



SSC15 Your Water Your Say: You Said We Did

Ofwat gave water and wastewater companies the following guidance on hosting 'Your water, your say' sessions in early 2023:

We expect each water and wastewater company to carry out two 'Your water, your say' sessions:

- *one during development of its PR24 business plan (the 'phase 1' session which took place between March and June 2023); and*
- *one following submission of its PR24 plan (in October or November 2023) – the 'phase 2' session.*

Each 'Your water, your say' session will allow customers and other stakeholders to pose questions to their water company about issues that are important to them, including priorities for the future, in a public environment.

This document sets out the concerns raised by customers and stakeholders in our first 'Your water, your say' session hosted in June 2023, and how we have addressed these concerns in our business plan for 2025 to 2030, and in our long-term delivery strategy for 2025 to 2050. We will hold a second 'Your water, your say' session on 7th November 2023, following the submission of our business plan, to show customers and stakeholders how they have influenced our final submission.

South Staffs and Cambridge Water – ‘Your Water, Your Say’

You said, we did

Row	You said	We did
1.	<p>Customers are worried about the impacts locally on their chalk streams and the license held by water companies to take water out of aquifers. What are South Staffs and Cambridge Water (SSC) going to do about it?</p>	<p>We will invest £19 million to deliver our environmental obligations. This includes implementing river enhancement and restoration projects for seven chalk streams in our Cambridge region as part of our WINEP obligations. We used insight from environmental groups to develop a ten-year programme of river restoration measures for these chalk streams in Cambridge.</p> <p>Our Cambridge region is in one of the driest parts of the country. This means there are significant challenges that could affect how much water we have available to meet demand. We have identified two alternative water supply options to address these challenges. The first is a transfer of water from Anglian Water’s Grafham reservoir, which will potentially deliver 26 million litres of water a day into our Cambridge region. The cost of this scheme is currently £12.43 million. We are also working in partnership with Anglian Water to build a new reservoir in the Cambridgeshire Fens. This will deliver around 43.5 million litres of water a day into our Cambridge region from the late 2030s. When complete, the total cost of this scheme is likely to be around £1.96 billion.</p>
2.	<p>With the planned increase of over 100,000 people in south Cambridgeshire alone and increases elsewhere in the region, how can SSC assure us that the current plan for new sources is sufficient?</p>	<p>By 2045, the population in our Cambridge region is forecast to increase by 32%, with 46,040 new homes expected to be built. Over the same time frame, the population in our South Staffs region is forecast to increase by 22%, with 125,000 new homes expected to be built.</p> <p>Transfer from Anglian Water’s Grafham reservoir. This option will deliver up to 26 Ml/d into our Cambridge region. The scheme is dependent on the construction of Anglian Water’s Grafham to Rede strategic pipeline, which has around 26 Ml/d capacity until 2040. This 26 Ml/d will be available upon the completion of the Grand Union Canal option under development by Affinity Water that will enable the company to reduce the volume of water it currently takes from Grafham (currently scheduled to be 2032). The pipeline will be constructed through our operating area and connecting to it will enable us to take advantage of this spare capacity. The cost of this scheme is currently £12.43 million, with the pipework installation and connections delivered through our AMP8 delivery partners.</p> <p>We are developing new water sources such as the Fens reservoir with Anglian Water (mentioned in row 1) to supply customers in our Cambridge region. It also means making the most of our existing water sources and encouraging developers to install water recycling systems to help customers reduce how much they use in their homes and businesses. The new reservoir will help us to meet the twin challenges of climate change and population growth. In addition, it will mean less water is taken from environmentally sensitive water sources – specifically, the chalk aquifer that feeds the rare chalk stream habitats that are a feature of our Cambridge region. So, it will also help us to protect and enhance the environment.</p> <p>Our ‘Water efficiency in faith and diverse communities’ project aims to address a gap in the water efficiency support measures offered to different faiths and cultures. It will address the need to reduce PCC</p>

