

MINUTES OF THE BRISTOL REGIONAL WATERSHARE + PANEL MEETING (PUBLIC)
BAWA Healthcare and Leisure, Filton, Bristol
7 May 2025 from 10:00 – 12:00

Present: **Panel:**
Peaches Golding OBE – WaterShare+ Panel Deputy Chair and Bristol Regional Chair
Tony Denham – Bristol Deputy Chair

In attendance: **Customer attendees:**
17 customer attendees

Company representatives:
Richard Stanbrook – General Manager, Drinking Water Services (RS)
Carolyn Cadman – Director of Natural Resources
Ketan Hindocha – Customer Director (KH)
Dani Twelvetree – Head of Customer Communications & Engagement (DT)
Dan Le Roux – Head of WFM, Planning and Reporting (DLR)
Jamie McDonald – Head of Billing and Recovery, Workforce Management, Planning & Reporting (JMc)
Marc Tite – Interim Head of Tactical Asset Management (MT)
Craig Watts – Director of Customer Services, Pelican (CW)
Natalie Everson – Community Engagement and Education Lead (NE)
Liv Caple – Customer Communication Specialist, Customer Communication and Engagement (LC)
Sophie Martin – Schedule and Event Coordinator (SM)
Claire Hicks – Head of Customer Hub (CH)

Meeting secretary:
Sophie Hooper Lea of Ebonstone

Apologies: Stephanie Martin, Customer Experience Project Manager (SM)

1.	Welcome and Introduction. Overview of WaterShare+ (slide 4)	ACTION
1.1	Regional Chair Peaches Golding welcomed everyone to the meeting, thanked them for attending and introduced herself. She emphasised to customers that Bristol Water supplies fresh water only and that Wessex Water provides the wastewater service to customers.	
1.2	The Chair provided background on the WaterShare+ Panel and share scheme (slide 4). She explained that WaterShare+ Panel, which is the Independent Challenge Group for Pennon Group Plc, covers all of the company's regions but that each region has a Chair and Deputy Chair to champion local issues. Peaches Golding is the Chair for the Bristol Water region with Tony Denham as Deputy Chair. She noted that Pennon is the only UK water company with a customer share scheme and highlighted that the company is listed on the UK stock exchange so customers can also buy shares.	
1.3	The Chair explained that the Bristol region has its own Independent Challenge Group, the Bristol Water Challenge Panel (the BWCP). The BWCP's role is to hold the company to account on behalf of customers and to raise questions and concerns that customers have in relation to the company's provision of clean, safe and reliable water. She noted that customers can be confident that the region's tap water is clean, drinkable and of the highest quality unless they are informed of an incident relating to their water.	

1.4	Following her introduction, the Chair handed over to Richard Stanbrook, General Manager of Drinking Water Services for Bristol and Bournemouth.	
2.	Business Update (slides 6-13)	ACTION
2.1	Richard Stanbrook introduced himself as well as Carolyn Cadman, Director Natural Resources, and Ketan Hindocha, Customer Director. He noted that other colleagues from the company were also available to answer customer questions.	
2.2	In his presentation, Richard Stanbrook described the Pennon Group and the services it provides (slide 6) and highlighted the scale of investment being made in four priority areas during 2025-30 (slide 7). He explained how the company is building water resources and improving water quality (slides 8-9) and handed over to Carolyn Cadman to talk about the company's approach to delivering Net Zero and environmental gains.	
2.3	Carolyn Cadman highlighted how the company is driving environmental gains including investments in renewable energy, energy efficiency and creating biodiversity net gains (slides 10-11). She highlighted that the company takes a green-first approach that focusses on nature-based solutions. She then handed over to Ketan Hindocha to talk about customer support.	
2.4	Ketan Hindocha introduced himself and members of his team who were available to answer customer questions at the event. He explained how the company is supporting affordability and delivering for customers (slide 12) as well as ensuring affordability for all (slide 13).	
3.	Your Questions	ACTION
3.1	The Chair thanked the company executives for their presentations and invited questions from attendees.	
3.2	Customer 1 asked about the business plan period that has just come to an end (2020-25) and how well the company has performed against targets. In a written question ahead of the meeting, she had asked were the targets agreed as achievable; why were they not met and what is the significance of that and have any of these been carried forwards into the new business plan period (2025-30)? She noted that South West Water had only met 30 out of its 44 commitments according to the 2024 WaterShare+ Annual Report. Peaches Golding responded that the upcoming 2025 WaterShare+ Annual Report and the 2025 Bristol Water Challenge Panel Annual Report will address all of these important issues. Ketan Hindocha highlighted that the company is in the process of evaluating its performance for 2020-25 and that results will be published after June 2025.	
3.3	Customers 2 and 3 had raised questions about leakage ahead of the meeting. The Chair asked their questions in their absence: why is so much water wasted and how does the company report leaks? Richard Stanbrook responded that the leakage rate in the Bristol Water region is around 35 million litres of water a day (about 11% of supply) with a target to reduce this to 29 million litres. He explained that the company has very dedicated and efficient leakage detection teams and has also invested in acoustic loggers that listen for leaks. He noted that smart meters are able to detect leakage on customer pipes, which is an important benefit as customer pipes account for about a third of total leakage. Richard Stanbrook also made a plea to customers to take responsibility for not wasting water, which is an important natural resource. In terms of addressing leaks, he	

