

A large circular graphic composed of various white line-art icons on a teal background. The icons include a person with a headset, a cloud with circuit lines, a "net zero" label with a leaf, a water drop with a checkmark, a target, a water meter, a person at a presentation, a hand holding a water drop, a family, a leaf, a person, a water drop with a gear, and a glass of water. The central text is overlaid on a white circle within this graphic.

# APPENDIX SES013 HOUSEHOLD CUSTOMER STRATEGY

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# APPENDIX SES013 HOUSEHOLD CUSTOMER STRATEGY

Our customer strategy describes the link between customer engagement and the ambitions and priorities set out in our Long-Term Delivery Strategy (LTDS) and PR24 plan.

We explain how we will go about understanding our customers' needs, preferences and behaviours and how we will involve them in what we are doing so that we can design services and plans that truly meet or exceed their expectations.

We also describe how we will embed a customer-centric culture and work to deliver excellent service as the foundations to rebuilding trust and partner with our customers as we set about delivering our ambitions.

## A. Introduction

1. In our LTDS we set out our ambition to build the trust of our customers, so they value water and the service we provide and are willing to play an active role in helping us tackle the challenges facing our local environment and water supplies. We know that we must work hard to demonstrate to our customers that we are delivering value for consumers and regain their trust. We also know that while there is much that we must and will do as a water company, we also need the support and active engagement of our customers as we work to achieve our long-term ambitions and the performance commitments that we are making for PR24.
2. We have designed our Long-Term Delivery Strategy and delivery plan for the period from 2025 to 2030 with the input of over 4,000 Household and Non-household customers. We will engage with them on an ongoing basis as we evolve our delivery plans over the period through to 2050, so that we understand how their views and priorities are changing and can ensure that we continue to deliver value in their eyes.
3. As we have shaped our plan for PR24, we have carefully considered how we will need to work with our customers to achieve our ambitious goals. We have used this to design our customer strategy for PR24 which describes how we will work with customers so that we can deliver the outcomes that we know are most important to them and partner with them to achieve our long-term goals.
4. We summarise the activity required with our customers across each of our key priority areas in the table below, before going on to describe our approach to customer engagement and the strategic objectives that we have identified to support delivery.



**Table 1: Customer activity required to deliver our priorities and performance commitments.**

Priority area	Performance commitments	Customer activity
Priority area #1: Provision of high-quality water from sustainable sources	<p>CRI</p> <p>Customer contacts about water quality</p> <p>Water softening</p>	<p>Educating customers about how to keep their water safe and proactively letting them know about work we are doing can help reduce contacts about water quality</p> <p>Working with schools, colleges, and nurseries to deliver our customer-focused lead replacement programme and identify wider support need by schools</p>
Priority area #2: Deliver a resilient water supply from source to tap and minimise wastage	<p>Unplanned outage</p> <p>Water supply interruptions</p> <p>Leakage</p> <p>Mains repairs</p> <p>D-MeX</p>	<p>Proactive engagement when water supplies are interrupted to support customers, address concerns and increase service satisfaction</p> <p>Helping customers identify customer-side leakage and working with them to help them identify and fix any leaks on their property</p>
Priority area #3: Help reduce water footprint and charge a fair, affordable price	<p>PCC</p> <p>Business demand</p> <p>C-MeX</p> <p>BR-MeX</p> <p>D-MeX</p>	<p>Educating customers and future bill payers about why water saving matters</p> <p>Building trust so customers engage with us positively and take action to reduce PCC</p> <p>Actively listening to our customers so that we understand and address their concerns through the service that we deliver</p> <p>Proactively letting customers know about problems and what we are doing to put them right</p> <p>Raising awareness about the help and support we offer and making it easier for customers to access it</p>
Priority area #4: Improve the environment and have a positive impact on our local area	<p>Operational GHG emissions</p> <p>Biodiversity</p> <p>Serious pollution incidents</p> <p>Discharge permit compliance</p>	<p>Making customers aware of our plans for biodiversity gains and generating support</p> <p>Working with local communities to promote career opportunities and create good quality jobs in our area</p> <p>Building local partnerships and giving back to our local communities, with a focus on broadening our reach to include diverse groups and those we have traditionally found it harder to reach</p>

