



Come on in, the water's lovely!

WE'VE launched our groundbreaking Bathing Water Enhancement Programme.

We're now working with local authorities, the Environment Agency and other organisations to bring a further seven bathing waters to 'Excellent' standard across our region.

Paul Kent, our Environment and Wastewater Strategy Manager, said: "We're immensely proud of this innovative project.

"Our customers asked us to help improve the standard of bathing waters across our region and, with the support of local authorities and others, that's exactly what we're doing.

"Together we can find and fix the root causes of pollutions which have historically prevented these bathing waters from achieving this coveted rating."

We announced the results on 15 May – the first day of the Bathing Season.

The seven selected bathing waters will benefit from a targeted campaign and multi-million-pound funding to help them achieve Excellent in the 2019 Bathing Season and beyond.

We are also planning a separate package of work for the other bathing waters identified as having a chance of achieving Excellent if some work is carried out.

The results of these investigations will soon be published on our website, allowing our partners to champion their own initiatives to help improve bathing water quality across the South East.

To find out more visit: southernwater.co.uk/bathingwaterenhancement

“Our customers asked us to help improve the standard of bathing waters across our region and, with the support of local authorities and others, that's exactly what we're doing.”

The seven bathing waters selected for dedicated funding:

- Deal Castle, Leysdown and Minster Leas in Kent
- Selsey, Middleton-on-Sea and Worthing in Sussex
- Shanklin on the Isle of Wight

The others where we'll also work in partnership:

- Sheerness, Tankerton, Herne Bay and Folkestone in Kent
- Stokes Bay in Hampshire
- Cowes on the Isle of Wight
- St Mary's Bay, Margate Fulsam Rock, Littlestone and Herne Bay Central in Kent
- Brighton, Felpham and Bognor Regis (Aldwick) in Sussex
- Hill Head in Hampshire

We've placed in the top 10 most improved for our customer service

THE total number of complaints we received last year fell by almost half and our customer satisfaction scores are improving but we still have more work to do.

In January, the Institute of Customer Service placed us in the top 10 most improved companies with a score of 72.5 – compared to 67.3 the year before.

This is a result of a number of steps we've taken to improve the service we provide, including: the expansion of our online platform, further development of our proactive team and relationships with specialist partners to improve some of our internal processes.

Our proactive team contacted 12,000 customers in January 2017, a number of whom avoided receiving a shock high consumption bill in the post. Due to these early conversations, our teams were able to tackle the root cause of the issue, before it became a concern for the customer.

In April, the Consumer Council for Water said it "welcomed" our improved performance but recognised we could still make further improvements.

We're delighted with this progress and will continue to work closely with them to develop better solutions for our customers.

Initial improvement programmes include: increasing our web chat capacity to give customers more flexibility over how they contact us, offering additional services through our online platform and working with South East Water to provide a combined bill for our shared customers.

We're also asking for customers' views about the services we offer as part of our consultation process: *Let's Talk Water* – see page 5.

Non-household customers welcome a little healthy competition for retail services

ON 1 APRIL, retail services for all non-household water and wastewater customers became open to competition.

Retail services are the management of non-household customer queries and complaints, billing and meter reading.

All businesses, public sector organisations and charities can now switch service providers.

Household customers are not affected by any of these changes.

We'll remain the provider of all wholesale services, including the

treatment and supply of water and the safe removal of wastewater.

We will also continue to be the key contact for non-household customers during an emergency, such as a burst pipe or flooding, via our 24/7 emergency contact line – **0330 303 0368**.

We announced last year that we would be transferring our non-household retail business to specialist Scottish firm Business Stream when the market opened. This means that, unless

they have chosen to move to an alternative retailer, all our non-household customers have been automatically transferred to Business Stream for those retail services that they previously received from us.

We wrote to all non-household customers, in advance of the changes, to explain what was happening and provided them with final Southern Water bills.

Further information on the changes is available at: southernwater.co.uk/for-business.

