

# South Staffs & Cambridge Water

Feedback on draft Water Resources  
Management Plan 2024 from the WRAP  
(Water Resources Advisory Panel)

August 2022



community  
research

*Bringing the voices of communities into the heart of organisations*




1. [Background and approach](#)
2. [The headlines](#)
3. [Participants' starting points](#)
4. [Reactions to the summary plan](#)
5. [Reactions to the detailed plan](#)
6. [Views on individual affordability, adaptive planning and key research themes](#)
7. [Looking ahead](#)
8. [Summing up](#)
9. [Additional information \(sample, evaluation, stimulus material\)](#)
10. [Appendices](#)



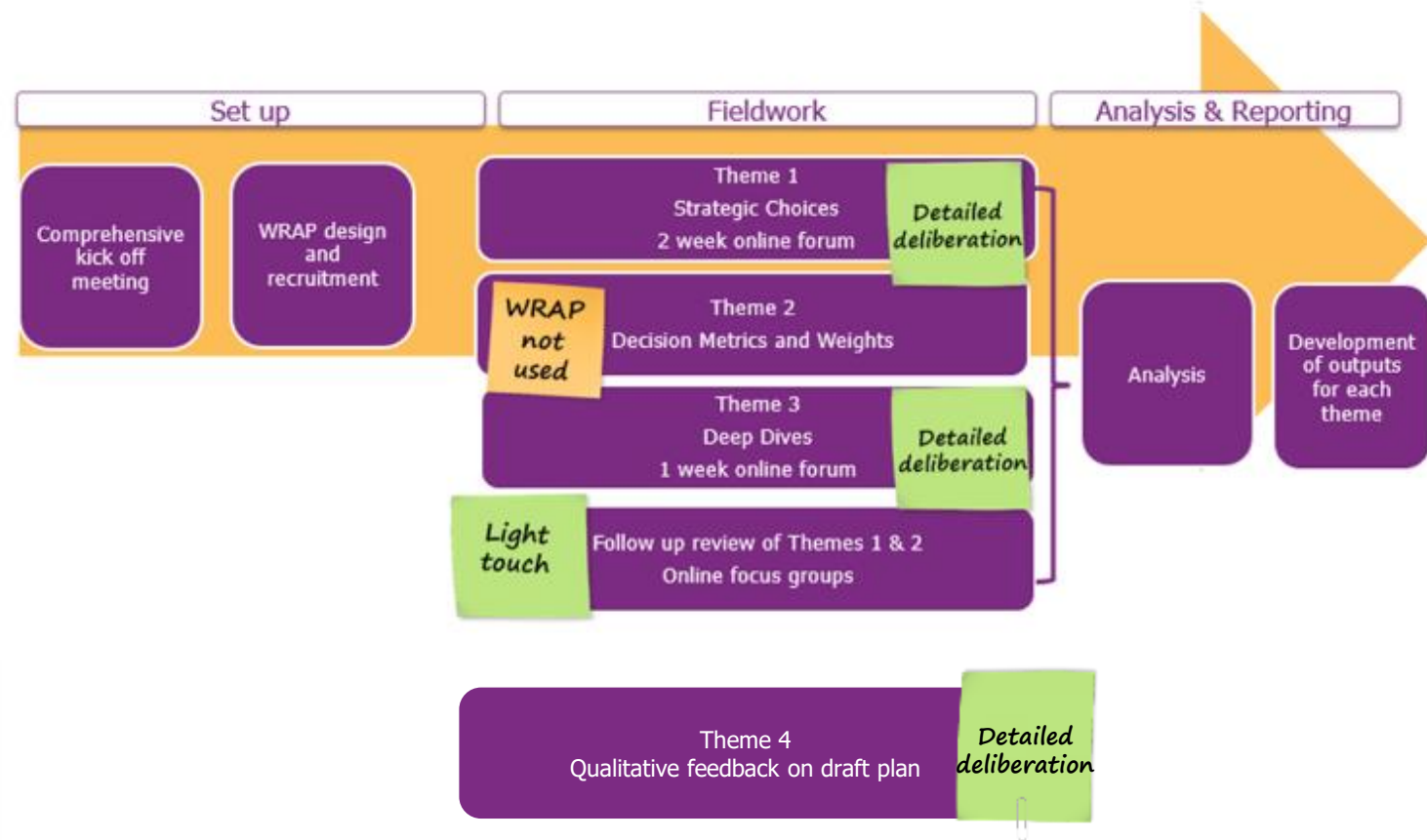
Background and  
approach

# Project background



- A comprehensive desk research study carried out by Accent/PJM (Dec-Feb 2020) recommended SSC undertake a four-themed customer research programme to ensure customers' preferences underpinned the WRMPs in both supply regions.
- In June 2021, SSC appointed Community Research to undertake the qualitative elements of the programme and Accent/PJM covering Themes 1-3 quantitative elements and Turquoise the final quantitative acceptability testing (Theme 4).

## The WRAP programme



# This is the fourth activity with the WRAP

## 1. Strategic choices

To explore household customer, future customer and SME business customer preferences in terms of:

- Environmental ambition
- Levels of service/resilience ambition
- Water efficiency ambition: leakage/PCC/metering
- Best value planning criteria
- Via an online forum

## 2. Deep dives

Deep Dives via an online forum which built on discussions in the Theme 1 discussions to explore household customer, future customer and SME business customer views in depth on:

- Universal metering
- Water transfers

## 3. Zoom groups

Follow-up online groups exploring the following topic:

- Metering options (covered in both regions)
- New types of tariffs/incentives (SSW only)
- Water transfer options (CAM only)

## 4. Feedback on draft plan

A third online forum with participants designed to get feedback on the draft WRMP24 (from an informed customers' perspective) before it is submitted

# A deliberative journey

## Features of deliberative research

- Information is gradually provided to participants to take them on a journey from uninformed to informed.
  - This provides us with spontaneous responses, as well as considered and informed viewpoints.
- Heterogenous (rather than homogenous) groups of participants, so that people are exposed to a perspectives from people from a range of backgrounds.

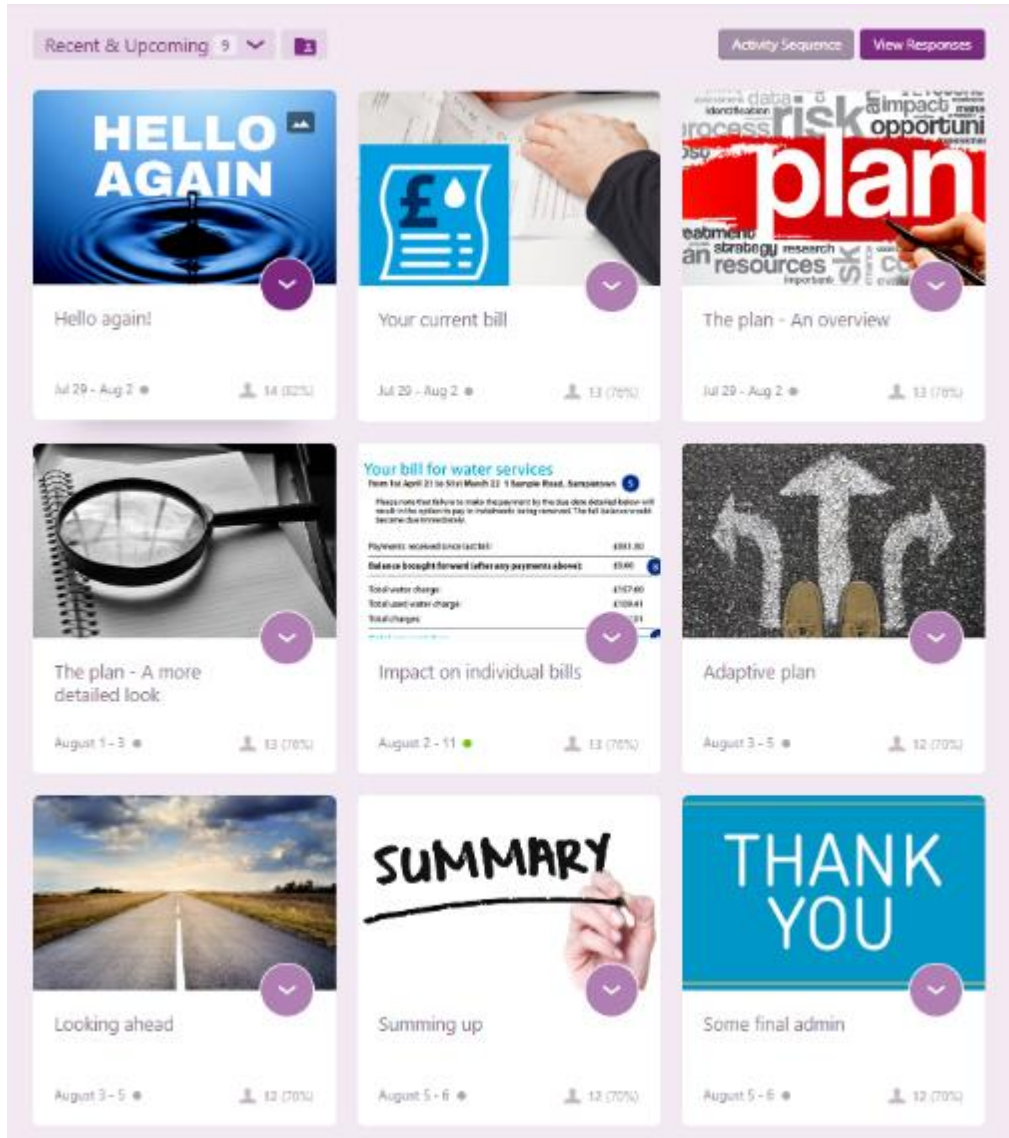
## Reconvening participants

- Participants have been reconvened 4 times over the course of over a year.
- Initially, all took part in a deliberative forum in July 2021 that lasted 2 weeks, building a foundation knowledge of water issues which has since been built on over time.
- Subsequently, the majority have taken part in a Deep Dive exercise that looked at specific issues of water transfers and metering; some of these also took part in further online groups about the topic.
- Finally, about half of the original participants have come back to review the draft Water Resources Management Plan.

Due to COVID-19 the research was all conducted online



# The online forum



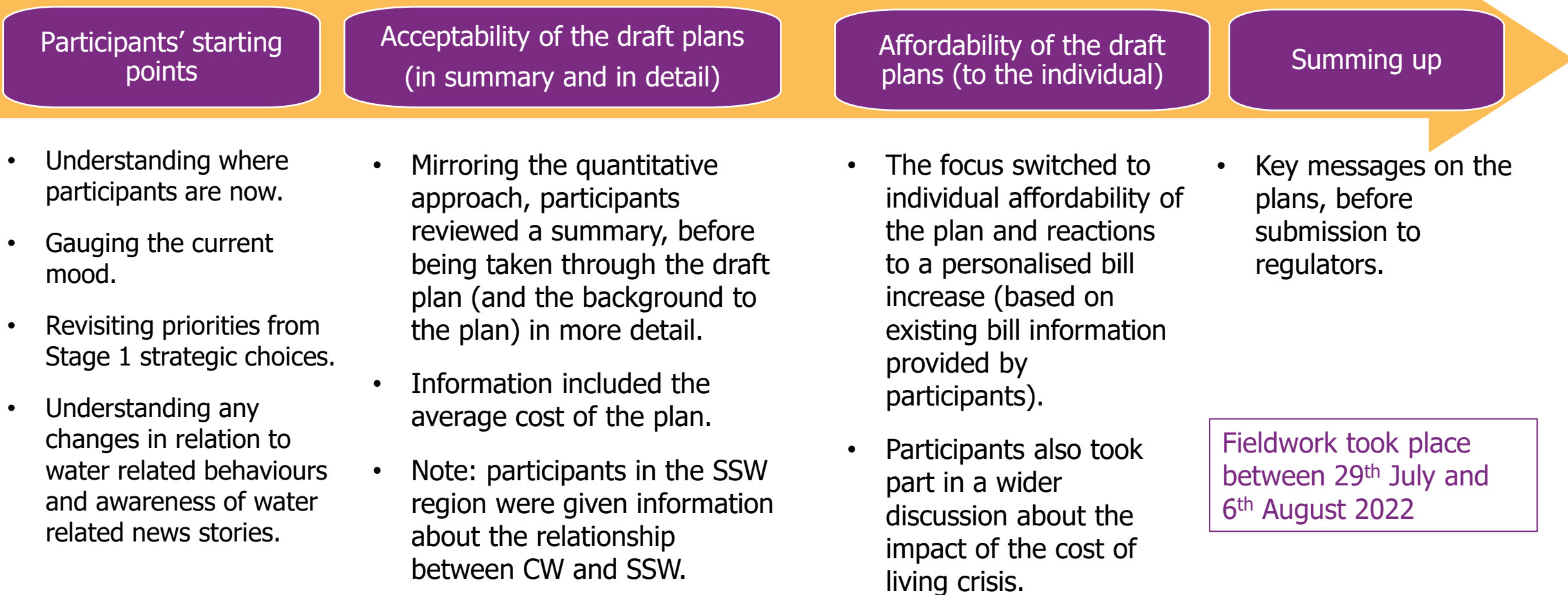
Participants were provided with a series of tasks to complete online, including polling questions, written tasks and self-generated discussions.

