

# Business plan and Long-term Strategy Testing

## Objectives

This research aims to improve understanding of customer preferences between South West Waters five ambitions and to provide insight into how investment levels and bill levels impact these preferences.

Format	Online Focus groups
Households (number)	47
Non households (number)	
Vulnerable customers	
Future customers	
Retailers	
Stakeholders	
South West Water	✓
Bournemouth Water	
Bristol Water	

## Impact on our plan and ways of working

This study provided insight into what customers think our priorities should be, as well as their preferences towards the time and monetary costs of acting on these priorities.

This has shown us that moderating the speed and scale of planned changes is important to customers.

### Topics

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

## Key messages – what matters most

### What we did

- Focus groups were conducted online with 47 customers in June 2023
- Customers were invited to give direct feedback to questions, and online voting was used to summarise the groups overall preferences between the five ambitions

### What matters most

- Customers view 'a growing population' (43%) and 'hotter and drier summers' (34%) as the biggest challenges to services in the South West.
- Customers recognise the need for investment to meet future challenges, but a desire for rapid action is tempered by a preference for slower bill increases.
- Of the five ambitions, increasing water resource resilience and controlling wastewater flows are the most important to customers right now.
- Customers prefer a medium-term plan to a faster plan, except for on public health-related issues, such as removing lead and improving beaches water quality.
- The majority of customers find South West Waters proposed plans to be reasonable

### Are there differing views?

- Customers are split on smart meters, with favourable/non-favourable views depending on personal preferences.
- Customers are not in agreement on who should pay for investment between bill payers, government, charity/third sector, or South West Water.

### Next steps

The majority of customers find our plans reasonable, but all want us to keep bills low while we invest. Consequently, we shall continue innovating new ways to keep bills low, such as our WaterShare+ scheme.

Date July 2023      Supplier ICS