£5m committed to innovation projects in 2017–18

NEW ideas and different solutions to age-old problems are the driving force behind our exciting research and development (R&D) programme.

We're working hard to accelerate the development and introduction of new technology into our capital delivery and operations and have invested £5 million in R&D for 2017–18 alone.

The programme is managed by the Innovation Strategy team led by Dr Barry Cleasby (right) and Elin Williamson (far right).

Barry said: "We receive so many great ideas from across the business and while we'd like to fund everything, we have to be selective about which projects we take forward.

"So we have a definition of 'Research and Development' that ensures our projects seek to address some level of scientific or technical uncertainty.

"We're funding projects that are new to the business and new to the water industry."

Part of the team's role is to build new partnerships with technology suppliers and



'knowledge partners' such as universities and external consultancies.

These include projects with local universities, including Brighton, Portsmouth and Southampton.

The team is working hard to address some of the main challenges facing the business around protecting the environment, water quality and new ideas looking at the circular economy.

Elin said: "We're particularly



pleased with our Innovation Hub at Petersfield Wastewater Treatment Works.

"This partnership with the University of Portsmouth will support trials aimed at proving the effectiveness of new options for removing phosphorus from small sewage treatment works.

"Working with the university will ensure the research, lab studies and trials are highly credible, independent and will be supported by the university's expert research fellows."

Keeping a weather eye on water resources

SINCE October, rainfall levels across the South East have been lower than normal. Met Office figures show the region received only 77% of the average amount of rain during the autumn and winter.

Despite this relatively dry weather, we don't believe we'll need to introduce temporary restrictions on water use in our water supply areas this year.

We're monitoring the situation closely and we'll be reminding our customers that they can help by using water wisely as the

summer continues and demand for water typically increases.

A wide range of practical advice and support for customers is available via our website, including free water-efficiency home visits for qualifying households.

Water is a precious resource and it's important that we all do what we can to reduce wastage, whatever the weather.

Our teams are working round the clock to detect and repair leaks on our 13,700km network of water mains and ensuring that

we operate our water sources efficiently, including sharing supplies with neighbouring water companies.

The actions we're taking now will put us in the best possible position, should we experience a second dry winter in 2017–18. A dry winter is officially defined as one with less than 85% of average rainfall between October and March.

To keep up to date with the water resources situation in our region, visit: southernwater.co.uk/water-resources-latest.

We're acting on your feedback

THANK YOU to everyone who took the time to take our survey and share their thoughts about this newsletter.

The vast majority of its content is written specifically for the publication and we want to make sure we're making the best use of our time as writers and yours as readers.

Overall, the feedback was positive, with more than 50% of respondents rating the newsletter and its content at either 4/5 or 5/5.

Most encouragingly – everyone who took part said it was a good source of information about what we do.

However, half of you said it could be improved with some new additions – most notably an increased focus on specific issues such as resilience, water resources or affordability.

So, in this edition we look in detail at the role of our Customer Advisory Panel plays in ensuring customers' interests are heard as we develop and implement our plans.

In the next edition we'll look at the work we're doing to help customers when they need it most.

Most of you thought the balance between regional and local stories was good, but 40% wanted to see more local stories and there was a 50/50 split between putting the local or regional content first.

We'll try to include more local content that is of interest to you but will continue to focus on the most topical stories for each edition.

We're also looking at ways of improving the way we distribute the newsletter to make it more engaging while keeping it accessible.

Thank you again for taking the time to help us – if you have any ideas for articles or interviews or any other feedback, please contact your county's stakeholder manager.



Forging partnerships to tackle future challenges

SIR Peter Bottomley, MP for Worthing West, kindly hosted our House of Commons reception on 19 July.

The event focused on how we can best work in partnership to overcome the challenges our region faces. Guests included Sarah Hendry, Director of Floods and Water at Defra, Sir Tony Redmond, Regional Chair of the Consumer Council for Water, a number of our regional MPs and other senior parliamentarians, representatives from our Customer Advisory Panel, local authorities, wildlife and rivers trusts and the business community.

