

**Yorkshire Forum for Water Customers  
Minutes of Meeting  
15 May 2023  
Microsoft Teams Meeting**

**Attendees:**

Andrea Cook	Chair
Chris Griffin	Independent Member
Dave Merrett	Independent Member
John Walker	Consumer Council for Water
Kirsh Siddique	Independent Member
Melissa Lockwood	Environment Agency
Steve Grebby	Consumer Council for Water

**Apologies:**

James Copeland	National Farmers Union
Jamie Ashton	Citizens Advice
Tom Keatley	Natural England

**Guests:**

Chris Offer	Yorkshire Water
Donna Hildreth	Yorkshire Water
James Hall	Yorkshire Water
Kirstin Hutchinson	Yorkshire Water
Margaret Crook	Yorkshire Water
Richard Hepburn	Yorkshire Water
Angeliki Stogia	Arup, on behalf of Yorkshire Water
Kirsty Novis	Arup, on behalf of Yorkshire Water

## 1. Yorkshire Water Strategy

- a) A Company Lead delivered a presentation on Yorkshire Water's 10-year strategy. The strategy is made up of a vision, three strategic pillars, two foundations, and four behaviours.
- b) The vision is 'A thriving Yorkshire: right for customers, right for the environment'.
- c) 'Right for customers' is about making sure Yorkshire Water are delivering a safe, reliable, and affordable service. Need to build trust with customers which is essential for successful engagement.
- d) 'Right for the environment' is about reducing the harm caused by wastewater (e.g., preventing it from flooding homes, causing pollution, harming rivers), reducing water consumption and leakage, and achieving net zero.
- e) The strategic pillars are key activities that will help achieve the vision. They are: improving asset health, creating engaged and high performing team, and taking a joined-up approach.
- f) The foundations are long-term programmes and ways of working that support the strategic pillars. They are: modernisation programmes, and sustainable business.
- g) The behaviours are how Yorkshire Water employees act as they are going about their work. They are: we own it, we're better together, we're always learning, and we have heart. The behaviours have not changed and are already embedded in Yorkshire Water.
- h) The Company Lead explained that all of Yorkshire Water's plans should be aligned with the strategy, and all teams are engaged with the vision and themes.
- i) The strategy will frame the PR24 submission.
- j) A Forum member commented that the most challenging part of cascading the strategy is that many customer-facing roles are being undertaken by contractors.
- k) A Forum member asked how cascading to contractors and external agencies will be successfully undertaken. The Company Lead agreed that cascading to contractors and supply chain will be a challenge. The strategy is straightforward in terms of what the Company are trying to do, which will help with the cascade.
- l) The Forum Chair asked whether the Forum are being asked to note the strategy or are they being invited to comment on it? In the past, the Forum was consulted rather than being informed, and such consultation was an integral part of the relationship.

- m) The Company Lead stated that the content has been agreed and is being rolled out across the business. The Forum's feedback and comments on the way it is being rolled out are welcome.
- n) The Company Lead acknowledged the change in relationship between the Company and the Forum and commented that the shift reflects the amended Forum Terms of Reference.
- o) The Company will send the Forum a report from the Yorkshire Water online panel. The report details the development of the strategy with customers and alignment with customers priorities.

**Action 1:** The Company to share the report from the online panel, around the development of the corporate strategy with customers.

## **2. Update on Actions and Minutes**

- a) The Company outlined that meeting minutes will be drafted within a week of each Forum meeting and to then sent to the Forum Deputy Chair for review.
- b) Actions will be captured as part of the meeting minutes.
- c) At the monthly Forum meetings, the previous month's minutes will be reviewed and signed-off by Forum members.
- d) There are outstanding meeting minutes, which have either been reviewed by the Forum Deputy Chair and are awaiting sign-off by the Forum, or they have not yet been completed by The Company.
- e) Actions from last month were reviewed.

