



Thames Water Long Term Delivery Strategy: Qualitative engagement

Report

September 2023

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20 September 2023 | 3620 LTDS Qualitative groups



It's everyone's water

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1. Executive Summary

The Long Term Delivery Strategy (LTDS) is broadly acceptable to customers in terms of priorities for investment identified.

Customers were relatively consistent in their preferred priority areas. Priorities were commonly those relating to the wider environment, or risk to human health:

- Reducing the risk of lead in drinking water
- Pollution of rivers and bathing waters
- Appearance, taste and smell of tap water (although this was polarising)
- Reducing sewage spills into rivers
- Sewage flooding of properties

Reducing leakage was a priority for some, but not as high as other areas, such as lead pipes and sewage spillages.

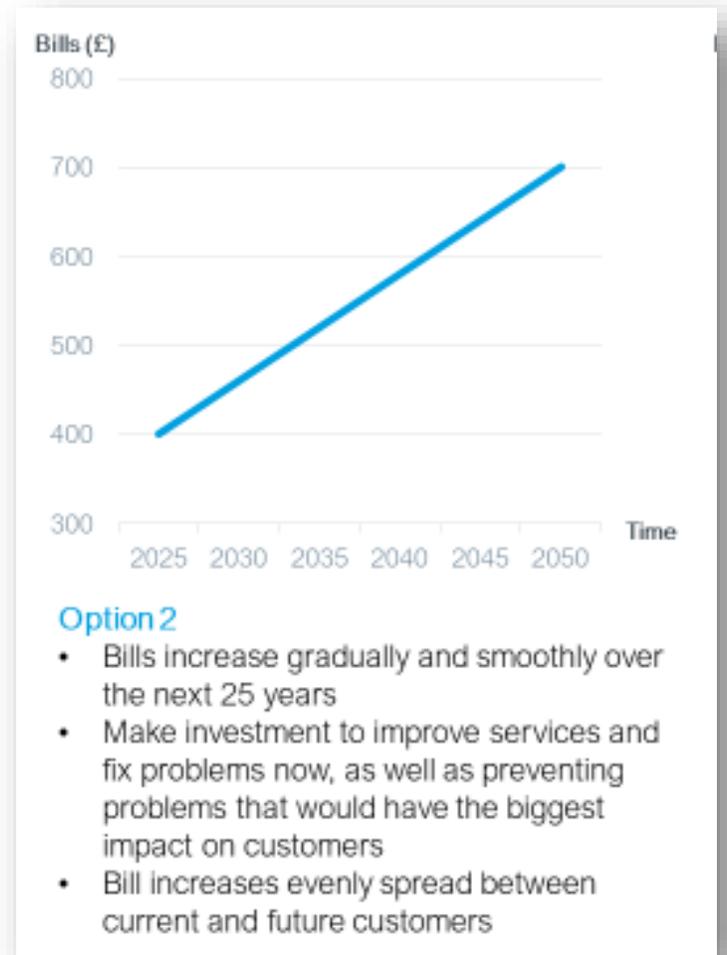
Customers want even higher ambition for some priority areas (reducing the risk of lead in drinking water, pollution of rivers and bathing waters, reducing sewage spills into rivers and sewage flooding of properties), either by reaching targets more quickly, or improving the levels achieved.

Future customers were in line with the views of other customer segments, but included some of the most passionate individuals about pollution of rivers, often combined with negative views of Thames Water as a company, as a result of negative press articles.

Business customers tended to be less emotive, rather balancing Thames Water's challenges alongside targets when evaluating their ambitions.

Phasing options

- The preferred phasing option was option 2 – a steady increase over time, accepting that not all areas can benefit from improvement until 2035 onwards.
- This was perceived to be the fairest option as it does not place excess burden on either future or current customers, is most in line with customer expectations and therefore is easier to budget and plan for.
- The cost-of-living crisis means customers are examining all their outgoings, and this option allows customers to budget easily, given its predictable path.
- However, there was a minority who would prefer to take the initial increase of option 1, and reap the rewards sooner, paying less in the long term.
- For those against option 1, the initial steep increase seems too much to bear in the current economic climate.
- Option 1 (and to some extent option 2) requires trust in Thames Water to deliver the targets promised, that they will not go bankrupt, that the money will be used as intended, rather than being used to pay shareholders
- Option 3 was unanimously found to be unacceptable – although affordability is important, this option was not felt to provide a tenable solution due to very sharp increase after 2035, and no improvements over that time.



The LTDS is broadly acceptable to customers, but affordability is perceived to be an issue towards the end of the period



- Times are tough, and the bill impacts modelled seem higher than most anticipated, particularly with inflation included.
- With some reluctance, most customers generally accept that bills will need to increase, and they will be able to manage their water bill in future.
- Affordability was difficult to assess for some, with so many unknowns this far into the future.
- Future customers in particular, struggle to see how they might meet bill costs in 2050.
- Some customers are able to be more pragmatic, reasoning that 25 years ago bill prices today would have looked similarly “huge” and therefore when we get there, it will probably be acceptable.
- Even amongst those customers who found the bill projections unaffordable, they could not identify improvement areas they would want to remove or reduce in order to lower bills – once they were aware of them, customers thought they were all needed.
- In all cases, customers want to ensure Thames Water demonstrate to customers where the bill increases have gone, to build confidence in them and show that their service is improving as a result of these investments.

2. Method, research background and context

Research objectives and approach

Overall Objective:

The focus of this research is on the long-term elements for improvement within Thames Water's plans (2025-2050), and their acceptability with/priorities amongst both current and future household and non-household customers.

- This research aimed to focus on the long term (2025-2050) strategy, engaging in greater depth with future customers (those likely to be most affected the LTDS) and understanding how intergenerational fairness impacts on customer priorities for improvements.

Engagement took place between Monday 4th to Friday 8th September 2023

- The majority of customers were **re-contacted from the Acceptability and Affordability Testing (AAT) qualitative research in April/May 2023**, and therefore were “warmed up” to the business planning process and the kinds of materials to be discussed. Due to lower participation amongst future customers in the AAT qualitative research, these participants were **newly recruited** in the majority of cases and asked to complete a pre-task giving them background to Thames Water and the industry.
- 6 x 2 hour online groups with Household, Non-Household and Future customers
- 2 x 2 hour online groups with micro businesses and 2 x mini groups with small/medium/large business customers

Sample profiles

Household customers

Group	1	2	3	4	5	6
Type	Customers	Futures	Futures	Customers	Customers	Futures
Water/Waste company	Thames/Thames	Thames/Thames	Thames/Thames	Thames/Thames	Affinity/Thames	Affinity/Thames
Date	Tues 4 th Sept	Tues 4 th Sept	Weds 5 th Sept	Weds 5 th Sept	Thurs 6 th Sept	Thurs 6 th Sept
Time	17.30 – 19.30	20.00 - 22.00	17.30 – 19.30	20.00 - 22.00	17.30 – 19.30	20.00 - 22.00
Sub-profile	ABC1s		C2DEs/ Financially vulnerable / vulnerable			
Incentive	£100	£100	£100	£100	£100	£100
Attendees	10	9	11	9	9	8

Abbreviations used throughout report:

TT – Thames/Thames customer
 AT – Affinity Thames customer
 SML - Small/medium /large business

ABC1 – Higher social grade
 C2DE – Lower social grade

Business customers

Group	1	2	3	4
Type	Micro	Micro	S-M-L	S-M-L
Water/Waste company	Thames/Thames	Thames/Thames	Affinity/Thames	Thames/Thames
Date	Mon 3 rd Sept	Fri 7 th Sept	Thurs 6 th Sept	Fri 7 th Sept
Time	18.30 – 20.30	18.30 – 20.30	13.30-15.30	13.30-15.30
Incentive	£150	£150	£150	£150
Attendees	5	7	3	3

Note: Initially it was intended to have a group of Thames/Affinity micro customers, however take up and attendance were poor and therefore an additional group of Thames/Thames micro customers were recruited to replace them.

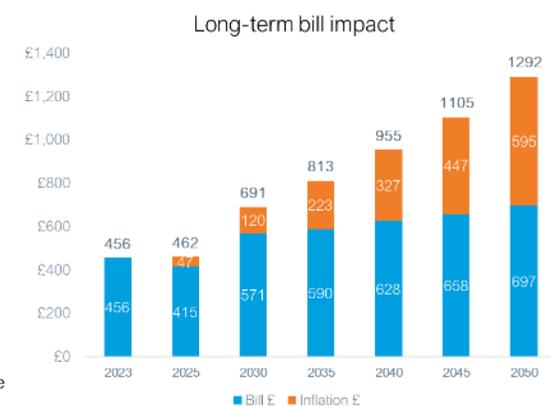
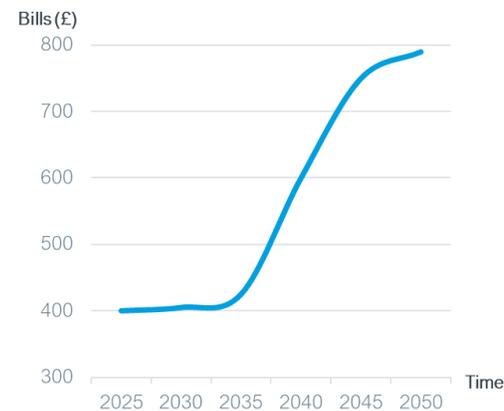
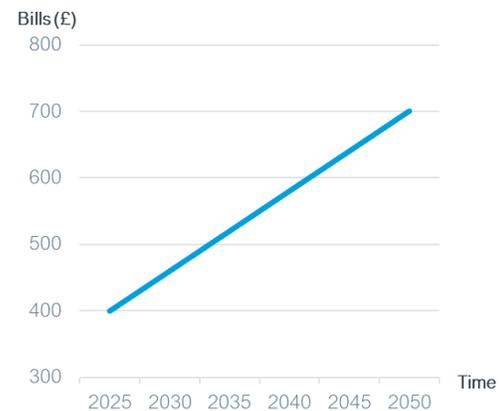
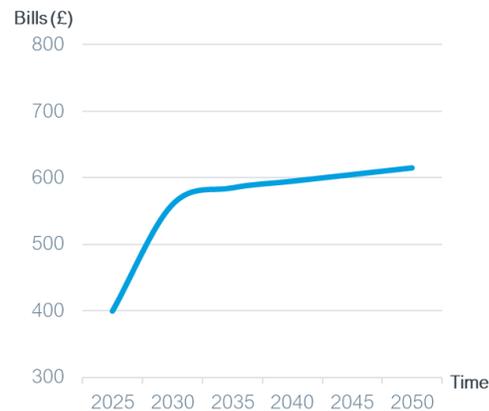
Comprehensive research methodology

Pre-Task Exercise (futures only)

- Newly recruited customers (future household customers) were provided with background information about Thames Water, and asked to highlight any questions, or interesting points. These materials were taken from the AAT qualitative research and therefore had been tested with customers before use. These materials were briefly discussed at the start of the future groups.
- Questions to ensure a baseline understanding of Thames Water and the business planning process.

Face to Face/Online Engagement

- Key improvements with associated targets (5 for wastewater, 5 for clean water) to be delivered as part of the LTDS were summarised and reactions gathered, including priority of each relative to others.
- Three phasing options discussed to understand improvement/ bill impact trade-offs and judge overall acceptability and affordability of the different options
- Acceptability of projected bill impacts.



Discussion guide

- All discussions lasted up to 2 hours and were conducted online, via Zoom.
- The guide was structured as follows:
 - Welcome (10 mins)
 - Introduction to long-term plan (10 mins)
 - Response to Long-term plan (50 mins)
 - Comfort break (10 mins)
 - Phasing of improvements (10 mins)
 - Options for phasing improvements (15 mins)
 - Impact of Long-term plan on bills (15 mins)
 - Close

A note on stimulus limitations:

Customers at times felt it difficult to appraise the information provided fairly, without seeing historical context, benchmarking data or necessarily understanding the complexity behind some targets to understand what “should” be achievable versus what is unrealistic.

Some participants felt that having data on how much each individual improvement was likely to cost would have helped them trade off priorities.

Future customers context research

Just prior to this research (2nd August), Thames Water undertook a 2.5 hour qualitative workshop with three cohorts of future customers (split by age/life stage) that aimed to understand young customers' priorities, concerns and issues by asking them:

- What current affairs are they most aware of?
- What is personally important to them?
- What has shaped their views on the world around them?
- What are their expectations for the future?

This supplementary research was designed to understand the relatively limited feedback from future customers gathered throughout the Acceptability and Affordability testing and provides useful context for interpreting this research.

Conclusions:

- None of the cohorts engaged with water-related issues at a meaningful level
- Water as an issue was rarely raised by any participant organically during the discussions
- Cost of living crisis dominated the pre-task responses, and the group discussions for all groups
- When water was discussed, misinterpretation and vague understandings were more common than not
- Water bills are not a concern for any of the groups

Although it was not an objective to test or replicate Accent's AAT qualitative research, the findings from that research correlate with this project on future customers

- Future customers are distant from Thames Water ✓
- No relationship or bill communication ✓
- Growing up with technology has fuelled and enabled hyper present tense mindset and behaviours ✓
- Engage at the last minute ✓
- Life is about being in the moment ✓
- Struggle to engage with the immediate future ✓
- Impossible to project to 2030-50 ✓

Thames Water in the news

- Thames Water continue to appear frequently in the media, and on the second day of fieldwork (Tuesday 5th September), a number of water companies including Thames Water, were criticised for a number of “illegal spills” on dry days, perceived to be contravening their licenses. This had been widely picked up amongst participants and is likely to have been in their minds, particularly when considering the spillage improvement area.
- Most recently, Thames Water has been widely reported as having severe financial difficulty, to the point of potential bankruptcy ([29th June](#)) and awareness of this was very high.
- This context is likely to have influenced opinions on the long term investments covered during this project, and such instances are highlighted in the report.

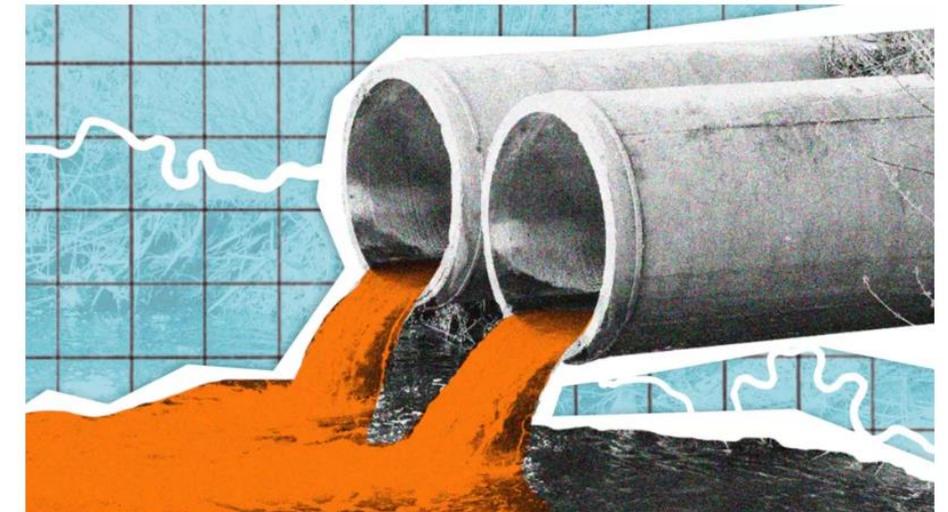
NEWS

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Science & Environment

Water firms illegally spilled sewage on dry days - data suggests

5 September · Comments



By Esme Stallard, Becky Dale, Jonah Fisher and Sophie Woodcock

Source: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-66670132>

3. Response to LTDS

Future customers knowledge about Thames Water is limited, but they are interested to understand more.