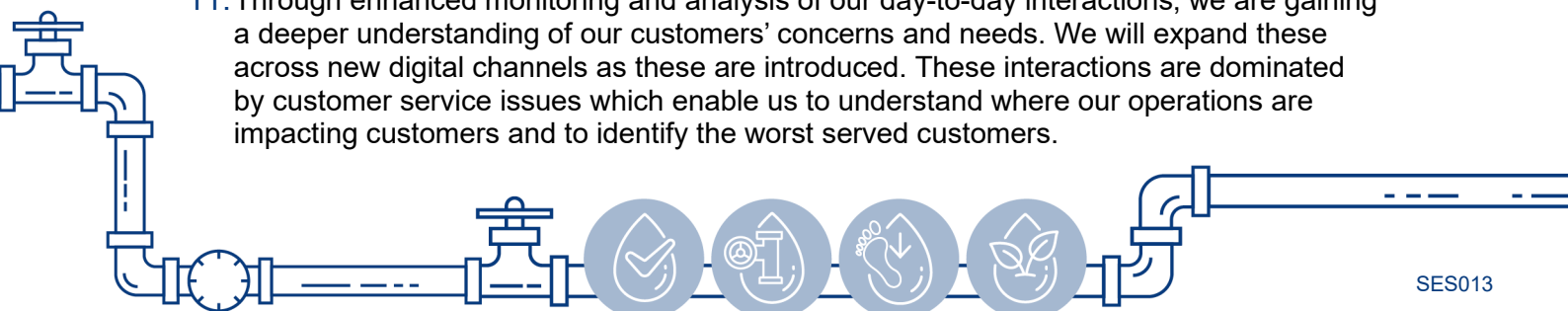


## B. How we engage with our customers and communities

5. Good quality engagement with our customers is fundamental to being able to achieve our objectives. Building on our customer engagement programme for PR19 and the learnings from it, we have made significant progress in improving our approach and have conducted a robust programme of activity on an ongoing basis that has contributed to the development of this plan. Our Customer Scrutiny Panel have commented on the quality of our work in their Final Assurance Report (Appendix SES040).
6. We have brought in external expertise to create a new, dedicated Customer Insight and Analysis team to support this and embedded customer insight into our decision-making processes. This has enabled customers to play a more active role in our business planning, as well as integrating their feedback into the delivery of our services.
7. We will continue to engage with our customers to understand how their attitudes and priorities are evolving over time and work to involve them ever more actively in the design of our delivery programme in the coming period. Using our increased understanding of our customer demographics we will take a fully inclusive approach to this work, building links into our communities so that we listen to a diverse range of voices. We will share what we are hearing and how we have responded openly to build the trust of our communities.
8. We collect insight from a range of sources. These include business as usual activities such as post call survey feedback, regularly commissioned customer research, ad hoc market research and unprompted feedback from the public and via online review and social media comments. We look to maximise the value of this insight by:
  - Designing effective collection methods for the feedback and having a clear purpose as to why we are collecting it;
  - Understanding where there are gaps in the coverage;
  - Looking to collect feedback at different touchpoints in the customer journey;
  - Analysing the feedback for patterns and tracking trends over time to identify how customer sentiment changes and identify the causes;
  - Sharing the insight throughout the organisation to make informed decisions; and
  - Closing the loop with customers where possible, demonstrating that we are listening to them and encouraging more feedback from them.
9. Our engagement with customers takes place through:
  - Day-to-day interactions;
  - Customer forums and primary research; and
  - Proactive engagement across a range of channels
10. We have established mechanisms for insight to be formally shared across the business and monitor changes and trends closely, sharing them regularly with our Board.

### Day to day interactions

11. Through enhanced monitoring and analysis of our day-to-day interactions, we are gaining a deeper understanding of our customers’ concerns and needs. We will expand these across new digital channels as these are introduced. These interactions are dominated by customer service issues which enable us to understand where our operations are impacting customers and to identify the worst served customers.



12. Recent analysis shows the top three reasons for customers raising complaints by volume are:

- Charges, in particular the use and application of the rateable value as a method for charging customers. This complaint category has increased as the cost of living has increased and public awareness of potential savings through measured billing has increased. More customers are now actively asking for a meter and to be switched to measured billing faster.
- Debt recovery processes, especially around the reminder letters for payment. While the absolute volume of debt related complaints is high, the ratio of complaints to contacts is low.
- Communication and the need for clear accurate guidance from customer service agents. Making our communications clear and accessible to all is a key priority.

13. In Chapter 10 we describe the action we are taking to address these and our ambition to reduce the level of complaints per 10,000 customers.

**C-MeX and shadow surveys**

14. We analyse the detail provided from the C-MeX surveys to give us a deeper understanding of the common themes that our customers identify. We also commission a quarterly survey of 500 customers (100 of whom are classified as having vulnerabilities) to dig further into satisfaction with our service and operational performance. Both sources of data contribute to ongoing service delivery improvements for customers.

15. Our recent PR24 research into customer priorities has led to us adapting our quarterly survey to include expanded questions on the areas customers have identified.

16. We share our findings and analysis from both throughout the business and with our Customer Scrutiny Panel and Board members. We also discuss it at our quarterly Customer Committee which is attended by one of our Non-Executive Directors, our Chief Executive Officer, and other members of the Executive Leadership Team.

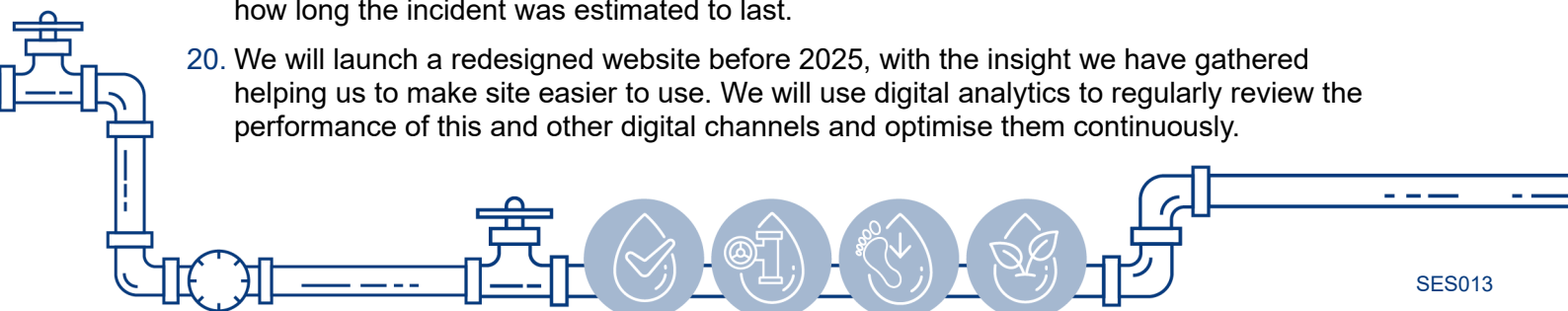
17. An example of how we have used feedback to improve our service was in October 2022 when analysis of survey responses highlighted an opportunity to improve satisfaction with our bereavement process. Customers (via the post call survey process) scored us just 8.5 out of 10. We used this feedback to redesign the process. After the new bereavement process went live, we achieved an average score of 10 out of 10.