Participants were also invited to comment on each other's posts to generate discussion amongst participants on the key topics.

In one of the final tasks, the emerging findings were shared with participants to gauge their reactions to the wider group view. This was a way of increasing engagement and a response to learnings from the first Forum.

Although the draft plans differed, the tasks were the same in each region

## 1 week in duration



Fieldwork took place between 29<sup>th</sup> July and 6<sup>th</sup> August 2022





## Our sample

26 participants in total took part in reviewing the draft Water Resources Management Plans:

<i>Water company</i>			
	<b>Forum 1</b>	<b>Forum 2</b>	<b>This exercise</b>
Cambridge Water	25	20	13
South Staffs Water	22	20	13

<i>Type of customer</i>			
	<b>Forum 1</b>	<b>Forum 2</b>	<b>This exercise</b>
Billpayers	28	26	18
Future customer	9	6	2
Small business	10	8	6



Further details are provided at the end of this report - [Additional information \(sample, evaluation, stimulus material\)](#)

It should be noted that one Cambridge participant moved out of the area during the course of the WRAP activity.

**Remaining participants appear to be particularly committed to the ongoing process and have enjoyed being able to scrutinise the plans for an informed perspective**



# Notes on the approach – general considerations

Please bear in mind this is **qualitative** research:

- Those who participated in this research 'opted in' to the process. It could be that those who opted into the process are different in some way than other customers / citizens.
- It is also important to note, whilst polling results have been reported, qualitative research is not intended to be statistically reliable and, as such, does not permit conclusions to be drawn to the wider population.
- Quotes have been included to illustrate particular viewpoints. The views expressed do not always represent the views of all those who participated.

*The online forum approach is a trade-off*

You get much more from each person than from face to face groups / workshops, but less interaction and reaction...we recommend that online live groups are conducted to fill this gap, if felt necessary

# Notes on the approach – inclusivity considerations

The WRAP was conducted purely online and so excluded those who were not digitally literate. This was a pragmatic decision given it was convened during the Covid pandemic when face to face research was impossible. The online approach did have benefits in terms of allowing for a greater geographic reach than face to face research.

It also allowed for the engagement of individuals in vulnerable circumstances who are able to participate online and, in fact, find it easier than attending face to face sessions. For example, those who are 'just about managing'/in debt/poverty; those with long term physical or mental health conditions or mobility issues.

Clearly, some vulnerable people (i.e. those who are visually, sensory or cognitively impaired and those who are digitally excluded) are unable to participate in a forum of this type online. It would have been too difficult to meaningfully and accurately replicate the complexity of content in telephone depth interviews with these audiences.

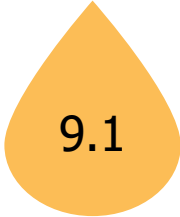
It was, therefore, decided that the views of these audiences would be better represented through liaison with intermediary organisations (such as the convened stakeholder roundtables) as well as being captured in the three quantitative studies that ran alongside the WRAP.

# Views of the research experience

## Mean average scores



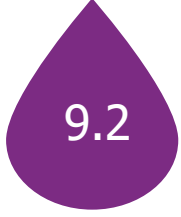
South Staffs Water



9.1



Cambridge Water



9.2

All participants are still happy to be recontacted and participate in further activities

### Overall satisfaction with research experience (10-point scale)

Overall, how would you rate your experience of taking part in this research on a scale of 1-10, where 1 is very poor and 10 is excellent?

Even better than previous forums (In Deep Dive Exercise Cambridge Water = 8.6, South Staffs Water = 8.7)

Participants particularly appreciated being able to see an actual plan and being able to take on board the views of a smaller number of fellow participants

*It's been good to view the proposed plan and to be able to have our say on it but also to understand why the different aspects of the plan have been decided upon. (Steven, billpayer)*

*Whether it was because it was a quite a topical subject at present time ; I found the Forum to be excellent and really made me try and think out of the box, I would love the opportunity to be part of these on going discussions even on a voluntary basis. (Stephen, billpayer)*

Further details are provided at the end of this report - [Additional information \(sample, evaluation, stimulus material\)](#)





The headlines

## **The South Staffs Water Plan**

9 of 13 participants found the Summary Plan acceptable or somewhat acceptable before going on to review the plan in more detail. Most participants believed it balanced the need for improvements with a sensible cost. However, there were 2 participants who initially found the plan somewhat unacceptable due to cost.

Having reviewed the plan in more detail and been reminded of the current situation that South Staffs Water is in and the future challenges the company faces, 9 of 13 participants found the plan somewhat or completely acceptable and none found the plan unacceptable. Whilst cost was no longer a base for objecting to the plan, concerns still lingered.

Most South Staffs Water participants were willing to contribute towards the supply options set out in the Cambridge Water plan so long as it was not to the detriment of the water supply and any planned improvements in the South Staffs Water region.

When presented with what their individual bill for water-only could look like in 2025 (based on planned price rises between now and 2025 and the cost of WRMP plan) 8 of 13 agreed or strongly agreed that the bill will be affordable. 1 SME disagreed that the bill was affordable and 4 other participants remained neutral.

8 of 13 participants agreed or strongly agreed with South Staffs Water using an adaptive planning approach if necessary. Those that did not agree had concerns about possible associated costs.

## **The Cambridge Water Plan**

9 of 13 participants found the Summary Plan acceptable or somewhat acceptable before going on to review the plan in more detail, again welcoming the balance between the need for improvement and a sensible cost. In particular, participants welcomed the plan for a new reservoir. The only participant who objected to the plan at this stage did so because they felt that improvements needed to be made sooner.

Having reviewed the plan in more detail and been reminded of the current situation that Cambridge Water is in and the future challenges the company faces, 10 of 13 participants found the plan somewhat or completely acceptable and none found the plan unacceptable; again, initial objection dissipated upon learning more about the plan.

When presented with what their individual bill for water-only could look like in 2025 (based on planned price rises between now and 2025 and the cost of WRMP plan) 8 of 13 agreed or strongly agreed that the bill will be affordable. Of the 3 participants that disagreed that the bill was affordable, 2 were SMEs and had concerns about future inflation and the lack of support for businesses.

12 of 13 participants agreed or strongly agreed with Cambridge Water using an adaptive planning approach if necessary. They believed that it made sense to adapt to changing circumstances.

# The key themes (golden threads) running throughout the research programme are still evident

**Transparency and engagement to understand context for and impact of any proposed changes.**

Participants stress this will be key, if the plans are to be accepted by a wider set of customers.

**A focus on fairness and collective action/sharing resources.**

Appears to be reflected in the willingness of most South Staffs customers to contribute towards the cost of delivering the major supply options in the Cambridge plan.

**A strong desire to take action sooner rather than later. Generally driven by concern for the environment.**

Concerns for the environment is still very evident and a number of participants want to know why the plans cannot be implemented straight away. However, some participants believe that affordability may have become the more pressing issue.

**A wide, but not universal, call to protect vulnerable customers.**

This is perhaps even more top of mind, given the current economic climate

Participants' starting  
points



# Reintroductions and starting points

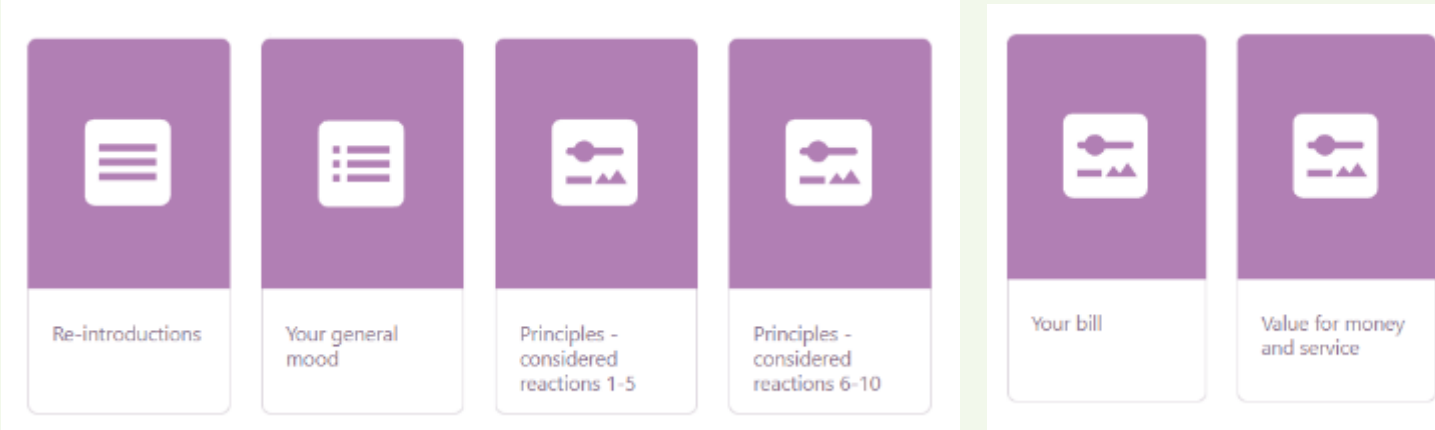
## Context

- Participants joined the WRAP and completed Theme 1 in July 2021; a Deep Dive Exercise in October 2021; Online focus group in January 22 (with a small subset of participants).
- This research is the fourth in a series of activities for some.

## Objectives

- To find out if participants have made any changes or picked up on any news stories.
- To gauge the general mood of participants.
- To revisit a set of principles about planning priorities.
- To gather information about current bill and views on affordability, value for money and service.

## Process / approach



Understand any behaviour changes and if patients have picked up on any news stories.

A polling question to measure mood.

A review of planning principles first seen in Theme 1.

Participants to submit bill information and answer question on affordability.

Polling question on value for money and service.



# After 12 months of the WRAP....

Some, but not all, participants shared some of their water related behaviours and awareness of news stories at the very outset:



7 talk of being more careful about water use e.g. shorter showers, not leaving tap running, not watering lawn; full washing machine.

Only today Southern Water announcing a hosepipe ban. I am making efforts to use less water - my lawn is like straw but I have no intention of watering it especially as I am on a meter. (Stephen, billpayer)

7 talk of being more careful about water use e.g. making use of water saving devices, cutting back on car washing, installing a water butt.

1 has cut down trees around house as taking too much water from ground.

1 using more water because working from home.

1 has switched to a meter.

5 have picked up on news stories about water supply/hot weather.

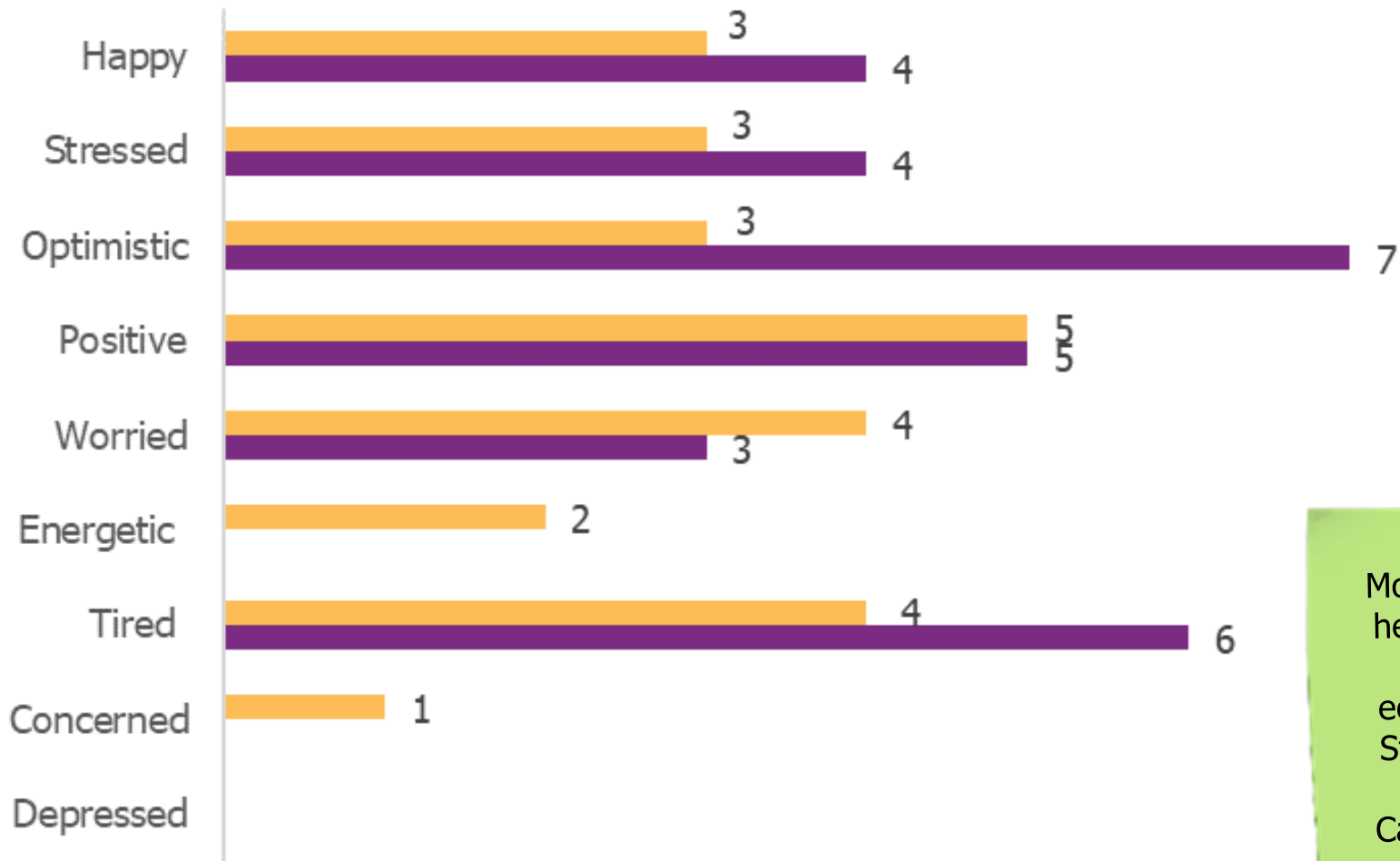
There have been several water shortages in my area leaving some households with no water supply or very limited supply. We all need to pull together and ensure that we have enough supply of water and follow the advice given by the local water company. (Joel, billpayer)

4 talk of new stories with several others voicing general concern over water supply in hot weather



# Gauging the mood of participants at the outset

Which of the following emotions best describe how you're feeling towards day-to-day life at the moment?  
Please select all that apply.