- In general future customers had low awareness of Thames Water's activities and responsibilities before the groups.
- Many were unaware/had never thought about the monopoly nature of the water industry in England and Wales.
- There was notable surprise at the extent of the activities they undertake and in particular their contributions to the environment such as generating renewable energy.
- Several customers were interested in how the bill is apportioned, and surprised at how much is involved on providing water and wastewater services.
- A vocal minority had heard negative press around Thames Water relating to pollution, sewage spills and financial problems. Those who were aware of these, often spoke emotively about Thames Water and could be cynical about their claims.

Where we work...



- We serve 15 million customers. However they don't all use both our water and wastewater services
- We supply water to 10 million of our customers (3.5 million properties).
- Other water companies supply the other 5 million customers (2 million properties).
- We supply 15 million customers with wastewater services
- This means we don't bill all of our customers directly
- We also serve 250,000 businesses

We operate

- 97 water treatment works
- 26 raw water reservoirs
- 308 pumping stations
- 235 clean water service reservoirs

We have

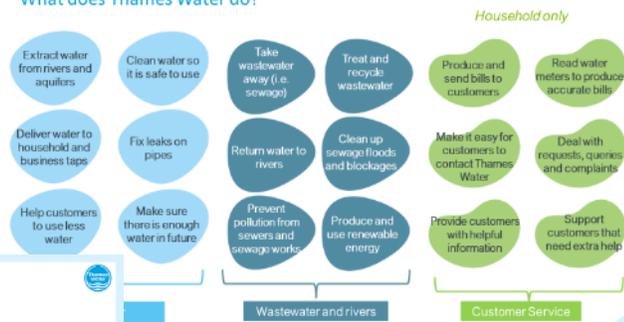
- 354 sewage works
- 100,000km of sewers
- 4,780 sewage pumping stations
- 1.2 million manholes

The water industry today

Water companies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take water from the environment (e.g. rivers), treat it so it's safe to drink, and return it safely to the environment after use • Build and maintain infrastructure (like pipes) to supply water to homes and businesses. 	Drinking Water Inspectorate (DWI) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Makes sure the water supplied in England and Wales is safe and that drinking water quality is acceptable for customers 	Consumer Council for Water (CCW) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Represent customers on matters relating to water • Investigate complaints and provide advice to ensure water services remain fair for customers
Environment Agency <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protects and enhances the environment • Works with water companies to ensure operations and plans develop in a sustainable way 	Defra (Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The UK Government department responsible for protecting the environment and countryside, including water 	Ofwat (Office of Water Services) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A regulator that makes sure water companies do their job properly, including fair pricing for customers and ensuring there is always a reliable water supply

“Recently involved in the scandal of dumping sewage”
Future customer, TT

What does Thames Water do?

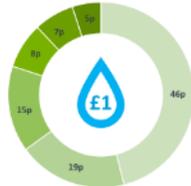


Household only

- Extract water from rivers and aquifers
- Clean water so it is safe to use
- Take wastewater away (i.e. sewage)
- Treat and recycle wastewater
- Produce and send bills to customers
- Road water meters to produce accurate bills
- Deliver water to household and business taps
- Fix leaks on pipes
- Return water to rivers
- Clean up sewage floods and blockages
- Make it easy for customers to contact Thames Water
- Deal with requests, queries and complaints
- Help customers to use less water
- Make sure there is enough water in future
- Prevent pollution from sewers and sewage works
- Produce and use renewable energy
- Provide customers with helpful information
- Support customers that need extra help

Wastewater and rivers | **Customer Service**

Breakdown of every £1 Thames Water spends

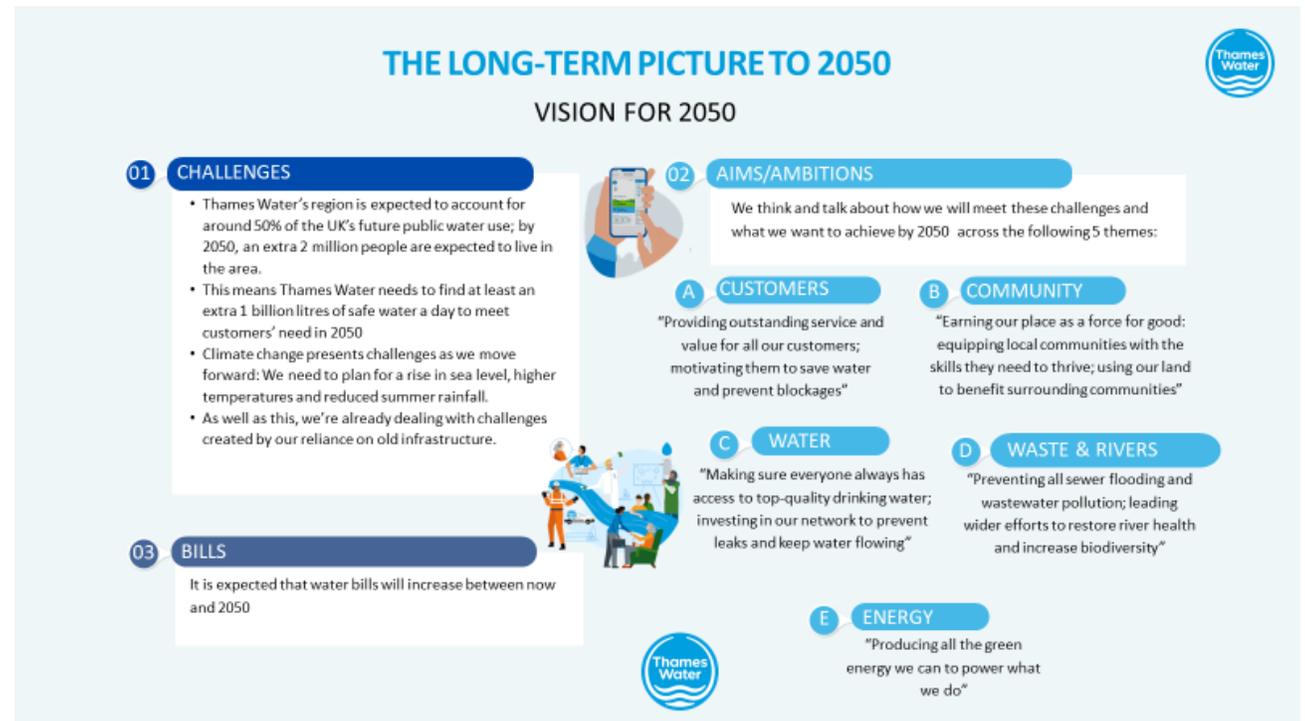


- 46p - Infrastructure**
This includes 3p for the Thames Tideway tunnel, which will divert millions of tonnes of sewage from the river Thames when it goes into operation.
- 15p - essential services**
We deliver and recycle billions of litres of water everyday.
- 15p - our team**
From engineers to scientists, we invest in over 7,000 people who help keep our water flowing.
- 8p - lenders**
To invest in our network, we borrow money at efficient rates while keeping our bills as low as we can.
- 7p - powering our sites**
We currently generate more than 20% of our own energy to help protect the environment.
- 5p - the government**
In 2021/2022 we paid over £88 million in business rates and for employers' national insurance contribution

“they're exploiting natural resources that we all need, and profiting from it”
Future customer, TT

Response to the long-term vision to 2050 positive, but customers want more information and want reassurance that Thames Water will deliver

- The vision is perceived as covering all the areas customers would expect and heading in the right direction, however, the vision was often felt to be (too) generalised and customers wanted more information on how this is likely to be delivered.
- Business customers felt it was unrealistic to think that far ahead and therefore were sceptical about whether it would be delivered
- Those who had seen negative press about Thames Water in particular had questions around their ability to deliver this vision.
 - *“With the news, I think there is an additional piece to demonstrate competency...I think there is a big piece in restoring confidence to reassure aspects of their business and ability to implement the plan” Small business, TT*
- The plan is inextricably linked to the bill impact, and therefore customers often felt without this information they could not comment on its effectiveness.
- There was particular interest from household customers in how Thames Water’s plans would mitigate against climate change.



Summary of improvements tested

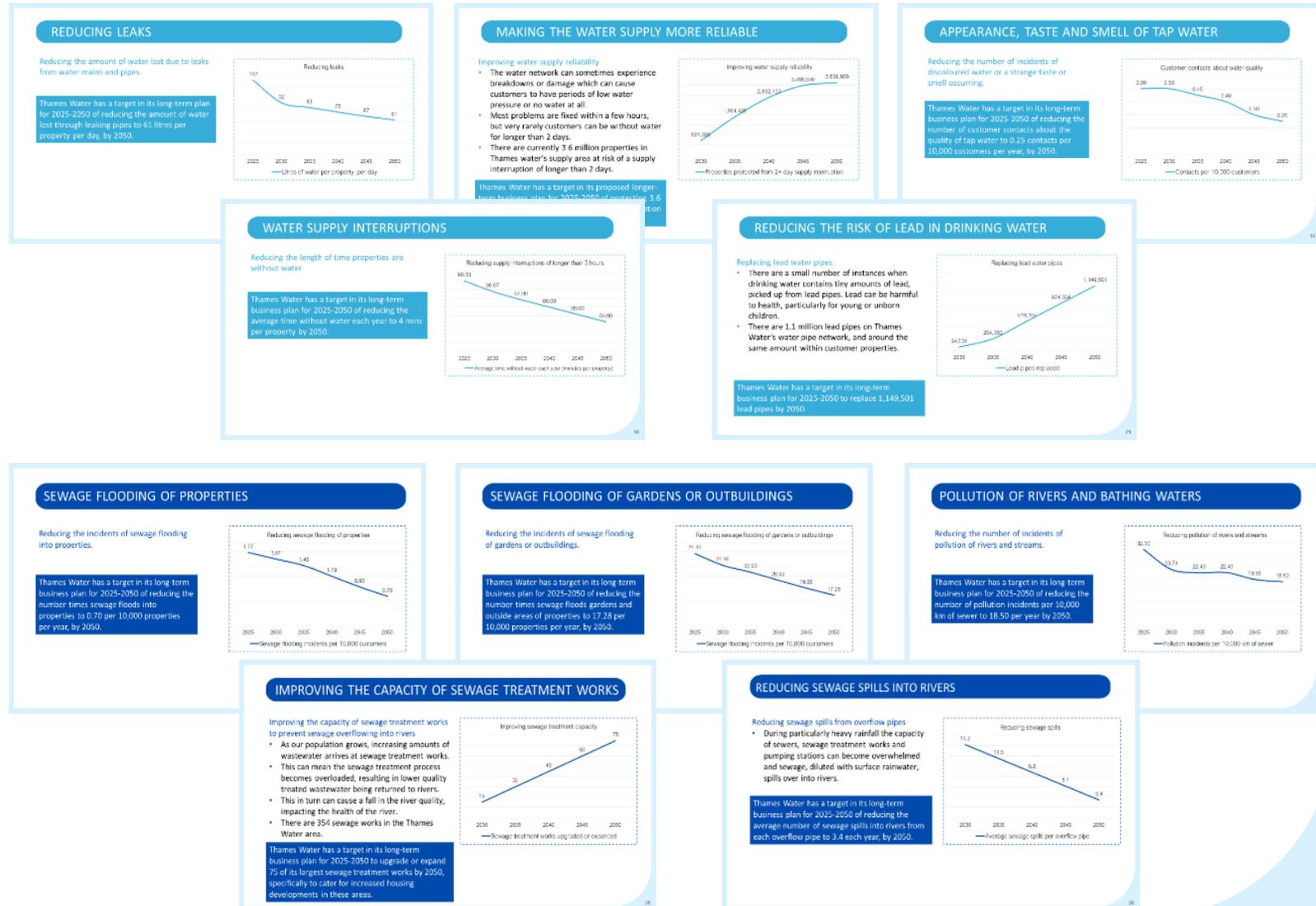
Most improvements tested were familiar to those who participated in the AAT qualitative research, however future customers had not seen these and therefore extra care was taken to explain the targets and descriptions of improvements. The stimulus shown is available in the Appendix.

Clean water (Thames/Thames only):

- Reducing leaks
- Water supply interruptions
- Appearance, taste and smell of tap water
- Making the water supply more reliable
- Reducing the risk of lead in drinking water (new since AAT qualitative research)

Wastewater:

- Sewage flooding of properties
- Sewage flooding of gardens or outbuildings
- Pollution of rivers and bathing waters
- Improving the capacity of sewage treatment works water (new since AAT qualitative research)
- Reducing sewage spills into rivers water (new since AAT qualitative research)



Priority areas for improvement - Summary

REDUCING THE RISK OF LEAD IN DRINKING WATER

Replacing lead water pipes

- There are a small number of instances when drinking water contains tiny amounts of lead, picked up from lead pipes. Lead can be harmful to health, particularly for young or unborn children.
- There are 1.1 million lead pipes on Thames Water's water pipe network, and around the same amount within customer properties.



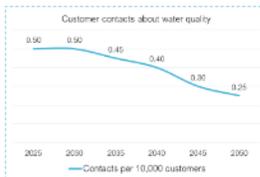
Thames Water has a target in its long-term business plan for 2025-2050 to replace 1,149,501 lead pipes by 2050.

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APPEARANCE, TASTE AND SMELL OF TAP WATER

Reducing the number of incidents of discoloured water or a strange taste or smell occurring.

Thames Water has a target in its long-term business plan for 2025-2050 of reducing the number of customer contacts about the quality of tap water to 0.25 contacts per 10,000 customers per year, by 2050.

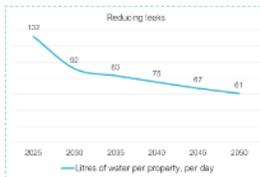


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REDUCING LEAKS

Reducing the amount of water lost due to leaks from water mains and pipes.

Thames Water has a target in its long-term business plan for 2025-2050 of reducing the amount of water lost through leaking pipes to 61 litres per property per day, by 2050.



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- Customers often cited that the priorities should be areas where **public health** or the **environment** were most impacted e.g. lead in drinking water, pollution, sewage spills, sewage flooding and water quality.

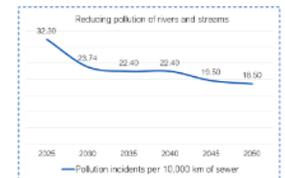
"anything like that that could affect...the quality of life, and also the future of our kids, or the environment, that's really, really important" TT, ABC1.

- Leakage was less frequently mentioned** as a priority compared with **reducing lead in drinking water** or **reducing sewage spills**.
- Little difference between segments, although **business customers** were often **less emotive** and more data focused when interpreting the targets.
- Future customers** were amongst the most passionate about **pollution of rivers**, but most customers supported the view that this is a priority area.

POLLUTION OF RIVERS AND BATHING WATERS

Reducing the number of incidents of pollution of rivers and streams.