**Analysis of website analytics**

18. Over the last year we have had 385,000 visits to our website. Customers, on average, spend 2:32 minutes per visit on our site. The main pages of interest beyond the home page are the Contact Us section, Pay your Bill via MyAccount and the Network Latest page, which provides updates on incidents and works in our area.

19. We use this insight to drive user experience improvements to our website and make it easier for customers to find the information they are looking for, particularly in an incident. As a result, when we had to issue a Precautionary Boil Water Notice to customers in the Westwood area in 2021, we found that 94% of all customers who visited the website during the incident were able to find the information they were looking for. Not only did this reduce call centre traffic, freeing teams up to speak to the customers who needed us most, but it also meant customers could easily keep up to date with status updates and how long the incident was estimated to last.

20. We will launch a redesigned website before 2025, with the insight we have gathered helping us to make site easier to use. We will use digital analytics to regularly review the performance of this and other digital channels and optimise them continuously.





### Gathering insight through regular forums and research

21. To deepen our understanding of our customers’ views, particularly in areas beyond day-to-day service matters, we conduct additional engagement through a combination of forums and primary research. This enables us to explore specific topics in more detail and helps inform our delivery plans, so they reflect customer preferences where possible.
22. Our “Talk on Water” online customer panel has over 200 members today. We post questions on a range of topics to the panel for discussion, but also respond to questions and issues that the panel raise so we can see what is spontaneously on their minds. One example from May 2023 is when the panel was asked to give views on our social media campaigns and which platforms and subjects would be most relevant/interesting. The responses informed our social media strategy and influenced the content creation, with 65% saying they were interested in local news and updates and 59% wanting service information. They were also clear that they did not want to see jobs or career vacancy adverts.
23. Where we require a more detailed understanding of customers’ views and insight on more strategic and long-term issues, we conduct primary research. This helps to inform our ongoing business planning and provided preliminary insight into the development of our business plan. It included customers’ views on managing drought, resilience, and net zero carbon emissions. Such research is always conducted by an independent research agency, accredited by the Market Research Foundation. The approach and findings have also been shared with our Customer Scrutiny Panel.
24. Ahead of the PR24 price review we reviewed our company purpose with the input of colleagues, customers, and other stakeholders. Our purpose is to harness the potential of water to enhance nature and improve lives and it influences everything we do. It enables us to make better, more consistent decisions, underpinning what we do and how we do it, both now and in the future. Our company culture and values are aligned to our purpose, enabling us to achieve our goals through our people.

### Engaging proactively with our customers through a range of channels

25. We have a well-established Communications function which continues to evolve to meet the changing needs of our customers and our business. Since 2020, we have increased our focus on proactive external communications and community engagement across a wider range of channels, enabling us to engage with customers on the platforms that they use and with content that is accessible. This year we have appointed our first ever Marketing Manager who is helping us to grow our capability in this key area and develop our channel and messaging strategies. We will invest in increasing our Marketing and Communications function to underpin the delivery of multiple ambitions in AMP8.
26. Our main campaign “Let’s Work Together” is designed to educate our customers about how we can help them reduce their water consumption through our water efficiency programme and support them with financial and other needs through the support schemes that we offer. We will also promote awareness of how we are working to improve the resilience of their water supply and what they can do themselves, the support we can offer with lead replacement and how we are working to create value in our communities and local environment beyond the delivery of our day-to-day service.
27. We have enhanced our use of digital channels and developed an online content strategy that is helping us to grow our audience and drive brand awareness and advocacy. This has included the launch of social media campaigns across Facebook and LinkedIn with material tailored for the audience. We have increased our use of videos and graphics to make our content more engaging and increase customer interaction. Since March 2023 we have seen a 42% increase in our followers on LinkedIn and a 34% increase our Facebook followers. Today we have 6,148 followers on LinkedIn, 778 on Facebook and 4,942 on X and will work to grow these audiences.



28. In autumn 2023 we will launch our new Instagram channel, which is designed to enable us to reach more younger customers and future bill payers across our supply area. We will add new channels such as Tik Tok in future, as we work to target customers we are not reaching today and our future bill payers.
29. We have also taken a fresh approach to building our relationship with and use of local media. We have established stronger relationships with local media contacts which has led to a step-change in our media coverage. In the summer of 2022, and more recently in 2023, we have regularly provided spokespeople to talk about the water resources situation, including on national broadcasts. Our proactive approach has resulted in 114 pieces of press coverage including 9 TV features and 21 interviews and quotes from us used. We are aiming for a 10% uplift this year.
30. In addition, we have been working as part of CCW’s Task and finish group to drive sector learning through a paid media campaign to raise awareness of the need for water saving across our area. Continuing to drive and apply best practice in this area is a key area of focus for us in PR24.

### Stakeholder engagement

31. We have mapped stakeholders across our supply area and reviewed how we engage with diverse groups, recognising their distinct roles and areas of interest. To help us target our engagement we have launched three new newsletters in addition to the easy-to-understand customer-facing documents that we already publish. They are:
  - Flow – a dedicated newsletter for schools focused on our education programme and the extra support we can give to schools across our area. This newsletter is one of the ways that we will communicate with schools about our free lead replacement programme;
  - Connected – a regular communication for our community and charity partners which focuses on areas such as extra help for customers in vulnerable circumstances, as well as practical advice around key topics so they can spread the word and help the communities they work with; and
  - Current – which is targeted at our political stakeholders, and other local and national groups providing more general company and industry updates.
32. We have established a dedicated panel made of up of representatives from local community organisations that support customers in vulnerable circumstances and those who are harder to reach. The panel meets three times a year to provide insight on the evolving needs of its clients and co-create solutions and services that enable us to meet those needs. We will use the panel’s position as a trusted intermediary to input into the development of our Vulnerability Strategy and then monitor its effectiveness.
33. Initial feedback on these initiatives has been positive. We are working to further deepen relationships and will evolve our strategy over time as we get a better understanding of how we can best drive mutual value.

