

'FIGHTING THE WATER PRICE BATTLE IN AN OXFORD INTERESTS'



An AGBAR Company

AS YOU may have already seen in the media, Bristol Water has announced that it cannot accept the regulator Ofwat's decision on price limits between 2010-2015. We believe that we have no alternative, in the interests of all our current and future customers, but to ask for the issue to be referred to the Competition Commission for review. We want to explain why to you:

"What we must deliver over the next five years will cost much more than Ofwat has allowed," explained Bristol Water Managing Director Alan Parsons. "There is a huge, multi-million pound gap between what we know we have to do and what Ofwat assumed."

"Without the money, we will not be able to invest enough to protect services for the one million-plus people and businesses we supply at the heart of the West. For well over 160 years, we have supplied an essential service to the community. We have industry-leading standards of service, excellent water quality, have consistently met leakage targets and had below-average bills.

"Bristol Water has consistently spent much less than nearly all other water companies in an effort to keep prices as low as possible. Our engineering judgement now is that we have no alternative but to have a sharp increase in the level of investment if we are to avoid the service deteriorating and continue to meet the expectations of our customers.



Bristol Water's Managing Director, Alan Parsons



Scenes like this are what we want to avoid by replacing more and more water mains. At the moment, the funding available means they are expected to last 300 years!



Already, a fifth of our mains are over 100 years old, laid even before this photo was taken!

"Our customers have benefited from a long period when we have been able to keep bills down by stretching our assets' working lives. Unfortunately, there are now a number of factors coming together that mean increased levels of investment cannot be deferred any longer. This inevitably means costs, and bills, increasing. We do not agree with Ofwat about the scope of necessary work and cost of dealing with these issues and so must ask the Competition Commission to review the matter.

"What we propose still represents great value for money – the increase on an average bill would be 87p a week by 2015."

Bristol Water's Final Business Plan sets out proposed service and investment levels and price limits. We need to invest £319 million in the five years to March 2015 by:

- replacing assets so that the essential infrastructure does not deteriorate.
- having enough water available to meet growing demand.
- cutting leakage by 10%.
- making further water quality improvements.
- providing greater security of supply in the course of hundreds of thousands of people.

The Company's proposals mean investing over £1 million a week to 2015.

For more details about the company's plans, use this link

<http://www.bristol-water.co.uk/news/mainNews.asp?newsID=418>

What happens now?

Like all the other water companies in the industry, Bristol Water could either accept Ofwat's decision or ask for a referral to the Competition Commission. The price limits already set by Ofwat for 2010/11 become effective in April this year.

We will charge what Ofwat said we can charge from April 2010 with the average bill marginally increasing from this year's £157. This will mean unmetered customers will see an average rise of just under 3% whilst metered customers will see a fall of around 1%. Any impact on bills resulting from a decision made by the Competition Commission would be applied in an adjustment from next year's bill, 2011.

WHAT WE NEED TO DO FOR YOU:

We are not scare-mongering in the least, but there are real risks to face if we do not get a better outcome.

We need to replace many more of our pipes and pumps and other assets. For example we are currently replacing pipes at a rate as if they will last 300 years! Nobody would say we can keep that up for much longer – as, already, over a fifth of our water mains are over 100 years old. We call pumps that service the city centre 'modern' but they are over 50 years old.

The system is creaking but not cracking – yet. We have been stretching asset lives to keep bills down as much as we can while managing to keep service standards at the highest levels in the industry. This cannot go on for much longer.

Another major area needing investment is dealing with regional population growth, expected to increase by 40% over the next 20 years.

We have to make sure we have enough water and system capacity available to meet increasing demand at the lowest cost possible.

We need to improve the security of supply for customers in line with what they tell us they want. What happened in Gloucester in 2007, when there was no mains water supply for over two weeks, could happen today in Frome, or Weston-super-Mare or even the city centre itself.

This is simply unacceptable. We want to be able to provide proper security of supply for hundreds of thousands of people – we produced well-engineered schemes to do this, but they were not funded.