Thames Water has a target in its long-term business plan for 2025-2050 of reducing the number of pollution incidents per 10,000 km of sewer to 18.50 per year by 2050.

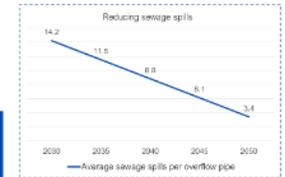


REDUCING SEWAGE SPILLS INTO RIVERS

Reducing sewage spills from overflow pipes

- During particularly heavy rainfall the capacity of sewers, sewage treatment works and pumping stations can become overwhelmed and sewage, diluted with surface rainwater, spills over into rivers.

Thames Water has a target in its long-term business plan for 2025-2050 of reducing the average number of sewage spills into rivers from each overflow pipe to 3.4 each year, by 2050.

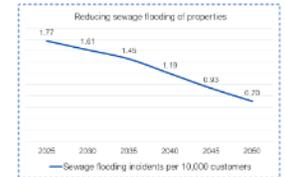


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SEWAGE FLOODING OF PROPERTIES

Reducing the incidents of sewage flooding into properties.

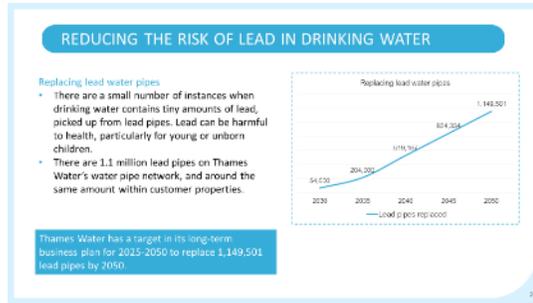
Thames Water has a target in its long-term business plan for 2025-2050 of reducing the number times sewage floods into properties to 0.70 per 10,000 properties per year, by 2050.



Reducing the risk of lead in drinking water

Level of
priority

Top



Prioritisation:

This was the most frequently mentioned priority area (amongst Thames/Thames customers), one of the most emotive, and was even spontaneously mentioned by an Affinity Water customer as being a priority.

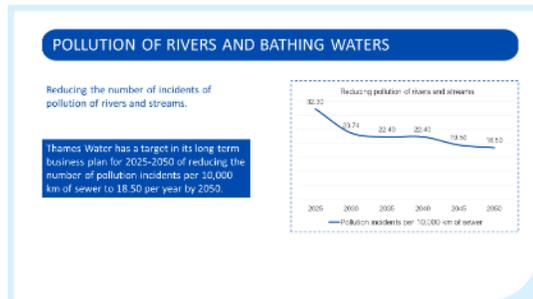
- The initial rate of replacement is important – this is an area customers feel cannot be put off any longer, and needs to be tackled as soon as possible.
"they are saying themselves, that can be harmful. And they're gonna wait another 5 years." TT, C2DE/Vulnerable
- Lack of awareness means customers are looking to Thames Water for information on whether they have lead pipes, both in their properties and leading to it.
- One group of business customers were less emotive on the subject, and pointed out they didn't hear stories in the press of lead poisoning, and that it is likely lead pipes would be replaced as part of wider pipe replacement anyway. They were keen to have more data on the issue such as levels of lead in the water, where the pipes were and the length of pipes affected.

- The majority of customers were unaware that there were still lead pipes on Thames Water's network, or within customer homes, or that there was a potential risk to health as a result.
"Public safety risk should be prioritised...The fact there's lead pipes is worrying to hear" TT, Future
"We've taken away lead in petrol, so we're not breathing it in, yet we're drinking it, ingesting it - that is horrendous" TT, C2DE
- It is an emotive subject and customers were often highly concerned at the potential harm to health, particularly the possible risk to children, mentioned in the stimulus material.
"It's about safety of drinking water, isn't it?...it's a bit emotive sticking babies on the slide, but it's definitely pulled in my heart strings." TT, ABC1
- Although customers are happy that the target is aiming to eliminate lead pipes from the network by 2050, many customers want this target to be reached sooner.
"It seems like they are fixing the problem 100% . Only issue is that they should be fixing in 10 years." TT, Microbusiness

Pollution of rivers and bathing waters

Level of
priority

Very
high



Prioritisation:

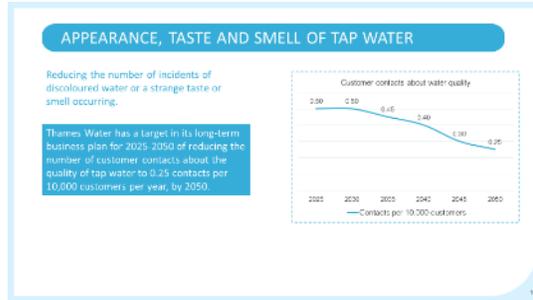
Aside from lead in drinking water, this priority area was identified by the largest proportion of customers.

“Things pertaining to local environment and health and safety are fundamental...if you neglect these things it can have catastrophic consequences” TT, Future

- As this is such a high priority area for customers, it's also an area where customers are pushing for greater ambition – both in terms of a lower end point, and getting there sooner.
 - “This target just says we are going to tinker with it” TT, Microbusiness*
 - “Should be deep decline... I don't think the money is necessarily being pointed in the right direction” AT, Future*
- Specifically, customers want to see the first 5-year trajectory (which was pleasing for most) continued throughout the 25-year plan.
 - “They have not gone far enough by the end. It starts strong but then phases out” TT, Microbusiness*
- Public health and the environment were frequently mentioned as the critical drivers of why this area is so important to address.
 - “this is affecting the environment, the ecosystem, the wider society like this is just like a really big impact” TT, ABC1*
- Press coverage of penalties incurred by Thames Water and other water companies for pollution incidents were mentioned in almost every group, although these were frequently mixed up/merged together with sewage spills and customers were not usually clear on the difference and responsibilities for each, without some explanation from the moderators.
 - “It's such a political issue I'm surprised they are not doing more.” TT, Microbusiness*
 - “I think they're gambling there, that if they make a difference up front it maybe won't be as big an issue and be in the papers as much, and they can get away with just marginal, so a token effort afterwards.” AT customer*
- For business customers it was noted that this can affect tourism and therefore have direct financial impact.
 - “This issue impact tourism, so small businesses are being affected by this.” TT, Microbusiness*

Appearance, taste and smell of tap water

Level of
priority



Prioritisation:

This improvement area could be polarising, with some feeling it to be critical (particularly amongst those who do not currently drink tap water), while others were happy with current tap quality and therefore did not feel the need for improvement in this area.

“Not everyone is able to buy bottled water all the time, so ensuring tap water is a decent standard is really important”
TT, Future

- For many customers water quality is a very important area, but opinion was divided over whether the targets went far enough or not.

“If the quality of the water's not there, everything else goes in the bin...if your water comes out brown and smelly you're not gonna be happy. 25 years is a very, very long time and they can only reduce it by half...its not quite good enough” TT, Future

- The plateau for the first 5 years was noticed by many, but relatively few concluded this was unacceptable given the trajectory for the 25 year plan.

“I just can't believe in 5 years. There's no improvement. It just seems shocking.” TT, ABC1

- Business customers overall tended to be satisfied with the target ambitions, partly as the numbers were already so low.

“This number is insignificant, is it worth talking about?” TT, Microbusiness

- Some customers felt this measure is likely to improve anyway, as other improvements are made such as new pipes and therefore should not be singled out as a priority.

- Several customers took issue with what they felt to be the subjective nature of the target, and would prefer money is invested to measure water quality objectively using technology such as an add-on to individual water meters, rather than relying on customer complaints to measure this.

“if they could actually come to the person's house and take these samples, and then go back every so often... I think that'd be better.” TT, ABC1

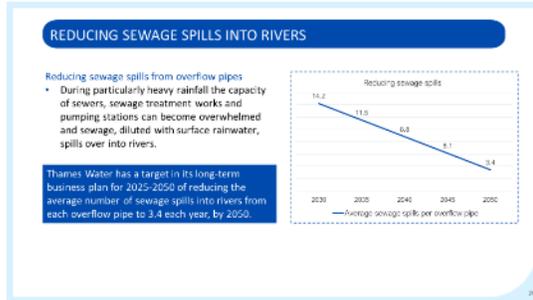
“ultimately you're relying on people to report it, and some will not, and some will over report in some cases, even if it's fine.” TT, C2DE/Vulnerable

Reducing sewage spills into rivers

Level of
priority



Medium
high



Prioritisation:

This area is a relatively high priority, but as customers were more satisfied with the targets associated with it, they didn't mention it as frequently as pollution of rivers, which was an area with some frustrations around the targets set.

- This area was discussed in most groups well before discussing the improvement targets, as it was top of mind due to negative press around sewage spills. However, in many cases, customers were pleased to see what they thought to be ambitious, yet realistic targets and therefore were satisfied the area was being tackled effectively.

"This looks like they have identified a problem and they are trying to get it done quickly. From this plan they are making a significant drop." TT, Microbusiness

"Quite a rapid descent, shows its possibly quite easy to fix" TT, Future

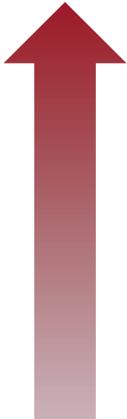
"Very important...if it spills into rivers it can harm wildlife....it does seem very ambitious actually" TT, Future

- For some they still prefer to see more ambition (achieving the targets sooner, or even reaching 0).
"Having any sewage spills into the river- this is the sort of thing where they should be achieving 100%. This is the key thing that Thames Water should be doing and this says we are working on it but still expect there to be pollution into every river." TT, Microbusiness.
"Maybe they can reduce that number, at a quicker rate, if they really cared" TT, Future
"The difference between 14.2 and 11.5 is a is about a 20% reduction. So for all the media hype..they're saying they gonna reduce ... by 20% in 10 years. That's truly nowhere near enough." TT, ABC1

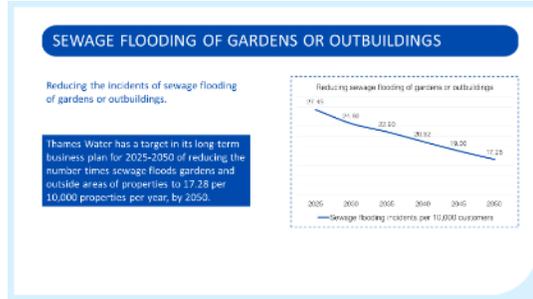
- This area was often compared directly with the pollution of rivers target, and customers were more satisfied with this target than the pollution target which they felt slowed after an initial focus for the first 5 years.

Sewage flooding of properties

Level of priority



Medium



Prioritisation:

Although most customers accepted that for those affected it can be devastating, only a minority highlighted this area as a priority over issues that affected them more directly.

There was a feeling that for those affected it would need to be top priority, but personally, often other areas are prioritised.

- Although most customers had no personal experience of sewage flooding in their properties, there was wide acceptance that if it did happen, it would be extremely disruptive.

"it probably is fairly inevitable that it's going to happen occasionally, but it's horrible for every single person that it happens to. So I think it's worth trying to reduce." TT, C2DE/Vulnerable

- More often than not, household and business customers want to see greater ambition for this target.

"It's only 1 customer in 25 years drop. The sheer decline is not as deep as I would expect. The number doesn't go far enough. I think the number should be 0.7 by 100,000 not 10,000 properties in 25 years" AT, SML business.

"I think that I between now and 2050, is a pretty pathetic target personally." AT customer.
"Why is it only half or thereabouts in 25 years? They should be more ambitious about the target" TT, Microbusiness

- There was some debate whether this improvement should be aiming for 0, or whether that is impossible, given the challenges to the network.

"we live in a society that should not have sewage flooding into a property...the numbers should be more dramatic than that." TT, ABC1

"I don't think we're gonna ever eliminate sewage flooding, just because the infrastructure of Thames Water.. all the pipes are just so old" TT, C2DE/Vulnerable

- Customers also mentioned that this is an area that is exacerbated by customer behaviour (flushing un-flushables), and therefore they need to take some responsibility, as well as Thames Water (continuing to) educate customers.

"we, the public, are more responsible on that one, because it's we who put the wrong things down the toilet." TT, ABC1

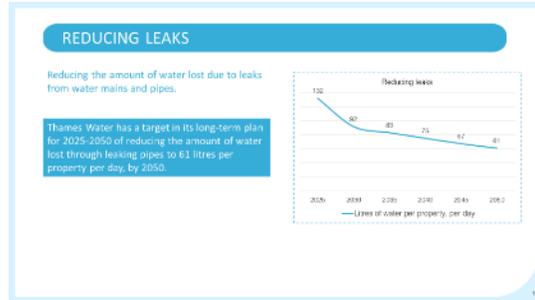
A number of customers would like context for these figures to see how the figures have changed over time, in order to understand how ambitious (and achievable) the plan is.

Reducing leaks

Level of priority



Medium low



Prioritisation:

For a minority, reducing leakage is still a high priority and needs to be part of the bigger picture of water security in future.

"We don't really know about global warming and droughts, and we have had hose pipe pans. So I think it probably is really important, because there could be a point where there genuinely isn't actually enough water...we are quite marginal in our reserve." TT, ABC1

However for others, it's not as high up their agenda compared with other areas such as issues relating to the environment.

"It doesn't feel as much of a priority as the environmental stuff as that feels more emotive" TT, Future

- A few were happy to see the target more than halve over the 25 year period, but there was also scepticism that the first 5-year target will be achieved, and might be over ambitious. Without seeing the context of leakage now and in recent years, some felt it difficult to assess if this initial 5-year target was realistic or not. Giving customers more detail on why the targets are structured this way is likely to build confidence that Thames Water can Deliver them.

"they're struggling just to keep the taps running so how they're gonna achieve 40 litres saving per household in 5 years." TT, ABC1
"They seem to suggest that the most dramatic improvement in the first 5 years and what is the basis for that?" TT micro business.

- Whilst others felt frustration that the initial improvement rate achieved for the first 5 years, declined for the remaining term
"If the same efforts in the first 5 years can be kept on for the rest of the years to 2050, perhaps will get to 0 instead of 61" TT, ABC1
- There is still shock at the leakage rates, why leakage occurs and even the final target still seems high to many.

"Quite shocked at how much water is lost per property per day....their plan is to halve that but it still seems quite a lot" TT, Future

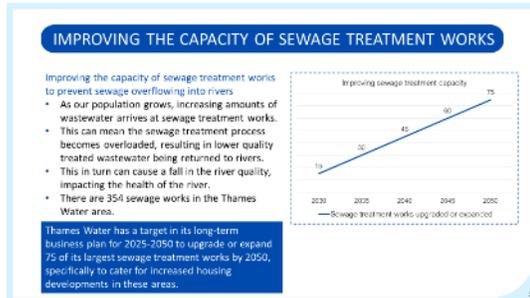
"I think we also need to know what's causing the leaks...Is it old infrastructure? They've repaired it, but haven't done a good enough repair job? Is it tree roots or something? Is it nothing to do with Thames Water?" TT, C2DE/Vulnerable

Improving the capacity of sewage treatment works

Level of priority



Medium
low



Prioritisation:

For most customers this was an area that they felt was a necessity in order to meet needs for population growth, rather than a customer priority. However for small numbers, they felt an improvement in this area would contribute to improvements in several other areas and therefore should be prioritised.