Base =13 in each region

■ South Staffs Water ■ Cambridge Water

Participants from Cambridge Water region are more than twice as likely to record being optimistic compared to South Staffs Water participants.

Moods were attributed to health, work, family and concerns about the economy. 6/13 in South Staffs Water region and 2/13 participants in Cambridge Water region spontaneously referred to the cost of living crisis as a driver of mood.



# A snapshot of views on satisfaction, value for money and affordability remains consistent with the first wave of research

## Mean average scores

### Overall satisfaction with water supply (10-point scale)

How satisfied or dissatisfied would you say you are with the **overall service** provided by Cambridge Water? When giving your answer, please think about all aspects of the service they provide, from the water supply itself to how accurate and easy to understand their bills are, to how well they respond to enquiries from customers.

### Value for money (5-point scale)

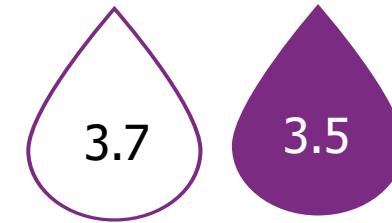
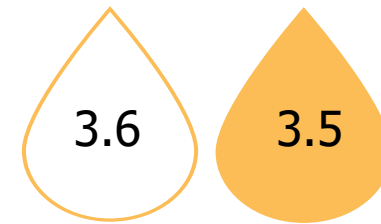
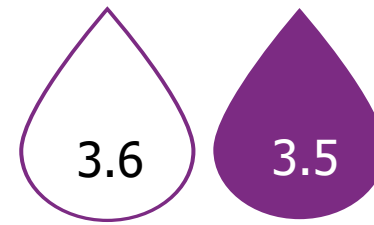
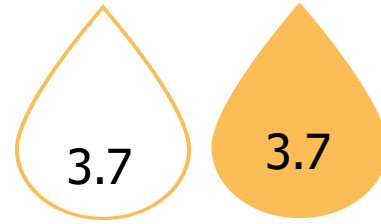
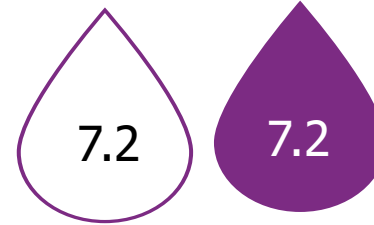
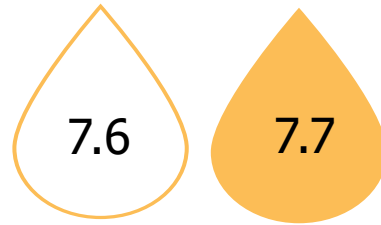
Thinking now about value for money, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the value for money of the water services in your area?


### Affordability (5-point scale)


How much do you agree or disagree that the clean water charges that your currently pay are affordable for you?


  
South Staffs Water

  
Cambridge Water



  
Theme 1 research = 18  
(SMEs, billpayers)

  
Draft WRMP = 13  
(all customer types)

  
Theme 1 research = 20  
(SMEs, billpayers)

  
Draft WRMP = 13  
(all customer types)

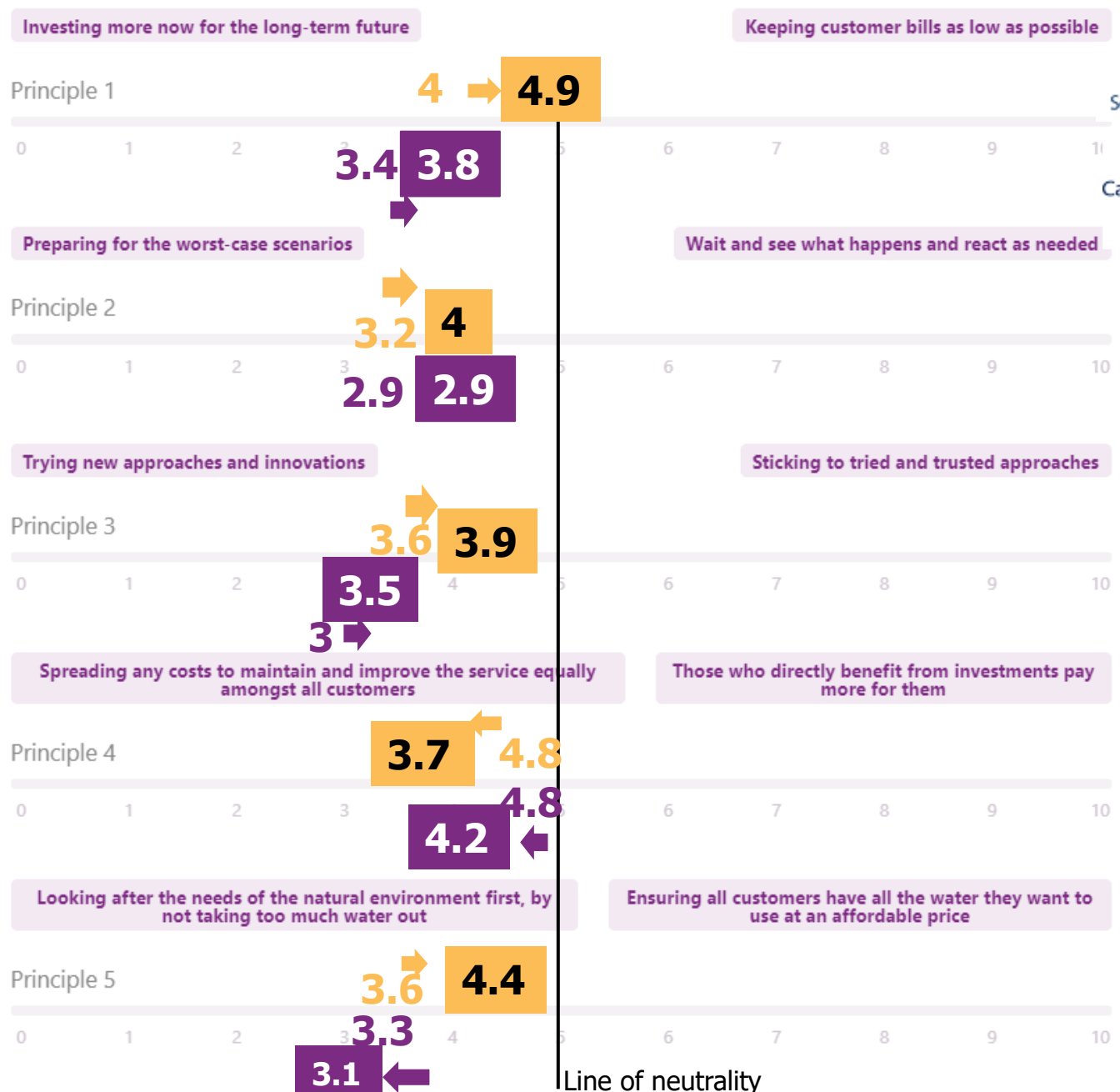
Means scores have remained strikingly consistent over the duration of the WRAP

Despite some minor variation on wording and the different sample sizes



# Key principles (1-5) for the plan show some small shifts from the end of Theme 1 (July 2021).

Mean scores out of 10



↑  
Move the slider towards the principle you favour more, or a 5 means you are sitting on the fence.

In both areas, since the end of the first forum there have been slight shifts towards:

- Keeping customer bills as low as possible
- Sticking to tried and trusted approaches
- Spreading costs equally amongst all customers

In the South Staffs region there has also been a shift to ensuring all customers have the water they want to use at an affordable price.

**0.0**  
SSW Draft WRMP = 13 (all customer types)

**0.0**  
CAM Draft WRMP = 13 (all customer types)

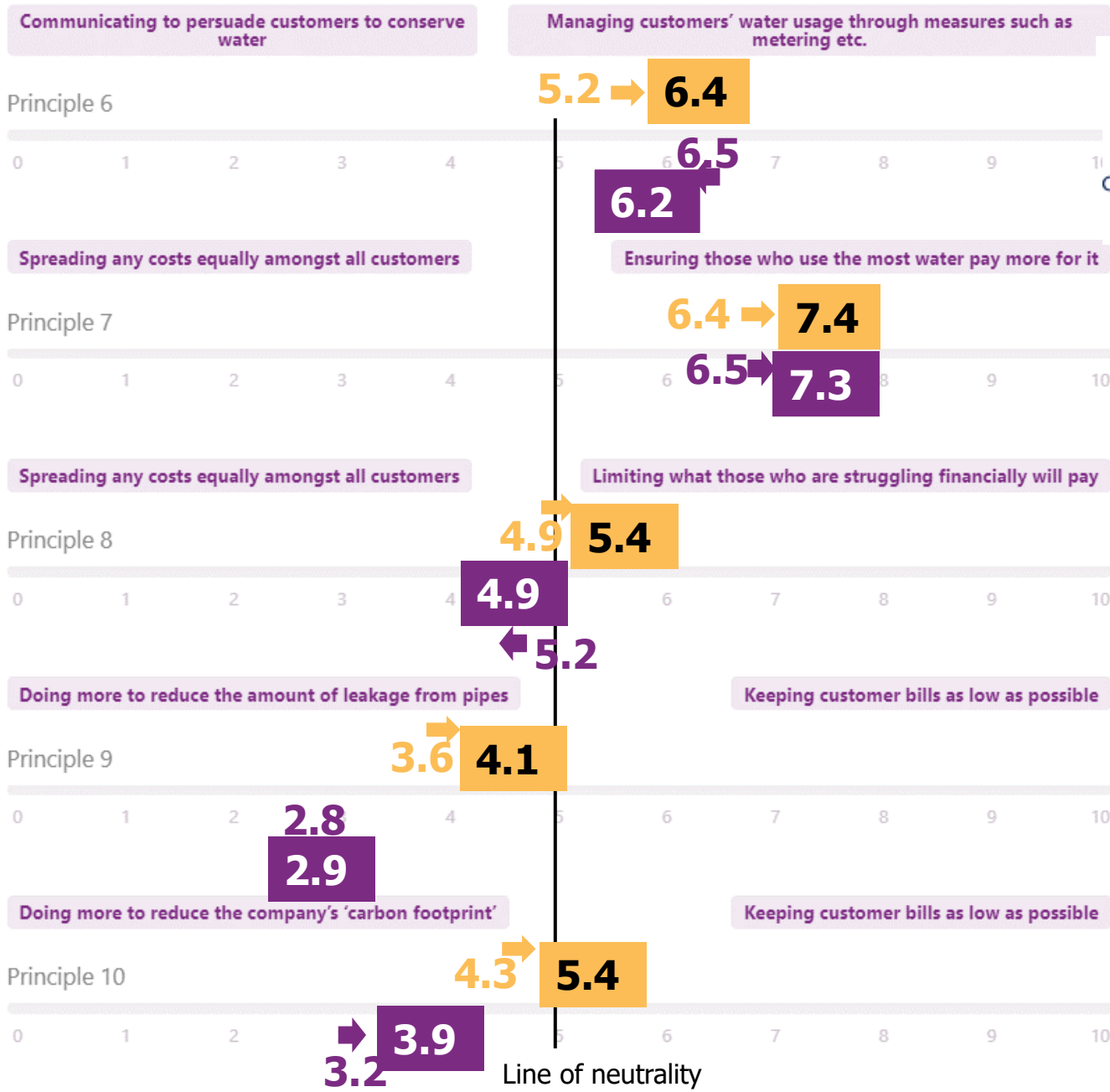
**0.0**  
SSW Theme 1 = 22 (all customer types)

**0.0**  
CAM Theme 1 = 25 (all customer types)



Key principles (6-10) for the plan also show shifts from the end of Theme 1 (July 2021).

Mean scores out of 10



↑ Move the slider towards the principle you favour more, or a 5 means you are sitting on the fence.

The overall trend appears to be for lower bills and ensuring fairness.

In both regions, since the end of the first forum there has been a shift towards:

- Ensuring those who use the most water pay more for it.
- Keeping customers bills as low as possible (as opposed to reducing carbon footprint).

In the South Staffs region there has also been a shift to managing customers' water usage through measures such as metering.



