

Appendix B

Drought Communications Plan

Drought Plan – Communications Plan

Effective communications is an essential part of drought management. The following document is intended to be an overview of the approach the company will take and is not a comprehensive action plan.

The approach is designed to allow flexibility through agile communications to adapt to individual circumstances while ensuring delivery of a consistent message to all necessary audiences.

This plan is in addition to our “business as usual” communications to customers about how they can be more water efficient, saving money, energy and protecting the environment. Our business as usual approach includes:

- Use of day to day social media to share themes and stories with our customers e.g. raising awareness of topical issues such as World Environment Day, information regarding incidents, campaigns, company news and community initiatives.
- Using the homepage of our website to share important messages e.g. incident information, how to sign up to our water efficiency campaign “Get Water Fit” and important news stories.
- Emails to customers for targeted communications
- Campaign messaging e.g. summer campaign, “water’s worth saving” WaterUk campaign, high demand campaign etc.
- Through our community hub we are also able to share messages face to face and provide timely information to our customers.
- Roadshow events, wherever possible e.g. taking a stand at the Staffordshire County Show to share water efficiency messages, have interactive games and quizzes to raise awareness of water usage, and hand out free water saving devices.

The key components considered for the communications plan are:

- Audience
- Channels
- Message
- Frequency and timing
- Monitoring and measures of success

Audience – who will we communicate with

As an essential resource, the audiences with an interest in water supply are wide ranging and significant. The following is a list is not fully comprehensive but includes the key audiences. Lists with actual details of each audience will be held and updated by the water company as an ongoing activity.

Audience	
Customers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Household Vulnerable customers and those on our Priority Services Register Businesses Commercial (retailers) Customer Panel H2Online members MPs/councillors
Regulators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Defra Environment Agency Ofwat Natural England Drinking Water Inspectorate CCW (the consumer watchdog) Water UK Historic England
Other organisations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Neighbouring water companies (Severn Trent Water) Regional groups such as Water Resources West Canal & River Trust Local authorities Staffordshire Resilience Forum Horticultural Trades Association (HTA) Fire Service Environmental organisations (including but not limited to Staffordshire Wildlife Trust)
Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Employees of South Staffs Water and PLC Contractors

Channels – how we will communicate

We have a wide range of communications channels available to us. These are a mixture of owned, earned and paid for. We already routinely use a number of the channels to communicate with our different audiences – the frequency and timing of these would be altered to respond to the situation. Others are not regularly used and would be adopted to amplify the message being communicated.

The following list is an overview of the categories of channels we would use according to need. We have not listed the individual details of channel as these will be constantly changing.

Customers

- Customer website (www.south-staffs-water.co.uk).
- Social media – Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube and LinkedIn.
- H2Online customer community
- Editorials through traditional print and broadcast media.
- Advertising – print, broadcast, livery, outdoor, and social media.
- SMS/text messaging – using database of customer mobile phone details.
- Email – using database of customer emails.
- Direct customer contact - call centre, on the ground staff (customer liaison), specialist roles/teams (education, water efficiency, catchment management, etc), and mailings e.g. regular billing cycle and bespoke mailings.
- Events and roadshows e.g. using the incident vehicle.

Regulators

Regular liaison meetings are held with our environmental regulators to discuss water resource issues, and the frequency of these will be increased once level 1 is reached.

The Summer Action Group (SAG) and River Severn Regulation Group will also be initiated and our Drought Resources Manager from our drought management team will represent the business on these groups, supported by the wider drought management team and the Drought Strategy Manager.

Defra will receive regular updates as a drought develops, which will include the water resource situation and measures taken to reduce demand and protect reservoir storage levels.

The Drinking Water Inspectorate, Ofwat and CCW will be given regular updates on the drought situation and CCW will be advised of any customer communications. We will work with CCW and the wider industry through networks such as WaterUK to ensure consistent messaging and the timing of this messaging to customers wherever this is possible.

Water-use restrictions will be implemented in conjunction with the Environment Agency and CCW, to ensure their feedback is taken into account. All stakeholders will be advised of any specific drought permits/orders with as much notice as possible.

Other water companies and retailers

Wholesalers: Regular liaison will take place with other wholesale water companies, particularly in respect of bulk supply arrangements. Neighbouring water companies will be advised in the event of water-use restrictions being implemented and we will also engage with them through Water Resources West (WRW). We will co-ordinate our communications to customers in line with any Water UK initiatives. An example of our commitment to aligning messages regionally with stakeholders in the WRW group is set out in Appendix D which details the consistent TUB messaging agreed by all companies within WRW.

NAVs: We will contact NAVs in our area and aim to co-ordinate any restrictions that we impose, so that the approach is consistent.

Non-household retailers: Our wholesale team will share regular information on the dry weather and water resources situation and provide water-efficiency advice which the retailers can provide to their customers. We will ask retailers to share messages from our website and social media to increase reach and visibility. This interface will be managed through our Head of Retail Market role.