### Community engagement and partnerships

34. We have always played an active role in the communities we serve by supporting local events and taking the opportunity to talk to our customers face to face. These are very important opportunities for us to listen to our customers and promote key messages around water efficiency, health and enhancing the environment. Our events programme has included events such as Run Gatwick and Run Reigate, as well as local events such as EcoFair and Cowpie Country Fair. Through our partnership with running events, we’ve provided water to runners directly from our supply to help prevent 48,000 plastic bottles from being used.

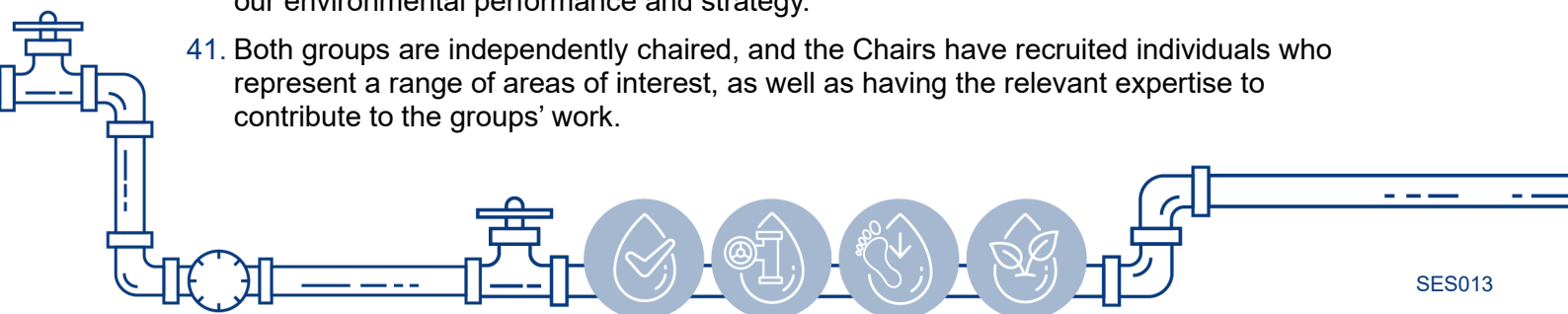




- 35. We explored what local community meant to our customers and stakeholders and how they felt we should engage as part of our Purpose research in spring 2021. Two strong themes that emerged were that not all communities are geographically based and that to be effective we need to engage with customers at a time and location that is relevant to them. We have used this insight to challenge ourselves to expand our programme of activity to different interest groups and beyond formal events. This year we have partnered with Pride Surrey for the first time and set up a stand at four local garden centres over the summer to talk to customers about water resilient gardening as well as the support schemes we offer for customers with vulnerabilities. In AMP8 we will continue to expand this approach, establishing a measure of how many customers within our supply area we have engaged with in different settings and challenging ourselves to at least double this over the 5-year period.
- 36. Our community outreach also encompasses partnerships with local groups and charities. In 2022/23 we donated £28,000 to local charities via the Community Foundation for Surrey. During the pandemic we connected the water supply at NHS Headley Court and provided volunteers to help construct more than 200 patient beds to expand capacity, an important part of the local response to Covid-19. This year we have already donated £12,000 directly to two charities – Orpheus and The Lucy Rayner Foundation – as we move our approach from charitable giving to more strategically integrated partnerships.
- 37. We provide all our employees with an opportunity to ‘Give a Day’ by volunteering for a local charity or community project. This includes our partnership with Orpheus, a local charity that prepares young disabled adults for independent living. Our employees give their time while learning more about the requirements and accessibility needs of customers such as these young people, and how we can better support them. 60 of the team worked to build a water efficient sensory garden for the centre last summer, equating to about 17% of the company. We will create more volunteering opportunities in the future aligned to our purpose, and report on this along with the number of hours that our employees give to the community in their free time through activities such as governorships.
- 38. We have also evolved the way in which we engage with customers during operational events. A strong example of this occurred in April 2023 when a water main in Kenley burst meaning that 530 homes had their water were interrupted for 25 hours. We took a proactive approach to communicating throughout. Once the water supply was restored, we surveyed the 530 properties to get customer feedback on what went well and where improvements could be made, with a separate survey for customers in vulnerable circumstances. In addition, a small team attended a pop-up meeting point in the local Co-op carpark to engage with residents and we worked with the local ward councillors to increase visibility.
- 39. The team received some great feedback as a result of this and were also able to update PSR details, as well as assist eligible customers to apply for our Water Support scheme. Building on this success we will ask for customer feedback and run engagement activity in the community after any incident in the future.

**Customer Challenge**

- 40. We recognise the importance of independent challenge of both our ongoing performance and our future plans. We maintained our Customer Scrutiny Panel (CSP) following PR19 and we established a dedicated Environmental Scrutiny Panel (ESP) that is scrutinising our environmental performance and strategy.
- 41. Both groups are independently chaired, and the Chairs have recruited individuals who represent a range of areas of interest, as well as having the relevant expertise to contribute to the groups’ work.