- Many customers felt this area was simply a reflection of keeping in line with population growth, rather than a target to deliver more than required. Following that line of thinking through, customers felt this was not an area they could prioritise or not as it would have to be done regardless of customer opinion.

"it's just keeping in line with what would have to happen anyway, rather than and going above and beyond where we are now" TT, ABC1

"Feel this has to be done...if the capacity isn't there, eventually you get to a point where this has to be done" TT, ABC1

"that's the most impressive looking graph. But it might mean nothing, could just mean we're standing still." AT customer

- This is also an area where customers felt that the target itself did not explain what would be delivered as a result. i.e. the headline is about sewage capacity, but the target does not provide a metric of capacity.

"I don't have enough information to know if that's enough...it doesn't sound like they're making any new ones. But I've got no data to be able to say, if they went from 15, or if they upgraded or expanded 100 of the ones that they've got, would they then be able to reduce the number of pollution incidents that they had, and the sewage overflows, and that sort of thing." TT C2DE/Vulnerable

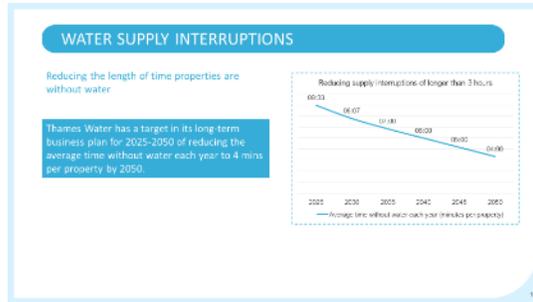
- A minority felt the target should be more ambitious (upgrading at least half of treatment works) as they assumed that this would help with other issues on the network.
- Business customers in particular, wanted to know the geographical location of the works to be improved, and to understand if any areas outside of new housing developments would also be improved.

Water supply interruptions

Level of
priority



Low



- Customers struggle to make sense of the way this target is shown. Some felt the targets seemed reasonable, based on the % reduction, whilst others felt it did not seem ambitious enough based on number of minutes reduced over 25 years. This idea is difficult to translate to what that means for customers experiencing long interruptions of several hours/days.
“In the first five years it is being reduced 1.30 minute and then a minute each 5 years, so they are not trying to reduce it fully which is possible in 25 years” TT, Microbusiness
- One customer (C2DE/Vulnerable) said that this area is more about how Thames Water respond to an interruption, rather than reducing frequency/length of an interruption itself, which many conceded were unavoidable in some cases. If Thames Water respond effectively, customers can tolerate the interruption much better, and these customers also mentioned that Thames Water had responded well to interruptions in their experience.

Prioritisation:

Most had not experienced an interruption of more than 2 hours, and therefore without experience of the impacts a long interruption can bring, this was frequently felt to be low priority compared with other improvement areas.

“I would choose other priorities over this one...My hope would be that as we make improvements, this will go down naturally as a result of the work that's being done, anyway.” TT, ABC1

Only those who had experienced interruptions saw this as higher priority.

“We had one for a couple days...there was a single mum at the bottom of my street and she wasn't able to leave her house” TT, Future

“my school shut for 2 days because there were problems with the pipes...everyone's education was interrupted because of Thames Water”

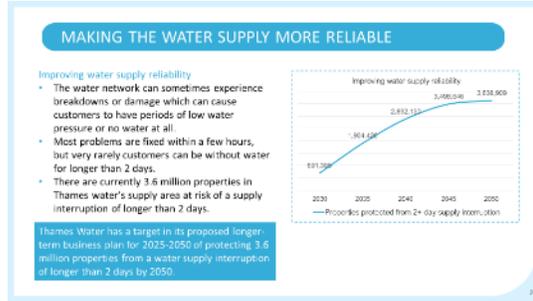
“As a business we just wouldn't be able to open” TT, Microbusiness

Making the water supply more reliable

Level of priority



Low



Prioritisation:

Low priority area for all but one customer, who had experienced a 2-day interruption, however customers could see that for those experiencing a long interruption, it would be a priority.

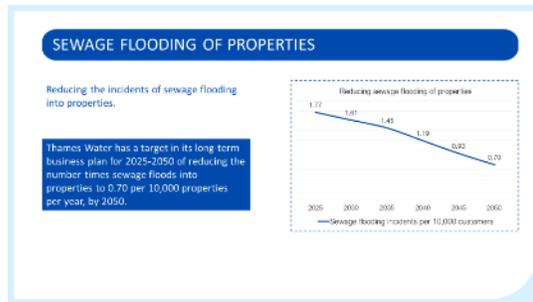
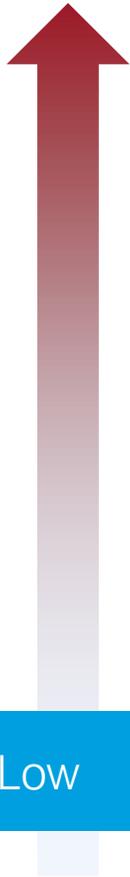
"2 days is a long time...I'd say protecting people's water supply is the most important thing as populations grow" TT, Future

"When pipes have been blocked people have had to rely on bottled water, gym memberships to have showers...which shouldn't be something you have to buy." TT, Future

- Primarily, customers were surprised at the number of properties 'at risk' of a lengthy interruption, but also impressed that this is the only target aimed at (almost) eliminating the problem over the 25 year period.
"Huge increase, rather impressive. " TT, microbusiness
"its quite alarming that there's 3.6m properties at risk...seems like quite a good amount of properties being protected" TT, Futures
- All except one customer (who would like to see it achieved sooner) were satisfied with the ambition of this target.
"it's 2 plus days of interruption, you'd expect that to be quite serious. It's not like a little leak or a little pipe that's broke...2 days to fix...you're probably repairing the Thames estuary or something...the metrics seem ambitious" TT, C2DE/Vulnerable
- Although one TT microbusiness group did suggest that if 100% is possible, perhaps this target is easier than others to meet.
- This target elicited some interest in the geographical areas likely to be impacted by these improvements, partly to see if their own properties were at risk, but also to see if they agreed with the areas to be targeted.

Sewage flooding of gardens or outbuildings

Level of
priority



Prioritisation:

Generally considered to be lower priority than flooding of properties as it is less damaging.

"People can live with sewage in their gardens, but if it goes into the bedrooms, you've got a problem" AT, Future

However, a small minority felt as it affects a larger number of customers it should also be a priority for investment.

- This target seemed less impressive to customers than the sewage flooding inside buildings, particularly for businesses, and customers would like to see greater ambition here too, to bring it down lower. Some even suggested Thames Water may be too cautious on this measure, to ensure they can meet the targets.

"Being too careful, or they are avoiding being ambitious because they don't want to fail" TT, Microbusiness

"Don't know how these things connect, have they compromised this for keeping sewage out of properties?" TT, Microbusiness

- Some customers felt this target may be an area where Thames Water were providing the minimal improvements as required by Ofwat, rather than stretching themselves.

"They've been told they've got to do it. The only challenge is. are they doing? Are they going above and beyond. Or was this just what set by the regulator?" AT Customer

"It looks as though they're just doing much of what they've already been doing." AT Customer

LTDS is broadly acceptable to customers in terms of the coverage of improvements to be delivered

- However, in many cases customers would like targets to be met **quicker** and/or to be more **stretching**. In particular these are:
 - Reducing the risk of lead in drinking water
 - Pollution of rivers and bathing waters
 - Reducing sewage spills into rivers
 - Sewage flooding of properties
- As many of the improvements seem to be interlinked, customers found it difficult to trade them off against one another, and would like to see all the improvements made, at least partially.
- One group of Thames/Thames microbusiness felt the plan was not acceptable, as the coverage was too broad and would rather they focus their efforts on a smaller number of core services.

"I think it's acceptable if you want an easy route out. They are not ambitious enough. They are not stretching it out. This should be 15 years not 25 years." TT, SML Business

"overall is quite a decent plan, because they're not going to be able to get everything down to 0 at the end of the day" TT, ABC1

"I think it could go a little bit further...they didn't completely reassure me....if one is neglected it can have a knock on effect on the others"
TT, Future

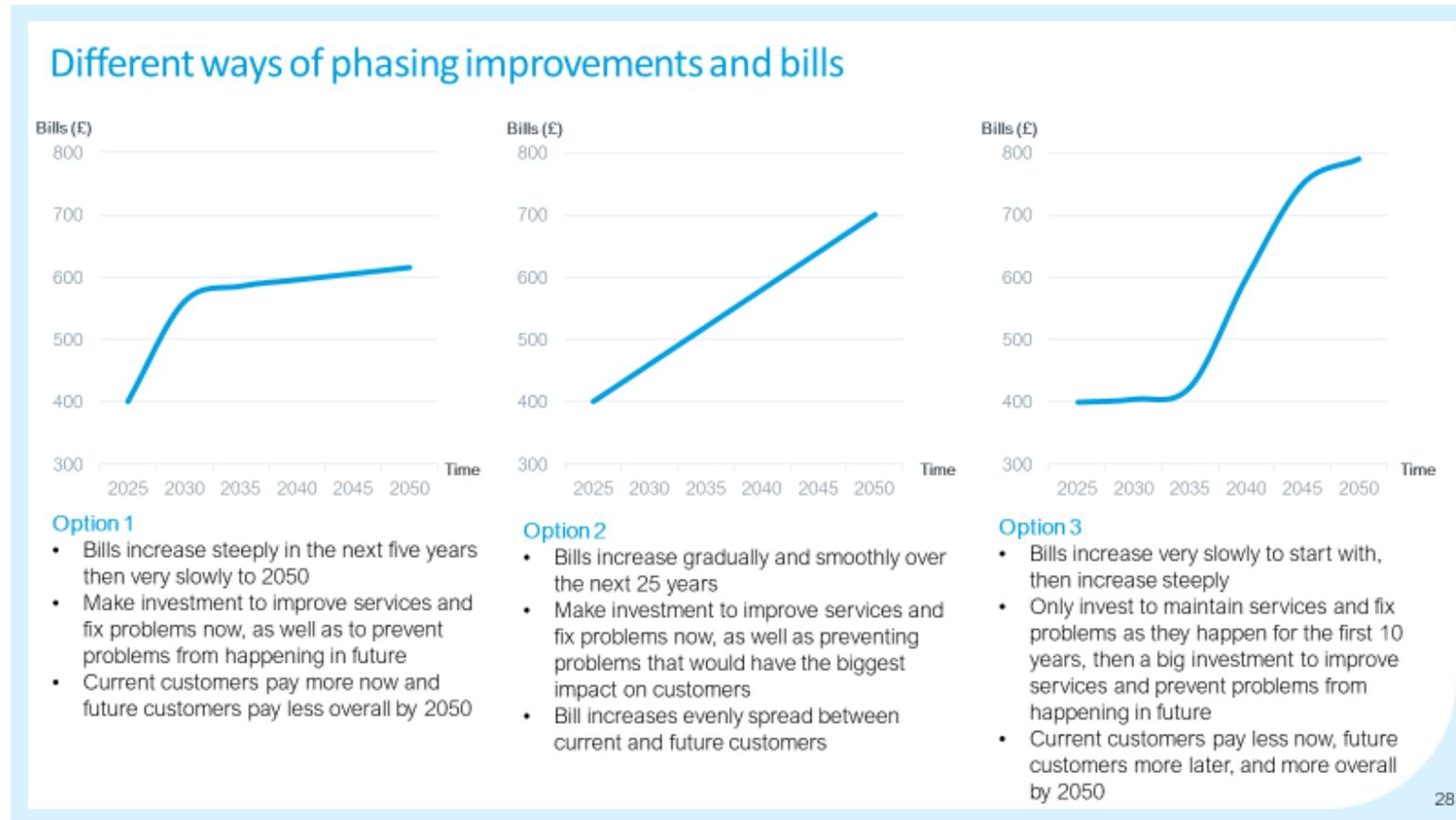
"I don't think it is acceptable especially all the ones about sewage. ...I think they are being too ambitious, if they had a core of things that gets down to zero I would be much happier with that." TT, Microbusiness
"I think for me, that's something about the overall theme of trying to be everything to everyone and do a little bit of everything." TT, Microbusiness

4. Response to Phasing options

Phasing options tested

Three options for phasing improvements and therefore bill impacts were shown to customers, with a short description of how this would change both the bill impacts felt by customers and when they would likely perceive improvements to have been made.

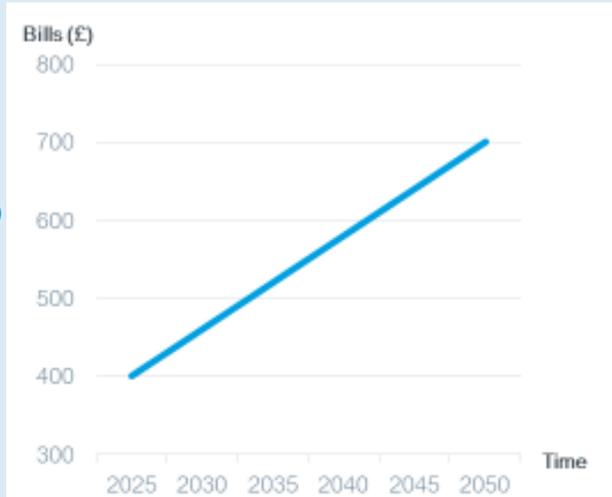
Between events, the order in which these options were presented were rotated, in order to minimise any order effects.



Three quarters preferred option 2 – a linear increase over time.

Option 2

The vast majority preferred the gradual and predictable increase of option 2, over either of the other options where there would be a steep increase at some point in future.



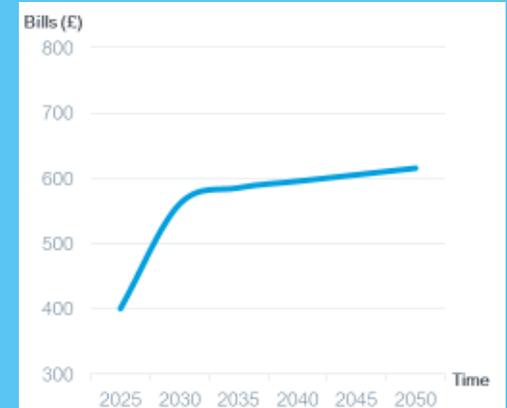
Option 2

- Bills increase gradually and smoothly over the next 25 years
- Make investment to improve services and fix problems now, as well as preventing problems that would have the biggest impact on customers
- Bill increases evenly spread between current and future customers

Option 1

The remaining participants opted for option 1, where they felt they would see the benefits of the investments sooner, and have a lower bill overall by 2050.

Businesses were more open to option 1, than household customers, preferring to take the increase now, get the benefits now, and pay lower bills long term.