Work is already ongoing with our retailers to share water efficiency advice and opportunities. We have held sessions with several retailers sharing our own work on water efficiency, how this could be supported by the retailers and how we can work together to support businesses with their water efficiency awareness and activities. South Staffs Water is part of the Retailer-Wholesaler Group who have developed a working plan to further promote water efficiency for non-householders. We would look to work with this group in a drought situation to enable consistent messaging for retailers. We will also work with retailers should there be any requests for assistance e.g. regarding water restrictions or support for large businesses.

Other organisations

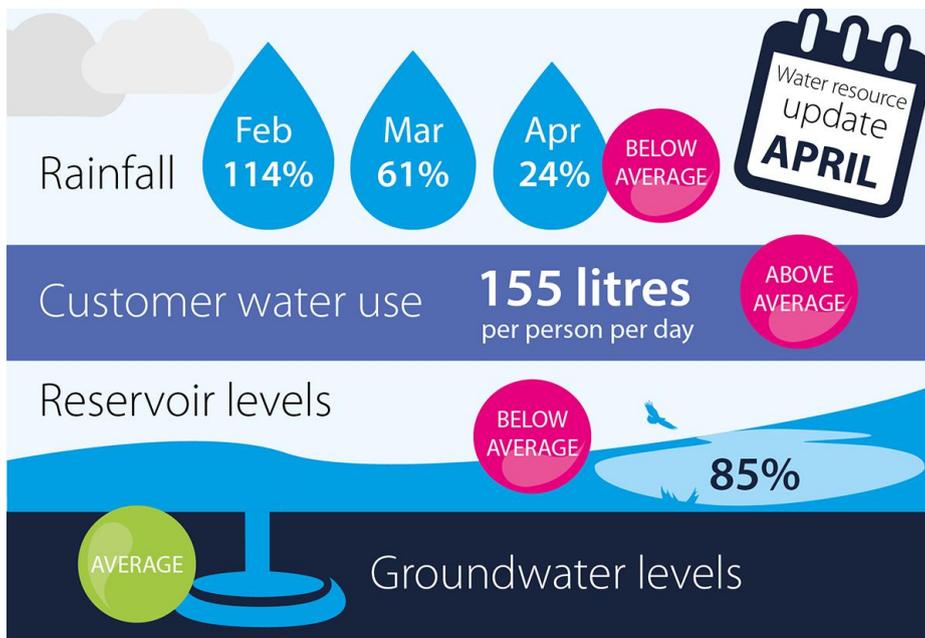
Key stakeholder organisations will be contacted and kept informed on the potential need for drought permit/order applications. We will work with them and ask them to reinforce water-saving messages and, in the case of environmental groups, how it will affect the environment.

Message – what we will communicate

We will keep our messages clear, consistent and manageable to ensure maximum understanding and impact with the audience, and we will target messages for specific audiences.

Our messages will be primarily determined by the status of operations (as triggered by monitoring) and we will tailor them to the individual audience and channel. As suggested in the Environment Agency’s National Drought Framework, we would also consider joint communications with the Environment Agency and other stakeholders, such as CCW, as this could help to re-inforce the messages. It would also ensure our messages align with those from other organisations. An example of our commitment to aligning messages regionally with stakeholders in the WRE group is given in Appendix D.

Examples of previous messages and adverts





Use a watering can instead of a hose or sprinkler.

#UseWaterWisely
#Pledge15



With the sun shining bright in the sky, we're seeing a higher demand for supply. When making the car look brand new, drop the jet wash - a bucket of water will do.

#UseWaterWisely and help us to manage supplies.



When filling paddling pools for your son or daughter, please remember to save the water. Re-using water is helpful and fun, as the kids can enjoy another day in the sun.

#UseWaterWisely and help us to manage supplies.

Timing and frequency

We will use the appropriate groups of key messages according to the level of operational status as outlined below.

We will increase the frequency of the communication as the operational status escalates through the differing levels. Again, this will be flexible according to the audience and channel.

Overview and implementation

Operational status	Message theme	Implementation time
Normal (above Level 1)	BAU proactive water efficiency awareness and education	BAU
Drought monitoring (Level 1)	Situation assessment and status Additional promotion of water efficiency Enhanced leakage reduction Updates re reservoir storage levels and licence agreements	Three days to one week
Drought management (Level 2)	Situation assessment and status updates – consultation regarding application for drought permit Appeals for restraint Notification of application for drought permit Implementation of a temporary use ban	One week
Severe drought management (Level 3)	Situation assessment and status updates – consultation and liaison Preparations for restrictions on non-essential use Enforcement of permit conditions Ban of non-essential use	Three days
Emergency Plan invoked (level 4)	Emergency Drought Order	Three days
Drought cessation	Situation assessment and status updates – consultation and liaison Relaxation/withdrawal of ban Proactive water efficiency awareness and education	Three days

Note: This plan does not detail the process by which each status is triggered or the associated decision making process.

