

Your Yorkshire Water, Your Say: Event 1 (9th July 2026) report

July 2026



YorkshireWater



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1 Introduction:

Report of the Your Yorkshire Water, Your Say event

The Your Yorkshire Water, Your Say event was held on Zoom on 9th July 2026, 6.00–7.30pm. It was chaired by Alex McCluckie (Research Director) from DJS Research.

Yorkshire Water were represented by:



Nicola Shaw CBE
Chief Executive
Officer



Matthew Pinder
Director of
Customer,
Distribution
and Collection



Richard Stuart
Director of
Capital Delivery

A total of 20 customers from across the Yorkshire region signed up to attend the evening and 9 customers joined the online event. Customers' reasons for not attending centred on changes in personal circumstances.

While questions were invited in advance, additional questions were received during the session via a Q&A box, or through live questions. This document provides a thematic response to the questions received. Where questions were similar, a common answer has been provided rather than addressing each question individually.

Additionally, where specific information was requested and Yorkshire Water agreed to provide direct follow up, this has been noted.

The presentation provided is available on Yorkshire Water's website:

<https://www.yorkshirewater.com/about-us/your-yorkshire-water-your-say/>

2 Independent Chair introduction

The Chair confirmed that he had been appointed by Yorkshire Water to act as the independent Chair for the Your Yorkshire Water, Your Say (YYWYS) session. The Chair explained that the purpose of the session was to give Yorkshire Water customers and stakeholders the opportunity to hear directly from Yorkshire Water's Chief Executive Officer, Nicola Shaw, on the company's recent performance and future plans, and to allow customers to pose questions related to Yorkshire Water and the issues important to them.

The Chair reassured the audience that every single question that had been submitted in advance, during, or very shortly after the online session would receive an answer from Yorkshire Water and would be included in the official record of the meeting but where questions were similar, a common answer would be provided rather than addressing each question individually.

3 Yorkshire Water presentation

Nicola Shaw, CEO of Yorkshire Water, opened the session by providing an update on Yorkshire Water's overall performance. She reminded customers of Yorkshire Water's largest ever environmental programme, including £8.3 billion worth of investment between 2025 and 2030. Nicola shared that within the first year of the plan, Yorkshire Water has invested £990 million to improve services and completed 88 projects across Yorkshire, the majority being mains replacement. Additionally, Yorkshire Water has invested in groundwater projects to increase resilience and has invested over £100million to reduce discharges into the River Wharfe. The presentation also outlined further investments into bathing water quality; what Yorkshire Water is doing to improve customer service and the company's leakage performance.

The presentation is available on Yorkshire Water's website:

<https://www.yorkshirewater.com/about-us/your-yorkshire-water-your-say/>

4 Event questions and answers

The Chair outlined the structure of the Q&A session, explaining that questions would be addressed by Yorkshire Water directors across the following areas:

- **Clean water and wastewater services:** queries relating to water quality, pressure, interruptions, leaks, lead pipes, repairs, consumption, and supply, as well as wastewater, sewage, pollution, and the environment were handled by all Yorkshire Water directors.

- **Investments:** Richard Stuart answered questions relating to company investment delivery and construction.
- **Billing, affordability, vulnerable customers:** Matthew Pinder responded to questions on billing, metering, and affordability.
- **Corporate and company matters:** Nicola Shaw covered working with partners, ownership, structure, profits, dividends, pay, and bonuses.

5 Clean water and wastewater Q&A

Is the volume of available water per household increasing or decreasing?

What's happening in Yorkshire is that more water is available per household at the moment and that's because of things like the borehole we've put in at Heck. But over time, there is going to be less water available and there are complicated reasons for that. First of all, there are going to be more households, we're all expecting there are going to be more people living in Yorkshire; you've seen a lot of publicity about more houses to be built in Leeds, Halifax, North Yorkshire or Doncaster. More houses will mean that unless we have more water, there'll be less per household. Then there are things that are changing in legislation because of climate change, more worries about the amount of water in the rivers at certain times of year. We extract water from rivers and we collect water in reservoirs, so at some times of the year, there'll be a lot of water available as it rains more in particular peaks, and at some times of the year, there'll be less water available because it rains less; like we saw last year, the massive change in the very dry and the very wet. And we're also worried about those rivers, because we worry about the quality of the environment for the fish and for the invertebrates and other things in the river. The Environment Agency is therefore requiring us to take less water out of those rivers over time. So, what we're doing is trying to encourage people to use less water. In Yorkshire we use on average less than in the rest of the country, we use on average about 127 litres per person per day, the rest of the country is about 140 litres per person per day. But the government wants us all to reduce further to about 110 litres per person per day, whether that's by having a shorter shower or having a bit of equipment that uses less water, like in your washing machine, those kinds of thing can really help. We're also finding new ways to put water into the system, like the boreholes, and we're also working with our neighbours in Northumberland, in Nottinghamshire, in the Peak District and over in the west of the country with United Utilities, to find ways to move water across the country from other locations where there is a bit more water. So, there is lots of work going on, both on supply, and demand.