		and protect the environment to meet the future twin challenges of climate change and population growth. It will also help to build trust and social cohesion by enhancing how we engage and support those communities that may not be aware of the support available to help them, or that may not be confident to come forward because of language or cultural barriers.
3.	Why don't SSC encourage reduced usage by having a very low rate for people's initial usage and above that, massively ramp charges up?	We will trial an essential use discount for customers who are above the income threshold for our Assure social tariff, but who are still struggling to pay their water bills. The tariff will be based on the number of people living in a property and will offer discounts for water use of 110 litres per person per day, with standard charges applying for discretionary use above this. We will also support customers on the trial with additional water efficiency advice.
4.	Where does grey water recycling come into the agenda for SSC?	Greywater recycling is an option for our Cambridge region in our water resources management plan. Retrofitting these systems is very costly and means there are other options that deliver water saving benefits cheaper and so it does not get selected in our plan in the short term. We are working with developers and local planning authorities to see how fitting these systems could be incentivised at build stage where it is more cost effective to do so. We are also working with Defra and the DWI to ensure the legislation in place for these type of developments enables them to operate as designed so they do not need to be treated to drinking water standard where they are used for activities such as flushing toilets. These elements mean that there are still some key challenges to work through before we can look to build further on our development at Eddington, but we're working closely with all parties to see how we can all work together to make these options more widely considered.
5.	How have SSC communicated information about their plans that focus on behavioral change and saving water to Cambridge residents? Customers are worried that people are not aware of the urgency of the situation.	<p>In AMP7, we have launched an awareness-raising campaign across our Cambridge and South Staffs regions, using television commercials and social media to encourage customers to 'waste not one drop' and use water wisely. We also launched a 'Can for the Cam' campaign in our Cambridge region to encourage more customers to swap their hosepipes for a watering can, helping them to save water and protect the rare chalk stream habitats that are a feature of the Cambridgeshire landscape.</p> <p>Additionally, in May 2023 we were delighted to be announced as one of the winners of the Water Breakthrough Challenge (Catalyst Stream) – the latest competition for funding from Ofwat's £200 million Innovation Fund. We were awarded £270,000 for a diversity-led water efficiency project.</p> <p>Working with a range of partners, including Waterwise, Hindu Climate Action, Cambridge Central Mosque, Cambridge University's Divinity Department and other water companies, our project focuses on establishing a deeper understanding of how water is used and valued in different faiths and cultures. This will help us to help our customers reduce their water usage.</p> <p>We think our project will help us to develop sustainable ways to engage with diverse and faith communities. This will help us meet our PCC target of 110 l/p/d by 2050, as well as our short-term demand requirements. It also strongly aligns with and supports Ofwat's strategic PR24 theme of driving improvements through efficiency and innovation. This is because it will enable us to develop and test new interventions to deliver the services customers and society will value, now and in the future. By recognising the needs of our diverse communities, the project will provide other water companies within the sector with an academically rigorous evidence base to ensure the</p>

		most appropriate interventions are used to support customers from similar communities.
6.	Do SSC have any plans to make better use of Blithfield reservoir? There used to be an education center that closed some years ago. Are there any plans to open the center again as educating future generations is important in saving water?	Educating future customers and generations is incredibly important to us. We have no further plans to use the education centre at Blithfield reservoir, as schools are more accepting of our education programme when their children can learn in their own classrooms, as this is easier for staff, children and parents. It has been more productive for our education coordinator to go into schools to educate children than to bring them to the reservoir.
7.	How are SSC going to reduce leakage? Over what period of time, and how much will this cost?	<p>We are committed to delivering ambitious leakage reductions – 20% in our Cambridge region and 15% in our South Staffs region, which have been increased from an 8% reduction in leakage in our South Staffs region and a 18% reduction in leakage in our Cambridge region after our ‘Your Water, Your Say’ session with customers and stakeholders. This will take place from 2025 to 2030.</p> <p>We will spend £10m on our leakage reduction programme from 2025 to 2030, and as we reduced our leakage levels, maintenance costs of the improved position increase too.</p>
8.	What is your ambition for reducing SSC’s carbon impact on the environment?	<p>To help combat the impact of global warming, we have committed to play our part to help the water sector in England and Wales achieve net zero operational carbon emissions by 2030.</p> <p>We will invest £7.2 million in ground-mounted photovoltaic electricity generating assets at key sites across our South Staffs region to help us reduce our scope 1 and 2 carbon emissions. Essentially, scope 1 emissions are those controlled directly by us, while scope 2 emissions arise as a result of activities that relate to our operations but that are not directly controlled by us – for example, emissions released from the energy we purchase. We will also continue to drive our net zero carbon ambitions through a combination of activities, including demand reductions, efficiency measures and corporate power purchase agreements (CPPAs).</p>
9.	<p>How much financial support in total in pounds are SSC proposing to make available to customers who are struggling to afford their water bills between 2025 and 2030, and how much or what percentage of that financial support will be funded from shareholder profits?</p> <p>What are the plans for low-income families, ie. any discount?</p>	<p>We will spend £25m over the 5 years from 2025 to 2030 on social tariff support, the average discount being £84-87 per customer per year.</p> <p>We currently offer the following financial support options for customers.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our Assure social tariff, which is available to customers whose household income is less than £19,050 a year. Eligible customers receive a 60% discount on their water bills in the first year and a 40% discount in the second. • Our Assure Assist tariff for customers who have no income coming into the home and who have applied for Universal Credit. In the first year, eligible customers receive a 100% discount for eight weeks, followed by a 60% discount for 44 weeks. The discount in the second year is 40%. • The WaterSure tariff for customers who have a water meter and receive income-related benefits, and who need to use a lot of water – for example, because of medical reasons. Customers on