Details

Operational status	Messages	Audience	Channels	Frequency
Business as usual (above drought Level 1)	Updates about reservoir storage levels and licence agreements	Regulatory stakeholders (CCW, Environment Agency, DWI, Ofwat, etc) Neighbouring water companies	Meetings/face to face/1:2:1 Email	Normal BAU
	Ongoing proactive water efficiency awareness and education	Customers	Website (www.south-staffs-water.co.uk) Social media H2Online customer community Direct customer contact: specialist roles/teams (education, water efficiency, catchment management, etc); mailings – regular billing cycle and bespoke mailings	Normal BAU
Approaching drought Level 1	<p>“Our water resources are slightly below normal, we are managing our operations to address this. Please remember to use water wisely.”</p> <p>“The dry weather means our reservoirs are low. Help us save water.”</p> <p>Updates re reservoir storage levels (videos by staff at Blithfield)</p> <p>Report a leak promotion: “Please support us in our increased leakage detection campaign by reporting any leaks you see.”</p>	Customers	<p>Website</p> <p>New webpage on TUBs and what it means</p> <p>Frequent updates to water resources page</p> <p>Social media H2Online community</p> <p>Social media advertising</p> <p>Direct customer contact: specialist roles/teams (education, water efficiency, catchment management, etc); mailings – regular billing cycle and bespoke mailings</p>	Medium-high
Drought Level 1 and Level 2	“The prolonged hot weather means our water resources are under pressure. We’re working with the Environment Agency on this developing situation.	Customers	Website – message on homepage, videos and infographics Social media	High

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	Please use water wisely.”		Social media advertising Editorial	
	<p>“If our water resources continue to be under pressure, we may have to implement a temporary use ban (TUB). Please use water wisely.”</p> <p>“Water is a precious resource.”</p> <p>Frequent updates re reservoir storage levels (videos by staff at Blithfield and charts showing resources)</p>		<p>Advertising (bus or billboard)</p> <p>SMS/text messaging (targeted by areas of high use)</p> <p>Email</p> <p>Direct customer contact (esp for PSR): call centre; on the ground staff; specialist roles/teams; mailings – regular billing cycle and bespoke mailings</p> <p>Contact MPs and councillors</p> <p>Press releases/radio interviews</p> <p>Suggest WaterUK convene comms group for co-ordinated approach</p>	
Drought Level 3 and Level 4 (severe drought management)	<p>“Water resources are now exceptionally low and we are unlikely to be able to sustain supplies to all users in the shortterm.”</p> <p>“To protect supplies we have introduced a temporary use restriction. These restrictions are essential to ensure that supplies can continue to be maintained to customers in your area.”</p> <p>Infographic to show what is covered under the TUB.</p> <p>Appeal to reduce demand</p> <p>Continued updates re reservoir storage levels (videos by staff at Blithfield)</p> <p>Warning re emergency drought order and that measures like standpipes may be needed if we don’t all do our bit.</p>	Customers	<p>Press releases/radio and TV interviews</p> <p>Video announcement by Managing Director</p> <p>Website Social media</p> <p>Social media advertising</p> <p>Editorial</p> <p>Advertising SMS/text messaging</p> <p>Email</p> <p>Direct customer contact (esp for PSR): call centre; on the ground staff; specialist roles/teams ; mailings – regular billing cycle and bespoke mailings</p>	High

Operational status	Messages	Audience	Channels	Frequency
	<p>Town messages to dramatically reduce PCC.</p> <p>Water facts and figures: A hosepipe uses 540 litres an hour, as much as a family of four would use in one day. A sprinkler left running overnight uses as much water as a family of four would use in one week A hosepipe ban can reduce water usage by 5-10% (according to research by UKWIR)</p>			
Drought cessation	<p>Press release – announcing the end of the drought. Co-ordinated with Environment Agency messaging and that of other relevant stakeholders such as WRW.</p> <p>Social media messaging to announce the end of the drought and the lifting of restrictions.</p> <p>Ongoing water efficiency campaign to maintain the water efficiency culture developed during the drought.</p>	<p>Customers Stakeholders</p>	<p>Website Social media SMS/text messaging Email Mailings – regular billing cycle and bespoke mailings</p>	

NB: All of the above is to be repeated to employees through email updates etc

Monitoring and measures of success

The drought situation, and the effectiveness of communication measures, will be constantly monitored throughout the normal and enhanced communication process, and decisions to develop or modify successive actions will be made accordingly by the Drought Management Team.

- Demand levels
- Number of visitor/hits on the relevant sections of the website
- Social media stats and engagement
- Requests for water efficiency packs