Our Chief Executive Ian McAulay used the occasion to underline the importance of building resilient water and

wastewater services, helping to support economic growth and protecting and enhancing the environment across the South East.

Ian emphasised the importance of strong co-operation between us and a variety of organisations to deliver the best possible outcomes for customers and the environment in the years ahead.

Guest speakers were Rupert Clubb, Director of Communities, Economy and Transport at East Sussex County Council, and Debbie Tann, Chief Executive of the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust.

Rupert focused on how to build sustainable communities, while Debbie set out the case for natural capital.



Left to right: Sir Peter Bottomley MP, Ian McAulay, Rupert Clubb, Debbie Tann

We would like to thank Sir Peter Bottomley for hosting the event, as well as the wide range of stakeholders who were able

to attend and meet our Chairman Bill Tame, other members of our Board and Craig Lonie, our Director of Strategy.

Joining the national debate



WE WORK closely with government and its agencies as part of our daily operations and our regular, long-term planning processes.

Customers and stakeholders have told us they want us to play a more active role in national debates too, particularly when it comes to housing and infrastructure policies.

One of the ways we do this is to respond to consultations on a wide range of different topics and follow up the points we make with government and regulators.

For example, Defra recently consulted on its draft strategic policy statement to Ofwat which

sets out its priorities for the next five years.

We supported much of the draft statement and welcomed the emphasis on Ofwat to “lead a shift” in the direction of the industry.

We also suggested areas which could be strengthened, including being more explicit about environmental protections and supporting customers in vulnerable circumstances beyond financial support.

We’ve responded to all the National Infrastructure Commission’s consultations and have met with them to share our experiences of universal metering.

We’d like the commission to look at infrastructure needs over 50 years, rather than 30, as this more closely aligns with the timescales for which water companies plan.

The commission is due to publish its vision document later this year and we hope to see some of the recommendations made in the long-term water resources framework included.

We were the only water company to ask government for the same access to data that it offers energy companies to help customers with support and advice in the Digital Economy Bill.

Government listened to our

case and the water industry was included via amendments.

This will mean we can better target our support to customers who might need it most but are difficult to reach.

Over the next year, we’ll be working with other companies, environmental groups, house builders and government agencies on a report looking at the future of water and housing.

This will make policy recommendations to government based on expert evidence from multiple sectors.

We’ll keep you updated on this and other consultations as they progress.

Here comes the sun...

WE'LL soon be harnessing the power of the sun to help supply our customers with water.

More than 15,000 solar panels are being installed at three sites in Hampshire and West Sussex.

Together they will generate enough electricity to supply almost 1,500 homes but we'll use it to power these water supply sites.

Work has already begun to install more than 3,000 solar panels at Hardham in West Sussex, around 5,500 are planned for Otterbourne, Winchester, and more than 7,000 will be installed at Testwood, Totton.

All three sites are expected to be up and running by early July.

Martin Ross, our energy manager, said: "Harnessing solar energy is key to us becoming a more sustainable business, something which is very much part of our long-term strategy.

"Utility companies are energy intensive and there is a need for us all to reduce our carbon footprint and become less reliant on the grid."

We currently generate around 17% of our energy from renewable sources, helping reduce our impact on the environment and on climate change.

A new Southern Water

A TRANSFORMATION is under way at Southern Water.

Our company is changing to ensure we continue to deliver the high quality of service our customers and regulators expect and that our environment deserves.

New markets, competitors and technology mean the water sector is continuing to change significantly.

To respond to this we have updated our organisational structure, recruited some fresh talent to join our Executive Leadership Team (ELT) and created four new directorates.

Alison Hoyle, our former Head of Wholesale Policy and Strategy, has been appointed as the Director of our newly-formed Compliance and Asset Resilience Directorate.

She is creating a new compliance framework for the company and building our asset management planning capabilities around future resilience.

The new Commercial directorate will drive better value

for our business, customers and stakeholders. It will be led on an interim basis by Chris Banks who brings with him a wealth of competitive water industry experience.