		<p>WaterSure pay for the water they use up to a fixed maximum, which will be no higher than the average household water bill.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Payment breaks, which are available for customers who may need a short break from paying their water bills – for example, because of a significant temporary change in financial circumstances. We currently allow payment breaks of up to three months. • Our new ‘text to pay’ service, whereby we text eligible customers, prompting them to make a payment as a way of encouraging regular bill payment habits. <p>The ongoing cost-of-living crisis means it is more important than ever to keep our bills affordable and help those customers who need additional help. We will continue to offer our Assure social tariff and other financial support packages. By 2030, we want around 60,000 customers a year to benefit from these services. We will also launch a ‘pay what you can’ online tool to give eligible customers the ability to reduce the amount they pay, indicating to us that they might need additional help or support.</p> <p>We will build on the support we already provide to customers through our Priority Services Register. This includes increasing communication with customers to make them aware of the support packages we offer. We will also partner with local and national charities to highlight other types of support that may be available. And we will make the process of applying for our Assure social tariff easier as part of a wider ‘help when you need it’ programme.</p> <p>We understand the importance of giving customers greater choice and control over their water bills and are continuing to align our approach with CCW’s affordability review. We will continue to invest in technology to support this approach to give our customers more options, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • increasing the payment choices available, such as using QR codes on bills and ApplePay; • implementing a new 24/7 self-serve approach, enabling customers to make payments and changes to their accounts at a time that best suits them; • offering flexible options to spread payments across a 12-month period to suit customers’ individual circumstances; and • implementing an online, sliding scale flexible payment tool, giving customers who want to self-serve and spread the cost of their water bills over 12 months the opportunity to do so in a discrete way.
10.	<p>What is the plan for the role out of smart meters, so everyone pays a fair share subject to the safeguard for the vulnerable?</p>	<p>We will install 31,000 water meters a year to take metering levels across our Cambridge and South Staffs regions from 53% currently to around 76% by 2030. Our aim is to get as close as possible to 100% metered properties by 2035. Key to the success of this initiative is making sure we put plans in place to help customers through the transition from unmeasured to metered charges.</p> <p>We are mindful that there are customers across our Cambridge and South Staffs regions who oppose the idea of universal metering. We will make sure we put plans in place to help these customers through the transition, with a particular focus on supporting those in circumstances that may make them vulnerable. So, before we are due to install meters in an area, we will provide customers with detailed information packs, explaining more about the transition process and giving advice on water efficiency and payment support options. We</p>

		<p>will also engage with customers on our PSR, tailoring our support as appropriate.</p> <p>We understand that some customers may be worried about switching to metered charges, even though, on average, each household that switches could save up to £100 a year. We will give customers a two-year grace period before switching. We will also share information with customers that shows them the potential savings of switching to a meter. Our innovative essential use tariff described in row 3 will also help customers on low and middle incomes.</p> <p>We have taken learnings from the CCW and Scope workshop around supporting consumers with disabilities who may not be able to reduce how much water they use. We will take every step to make sure we have a bespoke process to provide extra help when it is needed. Along with proactive identification and communication with customers on our PSR, we will also work with local charities and third-party organisations to identify further support options.</p>
11.	<p>What additional resources are being applied to customer services at South Staffs and Cambridge?</p>	<p>Recognising that different customers want to engage with us in different ways, we will invest £3 million to increase our digital and self-service offerings. We will also continue to offer more traditional communication methods for those customers who prefer to engage with us in this way.</p> <p>For customers who do not want to or cannot contact us virtually, we will increase our community presence, focusing on our mobile approach to engagement. This includes creating pop-up hubs that will operate across the South Staffs region, using data to identify the most appropriate locations. We will also offer home visits for customers who need more tailored advice and support. And we will target engagement with traditionally hard-to-reach communities, using insight from our innovative diversity-led water efficiency project to support this.</p>