

Objectives

To understand customer attitudes to and perceptions of South West Water, Bristol Water and Bournemouth Water identifying and fixing issues sooner through the use of smart technology.

Format	Focus Groups
Households (number)	58 (8)
Non households (number)	
Vulnerable customers	✓
Future customers	
Retailers	
Stakeholders	
South West Water	✓
Bournemouth Water	✓
Bristol Water	✓

Impact on our plan and ways of working

Alongside PR24 business plans, SWW is developing its long-term delivery strategy. Included are plans to extend elements of the 'Smarter, healthier homes' initiative, which was part of the Green Recovery plan.

Topics

Storm overflow	Drinking water quality
Water resources ✓	Net zero/ climate change
Nature	Affordability ✓

Key messages – what matters most

What we did

- Eight online focus groups were conducted, two per evening, over four dates in March via Zoom
- As well as attitudes towards smart technology, the aim was to also understand preferences in terms of delivery, priorities and charging and tariff options.

What matters most

- When shown a summary of the initiatives, many customers felt that they were things that water companies should be doing to help its customers.
- Customers were interested in the topics water reuse and recycling and water saving.
- The idea of linking smart meters to apps was liked by a good proportion of customers. This appeared to be driven by experiences with other utilities.
- Just over half of customers supported the cost of customer lead pipe replacement being paid for by customers regardless of whether they have lead pipes or not.
- There was no tolerance for lead in our networks, and lead at customer properties needs to be addressed, with most customers of the view that water companies are best placed to deliver this investment.
- The most appealing elements of the Smarter Healthier Homes initiatives to customers are support with the reuse of recycled water and water saving (smart meters) - often because these were areas that customers perceived they could help to reduce their own water usage and their bills.
- The majority of customers expressed positivity towards smart meters, feeling that accurate billing, the ability to detect leaks and putting the customer in control would be beneficial to all.

Are there differing views?

- Older customers in the Bristol area, expressed a slight preference for smart metering as the most important pillar.
- For younger customers in the South West and Bristol areas, this was the least important.

Next steps

The conclusions helped feed into our plans for smart metering, progressive charging and helping to keep customer bills affordable.