	highlighted that the company is normally aware of leaks before they are reported by the public. Customers may think that leaks are going unresolved but, if a leak is running safely, then it will be resolved as a lower priority than an unsafe leak that may not be visible.	
3.4	Customer 4 asked, given the cost to the company of water lost through leakage, couldn't the company employ more people to tackle leaks? Richard Stanbrook responded by saying that a background level of leakage will always happen for reasons such as wear and tear on pipes as well as movement in the ground due to weather, so it would be impossible to achieve a leak-free network. He stated that the company has enough manpower to tackle active and mains leaks, and that the company is committed to reducing leakage further. He gave examples of pre-emptive work to reduce leakage and daily monitoring practices.	
3.5	The Chair asked Richard Stanbrook to explain how Bristol Water compares with the rest of the UK water industry. He responded that Bristol Water is one of the best performing companies in the industry in relation to both measures of leakage: leaks per kilometre of main and leaks per property.	
3.6	Customer 5 highlighted that he saw a Bristol Water van drive past a leak but seemed to ignore it. Richard Stanbrook noted that the company would probably already have been aware of the leak and it may have been left to run safely. He explained that the company is able to resolve a burst under emergency powers if it endangers other utilities or homes. Otherwise, the company needs approval from the local authority, which is another reason why the leak might not have been addressed when the customer saw it. Richard Stanbrook also explained that the company is also providing training for teams about the value of water and encouraging team members to take responsibility and speak up if they encounter something that doesn't look right to them.	
3.7	Customer 6 asked how you find out about leakage on customer pipes if the customer doesn't have a meter. Richard Stanbrook responded that the company has installed 48,000 meters over the past five years (higher than its target of 40,000) but, because it is not a water stressed area, the company can't make meter installation compulsory. He stated that the company is monitoring the network and, if there is a spike in use, the team will go out and listen for leaks on properties and knock on doors of customers without meters.	
3.8	Customer 7 asked about the proportion of leaks from different sources and the company's plan for replacing old infrastructure including cast iron pipes. Richard Stanbrook replied that the company has a mains replacement programme and invited the customer to speak to his colleague Marc Tite for more information. He noted that the mains replacement strategy is based on factors such as the age of the pipes; the durability of the material used and the 'burst profile' of the pipe, which will show when refurbishment or replacement is necessary.	
3.9	Customer 8 asked if the teams responsible for metering understand issues affecting the elderly. Richard Stanbrook pointed out his colleague Jamie McDonald, who leads a team that looks after vulnerable customers. He also highlighted that the company cannot cut off water supplies to people in debt and that the customer teams take a very proactive approach to resolving issues for vulnerable customers including offering different options for them. Ketan Hindocha added that Stephanie Martin (who was unable to attend the meeting) is the lead on Bristol Water's vulnerability strategy. She has made many	

	connections with organisations such as the Citizens Advice Bureau, who help to identify vulnerable customers. He stated that 11% of customers are registered on the Priority Services Register and noted that many elderly people would receive lower bills if they had a meter.
3.10	Customer 9 pointed out that large families are not going to ask for a meter because it would be likely to cost them more money. Ketan Hindocha agreed that this is a challenge for the industry as a whole.
3.11	Customer 10 asked if he could get a meter fitted. Richard Stanbrook invited the customer to speak to Craig Watts of Pelican and Claire Hicks. He also said that customers could apply for a meter via the website.
3.12	Customer 11 asked if customers can request a smart meter. Richard Stanbrook said that the customer may already have a meter that can be retrofitted to provide full smart meter functionality. He said that the company will be fitting smart meters during the new business plan period (2025-30). Claire Hicks highlighted that the company is currently unable to change a customer meter to a smart meter on demand, but that the company is fitting new smart meters and will replace defective meters with smart meters.
3.13	Customer 12 asked why bottled water is supplied to customers when there is an incident. Why can't the company bring in water by tanker? Richard Stanbrook responded that the company does use water tankers but that the amount of water tankers can carry is very limited in comparison to water demand. He also noted that water supply interruptions can be caused by problems that are not related to water. For example, a lightning strike at Purton in the past affected all of the computers that control the system, so the treatment works had to be shut down. Richard Stanbrook noted that the company is required by legislation to supply every person with 10 litres of water per day after 24 hours of supply outage and that this is done by bulk delivery of bottled water to bottled water stations as well as doorstep delivery to vulnerable customers. He stated that the company empties and recycles all unused bottles afterwards.
3.14	The Chair noted that the next five years will see the largest ever investment in environmental solutions and programmes by UK water companies. She invited questions from three customers who had submitted questions about billing. As they were not present, the Chair asked their questions for them. These related to whether the company can justify bill increases and how affordable the bills are. Richard Stanbrook responded that bills have risen but not as much as other bills such as energy bills. He noted that a customer's water bill for the year can be equivalent to energy costs for a month. He stated that the company works very hard to make sure that it spends money on necessary investments carefully and wisely to avoid bill increases and bill shock to customers. He noted that the company recognises that customers are struggling to pay bills and has options available to those customers.
3.15	Customer 13 asked what the company is planning to do with all the money it makes from new housing developments. Richard Stanbrook responded that water companies are not statutory consultees on housing developments and are expected to supply water without necessarily being consulted on plans. He stated that the Environment Agency is, quite rightly, refusing to allow companies to extract more water than they currently do but new housing developments are creating demand for more water. In terms of spending the revenue from developments, the company tries to be innovative and encourage customers to use water more wisely and efficiently, and to understand the value of