USEFUL CONTACT DETAILS

(Cut out and keep)

- If you have a water supply query, call 0845 702 3797 (Emergency service only between 6pm and 8am). Minicom 0800 917 0737.
- If you have a billing query call 0845 600 3600
Lines open Mon - Fri 8am - 6pm.
- Meter option leaflet... call 0800 801 071 (24 hours).
- Reporting leaks... call 0800 801 071 free at any time.
- Beware bogus callers: Genuine Bristol Water staff carry proper IDENTITY CARDS. If you have any doubts, call freephone 0800 373 501 to check the identity of anybody claiming to be from us.
- If you would like to know more about how we can help customers with special needs, such as the elderly or disabled call Customer Care Plus on 0845 600 3600 or Minicom 0845 605 6585.

The Bristol Water Bond -

Aim is to give good service at all times

"The Bristol Water Bond sets out the levels of service we aim to achieve. It is OUR commitment to serving YOU, our domestic customers.

Our main objective is to provide you with a safe and reliable supply of water at all times. We are proud of our excellent record from over 160 years of experience. We operate an extensive network involving complex treatment processes and many support

services to bring water to your tap, safe to drink. All this is backed up by thorough planning and highly trained staff.

We aim at all times to give good service and deal promptly and fairly with you. We are required by Government to make certain undertakings of service to you. However, where possible, we go further.

We believe that Bristol Water has the trust of its customers and of the communities it

serves. We would never intentionally do anything to break that trust - it is our most valuable asset.

Our Bristol Water Bond commitments to you are set out here in clear and simple English. Please keep a copy in case you need to refer to them in future - although we hope the need never arises."

Alan Parsons, Managing Director.

WATER QUALITY

1. We will supply you with water that is safe to drink, meeting the legal water quality standards. Protecting your health is of paramount importance to us. If there is ever a need to impose 'boil water' precautions, give 'do not use' advice or suspend supplies for water quality reasons, then we will do so and if the problem is our fault we will pay you £10 compensation.

2. Although we always try to resolve water quality enquiries immediately, we promise to phone you back within 4 hours during the normal working day with any additional water quality information you reasonably require. If your call relates to health concerns we will phone back within 4 hours regardless of the time or day. If we agree it would be helpful to sample your tap water, we will arrange a visit at a convenient time.

3. We will phone you with the results of a sample taken because of a health complaint no later than 2 working days after the results become available. Within 5 working days of all results being available, we will, if you request, confirm them to you in writing.



WATER SUPPLY

4. We will give you notice of a planned cut off of your water supply and an expected restoration time. We will pay compensation if the cut off lasts more than 4 hours and we had not given you 48 hours prior written notice.*

5. After planned maintenance work, we will restore supplies within the time specified in the warning notice.*

6. We will restore supplies interrupted by an emergency within 48 hours of our becoming aware of a burst or a leak on a strategic main or within 12 hours in any other circumstance.*

7. We aim to provide you with a good flow of water at your tap.*

8. If you are the first person to report an unidentified leak from our pipes and we have not repaired it within 10 working days, we will pay you £30 (unless we have to give extended notice to the local Highway Authority or third parties).

9. We will usually repair, free of charge, a domestic customer's external underground supply pipe (up to the external wall of the house) on the first occasion a leak is found.

10. We will give you leakage allowances if you are a domestic customer when a leak on your pipe causes your metered water use to be higher than normal. For the first leak we will allow you 100% of the higher consumption and for the second leak 50%. You must advise us of the problem and carry out repairs promptly. Allowances for business customers are different.

11. We will help you undertake a water usage audit if requested.

12. We will carry out a survey and fit a meter as quickly as possible (where it is feasible to fit one) and certainly within 45 working days of receiving your signed application form other than during promotional campaigns. This period is extended to 60 working days for applications received in the period March to June. If we do not install the meter by the end of the specified time period we will not charge for water services until the meter is fitted.