Our Operations team has been separated into Wholesale Water and Wastewater directorates, to enable us to better focus on wholesale activities, asset performance, innovation and customer service.

These are being run by Helen Simonian and Simon Parker respectively.

Meanwhile, we recently appointed a new Director of Strategy and Regulation, Craig Lonie, who is heading up the development of our PR19 Business Plan.

We also have a new Director of Director of Transformation and People, Rob Barnett.

Our Chief Executive Ian McAulay said: "These changes will help us be recognised as a forward-thinking business that provides excellent customer service and innovative solutions."

Joining forces to fight the evil unflushables



OUR fat, oil and grease and unflushables team has been working with counterparts at Northern Ireland Water and United Utilities to keep the nation's sewers free from nasty, smelly blockages.

One of our Network Protection Enforcement Officers, Steve Williams, organised a day of discussions which also included the Grease Contractors Association.

Steve said: "It was a really useful day finding out what each company is doing in this area.

"The others were interested in our unified approach, working with environmental health officers at local council level, as well as the conversations we're having at a national level with food chains who, as expected, produce a lot of leftover cooking fat and grease.

"Our work on the commercial side, in particular issuing cautions, cost recovery and prosecutions, was of real interest, and I'm very much looking forward to the reciprocal visits which are in the pipeline.

"Anything we can do to stop blockages in sewer pipes will help prevent sewage flooding and protect customers' homes and businesses, as well as the environment."



Businesses are required by law to make sure their waste does not block or damage the sewer network.

Around £90 million is spent every year clearing blockages nationwide. Total costs, including damage from pollution and clean-ups, are estimated to exceed £200 million each year paid for out of customers' bills.

We're working hard to reduce the number of blockages by raising awareness with customers across our region in one of the widest reaching campaigns in the industry.

By 2020, we will have spoken to nearly 75,000 households and 28,000 businesses.

This February we launched our campaign on the subject – The Unflushables, with the Consumer Council for Water.



The newest members of our ELT, from left to right: Rob Barnett, Craig Lonie, Alison Hoyle, Simon Parker, and Helen Simonian (Chris Banks not pictured)

Putting customers at the heart of our business

WITH its unique blend of experience and expertise, our Customer Advisory Panel (CAP) is helping us put customers at the heart of our business.

Having such a group of independent experts was a requirement of our regulator Ofwat for the PR14 Business Plan process.

After PR14 we decided to retain the group, to help us continue to deliver meaningful customer and stakeholder engagement and advise us on delivering the promises we had made at PR14.

Chaired by Anna Bradley, former CEO of the National Consumer Council, the 10-person panel comprises experts from a variety of backgrounds who bring a broad range of skills and knowledge to the table.

Anna said: "As a CAP, we are part of the Southern Water family.

"Like any family, there will be moments when there's a difference of view but that means we're doing our job and bringing something new to the table. It's all done in the spirit of delivering better service for customers.

"We're about to set up an arrangement where each of the CAP members will make themselves available to work with staff who think we could be of help as individual experts."

The CAP meets every two months at the company's Durrington HQ and offers challenge and insight on papers submitted by project teams and heads of function on a variety of topics.

With PR19 on the horizon, the group is also starting to perform the formal Consumer Challenge Group (CCG) role as well.

Anna said: "As a CCG there are two questions on which we are focused and on which ultimately we must report back to Ofwat – the quality of the customer and stakeholder engagement and the extent to which that is driving decision-making and is reflected in the final Business Plan.

"During PR14, Ofwat gave very little guidance on

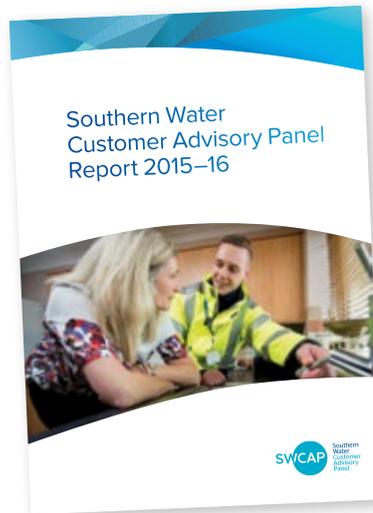
the way CCGs should fulfill their role, but this time Ofwat has provided much more detail on how these two questions should be considered.