Option 1

- Bills increase steeply in the next five years then very slowly to 2050
- Make investment to improve services and fix problems now, as well as to prevent problems from happening in future
- Current customers pay more now and future customers pay less overall by 2050

Option 1 – Acceptable for most. Some interest as this option saves customers money overall and customers see the benefit of investments quicker than other options

- ✓ Tackles perceived long-term underinvestment
- ✓ Benefits of investment seen straight away (as long as they are delivered as promised)
- ✓ Expectations are high for delivery in the first 5 years under this option – customers would need to see palpable improvements to demonstrate how investments have been spent
- ✓ Prevents further degradation of assets and infrastructure (as potentially could happen with other cost options)
- ✓ Perception that Thames Water are being proactive and tackling problems head on
- ✓ Fairer to future customers as bills will be lower later on

- ✗ Fear that the initial increase may be too steep for some to afford (particularly in the context of very high rises recently for energy and cost of living crisis)
- ✗ Some happy to wait a little longer to see benefits, if it spreads the cost increases more evenly over time
- ✗ Can Thames Water guarantee no further rises after 2030?
- ✗ Requires significant trust in Thames Water to deliver as promised, and keep prices as promised, which is lacking for many customers
- ✗ Concern over Thames Water's financial situation – what would happen to customer money if Thames Water go bankrupt?

Customers can see some benefits to option 1, but most preferred the predictability of option 2

"I think there's been huge under investment in the water industry for so long...we know it needs doing...And it's a problem we've got now. So it's painful."
TT, ABC1

"I think it's acceptable and affordable. It needs to be done; it needs to be paid more [by other sources]" TT, large business

"you would expect a lot to happen in the first 5 years when you're paying a lot, and probably after 2030, or whatever like your improvements, slows down. But the major thing must have already been implemented. But it doesn't say that, you pay first, now. But the improvement is gonna be very slow, and it's gonna take 25 years. I wouldn't expect this" TT, C2DE/Vulnerable

"The only benefit is you are seeing what you are paying for straight away...but I don't think its worth it....its not my main priority to see it right now" TT, Future

"If some things get fixed now, then maybe it will be better for the future, so we'll have less stuff to fix".
TT, Future

"Personally, I prefer [this] because it means that Thames get the job done and not faffing around" TT, Microbusiness

"we are still in a big cost of living crisis, and if Thames Water suddenly threw everyone massively into the deep end it would be disastrous" TT, Future

"It's not the not the right time to be telling people that they should like fork out more money." TT, ABC1

"If they are able to guarantee it won't go above £650 in 2050 I can see it being a better option"
TT, Future

"I believe the sacrifice should be made now rather than later". AT, Future

"How do we know they're going to be wise with it (so much money)...seems a bit risky" TT, Future

Option 2 – Universally acceptable. On the basis it has a familiar profile for incurring costs, easier to budget and in line with inflation and wage increases.

- ✓ Perceived to be the fairest option – does not place excess burden on either future or current customers.
- ✓ Feels like the safest option – steady increase to bills in exchange for the most pressing issues to be tackled first.
- ✓ Gradual and predictable increases over time are easier to budget for (no surprises)
- ✓ Gives a chance for wages to keep pace (although the future economic climate is a big unknown)
- ✓ Still allows for investment from the start, even if not in all areas
- ✓ Priority areas for first 5 years would be lead pipe replacement, pollution, leakage, sewage flooding.

- ✗ Customers not always willing to accept that only some areas will be prioritised in the first 10 years, and struggle to identify which could be delayed.
- ✗ Perception that Thames Water will decide which areas to prioritise for the first 10 years, and that requires trust from customers that they will get it right.
- ✗ Some frustration if bills are to rise every single year – feels more realistic that they may stay the same for a year or two at a time.
- ✗ Perception that Thames Water are not charging enough now, if even with bill increases, they still cannot make improvements above basic maintenance.

Option 2 on balance preferred, but for some there are still disadvantages to this phasing option

"Expecting a rise every year, but it's more or less in the same proportions is easier to handle...They're supposedly improving things over time, and you would expect to have to pay for improvements over time rather than give them all the money now we'll get all the benefits today when we're not quite believing that we will." AT Customer

"Most pressing areas in that time areas would be the ones affected by climate change" TT, Future

" Almost acknowledging they're not charging us enough right now, because obviously with the money that they're getting at this present time that just can't do anything extra." AT customer

"It's kinder for everybody, isn't it? Because everybody at the moment, we're all completely squeezed. Option, 2's kinder in in the short term" TT, C2DE/Vulnerable

"My water bill isn't my biggest bill, and I think I want to keep it that way because everything else like rent electricity groceries...it's already so high. " TT, ABC1

"Least worst option"
AT customer

"There may be ones we want to prioritise but that may not be able to happen until way later because we are being charged more at that stage" TT, Future

"Would be nice to see at least a little bit of improvement in all of them as they all have a knock on effect on each other" TT, Future

"They all risk somewhat to health...all need to be done...not really good enough that they are planning to do it over the next 30 years...I wouldn't say anything can wait" TT, Future

"with all the cost of living stuff, at least we know that's just gonna have a normal increase. Just hope that they're sort of rolling along and doing the work." TT, ABC1

"It's evenly spread between current and future customers" AT, future

"Option 2 and 3 starts to feel like a postcode lottery on what areas or priorities they start with first," TT, Microbusiness

Option 3 – Universally unacceptable not to see improvements before 2035, and price hike is too steep to bear.

- ✘ Costlier for everyone in the long term.
- ✘ Not acceptable to continue paying bills at the current rate and not see any improvements over such a long period.
- ✘ Fears that the infrastructure cannot continue that long without significant investment and will only degrade further.
- ✘ Customers feel the economic situation is not expected to improve in near future, and possibly not even by 2035 when the steep increase would hit consumers very hard.
- ✘ Financial burden is all on future customers, combined with a long time before any benefits are experienced.
- ✘ This plan suggests more ‘patch repairs’ which are disruptive to customers.
- ✘ Situation may be worse than predicted if left without investment, therefore may be even more costly at that point.
- ✘ Even for those financially struggling now, this is not a tenable solution as they are likely to suffer even more after 2035.
- ✘ Difficult to manage a rise like that as its sudden and customers may not realise it is coming until its too late.
- ✘ Makes no attempt to tackle the effects of climate change, which is urgent.
- ✘ Customers have priorities over and above money, and therefore this option is almost insulting.

Option 3 elicited strong views and even a sense of despair if improvements are deferred until 2035.

"if they're not doing anything for 10 years, how bad it will get if it's already bad" TT, ABC1

"Option 3's narrative is concerning. Very limited improving over 10 years feels very dangerous in my mind. That runs a serious risk of serious damage" TT, Microbusiness

"some of the problems could be compounded like some of the things that that really call our attention like lead. And there is climate change continues to make things harder." TT, C2DE/Vulnerable

"Seems pretty selfish and quite evil, as we're just passing it along to future generations as we couldn't be bothered to sort it out" TT, Future

"It almost seems like they're saving the extra money to get cash rich...its giving themselves a lot of leeway" TT, C2DE/Vulnerable

"[It's a] gamble to know where you're going to be in 10 years, things might be more difficult" TT, SML business

"In the cost of living crisis, it's good it increases very slowly....I just worry when it says it increases steeply and it is very steep" AT, Future

"Not interested in patchwork, do it now and they need to do it well." TT, SML business

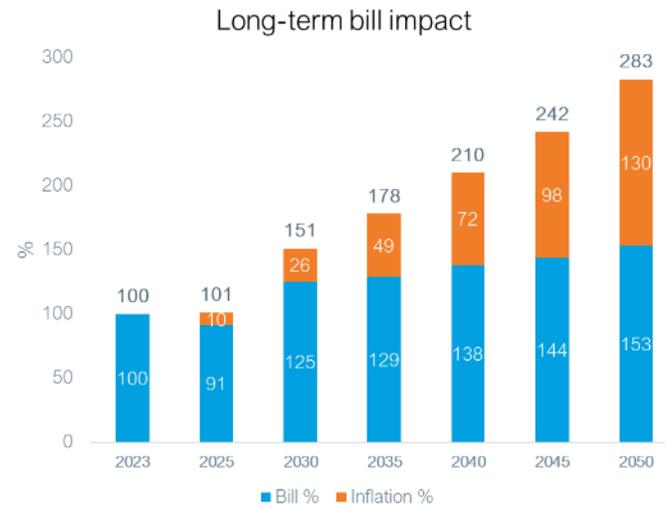
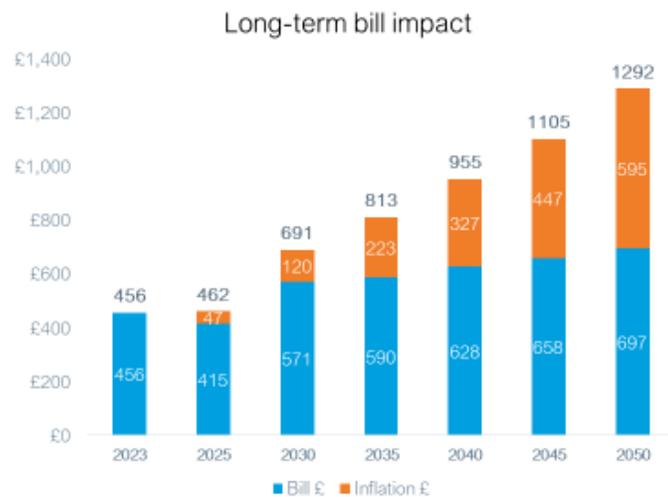
"I hate the look of this plan...if I haven't seen improvement all of this time and my bill is getting doubled, I wouldn't want to pay money towards that" TT, Future

5. Affordability

Bill impacts stimulus

Example bills for the long-term plan

- Thames Water is currently working on its long-term plan, and the example bill figures below are draft and only to give you an indication of how average bills could change in the future.
- Thames Water is more certain about the bill figures for 2025 and 2030 but less confident after that point, and so has provided example bill amounts for 2035 to 2050.



One version of the bill impacts with 5-year incremental values was shown to customers. This was closest to option 1, Thames Water's provisional likely phasing option. Bills were shown with inflation noted separately, based on Bank of England forecasts.

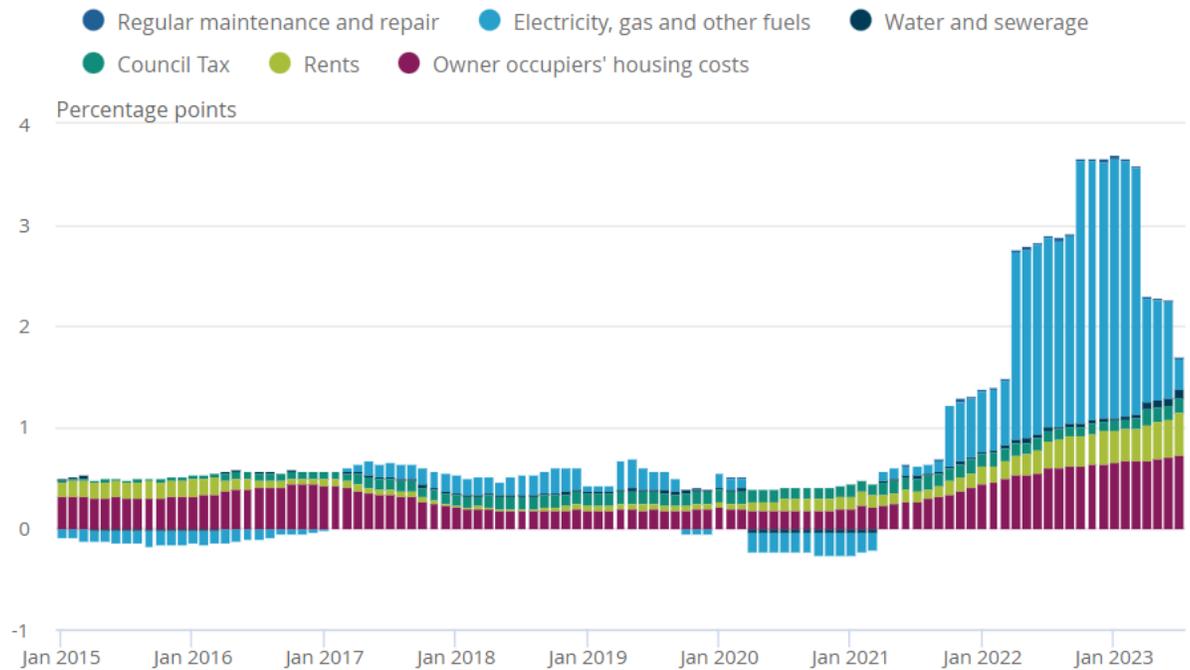
Business customers were shown increases in % terms.

A short explanation of inflation and its impact on water bills was provided in advance of this information.

The challenging economic climate has impacted customer response to affordability

- Customers across all segments are feeling the impacts of financial strain, some for the first time/in areas they have not before, and are preparing for even tougher times ahead.
- Energy prices are a major contributor to the high inflation rates, and customers naturally tend to compare water to their energy bills.
- Although water bills are low in comparison now, customers are worried how this might change in future, particularly alongside high bills for other essentials.

Contributions of housing components to the annual CPIH inflation rate, UK, January 2015 to July 2023



Source: Consumer price inflation from the Office for National Statistics

Customers reluctantly agree bills may be affordable, but significant fears over the future context of which these bills might be part



Future customers in particular found the bill impact to look unaffordable and struggle to imagine how they might be able to afford the 2050 prices in particular.

Concern over the high inflation projections, and if they are correct, whether wages and salaries will increase at the same rate

Based on bill increases in the recent and longer past, some could see that although they look high now, they may well seem more affordable at the time.

Even amongst those who found the projections to look unaffordable, they could not identify improvement areas they would want to remove/reduce in order to lower bills – now they are aware of them, they are all needed.

Significant trust issues emerged from some customers – lack of trust that Thames Water will deliver the targets promised, that they will not go bankrupt, that the money will be used as intended, rather than being used to pay shareholders

Some could not commit to stating if the bills look affordable, as there are simply too many unknown factors, this far into the future.

Affordability is complex for customers to assess, especially far into the future and is undermined by underlying mistrust of Thames Water for some.