# In participants' own words

*I suspect I might have given some of the financial-related principles different values in part due to the cost of living crisis that is ongoing.*

*I think also some of my views have changed from before the first survey, just due to having been given a lot of information about environmental costs particularly. (Beverley, billpayer)*

*Yes I feel they have changed because I feel things should be more equal and we should be more proactive in our water usage (where we can be). (Emma, SME)*

*I believe they have slightly changed - I am more aware of the world around me and climate change. I am more financially responsible for myself at the moment, as well, which plays a part. (Aleksi, future customer).*

*Given the current cost of living crisis my short term views have changed in favour of keeping bills as low as possible. (Marie, billpayer)*

*Yes, I am more focussed on keeping my household costs down at present, but hopefully in time this will improve for everyone. I am still aware of the long term need for changes however. (Paul, billpayer)*

*I think they have stayed the same apart from the ones involving the customers' bills since the cost-of-living increasing has had an effect on that answer. I think it will sway to customers having more affordable bills i.e. as low as possible, so they can live day to day without worrying for paying their water bills (Dylan, future customer)*



Reactions to the  
summary plan



# The Summary Plan

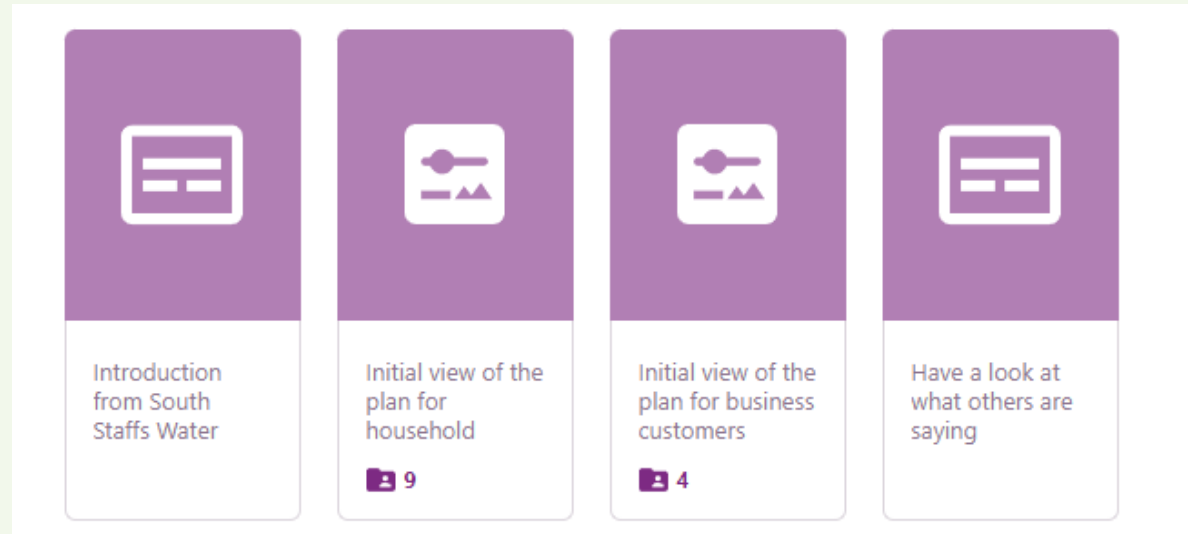
## Context

- An introduction to the planning process was followed by a first look at the summary plans (a version for business customers and a version for household customers), including the average cost for each region. Note that the plans for business customers were costed differently to the plans for household customers and present the increase as a percentage rather than an actual £ amount. All other sections of the plans remained the same for the different customer types.
- There were different plans for each region (see Appendix) but the plans were similar in how they were presented and some information was consistent across both plans i.e., 50% reduction in leakage target; universal metering; product labelling scheme etc.
- Designed to mirror the quantitative survey that will measure 'uninformed' responses to the plans.

## Objectives

- Understand customers' initial reactions to the plans.
- Establish what customers like about the plans and if they see any issues with it.

## Process / approach



South Staffs Water/  
Cambridge Water team introduce the planning process.

Share the summary plan for household customers and gauge initial reactions.

Share the summary plan for business customers and gauge initial reactions from SMEs.

Review and comment on what others have written.

# Key takeouts

The initial reactions to the Cambridge Water plan and the South Staffs Water plan can be summarised as:

**A long-term plan that balances cost and ambition.**

**With an ambitious target to reduce individual water consumption.**

**But some questions raised about whether the plan is achievable, affordable for all and doing enough to protect the environment.**

*I can't see any issues with this plan, only reluctance from some households. (Ivan, billpayer)*

*While I don't see any issues with the plan, I would like to know more details about how CW plans to help individuals and businesses reduce water consumption by 28% and 9%, water meters will help but what other plans etc. do CW have that makes this achievable? (Steven, billpayer)*



## Surprises / learning:

Although participants appreciate the fact that these plans are for the long term they are surprised that they do not come into action for another 3 years, given what many perceive to be the urgency of the situation.

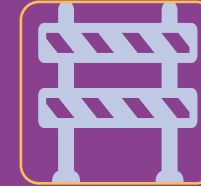
Participants calling for action sooner rather than later.



## Thoughts / justifications

Participants are very aware that they are assessing the plans amidst a cost-of-living crisis. Whilst many welcome the plans, there is some concern that the price increase will be less acceptable to those who are less familiar with the challenges facing water companies.

A number of participants request more information at this early stage so they can reassure themselves that the plans are affordable and achievable.



## Caveats / limitations

This is the response to a summary version of the plans and participants views change after reading more detailed versions.

In the quantitative acceptability testing the summary plans are used to measure uninformed responses. Note that the nature of the WRAP means that there is no comparable 'uninformed' view as all participants have taken part in previous research.

The average price rise shared is for the WRMP component only. Participants were not made aware of additional price rises that could affect their bill from 2025 for other areas of the service (as they are not yet known, they cannot be shared in a meaningful way with participants).

# Initial reactions to the summary plans

How acceptable is this plan for you? Please think about the options that South Staffs Water/Cambridge Water is planning to invest in and the proposed impact on the average water bill to deliver these investments.

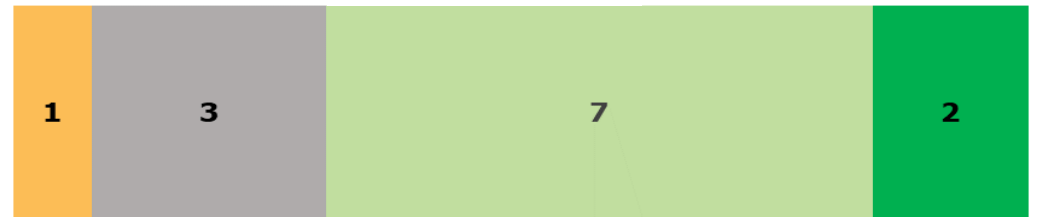


In both regions, 9 of 13 participants believe that the summary plan is somewhat, or completely, acceptable.



Base =13

1 x SME and 1 x billpayer believes that the plan is somewhat unacceptable due to cost.



Base =13

1 x SME believes the plan is somewhat unacceptable due to the overall timeline. They want immediate action.

- Somewhat unacceptable
- Neither acceptable or unacceptable
- Somewhat acceptable
- Completely acceptable



# Key 'likes' and potential issues....



South Staffs Water

- Many believe the plan attempts to balance the need to deliver improvements within a sensible budget (based on average price increase).
- Several simply find it reassuring that there is a long term plan in place for securing water resources.

## BUT

- There are concerns that not everyone will find the average cost increase acceptable.
- Some question whether the plan to reduce individual water consumption is achievable.
- Some notice that the plan is not promising to protect **all** natural water sources.

*The plan suggests that SSW will "Reduce the amount of water each person uses at home by 36% that's from 149 litres per day in 2021/22 to 110 litres per day by 2050" How do you plan on doing that because to me it sounds like it's been put in there to just tick a box. (Dylan, Future customer)*



Cambridge Water

- Again, participants appreciate the long term nature of the plan and a relatively moderate price increase.
- They pick up on the protection in place for rivers which they believe is needed.
- Some welcome the introduction of smart metering; the emphasis on reducing individual consumption; and the introduction of better product labelling.
- Many also welcome a new reservoir.

## BUT

- Uncertain that the plan goes far enough in terms of protecting chalk streams.
- Wish to see more detail about will happen to waterways not selected for investigation.
- Some debate whether usage targets are achievable.

*The target for improving the situation with chalk streams feels very limited in scope - a pledge to look at about a fifth of the total and \*then\* decide which of the selection are most at risk seems in danger of missing potentially bigger issues in the 80% that won't be surveyed.  
(Beverley, billpayer)*



Reactions to the  
detailed plans

# The plans in more detail

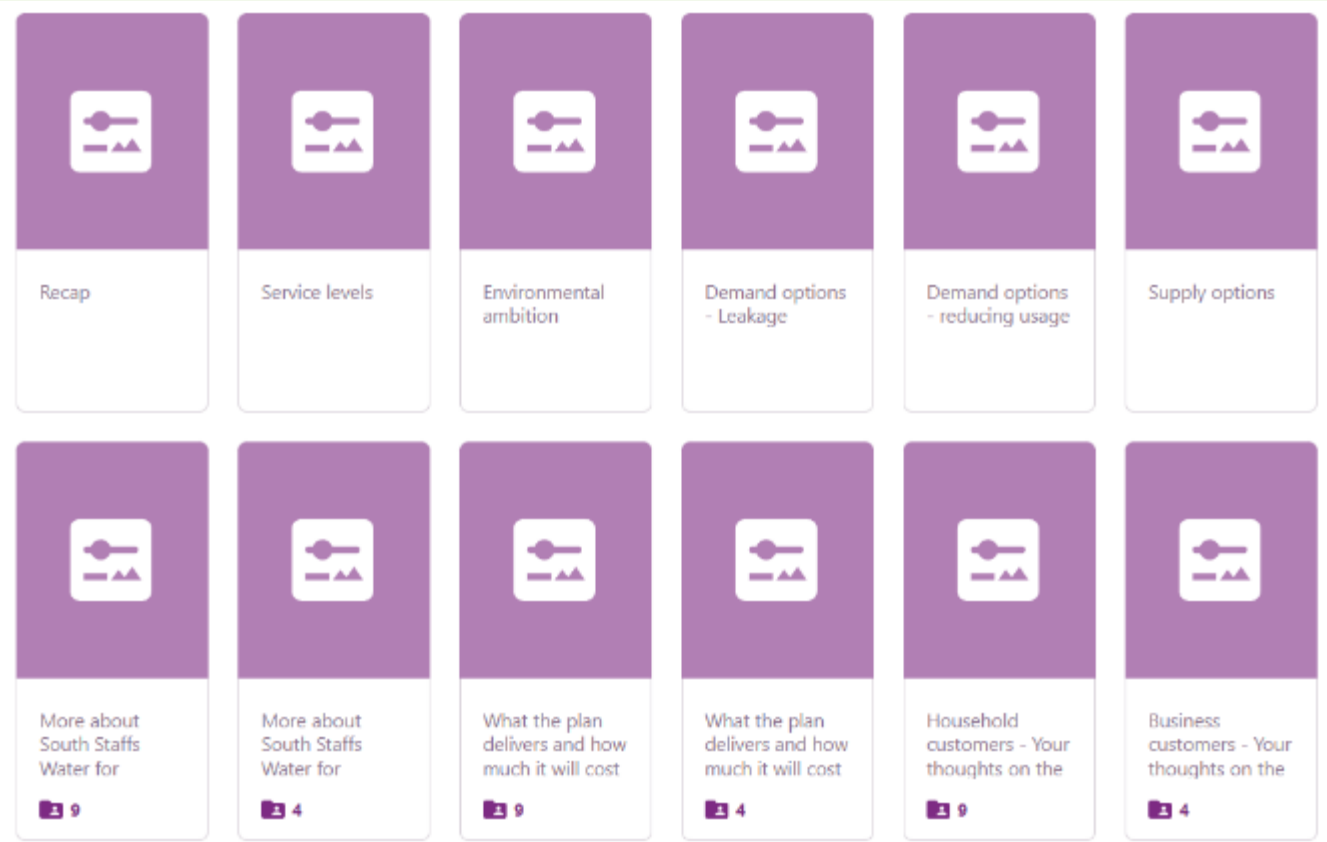
### Context

A recap of the challenges facing the water companies; followed by more information about both the plans and the current situation in each region. As with the summary plans, the detailed plans were different for each region and for business and household customers.

### Objectives

- To understand customers' more considered reactions to the plans.
- To uncover any questions participants may have about the plans.
- To understand if acceptability changes based on this more informed view of the plans.

### Process / approach



SMEs and household customers were shown a different version of the detailed plans (in terms of average costs) and are asked to work through the plan section by section looking at the current situation and the proposed plan for: service levels, environmental ambition, demand and supply options. South Staffs Water customers were also asked to consider the principle of contributing to the cost of the Cambridge WRMP. Having reviewed the detail of the plan participants were asked to consider acceptability again.