How many leaks have been stopped this year?

We fixed just short of 5,000 leaks this year, from the start of April, that is 200 less than the same period last year. We're pleased with that because some of the things we're doing to try and prevent the leaks happening in the first place, we're seeing some really good results from. We've got some new techniques that we're trying to use to detect where we think the next leak is coming from, with monitors and loggers on the network which are basically trying to determine whether something is going to happen – we get there and do the work before it happens. In the same way that we have water pumping stations that move water around the region, we're doing lots of work on trying to improve the pressure of the pipes to prevent them from bursting and

leaking, so we're pleased with that. We're nowhere near the point where we want to be still with leakage and we know that's one of the frustrations we hear a lot from customers about how quickly we fix them, especially when they're reported and they're visible to customers. We mentioned earlier about a lot of new people joining Yorkshire Water, a lot of them are leakage inspectors, 100 of them have joined us in the last twelve months to find more leaks and get there quicker, and that's important. Then, our partners who fix those leaks, we've also increased. We're challenged with sometimes fixing leaks, but we ultimately are trying to make sure that we get there as quickly as we can.

If the drinking water isn't used speedily, is it stored or is returned to the river?

We keep the water that's been treated after it's gone from the water treatment works into our network, that doesn't get returned. We have different ways in which we store it – so we have service reservoirs and different storage reservoirs that hold treated water so that we can use it when customers may be using more in weather like this. We have water towers that hold water as well so particularly in the flat parts of Yorkshire, you'll see more water towers that help to store water. We also move water around something we call the grid which allows us to move water from in the East of the county through to South Yorkshire. When the water has been treated, it can often be either stored or moved around so we don't lose it and have to return it, because it's important that once it's been treated, it gets to customers' taps.

I live on the outskirts of Rotherham and we have a community of about 23 homes in Firbeck, and we have a private pipeline. We have been trying to negotiate with Yorkshire Water for a considerable amount of time now to ask them to adopt the pipe and they've abandoned us, they're not interested. We've asked if we could pay towards having a new pipeline and we will make the payments through our direct debits for our water rates, but they're not interested. I just find in this day and age that it's just not good. They just won't negotiate with us. Every time we form a relationship with somebody, they get moved on. We've been told if it's a private pipe, they're not interested. Us as residents have all paid £1,000 each to get the pipe fixed ourselves, between us we've paid out £20,000 and if the pipe goes again, it looks like we'll have to do that again. In this day and age, I just don't think that is good.

There are a number of private pipes across Yorkshire, Yorkshire Water don't own every single pipe, which I think is important. I don't just mean wastewater here; there's clean water pipes that Yorkshire Water don't own so I do think that's important. It's probably one I need to speak to you directly about just to understand the history.

Why do you continue to refer to all discharges of sewage to rivers as storm overflows, when in reality, the vast majority are for other reasons e.g. equipment failure?

The terminology in the industry is the combined sewer overflow, which brings together sewage from people's homes, discharges of sewage from workplaces and offices, from any factory, or from restaurants, those kinds of things, and the water that runs off roads or fields into the sewage network, because we don't have separate networks that deal with the stuff that comes off the road or off the fields. We deal with that extra work through the combined sewer overflows, that's why we talk about combined sewer overflows. There are also things called emergency overflows and we are only allowed to use the emergency overflows when equipment goes wrong. There's a special permit for those, and there are many fewer of those than there are combined sewer overflows. We've got over 2,000 combined sewer overflows, and more like 150 (I can't remember the exact number of emergency overflows) but fewer. That's a very technical description but the point is, we don't have as many discharges as from our combined sewer overflows and that's why we're making this investment at 450 different locations across the county.

If there are combined sewer overflows and emergency overflows, why do you always refer to them as storm overflows?