"I'd be unhappy if I we got to a point where I have to pay that and say only 30 or 50 of their initiatives have been delivered. But if they deliver everything that they say they're going to, I'd be happy with that as an increase." TT, ABC1

"Most pressing areas in that time areas would be the ones affected by climate change" TT, Future

"It feels a bit hard to take, we have no say in who provides water, ultimately they make the decisions, we have no control over how much it goes up, its just what happens." TT, Future

"There's a lot of financial mismanagement, which is one of the reasons why we're having to pay more. So I don't feel that is fair, that all of it goes on to the users." TT, ABC1

"it's been under invested in for such a long time. We're now playing catch up, aren't we?" TT, ABC1

"Affordable but if the costs go up, the more I want to see improvements and see that we are achieving what they set out" TT, SML business

"At that point in time it would be affordable, because it would just be part of the norms" TT, C2DE/Vulnerable

"The fact its pretty much tripled from 2020 is crazy...and we don't know where the cost of living crisis is going to take us" AT, Future

"They're also on the brink of bankruptcy, so how much of that money is just to prop it up as a business" TT, Future

"Jesus Christ, it's so much money...imagine someone in their 20s getting a £600 bill for their water" TT, Future

"You need to drive consumer confidence in all of this. If we get to 2030 and they can show what they've spent the money on and how it's improved things, I think customers would be more inclined to agree then, if there is a little bit of an increase." AT Customer

"When you find more efficient processes, improving sensors or equipment, that should lower costs overall" TT, Future

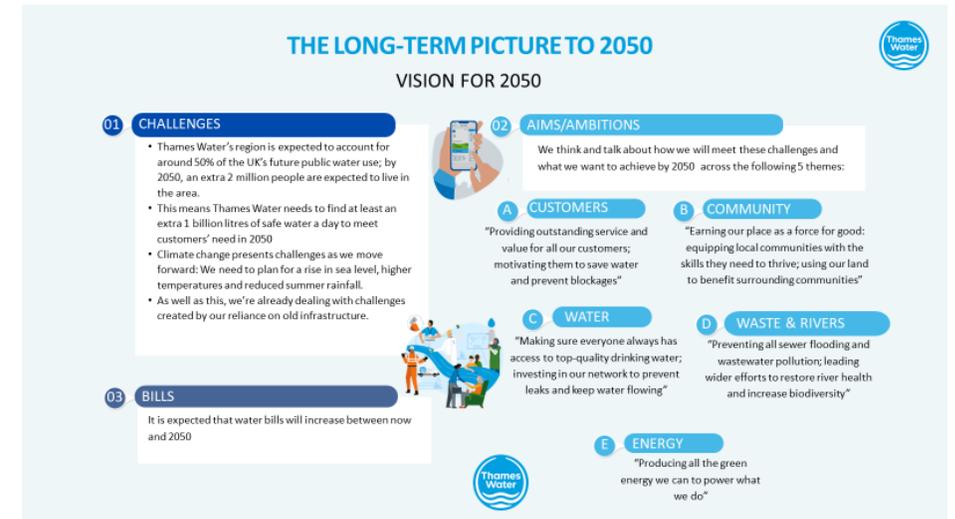
"It's not too difficult to absorb me personally. But I don't have trust...we pay higher bills for the shareholders to take more dividends" AT customer

"Why is the same main burst twice in a short amount of time? It could well be the material, or something else...but you know, could it be incompetencies and inefficiencies? So I think there's some things that they can probably look at internally and how they can make savings" TT, C2DE/Vulnerable

6. Conclusions

Summary

- The LTDS is broadly acceptable to customers in terms of priorities for investment identified. Of the 10 improvements tested, customer priorities are:
 - Reducing the risk of lead in drinking water
 - Pollution of rivers and bathing waters
 - Appearance, taste and smell of tap water (although this was polarising)
 - Reducing sewage spills into rivers
 - Sewage flooding of properties
- Customers would like to see greater ambition and quicker results on most of their top priorities.
- In terms of phasing, option 2 was felt to be fairest, and most in line with customer expectations, therefore easier to plan for. Option 1 did appeal to some customers, particularly businesses, who prefer to pay more now, receive the benefits sooner and pay less over the 25-year period.
- Affordability was difficult to assess for some, with so many unknowns this far into the future, and in particular future customers could not predict how they meet such increases in future. However, most accepted that the bills were likely to increase in such a way, and that they would manage, somehow.



Spotlight on customer segments

Future customers:



- Were least aware of Thames Water's role and responsibilities at the outset, but often impressed by their contribution to local areas, and the environment
- Had priorities in line with other customer segments, and were motivated by the same reasons – protecting the environment and reducing risk to human health
- Included some who were the most passionate about reducing pollution and sewage spills, as well as having strong (mostly negative) views on Thames Water, based on press articles around the same subjects.
- Were at times almost overwhelmed by the bill impacts and were not sure how they might manage in future

Businesses:



- Were often less emotive, but more likely to scrutinise the data to decide whether targets were realistic/achievable, in light of the company's current challenges
- Were more likely to prefer option 1 than household customers (although overall, option 2 was still favoured amongst businesses)
- Opinions were not linked to business size – most businesses were aligned with other customer groups' views, aside from one microbusiness group who were particularly cynical towards Thames Water and their ability to deliver against targets and were unhappy with the LTDS overall.

C2DE/Vulnerable customers:



- Were aligned with other customers views for the most part, but this particular group were very concerned about lead pipes, pollution and sewage spills.
- Were not willing to compromise on improvements to reduce bills

Next steps



The LTDS is broadly acceptable to customers, but communication of the benefits to customers as they are implemented is key to rebuilding lost trust and gaining buy-in for the bill increases they will experience at PR24 and beyond.

If customers feel their money has been invested wisely, they are more likely to feel the service delivers value for money (as it is still the lowest priced essential utility) and accept continued, reasonable, bill rises over time



Consideration should be given to the optics of the targets that start aggressively and then level off, as customers are unclear of the reasons for this. If Thames Water explain the reasons behind this, they are more likely to find customers to be supportive. There is certainly an appetite for more detail on each element of the LTDS (including, in particular, individual price tags for each component). As the LTDS becomes more refined/detail resolved, further qualitative research to explore that is recommended.



Perception of long-term affordability is likely to change with the economic climate, Thames Water's reputation, and other external factors (such as extreme weather events). Therefore regular quantitative tracking might be useful for providing some more reliable benchmark data over the course of the delivery of the LTDS, and to measure how sentiment and wider societal circumstances input into that.

7. Appendices

Declaration that this research observes Ofwat's standards for high quality research

Ofwat's minimum standards for high quality research	How we met these standards
Useful and contextualised	This research was used to inform customer viewpoints on Thames Water's Long Term Delivery Strategy. This research falls into a wider body of insight gathering aimed to understand what customers want from Thames Water in the near and longer term.
Neutrally designed	The survey utilised information materials that had been cognitively tested with customers for comprehension and clarity. The discussion guide used was designed by Market Research experts using balanced prompts, rotated stimulus to reduce order effects and a sample that covered a breadth of customer views.
Fit for purpose	We used a combination of qualitative groups and mini-groups to fully meet the objectives of this research. Qualitative research allows rich insight, using the customers own words to explore early stage plans that have not been fully developed yet and feed back on various issues including clarity, acceptability, affordability and wider context without the limitations of closed questions. We used plain English and engaging visuals for maximum comprehension.
Inclusive	The sample covered a breadth of Thames Water customers including household and non-household, future customers and a range of income and financial vulnerability. These groups are the main groups between which we tend to see attitudinal differences and therefore needs to be included in the research on the Long Term Delivery Strategy as this will affect all customers.
Continual	Thames Water's research and engagement programme is continuous. The findings from this research will be used in conjunction with previous and future insights to inform Thames Water's day-to day service delivery and business plan in the short and long term.
Independently assured	All research was carried out by Accent, an independent research and insight consultancy. Thames Water's Customer Challenge Group reviewed and gave feedback on the research methodology and initial drafts of the research materials.
Shared in full with others	The full report and supporting research materials will be shared with other water companies via a SharePoint site and with the general public via Thames Water's website.
Ethical	All research was conducted in line with the Market Research Society Code of Conduct.

Discussion Guide

Discussion Guide – Household (i)

Thames/Thames LTDS (2 Hours)
Draft Discussion Guide – HH Sessions



Household sample:

Group	1	2	3	4	5	6
Type	Customers	Futures	Futures	Customers	Customers	Futures
Water /Waste company	Thames/Thames	Thames/Thames	Thames/Thames	Thames/Thames	Affinity/Thames	Affinity/Thames
Date	Tues 5 th Sept	Tues 5 th Sept	Weds 6 th Sept	Weds 6 th Sept	Thurs 7 th Sept	Thurs 7 th Sept
Time	17.30 – 19.30	20.00 – 22.00	17.30 – 19.30	20.00 – 22.00	17.30 – 19.30	20.00 – 22.00
Group link						
HH customers	8-10	0	0	8-10	8-10	0
Futures	0	8-10	8-10	0	0	8-10

Sample notes: All groups made up of customers who participated in the Acceptability & Affordability Qualitative workshops, apart from future customers who've been newly recruited.

Non-household sample:

- 1 group of 5 micro-sized businesses who are Thames/Thames customers
- 1 group of 5 micro-sized businesses who are Affinity/Thames customers
- 1 paired depth with small/med/large sized businesses who are Thames/Thames customers
- 1 paired depth with small/med/large sized businesses who are Affinity/Thames customers

This guide will be modified for non-household and waste-only customer groups.

Group	1	2	3	4
Type	Micro	Micro	S-M-L	S-M-L
Water /Waste company	Thames/Thames	Affinity/Thames	Thames/Thames	Affinity/Thames
Date	Mon 4 th Sept	Wed 6 th Sept	TBC	TBC
Time	18.30 – 20.30	18.30 – 20.30		
Group link				
Customers	5	5	1-3	1-3

Event Timetable

- Welcome
- Introduction to long-term plan
- Response to Long-term plan
- Comfort break
- Phasing of improvements
- Options for phasing improvements

- Impact of Long-term plan on bills
- Close

Joining and Session Introduction

10 mins

- Welcome all onto platform/deal with any technical issues
- Show the agenda for the sessions on the screen (SHOWCARD)
- Introduce moderator
 - explain that we are an independent, impartial research agency
- Explain that we are here tonight on behalf of Thames Water who are looking for their view and input into their long term business plan - Remember that Thames Water are the provider of your clean and wastewater services
- FOR THOSE WHO ATTENDED GROUPS BEFORE (NON FUTURES): Last time we were looking at Thames water's' business plan up to 2050, but focussing on the near future, up to 2030 for the most part.
- Tonight, we will be focussing on the 25 years from 2025-2050. Over this long period of time, there are different investment decisions Thames Water can make at different times, in order to prioritise certain services over others, whilst keeping bills as low as possible for customers.
 - we are looking for everyone's views this evening and looking for everyone to contribute
 - no comments are attributed to you by name
 - no right or wrong answers to any of the questions we will ask – it's your opinion that matters. Of course, your views might be different from those of others, and that's natural – in fact it helps to stimulate discussion, which is really useful for us as researchers
 - please remain respectful of others' opinions and experiences if they are different from your own
- Tell everyone how long we will be here and session structure (break out groups/comfort breaks)
- Introduce the Client Representatives and any CCG
 - explain that these individuals are here to view the process and not take part
 - they are not here to answer questions and want to listen as they are very interested in their views
 - they shouldn't influence the discussions in any way so please be honest and don't let them affect your responses
- Moderator Note: if there are any specific questions then we can ask the Thames Water observer but try to minimise this and avoid it becoming a Q&A for the observer – there is a lot of discussion to cover and we will not reach a point of perfect information**

- Thank future customers for doing their pre-task exercises
- Introduce yourself ice breaker
 - Name
 - Where you live
 - One thing to take onto a desert island (not a person) and why
- MODERATOR NOTE – REITERATE SAFE SPACE AND WE WELCOME DIFFERENT VIEWS AND ENSURE EVERYONE COMFORTABLE AND HAPPY TO CONTINUE**
- FUTURE CUSTOMERS: Baseline Awareness:
 - What did you know about Thames Water before you read through the materials?

- What surprised you most out of the things you have read?
- What would you most like to find out more about?
- FUTURE CUSTOMERS: Baseline Perceptions:
 - How do you feel about Thames Water – scale -ve|1-10 +ve
 - Reasons for scores

Overview of Long-term Delivery Strategy

10 mins

10 MINS

- Today we want to talk about Thames Water's long-term plans, between 2025 and 2050. We will show you their plans across a number of key areas, where they will focus their investments, and when, and examples of how this could impact average bills between 2025 and 2050.
- Before we get into that, we want to explain why you are here today, and what the information you provide will be used for SHOWCARDS – ROLE OF RESEARCH & EXPLANATION OF LTDS
- SHOWCARD: LONG TERM PLAN
 - FUTURES/NEW RECRUITS ONLY:
 - Overall views on the challenges
 - From what you have seen about the ambitions and aims, do you feel the long term plan focuses on the right areas?
 - What makes you think this?
 - What do others think – agree/disagree?

When you look at this longer term plan, we want you to think about it from a range of different perspectives:

- SHOWCARD - 1) service users 2) bill payers. 3) citizen 4) society – please note that these overlap so if you are a bill payer, you are probably a service user and a citizen and member of society

Response to Long-term plan

50 mins

This part of the discussion will focus on some of the investment areas in the long-term plan, for both clean water supply (in light blue) and wastewater (shown in dark blue).

Thames Water is currently working on its long-term plan and so the information we will share with you today is to give you an idea of some of the areas that will be included in the plan and the improvements Thames Water will aim to make by 2050.

The information and numbers provided are to give you an indication of what Thames Water is aiming to achieve and how this could impact your bills, and are likely to change.

We are also not able to share the whole plan with you this evening, so there are lots of other activities that go into the plan that we will not have time to discuss.

45 MINS

- Presenting the LTDS:

- SHOWCARDS X 5 clean water improvements
- SHOWCARDS X 5 waste water improvements

- Response to each improvement (up to 5 mins on each)

- SHOWCARDS - Explore each service improvement
 - How do you feel about this improvement and the targets set?
- Do you feel they go far enough/too far/just right?
 - What is good about it?
 - What is not good about it?

5 MINS

- Now we have discussed the long-term plan, overall when you think about what we have discussed with the improvements, how **acceptable** is the Long-Term plan to you?

- Why do you say this?
- What is driving acceptability/non acceptability?
 - Water or wastewater elements?
 - Improvements – ambitious enough or not?
- How could this be more acceptable?
- What would you change?

Comfort break

10 mins

Phasing of improvements

10 mins

- Welcome everyone back to the room.

IMPROVMENTS AND BILL PHASING SHOWCARD

- Explain the 3 charts showing how investment and improvements could be delivered across the 25 years, in terms of when and how this could impact the bills of current and future customers. Explore each option:

- How do you feel about how Thames Water could deliver improvements over the 25 years for this option?
- What is good about this option?

Discussion Guide - Household (ii)

- What is not good about this option?
- Do think this option is fair to both current and future customers?

- Which option do you prefer and why?

Options for phasing improvements

15 mins

For this part of the group we will focus on how the improvements could be phased in three ways, in line with the examples we looked at earlier.

5 MINS

SHOWCARD OPTION 1.

This phasing option means bills increase steeply in the next five years then very slowly to 2050. However you would see improvement in all areas, from 2025 onwards.

- What is good about this?
- What is not good about it?
- How comfortable are you with this option?
- How acceptable is it to you?
 - Why do you say this?
 - What is driving acceptability/non acceptability?
 - How could this be more acceptable?
 - What would you change?
- Any difference if you put your different hats back on – bill payers, service users, citizens, society?

5 MINS

SHOWCARD OPTION 2.

This phasing option means bills increase gradually and smoothly over the next 25 years, however you would likely only see improvements in some (not all) areas before 2035.

- What is good about this?
- What is not good about it?
- Which 5 areas would you choose to improve before 2035?
- Which areas can wait until 2035?
- How comfortable are you with this option?
- How acceptable is it to you?
 - Why do you say this?

- What is driving acceptability/non acceptability?
- How could this be more acceptable?
- What would you change?
- Any difference if you put your different hats back on – bill payers, service users, citizens, society?

5 MINS

SHOWCARD OPTION 3.

This phasing option means bills increase very slowly to start with, then increase steeply. Therefore you would not see significant improvement in any areas until after 2035.