**The plan in each region is even more acceptable once participants have been reminded of the challenges facing water companies and have had the opportunity to review the plan in more detail.**

**Some participants question whether the plan for the region goes far enough in terms of environment and protecting waterways, particularly in Cambridge region.**

*I think it would be acceptable to the majority of customers, but would require careful messaging to ensure the reasons for the increases were understood. Taking part in this research has made that very clear, but some members of the public will not see beyond the price rise unless the details are clear and obvious. (David, billpayer)*

**Key themes from previous research thought to be reflected in the plans.**

**Some remain sceptical about whether demand can be reduced by the amount set out in the plans (through reducing leakage and usage).**

*I think with the 16 million litres this will save and the 18 million litres saved from water leaks plus the amount saved by reducing household usage this puts us in a great position to achieve the goals set out within the plan. I'm happy to see that we won't need to use water from other regions as the effect on the environment from doing this did concern me. (Shareen, billpayer)*





## Surprises / learning:

The scale of the water shortfall if nothing is done.

The scale of the population increase.

That only 16% of rivers in England are in good condition.

That currently only ensuring that 5% of new homes have water recycling.

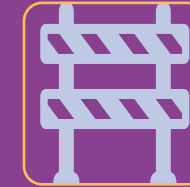
And the amount of water lost via leakage continues to surprise.



## Thoughts / justifications

The cost of the plans pales in comparison to recent energy price rises - and unlike with energy price rises - participants believe that there are benefits associated with the increase.

Some (in both regions) highlight that the target to reduce individual usage appears to be particularly ambitious and that individuals will need to be given more information about how to cut back on water usage.



## Caveats / limitations

By this stage of the WRAP these participants are particularly well-informed and will not be representative of the wider customer base. They are drawing on knowledge shared in previous research forums and able to place the plans in a wider context (having previously discussed alternative transfer options, the advantages of smart metering etc.)

Although widely accepting of the cost, many are aware that their circumstances could change in these volatile times and **so price rises are acceptable 'for now.'**

**The WRMP price rise is being considered in isolation.**

# Plan service levels receive similar reactions in both regions



**Drought and temporary restrictions**

	Current service level	Service level from 2025
<b>Hosepipe Bans</b> (the last ban in the region was 1976)	1 in 40 years	1 in 40 years
<b>Non-essential use ban for businesses</b> (the last ban in the region was 1976)	1 in 80 years	1 in 80 years
<b>Severe water restrictions</b> (such as the deployment of mobile water tanks and standpipes in the street - the last severe restriction in the region was 1976)	1 in 200 years	1 in 500 years ↑

Environment Agency

Given the forecasted impacts of climate change on rainfall levels, the Environment Agency is expecting water companies to make investments to reduce the chance of needing to deploy rota cuts and standpipes to a **once in every 500 year event by 2040.**

South Staffs Water is committed to this target in its plan but, to achieve this, it will need to further reduce demand for water, reduce losses and bring in new water sources

*I think when you see the term 40/80/500 years, as a consumer it makes you feel like it's not really going to happen often enough to be worried about it. (Asma, billpayer)*



## Service levels are universally acceptable

- As in previous research a number of participants suggest that hosepipe bans could be used **more** frequently.
- Some point out that figures appear to make the event seem 'unlikely' and therefore customers may be less inclined to reduce their consumption upon reading this.
- Note that one or two participants pick up the fact that targets are driven by the Environment Agency rather than the water company and several question how committed the water company would be to reducing demand, if the target did not exist.



**Drought and temporary water use restrictions**

	Current service level	Service level from 2025
<b>Temporary Use Bans</b> (used to be called Hosepipe Banal (the last ban in the region was 1991/92)	1 in 20 years	1 in 20 years
<b>Non-essential use ban for businesses</b> (the last ban in the region was 1976)	1 in 50 years	1 in 50 years
<b>Severe water restrictions</b> (such as the deployment of mobile water tanks and standpipes in the street - the last severe restriction in the region was 1976)	1 in 200 years	1 in 500 years ↑

Environment Agency

Given the forecasted impacts of climate change on rainfall levels, the Environment Agency is expecting water companies to make investments to reduce the chance of needing to deploy rota cuts and standpipes to a **once in every 500 year event by 2040.**

*It feels like it's being done because the government is putting things in place to make it happen, rather than because Cambridge Water feels it is the right thing to do. Not necessarily a bad thing in itself, but it does make me possibly more vigilant for green-washing and overtalking of actions and achievements. (Beverley, billpayer)*



The water environment plan raises more questions amongst Cambridge Water participants, due to the more specific nature of the plan for the region.



### South Staffs Plan for the Water Environment is generally seen as ambitious

- In terms of reducing water taken for the water environment by 48 million litres per day.
- Participants quickly ask for more detail about the plan to reduce demand and where new water sources will be found, to assure themselves that the target is achievable.

*I would like to know how they will reduce demand especially with the population growing. (Andy, SME)*



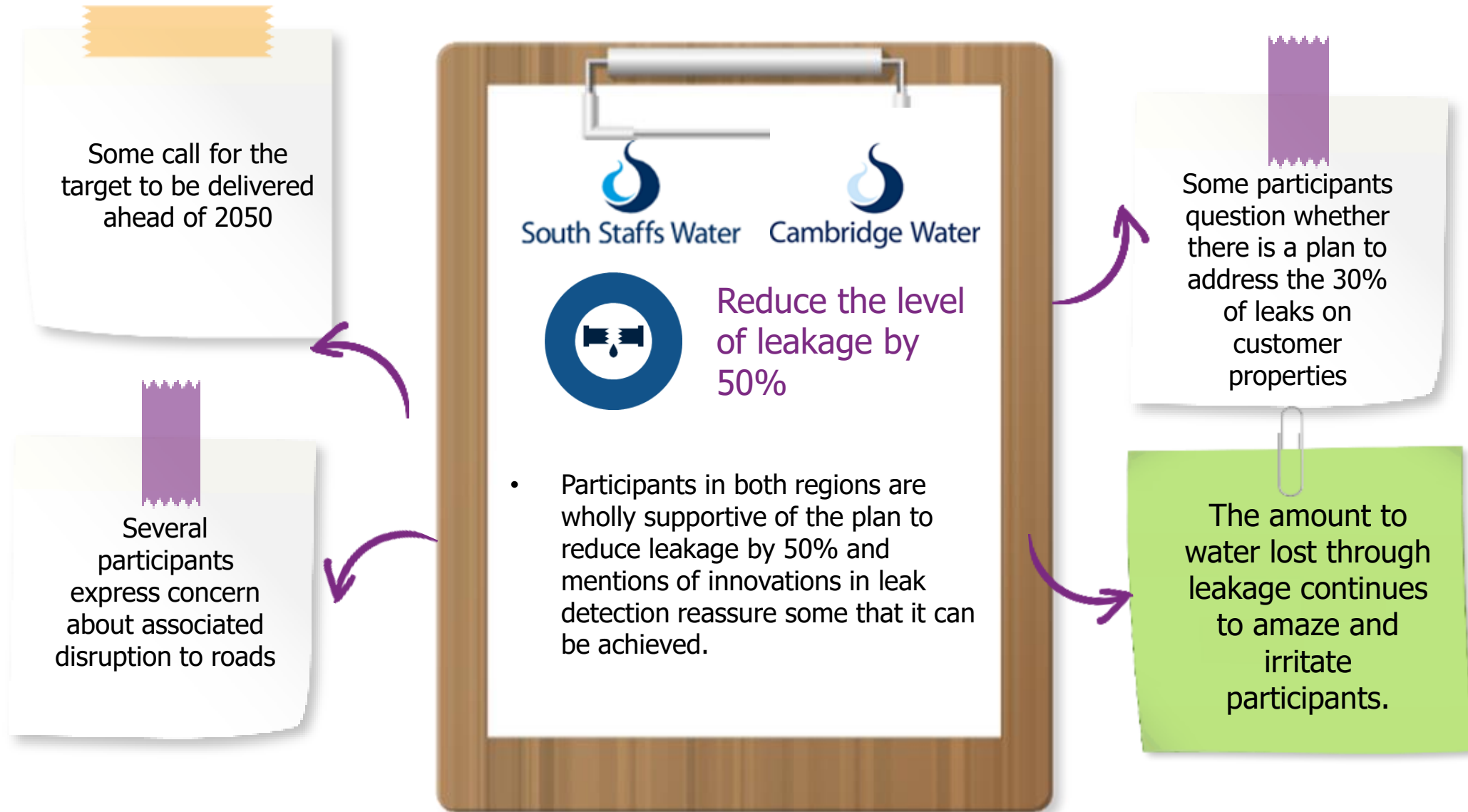
### Broadly accepting of Cambridge Water's plan in relation to the environment but questions are raised in relation to:

- What is happening before 2025 in terms protecting waterways and why don't detailed investigations start now?
- How will the 77km of water ways be selected for investigation?
- What happens to the remaining waterways that are not selected for investigation?

*This highlights the magnitude of the situation if we are to protect the environment. The previous figure given of 30million litres of water that needed to be saved or sourced seemed a major challenge, but the additional 50 million litres per day to protect the most at risk aquifers highlights the need for urgent action to change the way we all think about water. I am still unclear as to the impact on the remaining 303Km of waterways that are not receiving this special investigation activity. (David, billpayer)*



# Participants in both regions fully support the leakage target



# In participants' own words

*I think reducing the leakage by 50% to save 18million litres is great, as this will really help and I think it's reasonable as we don't want to increase pollution either by trying to increase this percentage, I think smart sensors and investing in leak detection technology is a excellent idea and will really benefit us towards the future goals of reducing water waste.. (Shareen, billpayer)*

*Certainly an area of focus because in turn this would support the environmental aim - although digging all the pipes up will be destructive but you have to look at the bigger picture! Smart sensors to all new water pipes is a fabulous idea! (Emma, SME)*

*No further questions for CW, the plan here covers all my thoughts. I'm pleased to see that new pipes less prone to leaking plan to be used and I hope that these can be retrofitted onto the existing network where leaks occur. (Steven, billpayer)*

*Also 30% leakage in customer homes is very, very high! I think South Staffs Water should do everything, with our help as consumers, to help solve these issues as soon as possible. (Marju, SME)*

## Reducing household and business usage is recognised as challenging but necessary in both regions

### Universal metering

**Majority in both areas welcome universal smart metering as long as the most vulnerable are supported** (in line with previous forum findings).

Some in Cambridge Water region would like to see the addition of higher users being charged more (reflecting back on tariff proposals shown in an early forum).

Call for more customer education about how to reduce usage.

### Water saving devices and technologies

**Free water saving devices considered a great idea by many**

- Some in Cambridge suggest that they could be targeted at those who would benefit most i.e. high users, vulnerable customers.
- Also one suggestion in Cambridge that there should be a grant available to those wishing to retrofit water saving technology.

Participants in both regions wholly support reducing household and business usage but there are questions about how realistic the targets are given the shift to home working and barriers to behaviour change.

Several participants want to understand if there is scope to increase 9% reduction in usage for Business Customers, given that there is a higher target being applied to household reduction in usage.

### Product labelling scheme

**A welcome idea**

- But one participant in Cambridge noted that it is a national initiative and not from the water company – so took issue with it being part of the water company's plan!

# Supply options were expected as part of the plan and are welcomed by Cambridge Water participants

**2. Deep dives**

Deep Dives research uncovered that talk of water transfers in the region cemented environmental concerns and the number of transfers being considered at the time made some Cambridge participants feel vulnerable.

*I think transferring in and a new reservoir are good ideas. OK, it may cost us but when needs must it has to be done. (Selina, billpayer)*

*Great idea - build it right now!! (Aleksi, future customer)*

**4. Feedback on draft plan**

Participants welcome new water sources and transfer options as the plan builds upon information they received in a previous forum. However, the question remains about whether these will be enough given population growth and scepticism about reducing demand.

Cambridge Water

love every drop anglianwater

processing drop anglianwater

AMITY WATER

These water... 200,000... business growth... environmental... included... they... 2028

A new 95km underground pipeline will be built to transfer water from Anglian Water's Godham surface... into the... will provide up... of water... come into... 2028

A new surface water storage reservoir is to be built by a partnership of Anglian Water and Cambridge Water. This will provide up to 43 million litres of water per day for Cambridge Water customers when it starts operating in 2035

A treatment works will be constructed and the water will be transferred into the Cambridge region through around 20km of new underground pipelines from the reservoir location, which is to be... This new... come into...

These informed participants were not hearing about water transfers and a new reservoir for the first time – most had already accepted that such measures would be necessary to meet future demand in the region.



# South Staffs Water customers are also broadly accepting of planned supply options



Raising the height of the Blithfield reservoir by 2m will provide up to **16 million litres of water per day for South Staffs Water customers** when it comes into operation in **2045**



**Majority welcome the supply options**, with a least one participant relieved that the plan does not include water transfers from other regions.

Again, as with other elements of the plan there are questions raised about why work can't begin straight away, given predicated shortfalls and population growth.

Several question if this option alone will be enough and believe water transfers into the region may still need to be considered

- What if the build runs into problems?
- What if population growth is more than anticipated?
- How does it work if rainfall is lower than anticipated?

*That seems a really practicable and sensible solution to raise the reservoir level by 2m. (Stephen, billpayer)*

*It's a no brainer just get on with it! (Mike, billpayer)*

These informed participants are aware that water transfers were previously being considered.