I think when we talk about storm overflows, we're talking about combined sewer overflows, and I think it's probably just shorthand. I don't think we always call them that, so if you've been offended by any of our language, I apologise, it's not intended to confuse.

Just to build on that, I think the large investment is because the majority of Yorkshire Water's network is combined, it takes the runoff from houses and roads as well as the sewage that comes from properties. The large investment that we've talked about so far is obviously about how we stop those spills, and some of the examples we talked about earlier at Wetherby are a good example of that. The emergency overflows are a smaller proportion in that they happen, or shouldn't happen should I say, but they are only allowed to happen should there be an emergency situation, which could be a burst wastewater pipe, an electrical or pump break down, which we need to fix. I think quite a lot of the work that we do to stop emergency overflows is a different type of activity, it's how we maintain our pumps, it's how we clean the pipes, it's all maintenance activity. Whereas the storm overflows usually require reasonable investment to be able to stop those spills from going to the water course. I think we've probably got some reflection to do there on the language we use on this, but I just wanted to add a little more.

What are the levels of E. coli in the River Wharfe at Wetherby?

I don't know the exact answer, but I do know that there is a very useful website called Swimfo. It's got really good, detailed information provided by the Environment Agency for any designated bathing water around the country. A lot of those are on the coast but there are a small number of inland bathing water areas - Wetherby is one of those,

and you can see all the information. I think it includes E. coli, so I'd really recommend that website, it's a useful resource.

6 Investments Q&A

Are you going to build any reservoirs to capture winter rainfall, as boreholes will be affected by summer drought?

Nicola has already touched on some of the supply and demand things that we consider, but a bit about the process. We have something called Water Resources Management Plans and what that does is look ahead 25 years to think about what the demand for water is going to be in Yorkshire over that time, and what resources we have available to us in order to meet that demand, and what we need to do differently if there's not enough supply to meet the demand. We've got lots of scenarios, we think about how much house building might go on, what sort of industrial growth there might be and so we've got a plan that can look ahead 25 years, but adapt over time as well if things change. The plan at the moment is pointing towards the need for more investment and the need to bring more water resources online and then once we've got to that point, we look at what is the best way to do that. What's the best value way that we can bring in more water resources to meet the demand that we need? Now, building reservoirs is extremely expensive, it's got a huge environmental impact, it takes a long time. We find that we can, by drilling new boreholes, such as the one that was mentioned at Heck and we've got a number of other boreholes which are being drilled across the county at the moment (some of those will be coming online next year), those are the best value way that we can meet the demand. The point about winter and summer, that's something that we need to balance. We've got the long-term planning, which is over 25 years, we also do a lot of short-term planning; week to week, month to month, year to year, to make sure that we've always got enough water resources. With the reservoirs and catching enough water when it's raining, we do have a big network of channels and catch waters and assets that you see up in the hills if you're out for a walk in the countryside. As part of what we do is look at that and make sure that we're keeping that well maintained so that we can capture as much rainwater as possible when it does rain, and keep those reservoirs stocked up as much as we can. With the mix of where we get our water, whether that's out of boreholes, out of the river, from the reservoirs, we've got a plan in place to make sure that we can keep up with the demand across the region.

How is it going to be possible to provide enough water supply to Yorkshire in the future for more housing, more data centres and support growth in the context of climate change?

I think that is the challenge of the water resources planning [mentioned in the previous response].

When will Wetherby Treatment Works be upgraded?

We've got quite a lot to do at Wetherby, and my team are busy making plans, we're doing lots of design work and survey work at the moment. We've got to have the work done by March 2030; we're in the detailed planning and investigation stages of what we're going to do there. We've got five storm overflows in Wetherby and also an upgrade to make to the sewage treatment works, and we're looking at options for that. We're looking at the best way to address all those issues, thinking about it in the round and holistically, what's the best way both in terms of value for money but also the disruption that we might cause while we're constructing it. There are a few different ways that we can reduce the storm overflows; one way is separating the rainwater network from the sewage network so keeping that stormwater out and doing that separation. Or we can use nature-based solutions, where we build things like reed beds and wetlands, or we can build big storage tanks. We're looking at all of those options, I don't have the exact start date but we've got a lot of work to deliver so it'll be within the next year or two that we start, and we'll certainly be finished by March 2030. And that's all to improve the bathing water in that area in the Wharfe.