"For example it wants customers to be engaged in discussion around the options available to the company to deliver on its priorities and has also stated that it wants companies to talk to customers and stakeholders about long-term issues, including resilience.

"Ofwat has also been clear that it is setting the bar for good customer engagement much higher in PR19 – for example, its 'Tapped In' report tasks companies with turning passive customers into active participants.

"Ofwat is clear that this is a long-term process and not just a one-off mechanism for the price review. In other words, good customer engagement is not just for the Price Review – it's for life."

There are a number of key opportunities this spring and summer for you to have your say on our strategic approach.



An independent view supports bathing water programme

THE Bathing Water Enhancement Programme is one project which has benefited from the CAP's guidance.

We suggested to Ofwat that the CAP play a role in the selection process for the specific bathing waters to be improved.

Papers were regularly presented at CAP meetings as the programme progressed, ensuring the group was kept up to speed with developments and could help shape subsequent stages.

These papers were written and presented by Environment and Wastewater Strategy Manager Paul Kent and Stakeholder Manager Sam Underwood.

Sam said: "The meetings with the CAP were a fantastic opportunity for us to tap into their expertise and they consistently provided useful advice and challenge on the engagement programme and selection process.

"It was helpful to have an independent, knowledgeable group of people to bounce ideas off, especially as their insight is helping us deliver an excellent project which is actively supported by customers and stakeholders."

Q&A with Anna Bradley:

How would you describe the benefits the CAP brings to Southern Water?

Two things – expertise and focus. The CAP is made up of people with considerable expertise, from customer vulnerability, through land management to local authority planning. But our primary task is to think about customers and stakeholders and that singular focus can help you to keep customers front of mind.

How different is the approach Ofwat outlines in its Tapped In report?

The challenge from Ofwat is very significant. They're asking that companies do much more than ask customers what they think. They want you to work with customers and stakeholders to design what you do and how

you do it. And they want this to become business as usual for the whole water company for all the time, not just for Business Plan writing purposes and not just for the customer and stakeholder engagement teams.

Is Southern Water already making progress in this area?

The company has done some great work of this sort in some places – around the design of UMP, in work with some customers to reduce demand and change behaviour, and with stakeholders to manage catchments.

The challenge is to make this part of the everyday for the whole company, in much more of what you do and at scale, so it makes a real difference.

How would you like to see the CAP's role evolve in the next Price Review?

In a perfect world the CAP would make itself redundant. We are only here to help the company rethink the way it works with customers and stakeholders. Once this is truly running through the lifeblood of the organisation, there would be no need for the CAP or anything like it. Perhaps not as soon as the end of PR19, but that's definitely the ambition.

How does Southern Water's CAP compare with others in the industry?

All the CCGs are slightly different in form, but we are more alike in PR19 than we were in PR14. One big difference in the SW CAP is that we don't have the environmental and quality regulators as members of the CAP. Instead we invite

Natural England, the Environment Agency and DWI to keep in touch with us by seeing the papers and coming as observers whenever they want. Plus at least once a year we ask them to tell us how the company is doing.

What is the company doing now that it wasn't doing before CAP got involved?

One of the things we have worked with SW on recently, is the programme of work with customers for PR19. We were keen to see what the whole programme looked like and how all the bits fitted together, so there is a golden thread from beginning to end allowing us all to be confident that customers are engaged throughout the process. The CAP and SW staff built the plan together in a workshop and it now looks and feels better and different.

Meet the Customer Advisory Panel

Anna Bradley
Chair

Anna has expertise in regulation, public policy and consumer and stakeholder engagement, with long experience in consumer advocacy.