## **3. Your Water Your Say Event**

- a) The Company delivered a presentation on the upcoming Your Water Your Say (YWYS) event. As part of the price review process (PR24) all water and wastewater companies in England and Wales are currently developing their plans for 2025 to 2030. This will set price controls for water and for sewage companies for the next five-year period. The YWYS sessions are part of the price review process.
- b) The YWYS session will provide an opportunity for customers, communities and wider stakeholders to ask questions about key features of business plans as well as local priorities or service issues that they would like to see addressed in The Company's PR24 submissions. It will also provide an opportunity for customers and stakeholders to pose questions to Yorkshire Water about issues that are important to them, including priorities for the future, in a public environment.
- c) There will be two online sessions. The first is scheduled for 7 June 2023 at 6pm. This session will allow attendees to ask questions about key features of business plans as well as local priorities or service issues that they would like to see addressed in The Company's PR24 submissions. The second session

will happen in October or November 2023, immediately after companies' submissions to Ofwat.

- d) The Company outlined the event agenda: a 15-minute presentation covering the Company's business plan and long-term delivery strategy, customer priorities, environmental outcomes and affordability. This will be followed by a live Q&A session for 1 hour. The session will be facilitated by an independent chair and will last for 1h 30 min.
- e) To register for the event: <https://www.yorkshirewater.com/about-us/your-water-your-say/>
- f) Questions can be asked in advance, via email to: [yourwateryoursay@ccwater.org.uk](mailto:yourwateryoursay@ccwater.org.uk). The advanced questions will be collated by CCW, who will ask them during the event.
- g) All questions asked (both at the live event and submitted in advanced) will be sent to the Company afterwards, for answering. This includes any advanced questions that were not able to be asked during the event.
- h) The event is in addition to the Company's engagement with customer and stakeholder representatives. It does not replace any of the regular insight, communications or consultation activities.
- i) Next steps after the event:
  - i. By 14 June 2023 The Company is required to draft a written record of the meeting to be shared with the audience
  - ii. On 6 July 2023, finalised written record of the meeting will be published on the Company's website and will include responses to all questions raised
  - iii. By Summer 2023, discussions and reflection on the main customer issues made during the event and via other channels
  - iv. In October 2023, submission of the Company's business 2025-30 plan to Ofwat
  - v. In Autumn 2023, the second YWYS public online session will be held. At this second session, the Company will discuss how issues are being addressed, which issues are outstanding; and the companies' explanation of why specific issues are not addressed.
- j) The Company requested that Forum members disseminate the YWYS event details to their network and contacts, and via social media channels. For those who cannot attend, encourage them to send a question in advance.

**Action 2:** Forum members are requested to disseminate the YWYS event details to their network and contacts, and via their social media channels.

- k) A Forum member suggested that Ofwat's expectation was for the Company to obtain input on slide contents from the Forum. The Forum member expressed surprise that the Company has not requested such input yet. The

Company replied that they will share the draft slides for input and comments by the Forum.

**Action 3:** The Company to share the YWYS draft presentation slides with the Forum, for their input and comments.

- l) A Forum member commented that the Ofwat guidance states that promotional activities should target participation by the most vulnerable and hard to reach customers, and those without the ability to attend the session virtually. The Forum member asked how the Company is targeting participation of those groups?
- m) The Company replied that they have promoted the event on Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and Instagram, and a promotion event will be sent to customers signed up for marketing emails. as well as to non-household retailers who look after billing and customer service relationships with the business customers to promote the event to them. A banner will be placed on the homepage to widen the reach to everyone who visits the Company's website. The intention is also to overlay registration postcodes on indices of Multiple Deprivation to help consider more targeted promotion of the event. In addition, there is a small amount of funding to undertake targeted promotion of more vulnerable customers, BAME communities, and younger customers.
- n) The Company are talking to other water companies who have undertaken similar events. The Company has obtained insight into paper targeted communication (i.e., communications that are not online). Unfortunately, the efforts in targeting underrepresented groups via paper-based communications has not yielded good results for other water companies, companies in terms of increasing attendance from vulnerable or underrepresented groups on the session.
- o) A Forum member observed that the event registration form does not address any accessibility needs.