## South Staffs Water participants are accepting of paying toward supply options planned for the Cambridge Water area



*In favour, large infrastructure projects need to be considered nationally not parochially. (Jason, SME)*

*It is basically one company so I don't see a problem with it. We will all benefit from the improvements in our own areas in the long run. I appreciate people are concerned in the cost of bills given we are in a crisis at the moment but this won't last forever. Also, given the rise in energy bills is huge in comparison, I feel this is fair. (Marie, billpayer)*

### **The vast majority (11/13) believe this to be a fair approach**

- Given South Staffs Water and Cambridge Water are the same company.
- Infrastructure projects are costly and should be considered beyond the local level.
- There is opportunity for both areas to benefit from improvements taking place in their own area.
- SMEs point out that it is fair as long as plans are delivering comparable results in the long-term (i.e. one region is not left in weaker or stronger position than the other).
- Participants (2/13) who found it less fair either did not fully understand what was being proposed or had expressed concerns about affordability more generally

*In communicating the plan it is important to emphasise that South Staffs Water customers do not receive water from the supply options being considered by Cambridge Water, as it was not obvious to all our participants in the first instance.*



# Average cost increase of the plan is accepted by most in South Staffs

## Costs for household customers

Amount of water saved, new sources and what this will cost customers

Water saved + new sources	What's in the plan?	When this will impact bills	Total bill increase	Yearly bill increase
16 million litres per day	Raising the height of the dam at the Blithfield Reservoir by 2 meters	From 2040 (for 10 years)	<b>£8.90 total</b> (over 10 years 2040-2050)	<b>£0.89 per year</b> (between 2040 and 2050)
18 million litres per day	Reducing pipe leakage	From 2025 (for 25 years)	<b>£87.25 total</b> (over 25 years 2025-2050)	<b>£3.49 per year</b> (between 2025 and 2050)
33 million litres per day	Universal smart metering programme + initiatives supporting household customers to reduce water usage	From 2025 (for 15 years)	<b>£74.25 total</b> (over 15 years 2025-2040)	<b>£4.95 per year</b> (between 2025 and 2040)
		From 2025 (for 25 years)	<b>£43.75 total</b> (over 25 years 2025-2050)	<b>£1.75 per year</b> (between 2025 and 2050)
12 million litres per day	Initiatives to reduce business usage by 2%	From 2025 (for 15 years)	<b>£9.15 total</b> (over 15 years 2025-2040)	<b>£0.61 per year</b> (between 2025 and 2040)
79 million litres per day by 2050	Building a new surface water reservoir, treatment works and a second water transfer to ensure the Cambridge Water region has enough water in the future. <small>This option will not provide any additional water for South Staffs Water customers</small>	From 2030 (for 10 years)	<b>£133.80 total</b> (over 10 years 2030-2050)	<b>£6.69 per year</b> (between 2030 and 2050)
		at a total cost of.....		<b>£357.10 across 25 years (2025-2050)</b>

## Costs for business customers

When this will impact bills	Total bill increase
From 2040 (for 10 years)	+0.7% (over 10 years 2040-2050)
From 2025 (for 25 years)	+2.8% (over 25 years 2025-2050)
From 2025 (for 15 years)	+4.0% (over 15 years 2025-2040)
From 2025 (for 25 years)	+1.4% (over 25 years 2025-2050)
From 2030 (for 10 years)	+5.5% (over 10 years 2030-2050)
with a total bill increase of.....	
<b>+14.9% across 25 years (2025-2050)</b>	

**Most are willing to accept the price increase, some more readily than others**

- Some household customers question if businesses are going to be asked to pay more.
- SMEs themselves wish to know if current inflation rates have been taken into account; whether price rises should be based on size of business/profit levels.
- Whilst a number of participants point out that these price rises are small (and justifiable) in comparison to energy price rises, there are several who appear to be more nervous and highlight that some customers (not necessarily themselves) may struggle with any additional costs.

*I think it is a lot in terms of increase to ask people when they won't see the effect of the results in their lifetime. (Christian, SME)*

*The cost is significant but necessary and certainly in line with cost of living price increases overall. Some customers may balk at it but nobody likes price increases. Acceptance is key. (Paul, billpayer)*



# Average cost increase of the plan lands better with Cambridge Water customers

By and large, participants were pleasantly surprised to find out the average annual increase as a result of the plan - particularly in light of expected price rises of other utilities.

One SME (farmer) did suggest a more gradual increase that took into account that the agriculture sector would find it difficult to reduce water usage.

Cambridge Water		Costs for household customers			Costs for business customers	
Water saved + new sources	What's in the plan?	When this will impact bills	Total bill increase	Yearly bill increase		
58 million litres per day	New reservoir and pipeline transfer from the new Fenlands reservoir (from 2055) + New water transfer and pipelines from existing Grafton surface water reservoir (from 2029)	From 2030 (for 100 years)	+£133.80 total (over 20 years 2030-2050)	+£6.70 per year (between 2030 and 2050)		
5.5 million litres per day	Reducing pipe leakage	From 2025 (for 25 years)	+£87.30 total (over 25 years 2025-2050)	+£3.49 per year (between 2025 and 2050)		
9 million litres per day	Universal smart metering programme	From 2025 (for 15 years)	+£74.30 total (over 15 years 2025-2040)	+£4.95 per year (between 2025 and 2040)		
5 million litres per day	Initiatives supporting household customers to reduce water usage	From 2025 (for 25 years)	+£43.80 total (over 25 years 2025-2050)	+£1.75 per year (between 2025 and 2050)		
	Initiatives to reduce business usage by 9%	From 2025 (for 15 years)	+£9.20 total (over 15 years 2025-2040)	+£0.61 per year (between 2025 and 2040)		
<b>77.5 million litres per day by 2050</b>			<b>£348.20</b>	<b>+£13.90</b>	<b>+2.8%</b>	<b>+4.0%</b>
			at a total cost of.....	annual increase	(over 25 years 2025-2050)	(over 15 years 2025-2040)
9 million litres per day	Universal smart metering programme	From 2025 (for 15 years)	+£74.30 total (over 15 years 2025-2040)	+£4.95 per year (between 2025 and 2040)		
5 million litres per day	Initiatives supporting business customers to reduce water usage	From 2025 (for 25 years)	+£43.80 total (over 25 years 2025-2050)	+£1.75 per year (between 2025 and 2050)		
	Initiatives to reduce business usage by 9%	From 2025 (for 15 years)	+£9.20 total (over 15 years 2025-2040)	+£0.61 per year (between 2025 and 2040)		
<b>77.5 million litres per day by 2050</b>			<b>£348.20</b>	<b>+£14.2%</b>	<b>+0.5%</b>	<b>+14.2%</b>
			with a total bill increase of.....	across 25 years (2025-2050)		

Of course we don't know how much other bills may rise by 2025 or even if they might come down but certainly the suggested rise of £13,90 pa is affordable at the moment and would seem value for money to protect water supplies. (Stephen E, billpayer)

That's a very decent average bill increase. I think go for it - if this causes uproar look into ways to charge more / charge less for those on lower income paying the same currently. (Aleksi, Future customer)

The percentage rise in bills is rather steep - would have been nice to have a more gradual increase - people don't really mind a little price rise but a big price quickly will get peoples backs up. (Emma, SME)

# In both regions the small level of opposition to the plan dissipates, upon learning the detail

How acceptable is this plan for you? Please think about the options that South Staffs Water/Cambridge Water is planning to invest in and the proposed impact on the average water bill to deliver these investments.



In the summary plan shown earlier 2 participants found the plan somewhat unacceptable



In the summary plan shown earlier 1 participant found the plan somewhat unacceptable

- Somewhat unacceptable
- Neither acceptable or unacceptable
- Somewhat acceptable
- Completely acceptable

Participants warn that the plans might not be acceptable to all customers because they will not all appreciate the seriousness of the situation and/or they will be coping with pressures of other price rises.



# In participants' own words

For me personally I think that the plan is acceptable and would like to think that the majority of customers would also think it is acceptable. The plan looks at the longer term needs along with those that can make a difference in the nearer future while ensuring customers have minimal impact on their bills especially in the current economic climate. Ultimately for me this ticks the boxes of providing a secure, sustainable future ensuring enough clean water for all as the population rises and these plans reduce the risk of restrictions being put in place. If all customers have the information we have been provided during this research then I would think very few would have any issues with it. I think when prices are increased but the customer has no understanding of why or the bigger/longer term picture then this can have a negative impact, so please make customers aware of why the increases are occurring and what the consequences would be if this action wasn't taken. (Steven, billpayer)

I think customers would be anxious to see bill increase but if we're educated about the reasons why, I think 14 pounds wouldn't seem much overall. It feels the plan is covering all bases /tackling all the issues at the same time. (Abbie, billpayer)

I feel it's acceptable of course, you have to move forward and be innovative to save waste and the planet. I'm worried about the cost of living in general as it's not just this increase it's also inflation that will naturally be added to this too. (Christian, SME)

I think the plan is set is fairly strong and very well thought, there is an increase in cost but as long as it's not too steep people will be expecting that with the way inflation is rising. It's great that this is a long term solution, the key here is to communicate more often with the consumers and tell them what you are proposing to do. I feel that there is much more education to be done in terms of videos, flyers with information about the future and what the plans look like, keep it simple but informative. (Joel, billpayer)



Views on individual  
affordability, adaptive  
planning and key  
research themes

# Individual affordability, adaptive planning and key research themes

## Context

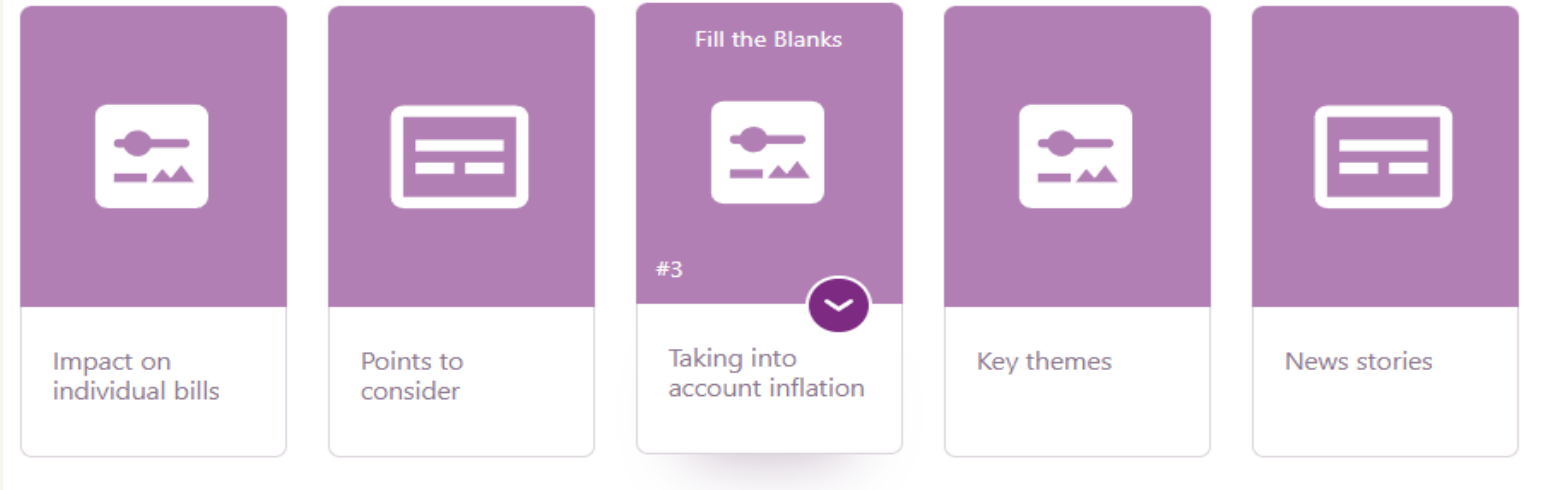
The cost increase as a result of the plans will not be the same for all customers and therefore individual estimates of the bill increase are important to understanding views of affordability.

Bill calculations were sent to each participant based on the bill amount they sent in (actual water-only amount was requested but some sent in estimates of total bill amount and calculations were made from there). SSC provided a formula, that included planned bill increases up to 2025, so that the cost of WRMP was added on to the cost of the estimated bill in 2025 rather than the cost of the current bill.

## Objectives

- To understand views on individual affordability.
- To understand the extent to which the 'golden threads' are represented in the plans.
- To understand if current news stories are influencing views.

## Process / approach



Participants were asked about their view of affordability based on an estimate of the individual price rise they might see as a result of the WRMP, based on information they gave earlier about their current bill.

Participants were given information about the possible impact of inflation, as well as information about support available for customers in vulnerable circumstances.

Participants were asked again about their views on affordability of the plan.

Participants were asked about the extent to which the plan reflected the 'golden threads' identified in previous research phases.

Finally, participants shared their knowledge of water related news stories and considered if these stories had impacted on their views.



# Key takeouts

Approximately two-thirds of all participants in both regions agree or strongly agree that the individual bill increase is affordable.

3 of 6 SMEs (across both regions) disagreed that the individual bill was affordable.

Key themes from previous research are thought to be reflected in the plans.

An adaptive planning approach is broadly accepted in both regions; however, South Staffs participants have more reservations about potential associated price increases.