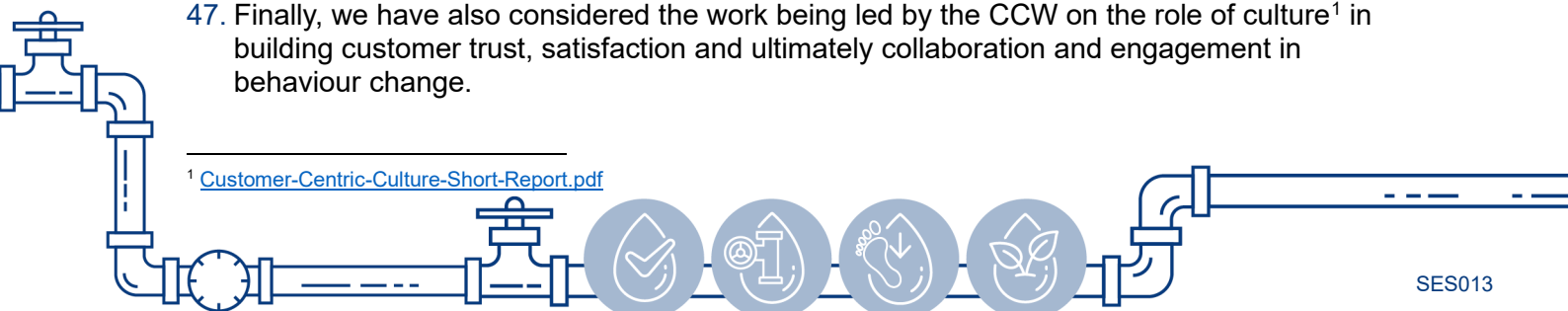


- 42. Our Customer Scrutiny Panel (CSP), chaired by Steve Crabb, reflects the interests and expectations of our customers. Steve is a specialist in consumer affairs with a particular focus on customers in vulnerable circumstances. He has previously held senior roles at British Gas and the Alzheimer’s Society, and currently holds several roles within the utilities sector, including leading the Water UK working group on data sharing between the water and energy sector. The panel meets on a quarterly basis to review company performance against performance commitments including C-MeX, support for customers in financial hardship and to scrutinise how we are understanding and meeting the needs of all our customers. The CSP has actively contributed to topics such as the development of our organisational purpose, the ongoing strengthening of our approach to customer engagement and how we can improve the quality of our communication with different types of customers.
- 43. Our Environmental Scrutiny Panel (ESP), chaired by Alison Thompson, provides constructive challenge on our environmental performance and the development of our environmental strategy. Alison is also an Academic Tutor for Cambridge University on the Postgraduate Sustainable Business Course and Deputy Chair and Independent Member of the Southern Regional Flood and Coastal Committee. Also meeting quarterly, the panel focuses on performance against our environmental targets and delivery of advancements relating to PCC reduction, net zero carbon and biodiversity. The group is helping us to identify and learn from work being done by others and consider areas where we want to show leadership and deliver on our purpose.

### C. How we have designed our customer strategy for PR24

- 44. In designing our customer strategy for PR24, we have reflected on the learnings from the work that we have done to date – what works well and where there is room for improvement. For example, using our enhanced understanding of the diverse communities across our supply area, we have identified that we are not reaching a proportionate number of customers in financial hardship in the London Boroughs relative to the level of social deprivation in these areas. As a result, we have developed new partnerships with community organisations in these areas such as the Sutton Citizen Advice Bureau and Job Centre Plus.
- 45. We have also considered the changing role that customer engagement needs to play in achieving our ambitions in the PR24 Business Plan period and through to 2050. Traditionally considered a low engagement category, the social and environmental challenges that we face require greater levels of customer engagement than ever before if we are to be successful. This means that we must transform the way that we engage with our customers as a water company, educating them about the threats to the resilient water supply that is taken for granted today and making it easy and attractive for them to change their behaviour in a positive way.
- 46. At the same time, the wider water sector is experiencing a reputational crisis with levels of trust in water companies falling. While we are not directly involved in many of the issues driving this issue as a water only company, many customers are not aware of the distinction while others connect us closely with their wastewater supply as we bill the 92.3% of customers served by Thames Water on their behalf. These circumstances also require us to work harder to understand the expectations and concerns of our customers and to be transparent about our performance and the issues we face so that we can rebuild trust.
- 47. Finally, we have also considered the work being led by the CCW on the role of culture<sup>1</sup> in building customer trust, satisfaction and ultimately collaboration and engagement in behaviour change.

<sup>1</sup> [Customer-Centric-Culture-Short-Report.pdf](#)



## Our strategic objectives

48. We have identified five strategic objectives that will support the delivery of our priorities and performance commitments in AMP8. They are:

- (a) Building customer-centric culture;
- (b) Understanding who our customers are;
- (c) Delivering service excellence;
- (d) Rebuilding trust; and
- (e) Changing behaviour

### D. Building a customer-centric culture

49. Building a customer-centric culture is important because it will ensure that we put our customers at the heart of the decisions and actions that we take across our whole business, consistently aligning our actions and those undertaken by our strategic delivery partners to our customers' interests.

50. Service is one of our five organisational values today. Our values are used to inform the design of our employee experience from recruitment through to the moment when people leave our business. We recruit for attitude and invest in developing our people, so they continue to build their customer service skills throughout their career with us and are equipped to meet our customers' evolving needs. Employees' delivery of our values forms part of our end of year performance assessments and contributes to the setting of management bonuses throughout the company, along with our delivery of our key customer pledges and performance commitments.

51. While we have many great examples of where individuals and teams have put our customers at the heart of their decision making, customers sometimes tell us that our service is inconsistent while employees tell us that our systems and processes do not always make it easy to work together to deliver the right outcomes. We want to create a shared understanding of our customer North Star and align our culture, operating model, systems and processes to this so we can improve this.