13. We will replace your meter within 20 working days of it being discovered to be faulty.

14. When we install or change your water meter we will provide written details including the date, the meter serial number and its reading.

15. If your supply is metered and we agree you need to run water to flush the supply, we will make an allowance of £5.

16. We will carry out a survey within 10 working days of your request for the relocation of a water meter. We charge for this service.

17. We will provide you with a connection to our mains within 10 working days of our final inspection and receipt of your connection charge (unless we have to give extended notice to the local Highway Authority or third parties).

18. If you have replaced your lead or galvanised iron supply pipe, we will replace ours and connect to your new one within 10 working days of our final inspection of your completed work and payment of charges (unless we have to give extended notice to the local Highway Authority or third parties).

Our Commitment To You



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CUSTOMER SERVICE

19. We will respond to your written complaint within 10 working days of receipt.*
20. If we need to meet you or enter your home, we will offer you an appointment to visit either in the morning or afternoon or, if you request, within a 2 hour time band. Our representative will arrive within the agreed time period. We will give you at least 24 hours notice of the need to rearrange an appointment.*
21. If you are registered for our Customer Care Plus scheme we will, if requested, send a bill or an item of literature in an agreed format e.g. Braille, large print or communicate with you in a specially requested way. We will process completed applications to join the scheme within 10 working days of receipt.
22. If your property is damaged or flooded because of a burst or leak from a water main, we will offer to clean up and arrange for our appointed loss adjuster to assess your needs and claim.
23. We will recompense you for clothes stained during washing if it is our fault.
24. Company employees and those working on behalf of the Company will treat you courteously.
25. If we fail to pay compensation due by certain deadlines, we will pay you additional compensation.*



BILLING/PAYMENTS

26. We will respond to your enquiry concerning the accuracy of a bill we have sent you within 5 working days of receipt or 10 working days if a site visit is required.*
27. We will rebate an unmetered domestic charge after being notified that a property is unoccupied but furnished as a result of the householder going into hospital or residential care or living with a relative.
28. If you have given us 5 working days notice of when you are moving, we will send a final bill within 5 working days of you leaving.
29. We will issue a replacement bill within 10 working days of your request being received.
30. We will respond within 5 working days if you request a change in payment method that we cannot meet or accept.*
31. If we take a direct debit payment in error, we will pay your costs and any related bank charges and will correct the error within one working day.
32. If you overpay us as a result of our error, we will repay you together with interest on the overpayment as soon as we are aware of the problem.
33. If you request a receipt for a payment we will send one within 5 working days.
34. If we refer your debt to a debt collection agency they will act properly in accordance with the Credit Industry Code of Practice.
35. If we incorrectly issue a county court claim against you for a debt for which you are not liable and for which you have previously informed us that you are not liable, we will correct the situation and withdraw the fees and costs from your account and give you £100.

Note 1

*These commitments are required by law, all the others are our additional discretionary commitments.



SO WHAT HAPPENS IF WE GET IT WRONG?

We believe our commitments reflect excellent service. They are highly challenging to consistently achieve and go well beyond the minimum legal requirements. Inevitably, though, there will be occasions when things do not go as well as we would like. We are only human, too.

There can be no absolute guarantee that we will always meet our objective of providing a safe and reliable supply at all times. We have significant back-up systems and plans designed to meet most circumstances. But we cannot guarantee to cover every possible situation. To do so would mean duplicating many of our systems - and increasing your bills very significantly. We have to strike an appropriate balance.

- If things go wrong, we will do our best to get things back to normal as quickly as possible.
- In addition, if it is our fault we will pay compensation. If the failure is covered by legislation (see Note 1 left), then we will pay you automatically if we can identify you have been affected. Otherwise you should make a claim. Unless shown differently above, we pay £30. In each case the compensation will be at least at the level laid down by legislation. Usually it will be more.

The not so small print

All documents contain small print - not to try to confuse you but because definitions, conditions and exclusions need to be spelt out in full detail.