PO Box 7040, Green Lane, Walsall, W51 9QG  
VAT Registration No. 834 8467 94

Mr A B Sample  
1 Sample Road  
Sampletown  
Sampleshire  
SA1 2MP

Customer Ref.: UC99999999/01 **1**  
Telephone No.: 01223 706050  
Opening Hours: 8am - 6pm, Mon-Fri;  
8am - 1pm, Sat  
Bill date: 01/12/21 **2**  
Bill Number: 999999999  
Payment due date: 14/04/22 **3**  
Page: 1 of 3  
[www.cambridge-water.co.uk](http://www.cambridge-water.co.uk)

## Your bill for water services

from 1st April 22 to 31st March 23 for 1 Sample Road, Sampletown **5**

Visit our website [www.cambridge-water.co.uk](http://www.cambridge-water.co.uk) for information and advice about your water supply and your account at the click of a button. Your charges are explained on the next page.

Payments received since last bill: £520.84

Balance brought forward (after any payments above): £0.00 **8**

Total water charge: £197.65

Total used water charge: £323.19

Total charges: £520.84

**Total amount due: £520.84 **6****

## We're here for you

We know times are hard and to help, we have many ways to support you, from discounted tariffs offering up to 60% off your bill to temporary payment breaks.

Apply by visiting our website [www.cambridge-water.co.uk/help/withpaying](http://www.cambridge-water.co.uk/help/withpaying) or calling us on 01223 706050

## Ways to pay

The easiest way to pay your bill is by setting up a direct debit via our online services.

You can also split your yearly bill into a payment plan to suit you or make one-off payments using our 'pay now' section. Visit our website to find out more: [www.cambridge-water.co.uk](http://www.cambridge-water.co.uk)

This bill is for INFORMATION ONLY.





## Surprises / learning

When asked for information about their water bill it was obvious that some did not have it to hand - and struggled to find it.

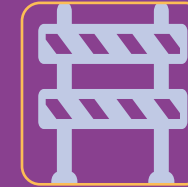
If participants are paying on monthly direct debits, monthly pay increases may be more meaningful to them than annual increases.



## Thoughts / justifications

As before, the cost of the plans pales in comparison to recent energy price rises – and unlike with energy price rises - participants believe that there are benefits associated with the increase.

Highlighting uncertainty around inflation does appear to make participants more nervous of price rises.



## Caveats / limitations

Individual bill increases were calculated on the information provided by participants, we cannot guarantee this is accurate and in some cases it was an estimate.

There were no associated costs presented alongside the example of an adaptive plan and participants were considering the principle only.

As before, the focus is on the price rise as a result of WRMP only.

# Views on affordability of the plan

How much do you agree or disagree that the proposed water charges that you will pay from 2025 to 2030 and beyond to 2050 will be affordable for you or your business? (where 1 = completely disagree and 5 = completely agree)



Initial view upon receiving bill calculation



View after considering inflation and available support



Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly agree

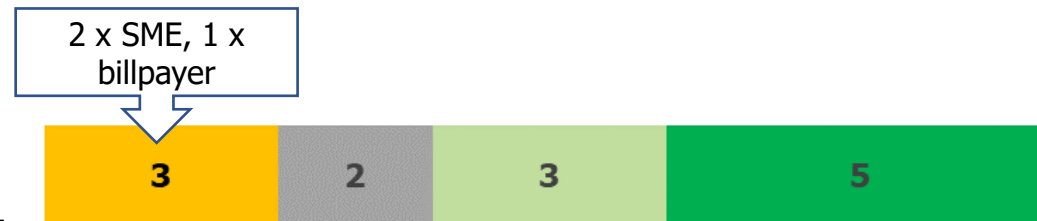
8 of 13 participants in each region agree or strongly agree that the plan is affordable after taking inflation and support options into account. This marks a slight shift of opinion from their initial response to the individual bill calculation.



Initial view upon receiving bill calculation



View after considering inflation and available support



2 x participants in each region are defined as 'Connected but struggling' (SSC segment)

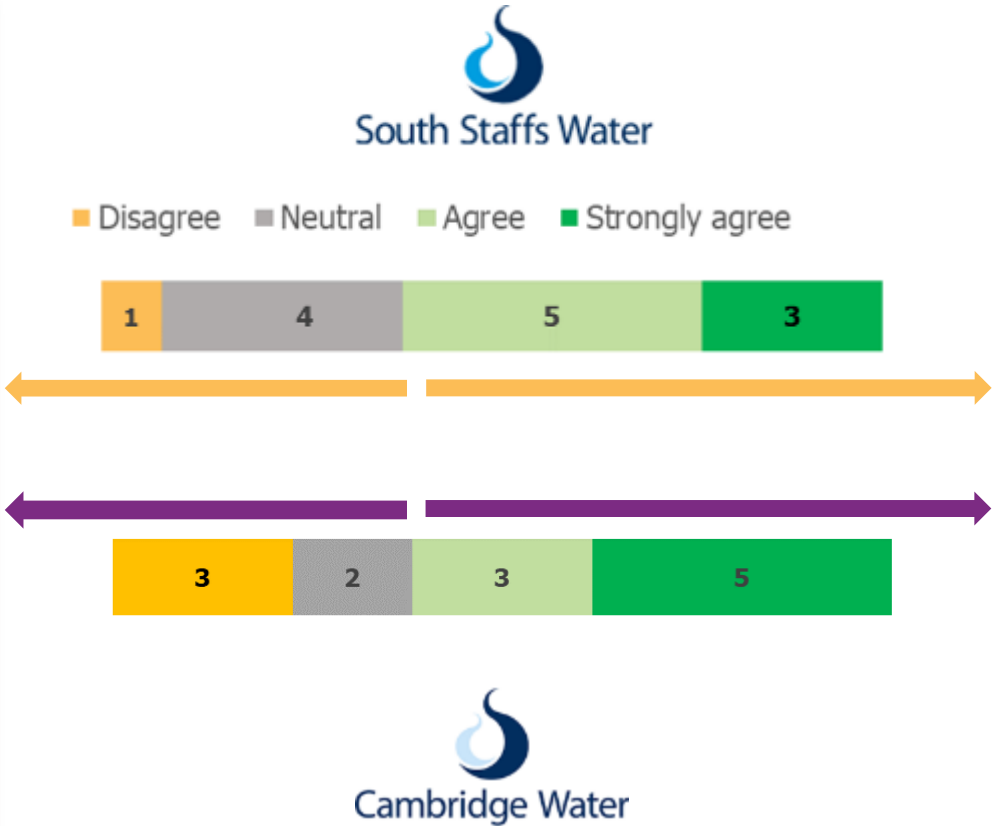
1 participants in South Staffs Water region and 3 participants in Cambridge Water region are classed as vulnerable



# Exploring views of affordability after considering inflation and support options

The general sense amongst the participants who **disagree** or are **neutral**, is that future affordability is hard to predict.

- They are not confident that inflation will return to 2%.
- They are not confident that wages will keep up with inflation.
- Note that 3 of 4 participants (across both regions) who disagreed the plan was affordable were SMEs
- One SME mentioned that the plan did not detail support options for businesses.



Those who **agree** the plan is affordable:

- Feel more confident about their personal future (financially secure).
- Believe that the increase is negligible in comparison to other price rises they are facing.
- Are prepared to prioritise water bills over non-essentials.
- 1 SME will simply pass on price rises to customers.



## In participants' own words

*I think if the inflation rate was to increase more than the 2/3% as per the projected price increase then I may struggle to afford the new prices, also taking into consideration the price rises of other bills/expenses. (Asma, billpayer)*

*It is one of these where you have to balance the fact that no one wants to see price increase, however unlike Gas & Elec where it just seems to be a raid on our pockets every quarter, this seems more of a structured balanced approach. (Stephen, billpayer)*

*Until my situation changes i.e. I have children and mortgage, it feels affordable to me, and you have highlighted there will be support for those who struggle to pay bills, in terms of inflation all bills will fluctuate. (Abbie, billpayer)*

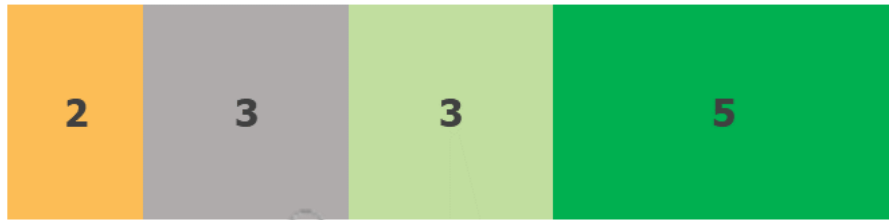
*Because it's not a huge increase in the big scheme of things. Water is essential so if I have to cut spending on non essentials then I will. I have chosen 4, not because I'm rich and this price increase will mean nothing but because I would prioritise my water bill over other things and therefore it is affordable. (Selina, billpayer)*

*Go back three years, did anybody predict what would happen and the position we would be in now? I have enough confidence in my ability to meet any challenges that may befall us in the next three years, the same as I have met the challenges of the past three years. (Stephen, billpayer)*

*There is not really anything in place for business customers at all, especially when we are providing food for everyone and we see nothing in return just more increases. (Emma, SME)*

# An adaptive planning approach is broadly accepted in both regions

How acceptable is it to you that South Staffs Water use an adaptive planning approach for their water resources plan shown to you earlier?



- Somewhat unacceptable
- Neither acceptable or unacceptable
- Somewhat acceptable
- Completely acceptable

Participants in each region were shown a different adaptive plan that gave an example of what could happen if the plan has to shift as targets to reduce water are not delivered, or the climate changes quicker than forecast.

- Those who find it somewhat or completely acceptable, focus on the fact that it makes sense to adapt to changing circumstances.
- Those who find it somewhat unacceptable or neither acceptable or unacceptable raise concerns about how the adaptive plan will impact on the proposed price increase.

*It seems foolish NOT to adapt plans as the current situation changes. (Jason, SME)*



# Key themes from previous research are thought to be reflected in the plans

To what extent do you agree or disagree that these themes are reflected in the plan you have just seen. Where 1 = strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree.

## Key themes

**A general call to ensure that the most vulnerable customers are protected.**

**Call for collective responsibility - customers want everyone to do their bit to maintain a reliable water supply for the future.**

**Concern for the environment and a desire to take action sooner rather than later.**

**The need for customer information and engagement so customers can understand why proposed changes are needed.**



All 13 participants in the South Staffs Water region agree (5) or strongly agree (8) that the key themes identified in earlier research are reflected in the plan.

*Everything has been taken to account. From different consumer needs to the environment. Very well thought out. (Ivan, billpayer)*



Almost all participants (11/13) in the Cambridge Water region agree (7) or strongly agree (4) that the themes are reflected in the plan. The two participants that disagree express concerns about:

- The increased cost and the lack of support for those in agriculture (SME).
- Whether the plan takes concern for the environment far enough (billpayer)

# Research took place against a backdrop of news stories relating to climate and water supply

## UK weather: Driest start to year in England since 1976

By Doug Faulkner  
BBC News  
© 26 July · Comments



Participants were asked about their awareness of news stories similar to the one mentioned here.

- Not all participants answered this question but amongst those that did their was relatively high awareness of such news stories
- Indeed, a number of participants had mentioned such stories at the beginning of the forum
- Many felt that these stories simply confirmed what they knew already through the research programme - that the future is challenging for water companies.

Yes I have seen the article and many others like it, it goes to show the need to think big and long term, the temp of the earth is rising and summers like this and 1976 may start to become the norm. (Jason, SME)

I don't think stories specifically made a difference to how I viewed the plan. I think I was already aware of the impact that climate change will have on our water supply. Maybe not the extent but definitely that it would. (Selina, billpayer)

I think the research has provided us with a clearer view of the future than the majority of customers, but the news like the article above and today's announcement of hosepipe bans in the South East should make people more aware of the future challenges. (David, billpayer)



Looking ahead



# A number of customers do have concerns about the future

Even though only 3 participants in the Cambridge Water region and 1 participant in the South Staffs Water region disagree that the individual bill will be affordable, it must be remembered that customers are facing challenging times and **affordable does not necessarily mean easily affordable.**

*I am very fearful due to concerns that I won't be able to cope with the cost of living soon. I can barely afford the petrol to get to the supermarket and with my weekly shopping bill doubling recently I am further more scared. (Sarah, billpayer)*

She said the plan was **somewhat acceptable** and **strongly agreed** the bill will be affordable

*I'm very concerned about my energy bill as it seems there's no cut off point with the increases. I don't see how I can cut my energy use as I spend a lot of time at home due to ill health. We are at the mercy of the energy companies. I'm thankful for the government's interventions but feel it would be better to target the energy giants pricing strategy as the current situation seems relentless. (Marie, billpayer)*

She said the plan was **somewhat acceptable** and was **neutral** that the bill will be affordable

He said the plan was **completely acceptable** and **strongly agreed** the bill will be affordable

*I am at the age where retirement is a real option but things have been more uncertain than ever in recent years. It is easier to stay in full time employment than it would be to get back into full time employment, so for the time being I choose the former it gives me more financial security. (Stephen, billpayer)*

# It must not be forgotten that some customers are struggling already

Participants were asked privately to share any concerns for the future.

## Confidence in the future

Approximately 1/2 of participants in both regions did not feel confident about their future: Concerns included:

- Not being able to afford energy price rises.
- The viability of their business in the current climate.
- Not being able to secure a mortgage.
- Having to give up non-essentials.
- Increasing cost of grocery bills.
- Not being able to afford retirement.

## Making changes already

Approximately 1/2 of participants in both regions have already started to make some changes:

- Cutting back on non-essentials: e.g., going out, weekends away.
- Choosing to walk rather than drive wherever possible.
- Spending less on groceries.
- Ensuring lights switched off; nothing left on stand by.
- Reducing use of hot water.
- Cutting back on the amount they eat!