52. We have recently refreshed our service behaviours using customer feedback and the input of employees in frontline service roles in all parts of the organisation to create our service blueprint. These behaviours are:

- Get it right first time, every time;
- Make it easy for everyone;
- We own it, we fix it, we care; and
- Listen and keep communication flowing.

53. We will invest in developing our leaders at all levels in the business so that they are able to motivate and manage their teams to deliver great customer experiences. We will design our teams and processes around our end-to-end customer journeys, making it clear to each group how they contribute to our customer experience in their day-to-day jobs and empowering them to tackle the blockers and enablers they experience today. We have invested in new internal communications capability in AMP7 so we are better able to share and celebrate success when we get positive feedback and will relaunch our internal recognition scheme to reflect our service behaviours.

54. We are participating in CCW's Customer-Centric Culture working group and through this will develop our set of metrics measuring the progress of our work in this area. This will include measuring how empowered our employees feel to deliver our service value and behaviours.



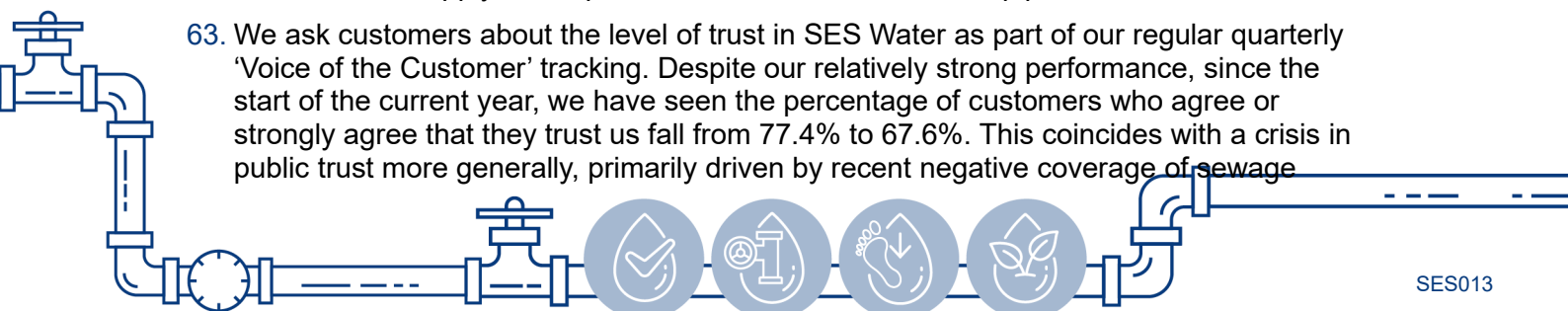
55. We will use our quarterly Customer Committee which is attended by our CEO and one of our Non-executive Directors to oversee the development and delivery of our overall customer strategy and culture metrics at Board level.

## E. Understanding who our customers are

56. Understanding who our customers are as well as their attitudes and service expectations is important because it enables us to design and deliver a service that they value and which meets their needs. It also enables us to understand how best to engage with them so we can partner with them in improving our service and delivering key outcomes such as reducing water consumption.
57. We have worked hard since the beginning of AMP7 to increase our understanding of who our customers are, including socio-demographic characteristics and attitudes to a wide range of topics such as digital uptake and environmental issues. This has resulted in a far more granular understanding than we have ever had before.
58. In Chapter 5: Our customers and their priorities and in Appendix SES014 we describe the make-up of our customer base. We have used this knowledge to drive our sampling approach for our PR24 customer engagement, as well as to inform operational decisions such as where we need to develop new partnerships to reach underrepresented customer groups and how to tailor our communications.
59. Through our Data Strategy, which is described in Appendix SES042, we will continue to invest in the acquisition and integration of third-party datasets and our own open data strategy to further enhance our understanding of customers in our supply area. We will use this augmented understanding to tailor the design of our services and communications to different customer segments and to proactively identify any existing or emerging customer segments where we need to work harder to engage.
60. Our investment in our Smart Water Customer Experience Enhancement Case (Appendix SES009) will also give us a holistic view of how our network is performing and the water footprint at a household level. By bringing together operational data with customer data into a single customer golden record, we will be able to understand much more about how each household interacts with our service and what targeted interventions we can make to optimise this relationship.

## F. Rebuilding trust

61. Customers cannot choose their water company but it is important that they trust us to deliver this critical service and are willing to partner with us on issues such as how we can work together to secure a constant supply of high quality water for the long term. We want them to have confidence that we are acting in their best interests and those of the environment, for today and the future.
62. Trustworthy organisations keep their promises. We made five pledges to our customers in PR19 based on what they told us was most important and measured through our performance commitments. They tell us that their highest priorities are for us to provide high quality water 24/7 and to secure a resilient service. We have worked hard to deliver these, and our other performance commitments, throughout PR19 and will continue to do so for the long-term. Our compliance risk index has consistently been better than the sector average in the current AMP, while we are one of the best performing companies in the sector for supply interruptions and we have had no hosepipe ban since 2012.
63. We ask customers about the level of trust in SES Water as part of our regular quarterly 'Voice of the Customer' tracking. Despite our relatively strong performance, since the start of the current year, we have seen the percentage of customers who agree or strongly agree that they trust us fall from 77.4% to 67.6%. This coincides with a crisis in public trust more generally, primarily driven by recent negative coverage of sewage