Karen Gibbs
Senior Policy Manager, CCWater

Karen is a Senior Policy Manager at the Consumer Council for Water (CCWater). She has been involved in consumer representation within the water sector for over 20 years. Karen leads CCWater's Environmental Policy Team and is CCWater's senior manager in the London and South East region.



Phil Belden
Environmental & Landscape Professional

Phil is a Chartered Environmentalist, with over 30 years' experience dedicated to Protected Areas' management.



Steve Hare
CEO, Age UK East Sussex

Steve is the Chief Executive of Age UK East Sussex, with over 25 years of experience in the voluntary and community sector. He has worked with a range of issues such as homelessness, mental health, domestic violence, and alcohol and substance misuse.



Ana Christie
CEO, Sussex Chamber of Commerce

Ana has substantial business experience both in the UK and internationally. She has worked in the Philippines and for the British Deputy High Commission in India before joining Sussex Chamber of Commerce in May 2014 as Chief Executive.



Dan McDonald
CEO, Medway Citizens Advice Bureau

Dan is the Chief Executive Officer of Medway Citizens Advice Bureau and has been for the past six years, managing more than 30 employees and 70 volunteers. He is also an elected councillor on Medway Council.



Rupert Clubb
Director, East Sussex County Council

Rupert, a Chartered Civil Engineer, has been the Director of Communities, Economy and Transport at East Sussex County Council since June 2007. Rupert currently chairs the Local Adaptation Advisory Panel on Climate Change and the ADEPT environment board.



Nicci Russell
Managing Director, Waterwise

Nicci has been Managing Director of Waterwise since March 2017. Prior to this, from January 2013, Nicci was a Director at Ofwat, where she led Ofwat's work on resilience and independent regulation, its relationship with the UK and Welsh Governments and with environmental groups.



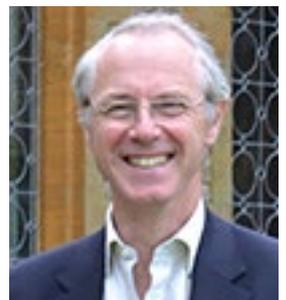
Philip Cullum
Partner, Ofgem

Philip is a Partner at the GB energy regulator Ofgem. His responsibilities have included consumer protection and redress, vulnerability, and research and insight, as well as work on future consumers and better regulation.



George Seligman
Chair, Wessex Chalk Stream and Rivers Trust

George has been the chair and a trustee of Wessex Chalk Stream and Rivers Trust since July 2012, an environmental charity focusing on water quantity and quality in the waterways of the Wessex region (Hampshire, Wiltshire and part of Dorset).



Starting the Conversation



WE LAUNCHED 'Let's Talk Water – Starting the Conversation' in May. The consultation identified a range of exciting possibilities for the future of water in the South East.

We wanted to hear your views to help us develop a shared long-term vision for the region.

As well as needing to make sure we get the basics right now, we are exploring how our company can add real value to the region in future years.

Many of you attended our stakeholder workshops last autumn where we tested priorities for the future which were identified through our customer research.

We widened the debate to help us define our future priorities and plan how we deliver our services now and over the longer term.

The first part of the consultation closed at the end of June but there will be further opportunities to feed in your

views as we shape our 25-year strategy and identify what we need to deliver in our Business Plan for 2020-25.

Stakeholder panels

WE HELD our second round of stakeholder panels in April and May, followed by the third round in June and July.

The panels, which launched last year, comprise separate meetings for Kent, Sussex, Hampshire and the Isle of Wight and a strategic environment panel.

They bring together local authorities, environmental groups, trade bodies and regulators to help shape how we deliver our services now and in the future.

Panel members also challenge us on our short-term plans and how we are delivering against our promises and reporting our performance to customers.

Our county panels were combined with tours of wastewater treatment works and

guests were encouraged to think about how our infrastructure could make a greater contribution to local customers.