The Bristol Water Bond is no different. The information about the Bond printed on these pages is intended to serve simply as a general guide to the commitments we offer. It does not set out in full all our legal obligations to you, nor the circumstances when we will not provide compensation.

Putting it simply, our commitments do not apply if we are prevented from meeting our standards as a result of the actions of a third party or exceptional circumstances such as severe weather, industrial action or abnormal conditions.

Most of our customers are billed by Bristol Wessex Billing Services Ltd jointly for water supplied by Bristol Water and sewerage services handled by Wessex Water. If this is the case, you will receive only one payment per incident that relates to billing or payment matters.

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ARE YOU A WATER WIZARD?

Take this five minute test to find out



HOW TO BECOME A WATER WIZARD

Why is it important? Quite simply because water is a precious natural resource, so using water wisely helps to protect the environment and keep prices down.

To become a water wizard you don't need to go to Hogwarts School of Wizardry. Just follow the practices below; the results will be spellbinding! Tick the boxes (honestly) to see how good you are now and where there's room for improvement:

IN THE BATHROOM

Bath or shower

- take a shower rather than a bath
- don't hog the shower for too long
- buy power showers with economy settings

Flushing the loo

- use displacement devices in your toilet cisterns
- use dual flush cisterns
- fit the latest economy cisterns

Cleaning your teeth

- use a glass of water to rinse your mouth instead of leaving the tap running

Washing your hands

- put the plug in first

IN THE KITCHEN

Dishwashers

- wait until you have a full load, before switching on
- use the economy programme where possible
- buy eco-friendly models

Preparing vegetables

- use a bowl of water

Washing-up by hand

- use a washing up bowl
- wait until you've enough for a full bowl
- use both sides of a double sink if you need to rinse

Waste disposal units

- use a compost heap as well

IN THE LAUNDRY

Washing machines

- wait until you have a full load
- use the economy programme where possible
- buy eco-friendly models

THROUGHOUT THE HOME

- fix dripping taps
- check the toilet overflow pipe and adjust the ball valve as necessary
- have the central heating system checked regularly
- know where your stop tap is and check that it works
- keep the name and number of a plumber handy at all times
- check for signs of leaks from supply pipes

You'd be amazed how much water the average household uses – a staggering 150 litres (33 gallons) per person per day. Complete the chart below to check how much you use. Then look at the table on the left to see how to become a water wizard.

Water use	Average usage in litres	Times a day	Daily total in litres
IN THE BATHROOM			
Baths			
	80		
Showers*			
Normal	45		
Power	80		
*Assumes a five minute shower based on average flow rates			
Toilet - select the type you use standard			
	7.5 to 9		
with displacement device in cistern (e.g. bottle or 'hippo')			
dual flush- short	7		
dual flush- long	5		
dual flush- long	9		
new water saving type	6		
General hand washing and teeth cleaning			
per person per day	10		
if done under a running tap	15		
IN THE KITCHEN			
Using the dishwasher - normal programme			
water efficient	18		
	13		
Washing dishes by hand - in a bowl or sink under a running tap			
	6		
	10		
General cooking and drinking			
per person per day	10		
if food preparation done under a running tap	15		
IN THE LAUNDRY			
Old (pre 2000)			
new	70		
	55		
water efficient	45		
Add all the figures in the right hand column to find out the daily consumption of water in your household			
Divide by the number of people in your household			
WHAT'S YOUR SCORE?			<input type="text"/>
How do you compare with the average?			

BRISTOL WATER
An AGBAR Company



PLEASE USE WATER WISELY

Want to save money and water? Why not try a meter. Call our meter option line on: 0845 601 5983 or visit our website for more details.

There are many ways to save water in the home or garden. Visit our website to find out how. You can also read our recently published Water Resource Plan where we detail our supply plans for the next 25 years and the challenges that lie ahead for all of us.

www.bristolwater.co.uk/environment