**Action 4:** Information about an individual's accessibility needs to be captured in the event registration form.

- p) A Forum member asked how the event sign-ups are going. The Company responded that 69 people have registered to attend the event. Additional promotion of the event will be undertaken in the next few weeks.
- q) A Forum member asked how the event will be advertised, outside the usual mailing lists. The Company will be promoting the event through their usual media channels, including online invitations, the Company's website, Twitter, LinkedIn, and Instagram.
- r) A Forum member observed that many sign-ups may be representatives of CCW, Ofwat, and members of the Company. The Forum member asked how

many of the 69 attendees are from outside of these groups and have not been in contact with the Company before?

- s) The Company acknowledged the comment and has also considered this potential issue. The Company are taking lessons from other water companies in how best to target other groups of customers. The Company reiterated that this event is an addition to current communications with customers.
- t) A Forum member expressed interested in helping with engagement of underrepresented customers for future events.
- u) A Forum member said that the Company needs to put more effort into targeting marginalised communities. The Company noted this point.

**Action 5:** The Company and the Forum member to discuss ways to continue engaging with underrepresented groups for future customer engagement events.

#### **4. Research Programme Update**

- a) The Company presented an update on the affordability and acceptability customer research.
- b) Cognitive interviews were conducted to test the research materials in advance of the qualitative research.
- c) Results of the interviews showed that the amount of information customers needed to read before attending the research was too much and resulted in participant dropouts and difficulty recruiting (particularly with future customers).
- d) The Company asked the Forum for their thoughts about not sharing the pre-task materials with future customers. Their reason was due to the issues with recruiting future customers, and the risk that they may not be represented in the research (depth interviews and workshops). The Company noted that this was not aligned to Ofwat guidance, which states the pre-task materials should be shared in advance.
- e) The Forum agreed with the decision to not share pre-task materials in advance to future customers. The agreement was due to the risk that future customers may not be represented in the research.
- f) A Forum member suggested that the Company provide Ofwat feedback on their guidance around the sharing of pre-task materials.
- g) Results from the interviews showed that the materials were easy to understand, clear and well designed.
- h) Results also showed that some parts of the stimulus needed a little more explaining to make them clearer - funding of debt, internal sewer flooding target. Other parts needed further detail and more tangible targets (e.g., the Long-Term Delivery Strategy [LTDS]).
- i) Separate testing on the LTDS will be undertaken.

- j) Interviews with vulnerable customers showed that the volume of information was resulting in them losing interest. This was particularly apparent with the comparative charts (a total of seven slides), which were found to be less relevant to this customer group.
- k) The Company asked The Forum if they agreed with removing the comparative information bar chart slides from the vulnerable customer side pack.
- l) The Forum agreed with the decision to remove the comparative information bar charts from the vulnerable customer sides.
- m) The revised stimulus materials will be shared this week. The Company requested feedback from the Forum on the materials.

**Action 6:** The Company to share the revised stimulus materials for the qualitative research, for the Forum's feedback.

- n) The Company shared the upcoming Affordability and Acceptability workshop dates and locations. Due to restrictions on the number of visitors permitted per workshop, Forum members as advised to tell the Company if they are attending a workshop.

**Action 7:** The Company to send the qualitative workshop venues via email.

**Action 8:** Forum members to advise the Company in advance if they want to attend a qualitative workshop.

- o) The Company outlined the next steps for Affordability and Acceptability testing.
- p) The Company outlined the current activity and next steps on the Affordability and Vulnerability research.

## 5. Annual Performance Report

- a) The Company shared that the APR23 document will contain a commentary on performance, two spreadsheets of data tables, a summary document on ODI performance, an in-period ODI report, a risk and compliance statement, an accounting separation methodology statement, and a statement from the Forum.
- b) Changes in APR23 from last year:
  - i. Ofwat want to see further progress on open data, including the strategy and characteristics being adopting for open data. The Company are looking into how best to address this requirement.
  - ii. Ofwat would like data on the provision of historical greenhouse gas emissions back to at least 2018/19, and information on developer services. The Company will include these data in APR23.
- c) Ofwat have asked for changes on two statements contained within the APR:

- i. Details on how dividends are paid, and demonstration on how this considers the interests of customers.
  - ii. A statement on executive pay and performance.
- d) Ofwat have requested an early view on the 2022/23 results for the 12 common performance commitments. The Company submitted the performance to Ofwat at the end of April 2023. The details of what was given to Ofwat is contained within the APR slide pack sent in advance of the meeting.
- e) Ofwat now require quarterly reporting against the 12 common performance commitments, rather than annual reporting. The Company will submit the next quarterly report to Ofwat in August 2023.
- f) The Company explained that APR23 will have a similar in length and style as last year's report.
- g) The Forum to prepare a statement on the Company's performance, to be published alongside the APR23 document.
- h) The Company requested to receive a copy of the Forum's statement, as each section is completed. The Company will work with a publishing company they have selected to prepare the document for publishing.