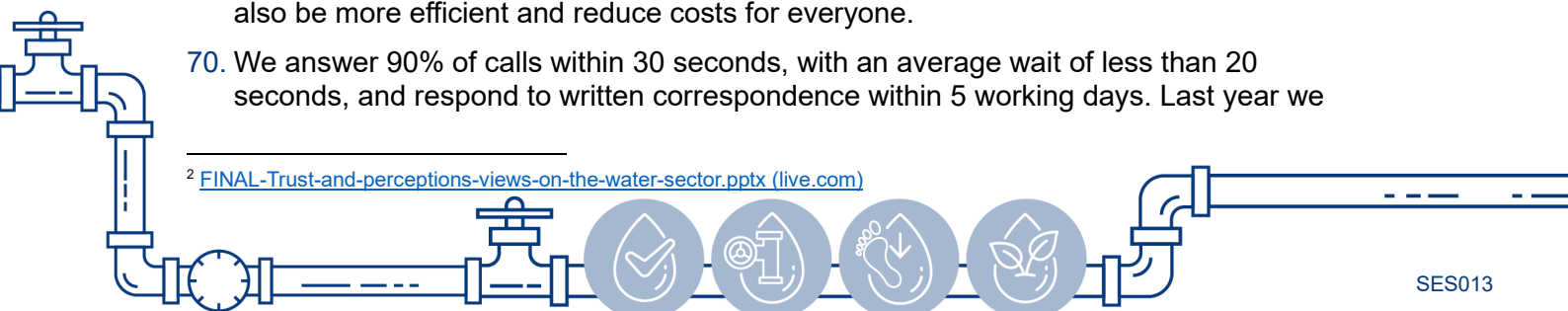
overflows and pollution. Our customers are not all aware that SES Water is a fresh water only company, and many are unwilling or unable to distinguish us from the waste water and sewage companies around us.

- 64. To rebuild trust it is important that we increase awareness of who we are and what we do. In the section above on engaging proactively with customers we describe how we will continue to look for opportunities to increase the visibility of our messages across our own and paid for media channels. We will also work with local partners who can promote our messages through their own channels, using the positive endorsement of trusted partners to enhance our reputation.
- 65. We will use our new website to make our performance visible on an ongoing basis so that it's easier for our customers to see how we are keeping our promises to them. Building on the success of our first Your water, your say meeting earlier this year, we will hold a similar session annually to present our progress and answer questions from customers about this and other issues that concern them. We will also work to ensure that the information is easily accessible to all customers, including those who are digitally excluded. This will include proactively reporting where we get things wrong. Integrity is one of our five organisational values and transparency and doing the right thing are core to this.
- 66. Savanta's report for Ofwat on Trust and Perceptions: Peoples' views on the water sector<sup>2</sup> in February 2023 found that customers who have more frequent contact across multiple channels with their water company are more likely to be positive towards it, particularly when there is direct personal contact. Our Smart Water Customer Experience enhancement case will deliver new communications capability, including Salesforce Marketing Cloud, that will enable us to engage more often and proactively with our customers about topics that are of direct relevance to them.
- 67. We will also continue to demonstrate public value by looking to find and fund ways to contribute beyond our core function as we work towards our organisational purpose. We do this today in a variety of ways. We have recently completed a major resilience scheme on the A22, receiving very positive feedback from local stakeholders about the quality of our engagement. We are now providing funding to Purley in Bloom to rehabilitate a previously derelict piece of land in the heart of the community, creating a space the residents can enjoy with water efficient planting and a drinking fountain. We also part-fund the debt advice service provided by Sutton Citizens Advice Bureau, who are able to refer their clients through to our financial support schemes and give us reciprocal support through providing insight and training on this complex area.
- 68. Our goal is to increase the percentage of customers who agree that they trust us to 80% by 2030. This is an ambitious target – we know it is easier to lose trust than to gain it, but with the right culture and the right actions we believe it is possible.

## G. Delivering excellent service

- 69. It is important that customers are happy with the service that we provide when they need to contact us about their account or there is a problem related to their water supply. Satisfied customers are more likely to want to engage positively with us and be open to playing their own part in ensuring there is enough water for everyone in the long term, as well as encouraging others to do the same. By resolving their issues first time, we can also be more efficient and reduce costs for everyone.
- 70. We answer 90% of calls within 30 seconds, with an average wait of less than 20 seconds, and respond to written correspondence within 5 working days. Last year we

<sup>2</sup> [FINAL-Trust-and-perceptions-views-on-the-water-sector.pptx \(live.com\)](#)



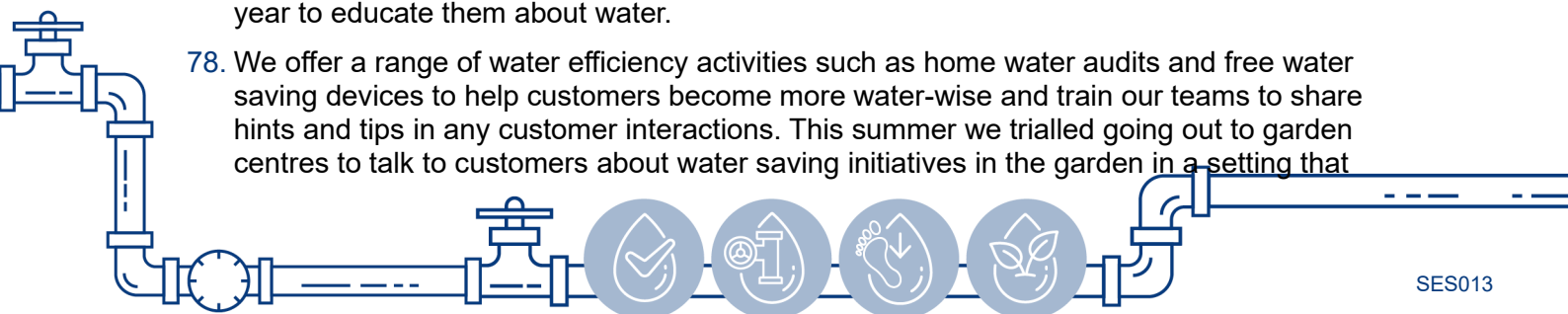


increased our First Contact Resolution to 85% as measured by our PR19 performance commitment. We have seen an increase in the volume of complaints received per 10,000 customers and have struggled at times to respond quickly enough but are now responding to 90% of complaints within 5 days. We have leveraged our investment in our new billing platform to increase billing accuracy to 97% for unmeasured customers.

