

MINUTES OF THE WATERSHARE+ CUSTOMER AGM
Mayflower Treatment Works, Plymouth
20 September 2024

Present

Panel Members:

Lord Matthew Taylor – Chair (MT)
Peaches Golding OBE CSTJ – Deputy Chair, WaterShare+ Panel (PG)
Nick Buckland OBE (NB)
Dinah Cox OBE (DC)
Tony Denham (AD)
Richard Lacey (RL)
Carole Theobald (CT)

In attendance:

Customer attendees:

21 customer attendees

SWW Representatives:

Susan Davy – Group Chief Executive Officer (SD)
Sarah Williams – Chief of Strategy and Regulation (SW)
David Harris – Managing Director of Water Services, SWW (DH)
Adele Barker – Group Chief People Officer (AB)
Carolyn Cadman – Director of Natural Resources (CC)

Expert Advisors:

Fergus Mitchell – Natural England (NE)
Catherine Jones – CCW (CJ)

Independent Report Writer – Sophie Hooper Lea, Ebonstone (SHL)

Apologies:

Kevin Ward – Environment Agency (KW)
Ben Harper (BH)

1.	Introduction to WaterShare+ (slides3-4)	[Actions]
1.1	The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked customers for attending.	
1.2	The Chair described the role of the independent WaterShare+ Group Panel, which is to hold the company to account on behalf of customers. He stated that public meetings provide an opportunity for customers to challenge the company directly and to voice their concerns. The meetings also provide an opportunity for the company to talk about local initiatives and future plans. The Chair also highlighted that Pannon is the only UK water company with a customer share scheme. The Chair described how WaterShare+ works (slide 3) and introduced fellow Panel members (slide 4) including apologies from BH who was unable to attend. He then introduced the Panel's external advisers: CJ of CCW and FM of Natural England who were in attendance and KW of the Environment Agency, who was unable to attend.	
1.3	The Chair spoke about the Panel's public meetings with customers and regular private meetings with the company Executive, as well as having access to the company's auditors, who validate the accuracy of information	

1.3	<p>provided by the company to the Panel. The Panel is also involved in significant customer engagement. The Chair welcomed Group Chief Executive Officer SD, who attends all public Panel meetings.</p> <p>The minutes of the 2023 WS+ CAGM on 13 October 2023 and the WS+ Bournemouth Regional meeting on 2 July 2024 were APPROVED with no changes.</p>	
2.	Welcome from the Chief Executive (slide 6)	[Actions]
2.1	SD welcomed customers to the Mayflower Water Treatment Works, describing her pride in the work of her colleagues in the company. SD thanked the Panel members for their very diligent work over the past year in understanding and challenging the company.	
2.2	SD introduced her colleagues who were speaking and answering questions at the event: DH, AB, SW and CC. SD then handed over to CT to describe the work of the Panel.	
3.	The Work of the Panel (slides 8-11) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The WaterShare+ Annual Report (slide 8) • Our focus in 2023-24 (slide 9) • Our focus for the year ahead (slide 10) • A new way of working (slide 11) 	[Actions]
3.1	CT welcomed customers and other meeting attendees. She talked through the WS+ Customer Advisory Panel Annual Report 2024 (slide 8) including meetings held, actions and challenges raised by the Panel and South West Water (SWW) performance.	
3.2	CT described the Panel's areas of focus in 2023-24 (slide 9) including involvement in the development of the company's 2025-30 business plan, how the Panel is kept informed on issues such as the 2024 cryptosporidium (crypto) outbreak in Brixham and new initiatives such as progressive charging trials as well as the Panel's success in securing the continued £50 customer subsidy from Government for SWW customers.	
3.3	CT explained the Panel's focus for the year ahead (slide 10) including scrutinising the company's overall performance and specific initiatives such as the desalination scheme in Cornwall and progressive charging trials, as well as working with the company's new Environment Panel.	
3.4	CT talked through the Panel's new way of working (slide 11) including the new structure of the Panel and increased number of regional public meetings. CT then handed over to PG.	
4.	The Bristol Water Challenge Panel (slide 13)	[Actions]
4.1	PG explained how the BWCP scrutinises the performance of Bristol Water (BRL) and talked through the BWCP Annual Report for 2023-24. PG highlighted how the Panel had scrutinised the company's response to a very disruptive water burst in Winterbourne on Christmas Day 2023 and how the Panel had helped BRL to achieve its ISO for Vulnerability and Inclusive Service. PG also identified key issues for 2024-25 including lead pipe removal, progressive charging trials and meter penetration. PG then handed over to the Chair to conclude the AGM part of the meeting before handing	