**Action 9:** Forum to advise the Company when they expect to complete their performance statement.

- i) The Forum Chair explained that the selected publishing company does not meet the Forum's requirements, and this has been an ongoing issue. The main concern is providing adequate graphics and visual materials for the Forum's document.
- j) The Company acknowledged the concerns raised and agreed that the visual materials provided by the selected publishing company have caused issues in the past. The Company understands that their in-house photo library has been updated and more photos and images will be available this year. The Company offered to share a selection of visual materials, allowing the Forum to select the visuals they wish to be included in the report.

**Action 10:** The Company to share a selection of visual materials for inclusion in the APR23 document, for the Forum to select from.

**Action 11:** The Company to share the Word document of last year's Forum statement as a starting point for the Forum's report.

- k) The Company gave an overview of the six performance commitments that require review and assurance by the Forum: working with others, integrated catchment management, length of river improved, capital carbon and carbon arising from owned land, inclusive customer service, and creating value from waste.



- l) The Company asked how the Forum would like to receive the data on these commitments.
- m) The Forum expressed a concern with adequately reviewing the performance commitments within the required timescales (10 June 2023). The next Forum meeting will be past the deadline, meaning alternative ways to submit the details is required.
- n) A Forum member raised that in previous years there were regular updates on progress on the 'Working with Others' performance commitment, resulting in the Forum being well sighted on the programme. The Forum member commented that it has been a year or more since they have received these updates.

**Action 12:** The Company to consider how to submit information about progress against the six performance commitments and report back to the Forum.

**Action 13:** The Company to provide the Forum with an update against the six performance commitments. This information is to include the criteria to be met for each measure, and evidence for each performance commitment.

- o) A Forum member commented that many of the performance commitments are environmental measures, and there has not been an Environmental sub-group meeting recently. This lack of information may impact the Forum's ability to give their assurance.
- p) The Company's third line auditors are due to attend the June forum meeting, to present their assessment of the annual performance reporting.

**Action 14:** The Company's third line auditors to attend the Forum meeting in June.

- q) The Company presented the draft outcomes for 12 of the common performance commitments.

## **6. Business Plan Review**

- a) The first iteration of the business plan and milestone plan were shared at the April 2023 meeting. The second iteration and internal governance processes will be undertaken in June 2023.
- b) The Company will provide an update on the Business Plan at the June 2023 meeting.
- c) The Forum Chair requested the Business Plan materials to be shared with the Forum well in advance of the next meeting.

**Action 15:** The Company to share the revised Business Plan in advance of the Forum meeting on 22 June 2023.

## **7. Research Programme Report Writer and Project Management**

- a) The Company have selected a report writer and are working through the procurement process to secure this person to undertake the work.

- b) The Company commented that getting confirmation of the report writer was now critical. The Forum Chair agreed and stated that further delays could result in the report not being produced.

**Acton 16:** The Company to complete procurement activities and secure the report writer.

- c) The Company has secured project management support until December 2023.

## **8. Feedback on CoG**

- a) The Forum Chair and a Forum member attended the CoG meeting.
- b) The Forum Chair was alarmed how far behind the Company is compared to other water companies.
- c) Except for one or two Company Leads, the Forum Chair expressed an overall lack of engagement from the Company. The Forum Chair noted that other customer forums appeared to have greater confidence in their water companies' achievements.

