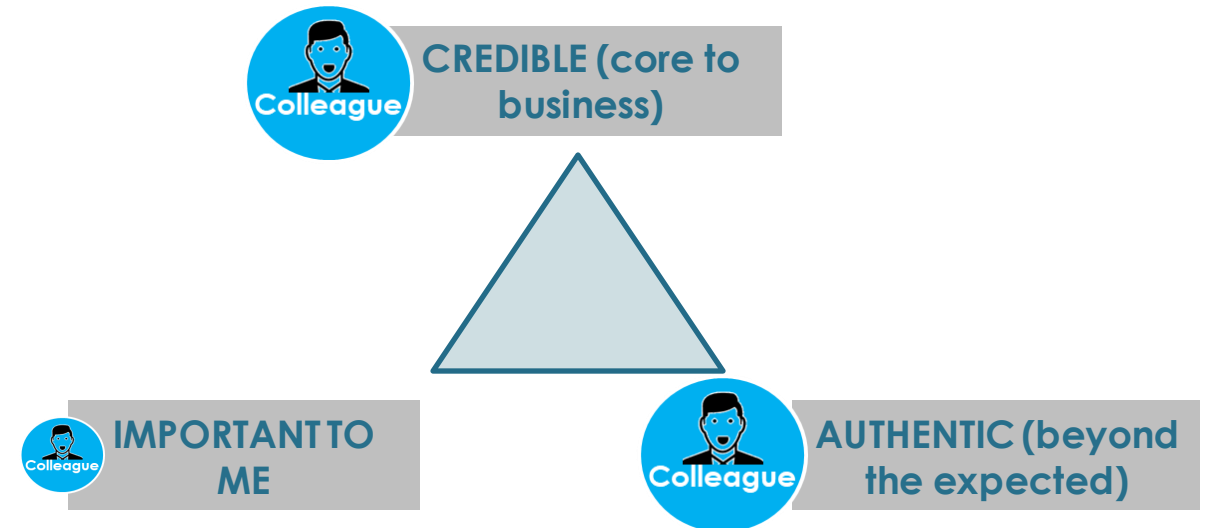- There is a glaring gap: employee satisfaction/wellbeing?

Positive aspects relate to core activities – particularly when relating to own roles

- Providing essential services now and into the future
- Improving natural capital
- Inclusive & affordable

⚠️ **There is also a credibility gap for colleagues**

- Carbon zero target is too ambitious

Colleague **CREDIBLE (core to business)**

Colleague **IMPORTANT TO ME**

Colleague **AUTHENTIC (beyond the expected)**

Broadly positive about directly relevant internally-facing elements, but may be seen as a 'given'

- Social mobility and inclusion within the company

⚠️ **A gap on employee satisfaction / wellbeing**

- Will initiatives result in more stress?

Other initiatives that are credible – often already happening – but little known

- Engaging communities
- Supporting local economies
- Skills & apprenticeships

blue marble

Gaps and conflicts?

- Whilst the different audiences may evaluate the social purpose statement from different viewpoints, there are relatively few gaps or conflicts within or between groups
- Panel customers raise environmental pollution and they may have greater insight than other 'mainstream' customers; however current media spotlight on combined sewers and river spills may result in greater scrutiny of this issue (and therefore risk of credibility gap)
- Colleagues and customers have different perspectives on carbon neutrality targets

	Future Future customers	**Current** Current customers	**Colleague** Colleagues
GAPS	No apparent gaps	Customers on the panel raise gaps around environmental risks and specifically river pollution	Colleagues identify employee wellbeing as a gap
CONFLICTS	No apparent conflicts	Carbon zero targets	

Not ambitious enough ⚠ *Too ambitious*

blue marble

Dichotomy: to promote or to not promote social purpose activities?

49

- Colleagues see value in promoting the good work Wessex does (feeling that customers have little idea of the service they get)
- Customers (Future and Panel) reveal, through their sketchy recall of companies making a positive difference, how difficult it is for even global brands to get cut-through
- Plus there is a risk of the social purpose being perceived as self-serving if activities promoted heavily

Current customers   **Future customers**

Colleagues

External communications:
- Environmental stewardship is an area of universal interest and not well understood – Wessex Water has the credibility to promote more widely
- Industry more generally needs to counter/reassure consumers about river pollution
- However, caution needed as customers anticipate social purpose activities will knock on to bills
- Consider targeted communications of areas that add authenticity to corporate values (the 'opportunity gaps' which have the potential for customers to re-evaluate Wessex Water)

Internal communications:
- More significant role for internal communications to:
  - Promote social purpose activities which instil pride in workforce (and plug knowledge gaps)
  - Address areas where staff see contradictions (e.g. barriers for local supply chain etc.)
  - Take staff with you on carbon reduction plans
  - Reassure about resourcing new initiatives (that could be construed as adding work to all)
- See as part of longer term strategy to embed social purpose internally so that customers experience it (which is how 'authentic' brands are born).

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