	over to DH for details of local plans.	
5.	Our Local Plans (slides 16-18)	[Actions]
5.1	DH asked CC, Director of Natural Resources, to introduce herself and her work as the lead on nature recovery and biodiversity. DD then highlighted key aspects of the company's business plan for 2025-30 in relation to investment in the city of Plymouth and wider local area (slide 16). These include investments in natural resources as well as improving water resilience, wastewater and sludge treatment facilities and coastal infrastructure.	
5.2	CC highlighted the company's responsibility to and actions being taken on nature and wildlife including tree planting, habitat restoration and the company's Upstream Thinking catchment management programme (slide 17).	
5.3	CC described the company's approach to controlling the presence and spread of invasive species that are damaging to the company's infrastructure and have a negative impact on the environment and local species.	
5.4	DH handed over to the Chair for the Questions and Answers session.	
6.	Questions & Answers	[Actions]
6.1	The Chair thanked DH and CC for their helpful explanations of the scale of investments planned and the company's ongoing work. He highlighted the important balancing act of providing customers with the water they need while also protecting local watercourses and reducing abstraction from rivers in environmentally preferable ways such as the company's pioneering catchment management programme. The Chair explained that the Panel's role is to focus primarily on problems – what has gone wrong and how the company addresses problems as well as whether the company's investment programme provides the best value for customers and the environment.	
6.2	The Chair then invited customers to ask questions of the company Executive and the Panel.	
6.3	Customer 1 asked about what the company has in place to deal with issues related to recent issues such as Exmouth and Brixham. SD replied that the vast majority of company operations work as expected and that drinking water quality is some of the best in the world but that occasionally issues arise. DH explained about the crypto issue in Brixham that was caused by a damaged air valve on third party land. He described how the company flushed and ice-pigged the system for eight weeks as well as undertaking other treatment and filtration measures. He explained that the company, and the industry as a whole, is considering technical and testing changes to identify and tackle the possibility of future crypto ingress into water systems. Since the incident, the company has inspected the company's air valves, tested extensively and has not found another instance of crypto in its entire network. DH stated that crypto incidents do arise in communities but are very unlikely to come from the water supply. SD spoke about the background to the Exmouth issue, which involved mains bursts that caused sewage discharges. SD explained that the whole main is being excavated, relined and fixed, but that problems with the temporary	

	<p>sewer being used in the interim had led to beach closures. SD also described longer term plans for a new treatment works. SD stated that the company can't promise that this won't happen elsewhere across the company's hundreds of treatment works and thousands of pumping stations, but that colleagues step up and work 24/7 to address issues such as those at Exmouth and Brixham.</p>	
6.4	<p>Customer 2 asked what crypto is. DH responded that it is a microorganism that lives in host bodies, typically sheep and cattle, which can cause severe intestinal disease in humans. He confirmed that the damage to the system in Brixham was from a property owned by a third party. He also confirmed that the company's approved testing approach did not work effectively to identify the presence of crypto and that this is therefore an issue for the company and the entire water industry to address. The Panel has asked to be kept informed of how the company is addressing crypto testing internally and also of any action taking place at an industry-wide level, including any proposed changes to the DWI testing regime. DH described the company's testing process including testing water in service reservoirs and the filtration system used in the company's water treatment works.</p>	Company
6.5	<p>Customer 3 asked about the progressive charging trials, whether these will be mandatory, whether customers will get benefits and if water bills will rise for customers that don't join up. The Chair responded that this is something the Panel has been looking closely at because it is both about encouraging people to do the right thing in terms of reducing water use and also about fairness, particularly as the South West has so many visitors at certain times of year. He stated that these trials are highly innovative and are testing what does and does not work for customers. SD stated that the company is trialling different ways of charging so residents and visitors each pay a fair share. In addition, the company wants to encourage customers to use less water, which is good for customers and for the environment. The trials are to understand what customers think and what would be fair.</p>	
6.6	<p>Customer 4 stated that seasonal visitors don't pay water bills and asked how the trials would help. SD agreed that it was important not to put the burden on residents and fair charges are needed. The Chair stated that the Panel will be looking carefully at the outcomes of the trials and that any changes will require regulatory approval. The Chair also highlighted that the Panel had secured the £50 discount on SWW customer bills from Government again this year and will request again for the coming year.</p>	Panel Panel
6.7	<p>Customer 5 asked about why there are two standing charges for one water meter. SD responded that some customers only have water services from the company, some only have sewage and others have both. It is not double charging, but split between the two types of service.</p>	
6.8	<p>Customer 6 asked whether someone who only had wastewater services pays double. The Chair responded that this is not the case. The regulator establishes a cost for water and a cost for wastewater, and the standing charges are split accordingly.</p>	
6.9	<p>Customer 7 asked about fixing lead pipes and how customers would know if they had lead pipes. SD responded that there are a lot of lead pipes in Bristol</p>	