Our first Kent panel of this year was held in Ashford and included representatives from the Kent Wildlife Trust, the South East Rivers Trust, CPRE South East, Kent County Council and Natural England.

Attendees at our Hampshire panel, held at Peel Common Wastewater Treatment Works in Gosport, included members of Hampshire County Council, Southampton City Council, Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust, Natural England and the New Forest National Park Authority.

Members of the Sussex Panel visited our Peacehaven Wastewater Treatment Works for a tour.

The Sussex panel's members include the Arun and Rother Rivers Trust, Chichester District Council, Brighton and Hove City

Council and West Sussex County Council.

The Isle of Wight panel met on June 27 at our Fairlee offices.

Meanwhile, our Strategic Environment Panel was held at Water UK's offices in London where we were joined by WWF-UK, Defra, the Environment Agency, the NFU and the Green Alliance.

The panels heard how we are developing our 25-year strategy and discussed opportunities for Integrated Water Cycle Management and innovation, including how we could play a greater role in supporting local communities and economic growth.

Some of the key themes which stakeholders felt we should explore included adopting more circular economy approaches such as generating more energy from waste, developing stronger partnerships with local groups and working with schools on education programmes.

You said, we did

SINCE we started our stakeholder panels and workshops, we've been keeping track of your priorities and expectations of us for now and the future. The table below shows the priorities we've identified so far and what we're doing to achieve them. The full table can be found [here](#).

You said	We did
Future priorities	
Stakeholders at the workshops agreed with the four broad themes suggested by customers to inform our long-term priorities, and identified a range of key areas which they felt were missing.	We developed seven new customer outcomes, building on customer and stakeholder feedback. We tested these in the Let's Talk Water consultation in the summer. We also explored long-term priorities in more depth with our stakeholder panels.
Performance reporting	
Stakeholders had mixed views on preferences for performance reporting.	We are keeping our communication approach under review and will be launching a new-look website soon.
Sewer flooding	
<p>Stakeholders thought that elderly, disabled or vulnerable customers should be given higher priority when making investment decisions to address the risks and impacts of sewer flooding.</p> <p>Generally, stakeholders felt customers' gardens and patios should be treated as a lower priority, when compared to internal flooding.</p>	<p>As part of our work to develop our next business plan we are reviewing the current approach to prioritising investment to reduce the risk and impact of sewer flooding. This work will consider the outputs from the stakeholder workshops, further insight gathered from customers and any relevant representative organisations.</p> <p>The work will also include identifying gaps in our knowledge to ensure we prioritise customers in vulnerable circumstances.</p>
Water resources	
<p>Stakeholders supported long-term planning to build greater resilience.</p> <p>Stakeholders expect us to reduce leaks, but many noted that leakage reduction should be cost-beneficial and, given our industry-leading position, there may be little scope for further improvement.</p>	<p>Stakeholder support for long-term planning provided additional evidence for the need to plan over longer periods, e.g. 50 years +. We are now testing customers' appetites for a longer-term approach.</p> <p>By using multi-criteria analysis, we can ensure customers' preferences are accurately represented in our water resource management plans in a systematic and objective way. This innovative method ensures we build greater resilience and have the support of our customers.</p> <p>We are exploring this issue in more depth with customers as initial feedback indicated they felt we should reduce leaks even if it means undertaking activity which is not cost-beneficial.</p>
Planning for future growth	
Clear and accurate bills are important, and our service should be more responsive.	<p>Our customer willingness-to-pay research will explore water and wastewater resilience in the context of investing for future generations.</p> <p>We are pro-actively engaging with the National Infrastructure Commission, an arms-length advisory body set up by Government. The Commission will produce National Infrastructure Assessments every parliament. We have also encouraged government to extend the horizon of the National Infrastructure Commission from 25 years to 50 years and are continuing to work with the Commission to inform its recommendations to government.</p> <p>We also responded to the Housing White Paper and Industrial Strategy. In both responses, we stressed the need for new ways of working, greater collaboration between different sectors and the recognition of the interdependencies between water and other critical infrastructure.</p>
Bathing water	
Stakeholders supported continued investment to improve bathing water quality.	Our customer research programme will explore this in more depth, to ensure we accurately capture customers' preferences.
Working in partnership	
Stakeholders said they wanted us to do more to work in partnership to achieve our objectives as this can help identify new ways of working and opportunities to add value.	We already have a number of collaborative approaches and projects under way which cover a range of activities across the business. We are actively considering other opportunities for collaboration and partnering through our stakeholder panels and business-as-usual activities. We hope to explore some of these in more detail at our annual stakeholder workshops in autumn 2017.