## Concerns about paying bills

Approximately 1/4 of participants in South Staffs Water region and 1/3 of participants in Cambridge Water were particularly concerned about being able to afford energy bills:

- 'Dreading' the winter.
- Future customer rethinking plans to move out of parental home.

## Better or worse by 2025?

5 participants in both regions believe their situation will get worse by 2025, due to:

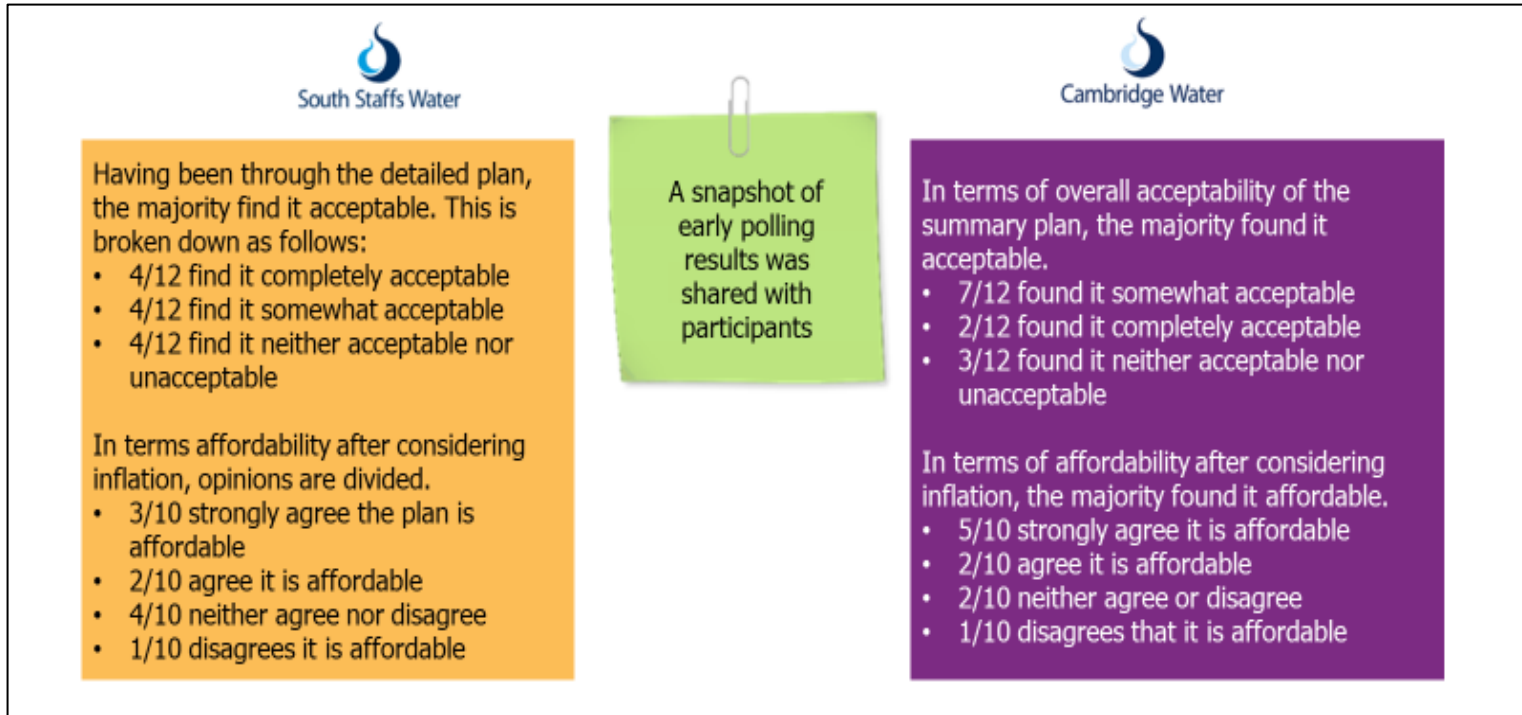
- Life changes: the cost of retirement; starting a family
- Little faith in government to make things better.
- Concerns about the world in general.
- Concerns about inflation in particular.

As outlined in Slide 18, Cambridge Water participants are more than twice as likely to be optimistic compared to South Staffs Water participants, however, they share many of the same concerns and struggles with cost of living



Summing up

## Participants recognise the plan is broadly accepted by others in the forum and that views of affordability are more mixed



Whilst recognising views are mixed, participants in both regions highlight that the plan is broadly accepted by members of the forum and differences of opinion can be explained by the following:

- The forum was designed to bring people together from a range of backgrounds
- The cost of living will be at the forefront of many peoples' minds
- Affordability is very dependent on the individual and therefore likely to result in a range of views

*No, the acceptability result seems like a normal reaction to a plan made by consulting a wide range of people: it's never going to please everyone fully, so to have no-one say it's unacceptable seems pretty good to me. In terms of affordability, if the spread of people is a good representation of society then this would seem to be a predictable result for a plan that balances action with affordability as per results of previous forums. (Beverley, billpayer)*

*I'm not surprised by the results as it's a diverse group and therefore everyone's current living situation is different, I did expect that not many people would completely agree that its completely acceptable, due to the current concerns of cost of living. (Shareen, billpayer)*

## When asked for one piece of advice before submitting the Water Resources Management Plan, participants came up with the following advice



Reduce the timeframe – do it sooner\*

Think about doing more to spread costs over time

Ensure inflation is sufficiently built in to the cost of infrastructure projects

Set a target date for universal metering

Provide more information about reducing usage – aside from metering

Don't lose sight of affordability



Reduce the timeframe – do it sooner\*

Ensure sufficient contingency built in for climate related changes

Include more information about how waterways are selected for investigation and what happens to the waterways that have not been selected

Ensure that use of the most durable materials have been costed for in supply options

Do more...

\* Note that that it was not explicitly explained in this stage of the research to participants that reducing the timeframe would result in higher bills.

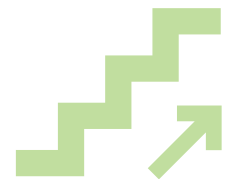
# Conclusions

## Conclusions

- WRAP members continue to be engaged in the process and have been able to give insightful views on the draft plan as a result of participating in an ongoing programme of research; through which they have developed knowledge of the challenges facing SSC and some of the potential options to address those challenges.
- SSC may wish to be mindful of key messages / findings:
  - Plans are deemed acceptable by the WRAP but will likely benefit from effective customer communication to explain associated cost increases to a wider, less informed, set of customers.
  - Customers are living in volatile times; future affordability is judged in the here and now and views may change.
  - Although the plan may be judged as affordable this does not necessarily equate to 'easily affordable' and it is worth understanding if customers are making sacrifices elsewhere in order to prioritise bills and/or the environment
  - The long-term nature of the plan is welcomed but there may be a benefit in explaining why some of the proposals cannot be undertaken immediately.
  - The environmental plan in Cambridge may benefit from more information about the detailed investigation of waterways i.e., how are they selected for investigation, what happens to those not selected.

## Next steps

- Keep in mind the WRAP as an informed and engaged group of customers and public who could be convened at relatively short notice for further engagement.



- Distinguishing between affordability (impact on individual bill) and acceptability (including the average bill increase) allows costs to be viewed from an individual perspective and a citizen perspective and can highlight interesting differences. For example, no one in either region found the plan (including average costs) unacceptable but 1 participant in South Staffs Water region and 3 participants in Cambridge Water region did not agree that the bill was affordable based on their individual bill increase.
- However, there are challenges in getting accurate information about individual bills and not all customers will be able to find a bill. There is also a risk of reducing response rates as some may be unwilling to seek out and provide financial information even if they have it.
- Furthermore, it is important to consider how bill increases are presented to customers. For example, if a customer is paying by monthly direct debit (and estimates their monthly bill) calculating the monthly bill increase maybe more meaningful than calculating an annual increase.
- When looking at both acceptability and affordability it is also important that all customers are made aware that the cost increase relating to WRMP is only one component of future bill increases and not the total bill increase they are likely to experience.
- Going forward, it will be important to continue to highlight and explain the possible impact that inflation rates could have on cost. It may also be worth giving a monetary example highlighting the possible impact of different rates of inflation.

# Considerations for approaching acceptability testing in future

- Alongside views of affordability it is important to gain some context of people's lives and priorities and attempt to understand if potential bill increases will be affordable or easily affordable; whether customers are prioritising the environment over their own personal comfort.
- Finally, as we know the pressures that many customers will be feeling due to energy price rises it will be important to continue to ensure that they understand what mechanisms are in place to support all those who are looking to reduce water consumption as well as support for the financially vulnerable.





Additional  
information  
(sample,  
evaluation,  
stimulus material)

# Evaluation survey

	<i>Very good</i>	<i>Quite good</i>	<i>Quite poor</i>
Understanding the tasks and questions	8	5	-
Being able to have your say	12	1	-



South Staffs Water

	<i>Too much</i>	<i>About right</i>	<i>Too little/few</i>	<i>N/A</i>
The amount of time you had to spend on the research	-	13	-	-
The amount of emails from Community Research	-	13	-	-
The amount of support you received if you had problems	-	4	-	9

	<i>Very good</i>	<i>Quite good</i>	<i>Quite poor</i>
Understanding the tasks and questions	12	1	-
Being able to have your say	13	-	-



Cambridge Water

	<i>Too much</i>	<i>About right</i>	<i>Too little</i>	<i>N/A</i>
The amount of time you had to spend on the research	1	12	-	-
The amount of emails from Community Research	2	11	-	-
The amount of support you received if you had problems	-	4	-	9



# WRAP participant profile – Draft plan participants in red

	SSW Theme 1	SSW Deep Dive	SSW Draft WRMP	CAM Theme 1	CAM Deep Dive	CAM Draft WRMP
<b>Total</b>	22	20	13	25	20	13
SME owners (mix sectors and size)	5	4	4	5	4	2
Future bill payers – (mix of current work / study and home circumstances)	4	3	1	5	3	1
Bill-payers (jointly or solely responsible for bill), of which:	13	13	8	15	13	10
<b>Gender</b>						
Male	12	11	8	10	8	6
Female	10	9	5	15	12	7
<b>Age</b>						
18 to 24	4	3	1	5	3	1
25 to 39	5	5	5	8	7	5
40 to 54	10	10	5	4	3	3
55 to 70	2	1	1	7	6	4
70+	1	1	1	1	1	0
<b>Children at home</b>						
Children in household	5	5	1	6	6	5
<b>Ethnicity</b>						
BAME Background	4	4	2	4	4	3
<b>Socio Economic Group</b>						
ABC1 (includes SMEs)	13	11	9	18	14	7
C2DE	9	9	4	7	6	6

	SSW Theme 1	SSW Deep Dive	SSW Draft Plan	CAM Theme 1	CAM Deep Dive	CAM Draft plan
<b>Working status</b>						
Employed (full or part time) Includes SMEs	18	16	10	19	17	11
<b>Water Meter in Home</b>						
Yes	14	12	9	17	13	9
<b>Home location</b>						
Rural	4	3	3	16	13	8
<b>Vulnerable circumstances</b>						
Vulnerability	5	5	1	5	4	3
<b>SSC Segment</b>						
A: Very time pressed juggling all their commitments. Consequently don't think much about their water usage and don't want their time wasted. Often online.	3	2	2	7	7	4
B: Highly engaged with their water usage and the wider community their live in. Expect a very high level of service from companies they use. Use technology, but prefer a personal relationship.	2	2	2	3	1	0
C: Often financially and time pressured. Strong preference for being on-line and using social media.	3	3	2	3	3	2
D: Highly engaged with using the 'latest' technology and managing their lives online. Switched on to saving water.	2	2		4	3	3
E: Highly engaged with technology and very focused on their network of family and friends. Admit to not thinking much about their water usage or services and prefer a more transactional relationship with their water company.	3	3	2	1	1	0

It should be noted that one Cambridge participant moved out of the area during the course of the WRAP activity.



# Stimulus material

Topic	Document	Where referenced in report (Slide no.)
Introduction to the plan	<a href="https://youtu.be/kLAZRNhOxZc">https://youtu.be/kLAZRNhOxZc</a> - SSW video 1 <a href="https://youtu.be/3aebvgpuWgg">https://youtu.be/3aebvgpuWgg</a> - CW video 1	23
Summary Plan	Cambridge summary plan for household customers (found in Appendices to the report, page 3) Cambridge summary plan for business customers (found in Appendices to the report, page 5) South Staffs summary plan for household customers (found in Appendices to the report, page 7) South Staffs summary plan for business customers (found in Appendices to the report, page 9)	22-27
The plan in more detail	Cambridge plan in more detail for household customers (found in Appendices to the report, page 11) Cambridge plan in more detail for business customers (found in Appendices to the report, page 17) South Staffs plan in more detail for household customers (found in Appendices to the report, page 23) South Staffs plan in more detail for business customers (found in Appendices to the report, page 30)	28-44
Adaptive Plan	Cambridge Adaptive Plan (found in Appendices to the report, page 37) South Staffs Adaptive plan (found in Appendices to the report, page 38)	51

Note that the forum agenda is not available in a format compatible with a pdf file

Click [here](#) to be taken to full Appendices containing stimulus documents