- What is good about this?
- What is not good about it?
- How do you feel about limited improvement until 2035?
- How comfortable are you with this option?
- how acceptable is it to you?
 - Why do you say this?
 - What is driving acceptability/non acceptability?
 - How could this be more acceptable?
 - What would you change?
- Any difference if you put your different hats back on – bill payers, service users, citizens, society?
- Thinking about the three options for phasing improvements that we have discussed tonight
 - Which would you vote for and why

Impact of Long-term plan on bills

10 mins

10 MINS

- Now we want to look at what the Long-term plan could mean for your bills, to get your views on that
- SHOWCARD – explain about inflation
- SHOWCARD– SHOW EXAMPLE BILL IMPACT GRAPH WITH INFLATION PREDICTION
- These example bill figures are draft and only to give you an indication of how average bills could change in the future.
- Thames Water is more certain about the bill figures for 2025 and 2030 but less confident after that point, and so has provided example bill amounts for 2035 to 2050.
- If you look at the graph it shows what impact the Long-term plan could have on your bills and how that changes from now until 2050
 - Overall when you look at the potential impact on your bills, how affordable is this to you (Bill Payers)/how affordable does this appear to you (Future customers)
 - Why do you say this?
 - If not affordable, what would you advise Thames Water to take out?

SHOWCARD: IMPACT OF Long-term plan ON BILLS LINE CHART WITHOUT INFLATION

- Any difference if you think about the impact on future customers, those paying bills in 10-25 years from now?

Final Comparison

5 mins

- – Now that you have seen an example of what the long-term plan could mean for your bills, does this change how you feel about the three options for phasing improvements that we have discussed tonight?
 - Which would you vote for and why?
- Thank everyone for coming
- Invite any final questions
- Close

Key Moderator Notes:

Make note of any questions asked by customers that are answered by the company
Add to subsequent sessions and/or run by ICG (CCG)

Discussion Guide – Non-Household (i)

Thames/Thames Non-Household LTDS (2 Hours)



Household sample:

Group	1	2	3	4	5	6
Type	Customers	Futures	Futures	Customers	Customers	Futures
Water /Waste company	Thames/Thames	Thames/Thames	Thames/Thames	Thames/Thames	Affinity/Thames	Affinity/Thames
Date	Tues 4 th Sept	Tues 4 th Sept	Weds 5 th Sept	Weds 5 th Sept	Thurs 6 th Sept	Thurs 6 th Sept
Time	17.30 – 19.30	20.00 – 22.00	17.30 – 19.30	20.00 – 22.00	17.30 – 19.30	20.00 – 22.00
Group link						
HH customers	8-10	0	0	8-10	8-10	0
Futures	0	8-10	8-10	0	0	8-10

Sample notes: All groups made up of customers who participated in the Acceptability & Affordability Qualitative workshops, apart from future customers who've been newly recruited.

Non-household sample:

- 1 group of 5 micro-sized businesses who are Thames/Thames customers
- 1 group of 5 micro-sized businesses who are Affinity/Thames customers
- 1 paired depth with small/med/large sized businesses who are Thames/Thames customers
- 1 paired depth with small/med/large sized businesses who are Affinity/Thames customers

Group	1	2	3	4
Type	Micro	Micro	S-M-L	S-M-L
Water /Waste company	Thames/Thames	Affinity/Thames	Thames/Thames	Affinity/Thames
Date	Mon 3 rd Sept	Wed 5 th Sept	TBC	TBC
Time	18.30 – 20.30	18.30 – 20.30		
Group link				
Customers	5	5	1-3	1-3

Event Timetable

- Welcome
- Introduction to long-term plan
- Response to Long-term plan
- Comfort break
- Phasing of improvements
- Options for phasing improvements
- Impact of Long-term plan on bills
- Close

Joining and Session Introduction

10 mins

- Welcome all onto platform/deal with any technical issues
- Show the agenda for the sessions on the screen (SHOWCARD)
- Introduce moderator
 - explain that we are an independent, impartial research agency
- Explain that we are here tonight on behalf of Thames Water who are looking for their view and input into their long term business plan - Remember that Thames Water are the provider of your clean and wastewater services
- Remind customers that we are focusing on the Wholesale part of the water company operations and now billing/customer service, etc
- FOR THOSE WHO ATTENDED GROUPS BEFORE: Last time we were looking at Thames Waters' business plan up to 2050, but focussing on the near future, up to 2030 for the most part.
- Tonight, we will be focussing on the 25 years from 2025-2050. Over this long period of time, there are different investment decisions Thames Water can make at different times, in order to prioritise certain services over others, whilst keeping bills as low as possible for customers.
 - we are looking for everyone's views this evening and looking for everyone to contribute
 - we are looking for your views on behalf of your business, rather than your views as a household customer.
 - no comments are attributed to you or your business by name
 - no right or wrong answers to any of the questions we will ask- it's your opinion that matters. Of course, your views might be different from those of others, and that's natural - in fact it helps to stimulate discussion, which is really useful for us as researchers
 - please remain respectful of others' opinions and experiences if they are different from your own
- Tell everyone how long we will be here and session structure (break out groups/comfort breaks)
- Introduce the Client Representatives and any COG
 - explain that these individuals are here to view the process and not take part
 - they are not here to answer questions and want to listen as they are very interested in their views
 - they shouldn't influence the discussions in any way so please be honest and don't let them affect your responses
- Moderator Note:** if there are any specific questions then we can ask the Thames Water observer but try to minimise this and avoid it becoming a Q&A for the observer - there is a lot of discussion to cover and we will not reach a point of perfect information

- Thank future customers for doing their pre-task exercises

- Introduce yourself ice breaker
 - Name
 - Business they work for
 - How big is the company (staff/t/o)
 - What does the Business do
 - Operating context - How much does the Business rely on water, in what ways e.g. manufacturing process, etc, how much does the business use water,

MODERATOR NOTE – REITERATE SAFE SPACE AND WE WELCOME DIFFERENT VIEWS AND ENSURE EVERYONE COMFORTABLE AND HAPPY TO CONTINUE

- NEW RECRUITS: Baseline Awareness:
 - What did you know about Thames Water before you read through the materials?
 - What surprised you most out of the things you have read?
 - What would you most like to find out more about?
- NEW RECRUITS: Baseline Perceptions:
 - How do you feel about Thames Water – scale -1-10 +😊
 - Reasons for scores

Overview of Long-term Delivery Strategy

10 mins

10 MINS

- Today we want to talk about Thames Water's long-term plans, between 2025 and 2050. We will show you their plans across a number of key areas, where they will focus their investments, and when, and examples of how this could impact bills between 2025 and 2050.
 - Before we get into that, we want to explain why you are here today, and what the information you provide will be used for SHOWCARDS – ROLE OF RESEARCH & EXPLANATION OF LTDS
 - SHOWCARD: LONG TERM PLAN
 - NEW RECRUITS ONLY:
 - Overall views on the challenges
 - From what you have seen about the ambitions and aims, do you feel the long term plan focuses on the right areas?
 - What makes you think this?
 - What do others think – agree/disagree?
- When you look at this longer term plan, we want you to think about it from a range of different perspectives:
- SHOWCARD - 1) service users 2) bill payers. 3) citizen 4) society – please note that these overlap so if you are a bill payer, you are probably a service user and a citizen and member of society

Response to Long-term plan

50 mins

This part of the discussion will focus on some of the investment areas in the long-term plan, for both clean water supply (in light blue) and wastewater (shown in dark blue).

Thames Water is currently working on its long-term plan and so the information we will share with you today is to give you an idea of some of the areas that will be included in the plan and the improvements Thames Water will aim to make by 2050.

The information and numbers provided are to give you an indication of what Thames Water is aiming to achieve and how this could impact your bills and are likely to change.

We are also not able to share the whole plan with you this evening, so there are lots of other activities that go into the plan that we will not have time to discuss.

45 MINS

KEY MESSAGE FOR MODERATORS: The information provided shows what Thames Water currently plan to achieve by 2050. This is just one example of what could happen in future and your feedback this on these plans and later in the session will help Thames Water decide whether they should go for a differ option and change their long-term plans.

- Presenting the LTDS:

- SHOWCARDS X 5 clean water improvements
- SHOWCARDS X 5 wastewater improvements
- Response to each improvement (up to 5 mins on each)
 - SHOWCARDS - Explore each service improvement
 - How do you feel about this improvement and the targets set?
 - Do you feel they go far enough/too far/just right?
 - What is good about it?
 - What is not good about it?

5 MINS

- Now we have discussed the long-term plan, overall when you think about what we have discussed with the improvements, how acceptable is the Long-Term plan to your business?
 - Why do you say this?
 - What is driving acceptability/non acceptability for your business?
 - Water or wastewater elements?
 - Improvements – ambitious enough or not?
 - How could this be more acceptable for your business?
 - What would you change?

Comfort break

10 mins

Phasing of improvements

10 mins

- Welcome everyone back to the room.
- IMPROVEMENTS AND BILL PHASING SHOWCARD

Discussion Guide – Non-Household (ii)

KEY MESSAGE FOR MODERATORS: These are three potential options for how investment and bills could look in future. In all three options customers would receive the same level of improvement by 2050. In option 1, bills are lower in 2050 because some of the investment has been brought forward into earlier years. In option 2, bills are slightly higher in 2050 because investment has gradually increased over the 25 years. In option 3, bills are a lot higher in 2050 because the investment has been pushed back into later years.

- Explain the 3 charts showing how investment and improvements could be delivered across the 25 years, in terms of when and how this could impact the bills of current and future customers. Explore each option:
 - How do you feel about how Thames Water could deliver improvements over the 25 years for this option?
 - What is good about this option?
 - What is not good about this option?
 - Do think this option is fair to both current and future business customers?
- Which option do you prefer and why?

Options for phasing improvements 15 mins

For this part of the group we will focus on how the improvements could be phased in three ways, in line with the examples we looked at earlier.

5 MINS

SHOWCARD OPTION 1.

This phasing option means bills increase steeply in the next five years then very slowly to 2050. However you would see some improvement in all areas, from 2025 onwards.

- What is good about this?
- What is not good about it?
- How comfortable would your business be with this option?
- How acceptable is it to your business 2
 - Why do you say this?
 - What is driving acceptability/non acceptability for your business?
 - How could this be more acceptable for your business?
 - What would you change?
- Any difference if you put your different hats back on – bill payers, service users, citizens, society?

5 MINS

SHOWCARD OPTION 2.

This phasing option means bills increase gradually and smoothly over the next 25 years, however you would likely only see improvements in some (not all) areas before 2035.

- What is good about this?
- What is not good about it?
- Which 5 areas would you choose to improve before 2035?
- Which areas can wait until 2035?
- How comfortable would your business be with this option?
- How acceptable is it to your business?
 - Why do you say this?
 - What is driving acceptability/non acceptability for your business?
 - How could this be more acceptable for your business?
 - What would you change?
- Any difference if you put your different hats back on – bill payers, service users, citizens, society?

5 MINS

SHOWCARD OPTION 3.

This phasing option means bills increase very slowly to start with, then increase steeply. Therefore you would see very limited improvement in all areas until after 2035.

- What is good about this?
- What is not good about it?
- How do you feel about very limited improvement until 2035?
- How comfortable would your business be with this option?
- How acceptable is it to your business?
 - Why do you say this?
 - What is driving acceptability/non acceptability for your business?
 - How could this be more acceptable for your business?
 - What would you change?
- Any difference if you put your different hats back on – bill payers, service users, citizens, society?

KEY MESSAGE FOR MODERATORS: Option 1 would see some improvement in all areas across each of the five-year periods to 2050. The difference between option 2 and 3 is that for option 2 there would be improvement in only some areas until 2035, and for option 3 there would be very limited improvements in all areas until 2035.

- Thinking about the three options for phasing improvements that we have discussed tonight
 - Which would you vote for and why?

Impact of Long-term plan on bills 10 mins

10 MINS

- Now we want to look at what the Long-term plan could mean for your bills, to get your views on that
 - SHOWCARD – explain about inflation
 - SHOWCARD– SHOW EXAMPLE BILL IMPACT GRAPH WITH INFLATION PREDICTION
 - These example bill figures are draft and only to give you an indication of how average bills could change in the future.
 - Thames Water is more certain about the bill figures for 2025 and 2030 but less confident after that point, and so has provided example bill amounts for 2035 to 2050.
 - If you look at the graph it shows what impact the Long-term plan could have on your bills and how that changes from now until 2050
 - Overall when you look at the potential impact on your bills, how affordable is this for your business?
 - Why do you say this?
 - If not affordable, what would you advise Thames Water to take out?
- SHOWCARD: IMPACT OF LONG-TERM PLAN ON BILLS LINE CHART WITHOUT INFLATION
- Any difference if you think about the impact on future business customers, those paying bills in 10-25 years from now?

KEY MESSAGE FOR MODERATORS: Thames Water's current long-term plan is most similar to option 1 discussed earlier and the charts are indicative examples of what this could mean for customer bills in future.

Final Comparison 5 mins

- – Now that you have seen an example of what the long-term plan could mean for your bills, does this change how you feel about the three options for phasing improvements that we have discussed tonight?
 - Which would you vote for and why?
- Thank everyone for coming
- Invite any final questions
- Close

Key Moderator Notes:

Make note of any questions asked by customers that are answered by the company

Pretask (future customers
only)

Pre-task: Future HH

Thames Water
PRE-TASK: FHH

Accent

Hello and thank you very much for agreeing to be part of our exciting research project for Thames Water.

As part of this important project, we will be talking to Thames Water customers all over their supply region. We're delighted that you will be taking part in one of these sessions where we will present and discuss Thames Water's business plan for 2025-2050.

Before you take part, we need you to read through this pre-task which is all laid out on the following pages. It has been designed to take no longer than 20 minutes of your time and you will receive a separate incentive for doing this.

The pack includes six tasks for you to read through and then a few questions to answer at the end. Some of the information about your water company may be new to you but please be reassured that you don't need to understand everything. If you have questions, then please type them in as you go along in the space provided. We will collate any questions/responses and we can recap at the beginning of the session.

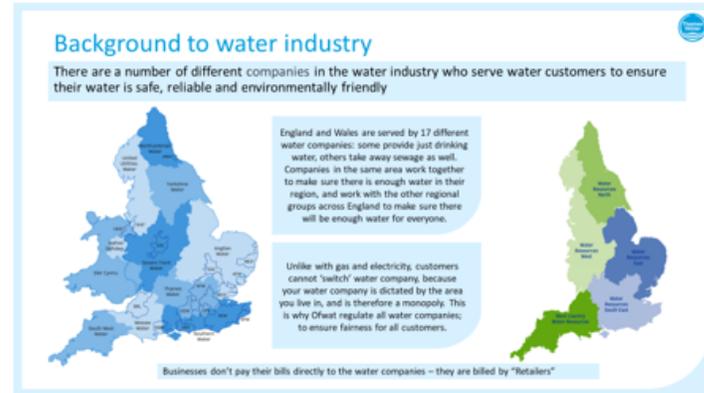
If you have any technological issues related to this platform, then please contact julian.hollo-tas@accent-mr.com.

We are really looking forward to meeting you.

Susie and the rest of the research team

Introduction to Task One

On the first slide there is a map of England and Wales that shows Thames Water's operating area:



Background to water industry

There are a number of different companies in the water industry who serve water customers to ensure their water is safe, reliable and environmentally friendly

England and Wales are served by 17 different water companies: some provide just drinking water, others take away sewage as well. Companies in the same area work together to make sure there is enough water in their region, and work with the other regional groups across England to make sure there will be enough water for everyone.