25 years of Learn to Swim

SPORTS Minister Tracey Crouch joined our CEO Ian McAulay at Medway Park to help us celebrate 25 years of our Learn to Swim scheme.

Alongside other guests, Tracey and Ian were able to see a lesson in action and to speak with some of the children benefitting from the award-winning scheme.

Marking the 25 years, Ian said: "The children definitely made a splash for the visitors."

"It's quite remarkable and we're celebrating all those who've been through the programme – the teachers, children and the people who've put a lot of time into the scheme."

Learn to Swim supports lessons at 85 pools and clubs across Kent, Sussex, Hampshire and the Isle of Wight and has helped teach nearly 800,000 children to swim since it began in 1992.

It is sponsored by our supplier Clancy Dowcra.



Connection failure fix on Lucks Lane

OUR investigators were recently called to Lucks Lane, Paddock Wood following reports of a coloured effluent entering a drainage ditch.

Working in partnership with the Environment Agency, we were quickly able to identify that the cause was a misconnection from portable toilets on the site of a local equipment supplier.

Costs totalling more than £5,000 were subsequently recovered from the company.

Network Protection and Enforcement Officer Dave Burnett led the investigation.

He said: "This case is a good example of the benefits of cohesive and robust partnership working, not only with our investigating partners, Cappagh Browne, but also the Environment Agency, to bring about a positive result."

£8m Woolmans Wood project reaches milestone

WE'VE reached the half way point in our replacement of 30km of old water mains in the Woolmans Wood area of Medway.

Our construction partner, Clancy Dowcra, have been using trenchless techniques to minimise disruption.

The £8m project will improve the resilience of the water supply in Rochester, Chatham and Gillingham.

During April, our project team held a number of community drop-in sessions to ensure customers were kept updated on progress.

Between 2011 and 2013, we invested £14m in successfully replacing old water mains in the area.

During that first stage of the replacement, teams worked in more than 160 roads, excavated more than 10,000 holes and installed almost 50km of new pipes.



Working with the Kent Wildlife Trust

THE sun was shining in the "garden of England" for our recent meeting with Kent Wildlife Trust Chief Executive John Bennett (right), at their Tyland Barn HQ.

Set up by our Stakeholder Engagement Manager for Kent, Sarah Feasey (centre), this was the first opportunity for John to meet with new CEO Ian McAulay (left) to discuss our future plans and closer working opportunities.

South East customers to benefit from simpler bills

WE'RE rolling out joint billing for the 460,000 customers we share with South East Water.

We've teamed up to combine the two bills these customers currently receive for water supply and wastewater services into one simple bill.

Similar arrangements have proved successful in other areas across the South East.

We'll be contacting affected

customers over the next few months as their next bill due date approaches.

The new bills will be sent by South East Water.

Simon Oates, our Chief Customer Officer said: "We're delighted to be joining forces with South East Water to offer our customers a simpler way to pay for the water and wastewater services they receive."

"The rollout of the new bills will be introduced gradually with metered customers being the first to receive them, followed by unmetered customers early next year."

Welcoming the development as a positive step, Karen Gibbs, Senior Policy Advisor at the Consumer Council for Water said: "This should be good news for customers as it will

make paying their bills and managing their accounts much easier in future.

"We've been working with both Southern and South East Water to make sure there is a smooth transition and customers get the information they need."

"We're pleased that the companies have listened to their customers and are now working together to make this happen."