	<p>water. Richard Stanbrook stated that it is important that customers decrease the per capita consumption of water over the next five years. Carolyn Cadman added that water companies are working with local authorities, schools, farmers and other groups to harvest rainwater for re-use in situations where treated water is not necessary (for example in car washing or toilet flushing). She also talked about new housing developments being required to use Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDS) such as ponds and reed beds that absorb water, so it doesn't run into and potentially overwhelm the sewage system. Ketan Hindocha also highlighted that the company has varied schemes for customers who are unable to pay and that 100% of Bristol Water customers surveyed last year said that their bills from the company were affordable.</p>
3.16	<p>Customer 14 asked about rural areas being converted into urban areas and asked how the company will cope with the extra pollution and sewage created and its impact on the environment. Carolyn Cadman described the company's work with the University of Exeter on trials to keep more rainwater in the rural landscape and prevent rainfall from going into the sewage system, which could lead to combined sewer overflows (CSOs). Known as Upstream Thinking, the project involves trials with ponds, swales and upland restoration projects. This work also informs how to address issues in the urban landscape.</p>
3.17	<p>Customer 15 asked how water companies can encourage people to get healthier through wild swimming and how people can know if the water is safe. Carolyn Cadman responded that both South West Water and Wessex Water (which provides wastewater services to Bristol Water customers) recognise that sewage spills are no longer acceptable. She explained how CSOs are designed into the current system and the investment that companies are putting in to change this. She also highlighted that all water companies publicly share information on CSOs so that customers can take an informed decision on whether to swim in any location. Carolyn Cadman also pointed out that pollution in rivers and seas is not always related to sewage but can be from farm animals, seagulls, septic tanks and other issues. Identifying these factors relies on laboratory testing, so it can be difficult to understand the levels of bacteria in water and where it has come from. In response to a question about testing, Carolyn Cadman noted that the Environment Agency test bathing waters from May to October at the moment but are in the process of extending the time periods for testing due to people swimming all year round.</p>
3.18	<p>Customer 16 asked about why beaches around North Somerset are not safe to swim in and asked what Bristol Water and Wessex Water is going to do about it. This is a question for Wessex Water as Bristol Water only supply fresh water to customers.</p>
3.19	<p>Customer 17 asked if wet wipes are flushable. Carolyn Cadman explained that even the wet wipes marked as biodegradable are made of dense material and do not decompose easily. The sewage system was not designed to cope with new materials like these, and wet wipes cause extensive problems in sewers and have to be screened out at sewage treatment plants. She noted that 70% of blockages are caused by wet wipes getting mixed with household fats (which should not be put down the sink either).</p>
3.20	<p>Customer 18 asked why the UK still has chlorine in tap water and said that she thinks the water tastes of it. Richard Stanbrook stated that the company has to monitor how its water tastes and that a range of factors contribute to the taste such as hardness, the substrate the water comes from, organic matter present, etc. He highlighted that these</p>

	issues affect taste but that the water is drinkable and safe. He went on to explain that water companies chlorinate the water to disinfect it, to ensure that it is safe to drink. He also noted that the amount of chlorine in the water leaving the company's treatment works is less than the maximum specified by the Drinking Water Inspectorate. He also invited the customer to provide their details to his colleagues if they would like a water quality tester to sample their water. He noted that the level of chlorine should not affect the taste of the water.	
4.	Thank you and close	ACTION
4.1	The Chair thanked attendees for their questions and feedback. She invited attendees to stay for lunch, visit the market stalls and speak to company executives about any questions or concerns.	

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All customer questions were answered, and no actions were recorded at the meeting.