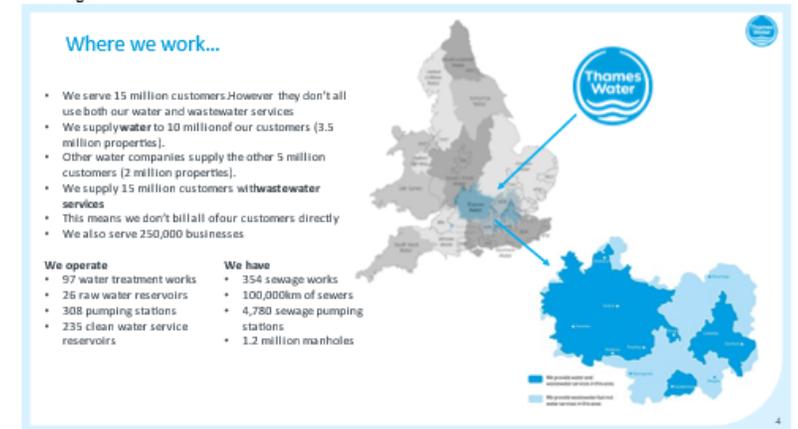
Unlike with gas and electricity, customers cannot 'switch' water company, because your water company is dictated by the area you live in, and is therefore a monopoly. This is why Ofwat regulate all water companies to ensure fairness for all customers.

Businesses don't pay their bills directly to the water companies – they are billed by "Retailers"

If you have any questions then please write in the space below.

Introduction to Task Two

Next you will see some key facts about the customers that Thames Water serves and the infrastructure that it manages:



Where we work...

- We serve 15 million customers. However they don't all use both our water and wastewater services
- We supply water to 10 million of our customers (3.5 million properties).
- Other water companies supply the other 5 million customers (2 million properties).
- We supply 15 million customers with wastewater services
- This means we don't bill all of our customers directly
- We also serve 250,000 businesses

We operate

- 97 water treatment works
- 26 raw water reservoirs
- 308 pumping stations
- 235 clean water service reservoirs

We have

- 354 sewage works
- 100,000km of sewers
- 4,780 sewage pumping stations
- 1.2 million manholes

If you have any questions then please write in the space below.

Pre-task: Future HH

Introduction to Task Three

This provides a bit of background on why Thames Water wants to hear from you:

The role of research

Ofwat & business plan	Customer's priorities	Research matters
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ofwat (Water Services Regulation Authority) is a non-ministerial government department. They are responsible for making sure that water companies are regulated to provide consumers with a good quality and efficient service at a fair price. Every five years, water companies develop a 'business plan' that sets out how they want to develop their services, and the proposed cost to customers. As customers are not able to choose their water company, water companies must give them a say about what they want from their services and the price they pay. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Talking to customers also helps water companies prioritise what to do first or what to do most of – because they are not able to fund everything they would like to do or do all of the things that customers might want them to do. The business plan and prices are then finalised by Ofwat in a process known as the Price Review. There is more information about this here: 'All about the price review'. Available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QWmivCS3AF8 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> One of the ways that people have their say is through this research, which will explain what the long term plans are for where you live, and ask what you think – whether the plans are 'acceptable' to you and whether you can afford the example bills from 2025/2050. Companies also have to show to Ofwat that their plans reflect what their customers want – that means refining the plans based on what customers tell them.

The water industry today

<p>Water companies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Take water from the environment (e.g. rivers), treat it so it's safe to drink, and return it safely to the environment after use. Build and maintain infrastructure (like pipes) to supply water to homes and businesses. 	<p>Drinking Water Inspectorate (DWI)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Makes sure the water supplied in England and Wales is safe and that drinking water quality is acceptable for customers. 	<p>CCW Consumer Council for Water</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Represent customers on matters relating to water. Investigate complaints and provide advice to ensure water services remain fair for customers.
<p>Environment Agency</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Protects and enhances the environment. Works with water companies to ensure operations and plans develop in a sustainable way. 	<p>Defra Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The UK Government department responsible for protecting the environment and countryside, including water. 	<p>Ofwat Office of Water Services</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A regulator that makes sure water companies do their job properly, including fair pricing for customers and ensuring there is always a reliable water supply.

If you have any questions then please write in the space below.

Introduction to Task Four

The next slide shows you what Thames Water does and the service it provides:

Thames Water and the water cycle

Thames Water takes water from rivers and natural underground stores and turns it into high quality drinking water. It then delivers the drinking water through a water pipe network to homes and businesses. Once the water has been used (i.e., wastewater that goes down sinks and toilets) it is collected in the sewer network. It ends up at sewage treatment works where the water is treated and safely returned to rivers.

What does Thames Water do?

Water	Wastewater and rivers	Customer Service
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Extract water from rivers and aquifers Clean water so it is safe to use Deliver water to household and business taps Help customers to use less water Make sure there is enough water in future 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Take wastewater away (i.e. sewage) Treat and recycle wastewater Return water to rivers Clean up sewage floods and blockages Prevent pollution from sewers and sewage works Produce and use renewable energy 	<p><i>Household only</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Produce and send bills to customers Road water meters to produce accurate bills Make it easy for customers to contact Thames Water Deal with requests, queries and complaints Provide customers with helpful information Support customers that need extra help

If you have any questions then please write in the space below.

Pre-task: Future HH

Introduction to Task Five

Please take a look at this slide. It tells you about your water bill and how every £1 of your bill is spent across, for example, water and wastewater running costs, and investment to improve infrastructure for the future:



If you have any questions then please write in the space below.

Introduction to Task Six

The information has probably given you an impression of the water company operating in your area to supply water and/or to manage the removal of wastewater. If 10 is 'very interesting' and 0 is 'very unimpressed', how are you feeling about your water company. Please write a sentence or two explaining your view:

As we mentioned at the beginning of this pre-task, we will start the session discussing your reactions to the information you have just seen. As you've read through it, please list the 3 or 4 things that are new / interesting / surprising to you:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

Please have these to hand during the research group discussion

We are looking forward to meeting you. If you have any questions before the session please contact us at: julian.hollo-tas@accent-mr.com.

See you very soon.

Susie and the rest of the research team
Accent Research Team

Recruitment Materials

Recruitment Questionnaire - HH

IF WATER THANK & CLOSE

Q7. Are you responsible, either jointly or solely, for paying your household's water bill?

Yes, solely **THANK AND CLOSE**

Yes, jointly **THANK AND CLOSE**

No **PROCEED WITH RECRUITMENT**

Q7b. Do you know who supplies water services where you live?

Thames Water **RECRUIT FOR THAMES/THAMES**

Affinity Water **RECRUIT FOR AFFINITY/THAMES**

Another water company **THANK AND CLOSE**

No, don't know **PROCEED TO Q7C AND CHECK POSTCODE.**

Q7c. What is your postcode? We are looking for participants in specific areas to take part in this research, and your postcode will be used to ensure you are in scope for this research.

Capture postcode

CHECK POSTCODE TO ENSURE THAT PARTICIPANT IS IN THE CORRECT GEOGRAPHY FOR THE EVENT BEING RECRUITED TO

Q8. How old are you? **CODE AGE GROUP BELOW**

1. Under 18 **THANK & CLOSE**

2. 18-25

3. 26-29 **THANK & CLOSE**

4. 30-34 **THANK & CLOSE**

5. 35-44 **THANK & CLOSE**

6. 45-64 **THANK & CLOSE**

7. 65 or older **THANK & CLOSE**

8. Refused **THANK & CLOSE**

Q9. Which of the following most closely matches your current study/work situation?

1. In an apprenticeship

2. At university (undergraduate or post graduate studies)

3. Working full- or part-time

4. Not currently working (unemployed, taking a break from education (gap year, etc.)

5. Other, write in:

6. Prefer not to answer **THANK AND CLOSE**

AIM TO RECRUIT A MIX ACROSS ALL CATEGORIES

Q10. Which of the following best describes your situation?

1. I live in student accommodation and water bills are included within my payments

2. I am a student and a parent/guardian pays my water bill

3. I live with parent(s)/guardian(s) and they are responsible for paying the water bill

4. I live in shared accommodation and someone else is responsible for paying the water bill

5. I live in rented accommodation and water bills are included within my rent

6. Other, write in:

7. Prefer not to say **THANK AND CLOSE**

8. **AIM TO RECRUIT A MIX ACROSS ALL CATEGORIES**

Q11. Are you...

1. Male

2. Female

3. Prefer to self-identify/I describe my gender differently

4. Prefer not to say

CHECK QUOTAS, ASSIGN THOSE WITH CODES 3 AND 4 AS APPROPRIATE

Q12. To which of these ethnic groups do you consider you belong to?

WHITE

1. British

2. Irish

3. Any other White background

MIXED

4. White and Black Caribbean

5. White and Black African

6. White and Asian

7. Any other Mixed background

ASIAN OR ASIAN BRITISH

8. Indian

9. Pakistani

10. Bangladeshi

11. Any other Asian background

BLACK OR BLACK BRITISH

12. Caribbean

13. African

14. Any other Black background

CHINESE OR OTHER ETHNIC GROUP

15. Chinese

16. Any other ethnic group

17. Prefer not to say.

AIM FOR A MIX

Thank you. As I have said, the research will consist of:

- **First stage:** a homework exercise which should take no more than 20 minutes to complete
- **Second stage:** taking part in 2 hour online group on Zoom

You will receive a total of £100 including completing both the first and second stages of the research.

Would you be willing to commit yourself to both stages of the process to help inform Thames Water's future plans?

Yes **PROCEED TO 'PRE-TASK' SECTION**

No **THANK AND CLOSE**

PRE-TASK

ADVISE PARTICIPANT ABOUT PRE-TASKS: We will email details outlining the Stage 1 homework exercises. This **must** be completed before you attend the online session, but it shouldn't take too long to complete and hopefully you will find it interesting and informative.

We will be asking you to download an app onto your mobile device for completion of the homework exercises. The app is quick and fun to use and you will be incentivised fully for your commitment to each part.

VERY IMPORTANT. INTERVIEWER: PLEASE TICK TO CONFIRM YOU HAVE EXPLAINED ALL ABOUT THE PRE-TASK.

Q13. IS THE PARTICIPANT CLEAR ABOUT THE PRE-TASK?

Yes

No **THEN RE-EXPLAIN**

Q14. DID THE PARTICIPANT SAY THEY WOULD DO THE PRE-TASK?

Yes

No **THEN PERSUADE POLITELY AND REITERATE REQUIREMENTS**

Q15. WILL THE PRE-TASK BE COMPLETED VIA THE APP

Email/App **COLLECT EMAIL ADDRESS**

ASK ALL: DATA COLLECTION AND SHARING CONSENT

DATA COLLECTION & SHARING CONSENT

The online discussion may be joined by representatives of Thames Water and/or their independent customer challenge group, so they can watch the discussion and learn as much from it as possible. They will not participate in the discussion directly but will be on hand to answer any technical questions, if required.

The discussion will be recorded for analysis purposes and to ensure accuracy. All recordings will be securely stored for a period of 12 months (for reference purposes) before being destroyed, and will not be shared with anyone outside the research teams.

In our reporting of the findings from this research everything that you say will remain confidential and will be reported in grouped format only.

Please confirm that is OK.

Yes **CONTINUE**

No **HOLD IN RESERVE OR THANK AND CLOSE**

Recruitment Questionnaire - HH

Q16. How proficient would you say you are at using Zoom?

- I feel very confident about using Zoom **GO TO 17**
I feel quite confident about Zoom **GO TO Q17**
I don't feel confident about using Zoom **THANK AND CLOSE**

Q17. Do you have access to a desktop or laptop computer, or a large-format tablet (such as an iPad with a large screen), which is connected to a reliable and stable internet connection, on which you could take part in a Zoom interview? **Please note that you will NOT be permitted to take part in the research on Zoom using a smartphone. Taking part in the research will involve reviewing materials onscreen and a smartphone is simply too small to do this properly.**

- Yes
No **THANK AND CLOSE**

Q18. The Zoom Group will take place on:

THAMES-THAMES

Date	Time	Place
Tues 5 th Sept	20.00 - 22.00	Online

Or

Date	Time	Place
Weds 6 th Sept	17.30 - 19.30	Online

Affinity -Thames

Or

Date	Time	Place
Thurs 7 th Sept	20.00 - 22.00	Online

Would you be able to attend? reassure & persuade

IF PARTICIPANT AGREES, CONFIRM DATE AND TIME then continue:

If for any reason you find you are unable to attend, please could you let me know as soon as possible so that we can invite someone else to take your place?

RECRUITER: Please ensure you have filled in the cover page of the RQ, including email address and mobile number of participant then complete the following confirmations.

THANK PARTICIPANT FOR THEIR HELP IN THIS RESEARCH

Recruiter Confirmations

RECRUITER – VERY IMPORTANT – PLEASE TICK TO CONFIRM YOU FULLY READ OUT THE DATA SHARING AND CONSENT QUESTION, AND THAT IT MADE SENSE TO BOTH YOU AND THE PARTICIPANT.

Yes

Q19. **IS THE PARTICIPANT CLEAR ABOUT THE PRE-TASK & DID THEY SAY THEY WOULD COMPLETE IT?**

Clear
Will complete

MRS DECLARATION

Q20. I confirm that this interview was conducted under the terms of the MRS Code of Conduct and is completely confidential

INTERVIEWER'S SIGNATURE:

THANK PARTICIPANT FOR THEIR HELP IN THIS RESEARCH

INTERVIEWER: PLEASE ENSURE YOU REMOVE THIS PAGE BEFORE RETURNING THIS RECRUITMENT QUESTIONNAIRE TO ACCENT

PROPERTY NAME OR NUMBER	
2 ND LINE OF ADDRESS	
TOWN/VILLAGE	
POSTCODE	

Recontact recruitment email

Thames Water B2B Online Focus Group invitation, from Accent Research (Mon 4th)



Julian Hollo-Tas

To

Bcc derhirhie@gmail.com; jssian@btinternet.com; Paulrogers1974@btinternet.com; Wazmerchant@icloud.com; ramesh_pal04@yahoo.co.in; ozulyn@aol.com; talibj123@gmail.com; 1nadiamansoor@gmail.com; bengeorgiou@gmail.com; oliver.morris@ymail.com; abz-s@live.co.uk; aramidefadora@gmail.com; adriane.janes@googlemail.com; davidhammant@dhphotoservices.com; d.jameson@hotmail.com; **+2 others**



Fri 01/09/2023 11:05



Dear Participant,

Back in late April/early May, you were kind enough to attend a workshop in which we discussed Thames Water's 5 year business plans. Thank you very much for your help and feedback.

Thames Water are continuing the research, this time looking further forward (at the period 2025 to 2050).

The plans for this period are a little less defined, so will be discussed in less detail (meaning the event will only be 2 hours, and without a pretask), but there are still important priority setting discussions to be had and we would value your input.

The focus group will be conducted [online, via Zoom](#) (so you would need a large screen device such as a computer or large tablet – we will be reviewing stimulus material in the same way as we did in May, so **it is not possible to take part on a mobile phone**).

The event is being held: **Monday 4th September, 18:30-20:30.**

You would be paid **£150** for your time were you able to attend and are selected to participate.

We would be very grateful if you would let us know if you are interested in attending.

With best wishes,

Julian,

For and on behalf of the Thames Water Research Team

Key Stimulus shown

Thank you



It's everyone's water

Full details of research design and methodology are available upon request.

Accent conforms to the requirements of ISO 20252:2019



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