## **Next meeting**

22 June 2023 via Microsoft Teams

## Actions

### May 2023

Ref.	Action	Status
1	The Company to share the report from the online panel, around the development of the corporate strategy with customers.	Complete
2	Forum members are requested to disseminate the YWYS event details to their network and contacts, and via their social media channels.	Complete
3	The Company to share the YWYS draft presentation slides with the Forum, for their input and comments.	Complete
4	Information about an individual's accessibility needs to be captured in the event registration form.	Complete
5	The Company and the Forum member to discuss ways to continue engaging with underrepresented groups for future customer engagement events.	Open
6	The Company to share the revised stimulus materials for the qualitative research, for the Forum's feedback.	Complete
7	The Company to send the qualitative workshop venues via email.	Complete
8	Forum members to advise the Company in advance if they want to attend a qualitative workshop.	Complete
9	Forum to advise the Company when they expect to complete their performance statement.	Complete
10	The Company to share a selection of visual materials for inclusion in the APR23 document, for the Forum to select from.	Complete
11	The Company to share the Word document of last year's Forum statement as a starting point for the Forum's report.	Complete
12	The Company to consider how to submit information about progress against the six performance commitments and report back to the Forum.	Open
13	The Company to provide the Forum with an update against the six performance commitments. This information is to include the criteria to be met for each measure, and evidence for each performance commitment.	Open

14	The Company's third line auditors to attend the Forum meeting in June.	Open
15	The Company to share the revised Business Plan in advance of the Forum meeting on 22 June 2023.	Open
16	The Company to complete procurement activities and secure the report writer.	Complete

### April 2023

Ref.	Action	Status
1	May meeting to be rescheduled.	Complete
2	Forum to provide feedback on minutes.	Open
3	The Company to prepare and send outstanding draft minutes plus recordings (if still available).	In progress
4	The Forum to provide feedback on the Company's Business Plan Tracker.	Complete
5	Forum to provide feedback on WINEP paper	Open
6	Clarity requested on how confident we are on what Ilkley will deliver.	Open
7	Meeting to be arranged with the new Forum PM and the Forum Chair and Deputy Chair.	Complete
8	The Company to provide critical path update via email.	Complete
9	Forum to consider raising in report - understand impact of statutory enhancement expenditure crowding out choices expenditure/impact on customers.	Open
10	Forum to consider raising in report - concerned about Ilkley being a precedent and that there is transparency to customers around cost.	Open
11	Move meetings to 13.30 rather than 13.00 start	Complete

### March 2023

Ref.	Action	Status
1	Forum dates to be in the diary for end of the year by end of March 2024	Complete
2	Minutes from previous meetings to be circulated	Closed (superseded)
3	Subgroups - feedback required from meeting between Forum Chair and Company Lead	Complete

4	Forward pragmatic view of key elements of the plan and associated investments required and discussions on critical path	Complete
5	Statutory submissions to be circulated to members	Open
6	Update required on report writer	Complete
7	Your Water Your Say Deck to be shared/dates to be confirmed	Complete
8	Follow up with Company brand team re addressing digitally excluded	Closed
9	Acceptability and affordability deck along with spreadsheet to be circulated	Complete
10	The company to update text, add DWI etc. (linked to Action 4, above)	Complete
11	April meeting - extended members only forum required	Complete
12	Enhanced expenditure to be on April agenda	Complete

## February 2023

Ref.	Action	Status
1	Meeting to be arranged between Forum Chair and Company Lead. Topics to include subgroups	Complete
2	Solution required on report writer	Complete
3	Future agenda items requested - Bill Impacts, WINEP, "flexibility to factor sub-group issues into critical path", WACC, implications of DWMP and WRMP - e.g., cost efficiency, cost implications, DWI submission/implications, Bespoke PCs, plan review	Open
4	LTDS slides presented on the day to be forwarded to Forum members	Complete
5	LTDS - Company to confirm attendees at the company and Ofwat meeting	Complete
6	LTDS - further engagement with forum in April/May with consideration of an additional meeting on LTDS scenarios	In progress
7	Forum members to feedback comments/further reflections to PC on approach to Affordability and Acceptability Testing research	Complete
8	The Company to forward presentation materials from two items discussed with Forum members	Complete

9	Company to share 'Your Water, Your Say' presentation material for comment with Forum members ahead of open forum event in May/June	Complete
10	Forum terms of reference – consideration of flexibility around implementation of 9-year terms including issue with statutory members	Open