	<p>and that these are in customer homes rather than the BRL-owned infrastructure. BRL needs to get agreement from homeowners to update and fix the pipework as the lead is on customer pipes rather than pipes owned by the company. DH stated that there are records and databases identifying homes with lead pipes and, while Bristol has a significant amount of lead piping, there is very little lead piping in SWW customer areas. If customers contact the company with concerns about water taste or odour, then the company will test for lead. The Chair stated that the Panel has championed this issue in Bristol (including with the regulator Ofwat) as an important public health programme that BRL customers are very concerned about.</p>
6.10	<p>Customer 8 asked what kind of set up would use only water or only sewage. PG mentioned that BRL is a water only company with sewage services provided by Wessex Water. The Chair gave examples of customers with septic tanks who do not use sewage services or those with bore holes who do not use water. SD confirmed that quite a few customers in the South West have their own water supply.</p>
6.11	<p>Customer 9 was a sea swimmer and asked what the company is doing about weather warnings that show pollution alerts around the coast that advise against swimming. SD explained how and why storm overflows are triggered, resulting in discharges of very dilute wastewater. She stated that storm overflows are triggering more often than anyone wants to see and that the company is investing heavily in improvements. She highlighted the value of catchment schemes (as described by CC earlier in the meeting), which reduce the amount of rainfall that runs off land. SD also stated that the company is prioritising beaches and highlighted that the majority of beach closures are due to organic matter run off from land rather than sewage discharges. The catchment scheme work involves engaging with farmers and other land owners to help them reduce the use of phosphorous and other nutrients.</p>
6.12	<p>Customer 10 asked how the company will provide infrastructure on the scale needed for a growing population and also whether we will see more frequent droughts and hosepipe bans in future. SD talked about the environmental impact of abstracting water from rivers and the importance of using less water. She also stated that the company is building more reservoirs, but that reservoirs also have an impact on rivers and that water companies must focus on reducing water use, particularly with a growing population. SD explained that the company is building more infrastructure while also introducing the progressive charging trials to reduce demand. SD also talked about other options such as using repurposed mines as additional water sources and using water pipelines to move water to where it is needed. She emphasised the importance of supporting biodiversity. DH talked about the company's adaptive 25-year plans that address supply and demand management and take population growth into account. He outlined the company's achievements and plans in terms of increasing water supply to reduce the likelihood of hosepipe bans and also gave examples of the company's campaigns encouraging customers to save water including providing free water butts.</p>

6.13	Customer 11 asked about the desalination plant in Cornwall. SD stated that desalination is used around the world and that there is a place for it in the South West so that the company does not have to rely on abstraction from rivers, particularly during hot summers. The Chair also commented on the fact that reservoirs have an environmental impact that has to be balanced against the benefits they bring. SD pointed out the desalination water would go straight into a treatment works without needing to go into a reservoir. She stated that desalination is useful for relieving pressure on rivers.	
7.	Presentation Close and Thank You	[Actions]
7.1	The Chair brought the meeting to a close, asking customers with outstanding questions to approach members of the SWW team for answers. The Chair made some final comments about storm overflows and about greywater schemes and improvements in sustainable drainage systems in new housing developments. He thanked everyone for attending and for asking questions, and he invited customers to join future WS+ meetings.	
7.2	SD thanked customers for attending the meeting. She stated that the company is committed to further improvements, but highlighted that bathing water quality is significantly higher now than it used to be and that people should not be deterred from swimming.	

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Actions/Matters Arising

No	Meeting date	Action	Owner	Comment/ Target date
479	20 September 2024	<i>Item 6.4 Q&As</i> Company to keep Panel informed of how it is addressing crypto testing internally and also of any action taking place at an industry-wide level, including any proposed changes to the DWI testing regime.	Company /Panel	
480	20 September 2024	<i>Item 6.6 Q&As</i> Panel to scrutinise outcomes of progressive charging trials to ensure that the resulting company approach is fair for customers.	Panel	
481	20 September 2024	<i>Item 6.6 Q&As</i> Panel to request continuation of £50 Government subsidy for SWW customers.	Panel	