- 71. We set ourselves an ambitious goal of being in the top quartile of the C-MeX table in the current AMP. While we have not achieved this and our customer satisfaction levels are still not consistently at the level we aspire to, we have made steady progress up the table since the start of PR19. For AMP8 our ambition is to consistently perform in the upper half of the C-MeX table relative to other water companies.
- 72. We aim to maintain our strong performance in responding to telephone enquiries and reduce our average response time for written correspondence to two working days. We will expand the range of digital channels on offer to match customer preference and continue to develop MyAccount so that customers are able to self-serve at the time of their choosing. We aim to achieve 90% First Contact Resolution by 2025 and maintain this level throughout AMP8 and to achieve 99% billing accuracy. We will reduce our complaints to 0.3 per 10,000 household customers and send a substantive response to 90% of these within 2 working days.
- 73. In PR24 we will go beyond excellent service when customers contact us and deliver more proactive interventions in near real-time to make it easier for customers to enjoy the service that they want. The richer data that we will hold about individual customers and their supply combined with the new digital capability delivered through our Smart Water Customer Experience enhancement case (Appendix SES009) will enable us to design and deliver relevant messages tailored to their circumstances. This will include information about what action we are taking and what customers themselves should do without them having to contact us. Customers tell us that this is particularly important when they are waiting for us to resolve an issue or when there is an incident. While this will primarily be driven by data and digital, we will record and consider how individual customers want to hear from us. We will keep our local customer contact team and maintain the ability to visit customers face to face in person when this is preferred.
- 74. For customers with vulnerabilities, our Vulnerability Strategy, which we will publish in July 2024, and our commitment to achieving the British Standard for Inclusive Service will ensure that we are better identifying and responding to their additional needs through the delivery of our day-to-day service.
- 75. We will measure our success through C-MeX and by introducing internal customer satisfaction surveys across all our channels, with a focus on listening and closing the loop.

## H. Partnering in behaviour change

- 76. It is important that we can partner with our customers to help reduce customer-side leakage and water consumption so that we can deliver our long-term plan to secure our water resources.
- 77. We work through our own channels, community partnerships and local media to promote awareness of the status of our water resources and what we can all do to save water. In PR19 we opened our interactive education centre Flow Zone at our Bough Beech reservoir, where we hosted nearly 3,800 primary school pupils and their teachers last year to educate them about water.
- 78. We offer a range of water efficiency activities such as home water audits and free water saving devices to help customers become more water-wise and train our teams to share hints and tips in any customer interactions. This summer we trialled going out to garden centres to talk to customers about water saving initiatives in the garden in a setting that





was directly relevant to them, and we will do more of this in the future. We also offer customers support with fixing leaks in their home.

79. Despite this, when we engaged with customers as we prepared our PR24 plan, many told us that they were unaware of how immediate and local the issue of water scarcity is and were shocked to learn about average daily usage per person in our supply area. To address this, we will work to increase awareness of the issue amongst current and future bill payers and contribute to campaigns at a national level as this is not a problem limited to our supply area.
80. We aim to double the reach of our education programme in PR24 and will fund transport to make it easier for pupils from the most socially deprived areas in the north of our supply area to attend. We will expand its reach beyond primary schools and look for innovative opportunities to further take our programme into the communities that we serve. This year we will launch a new partnership with the Wildlife Aid Foundation, which will enable us to run education days at their new activity centre by the River Mole in Leatherhead due to open in 2025.
81. Once customers became aware of the urgency of the issue, some readily agreed that they would take action to reduce their consumption but did not necessarily know how. We will continue to provide water efficiency activities and proactively look for best practice across the sector to make our programme more effective.
82. Other customers told us that they did not see it as a priority for them to change their behaviour while our own leakage levels continue to be as high as they are today. Even though we have some of the lowest levels in the sector, customers were clear that increasing our level of ambition in this area was of great importance to them and this is reflected in our PR24 plan. We will continue to invest in our smart network and leakage reduction strategy to drive levels down and report transparently on this as part of our work to build trust in our performance,
83. At the same time, we will work to drive up awareness of the contribution of customer-side leakage to our overall reported leakage levels. Our investment in smart meters over the course of AMP8 will enable us to identify customer-side leakage earlier than ever before. We will adopt a proactive approach to letting customers know about the problem as soon as we find it and provide them with support and guidance so they know what they can do to get any leaks fixed.
84. Alongside smart meters, we will put in place the systems and interfaces required to make it easy for customers to see information about their water usage more frequently and readily. We will use our increased understanding of their water consumption behaviour, demographic information, and the performance of our network in their area to design and deliver personalised, trigger-based communications using behavioural change techniques to create the best conditions for change. We will also use the data that we gather through our smart metering programme to trial and implement new tariffs that are designed to encourage responsible water consumption and protect affordability, while ensuring that the customers who use most water and can afford it are paying most.
85. We will measure the success of our programme by asking customers how seeing our communications or taking part in our activities has changed their attitudes and by comparing the water consumption of customers we have interacted with directly with their previous behaviour and with other similar customers.