I live in Wetherby and I asked the question regarding the River Wharfe because we're all very concerned about the state of the water with all the overflows, continuous overflows, and we're not just having to put up with that now, we've been putting up with that for quite a number of years. In the meantime, 500 new homes have been built in Wetherby, and we now have a further 1,000 homes they've started near the York Road, they're due to be completed over the next seven to eight years. There's an awful lot of sewage that is still going to be flowing into the river before the new treatment works are sorted. I'm very concerned about the effects of the river because we have brass bands playing down by the riverside during the summer and people come from all over the place with children. The other week, I was down there with my two grandchildren, I won't let them anywhere near the river because I know that it's not in a healthy state, it was bad that weekend that I could smell the sewage, and other people just didn't seem to be bothered and were letting their children swim and paddle in that water – I don't know how many ended up ill.

The Wharfe is a beautiful river, Wetherby is a great spot, I've been there with the family, and I can understand how worrying that must be with the additional development that's coming online, and your concern about the impact that might have on the river. It is one of the reasons that we're investing in Wetherby because we want to do our bit in helping improve the Wharfe. One of the things that we feel is important to do in the meantime is to be as open and transparent as we can with the information that we have. So, I've talked about the Environment Agency website that talks about the river water quality, they do quite a lot of water testing down there, and they publish the information as soon as they can following that testing. What we're also doing is we have a live storm overflows map that we publish, and we keep that up to date so you

can see across Yorkshire where we've got all of our storm overflows, you can see when each one of those last operated.

You may well know of the guy who knows the Wharfe extremely well and has done a lot of videos, he knows that despite what the storm overflow information might be, as in nothing is happening today, he's swimming through it.

If you think or know where there's any sort of difference between what we're reporting on our map and what you're seeing or experiencing out there, we'd be really keen to hear about that because we want to make sure that we've got monitors on all of our storm overflow outfalls. We rely on those monitors to tell us when it's operating and when it's not so if you think that's wrong, then please do get in touch and we'll send some people out to have a look and make sure that it's calibrated in the right way.

Can you give me any timeframe as to when the new sewage treatment works might be on stream?

The deadline we've got for the Environment Agency is 31st March 2030, so we'll be finished before then. We'll be doing lots of engagement with customers that live in that area while we're doing the work, and we'll keep you all up to date with the information as we develop more details around the plans. We have recently done quite a lot of work upstream on the Wharfe at Ilkley and we're really pleased with how that's gone; we've made a really big impact up there and we hope to repeat that type of thing in Wetherby over the coming years.

The York area always has plenty of water in the Derwent, Ouse and Foss. Why do we then encounter hosepipe bans; is it because of under investment?

It's a really good question because when you go across the county you often see that, don't you? You see water flowing through rivers, and you'll question, why is it that there has to be a hosepipe ban? We've had two since 1999 and they both happen to have been recently, in 2022 and 2025. And the reason why we hadn't had any between was absolutely because of investment because after the very big hosepipe ban and very difficult period we had in 1996, there was a huge investment across Yorkshire in making sure we had a much more extensive network to be able to move water between different areas, and we make use of that extensively almost all the time. So, lots of water from the Derwent, for example, is treated at a place called Elvington, near York. Some of that water goes into the York network, some of that water goes right the way down to support water flows in Sheffield; a good illustration of the extent to which we move water around the network to ensure that everybody has the water that they need. It's really useful, that network, because it helps us stay resilient even when some parts of the county, whether it's a reservoir part or a river part, is struggling. And the hosepipe bans have not really been because of underinvestment; they've been because of the huge change in the way that water has fallen or hasn't fallen across the county. We can see all the data on rain and how we've caught it in reservoirs for

every year, month by month, week by week, going back for a long time. What we see is that 2022 and 2025 were outstandingly difficult years; we knew that because our planning for our Water Resources Management Plan said this was going to be a difficult five years as the change in the climate and our investments were working together. Because we've accelerated the work at Heck and those other boreholes that Richard and I have mentioned, we believe that all our forecasts say we will be in a much better place when all that investment is done. We're also putting investment into things called storage reservoirs, which is where we store water after we've treated it, so we have a more resilient time if any of the treatment works struggle at any time, and when the treatment works have to work really hard as they are doing now. We've seen, broadly, a 30% increase in demand during the hot weather in the last few weeks, so the treatment works have all been working really hard, and as Matt said, sometimes equipment just struggles. It's like sometimes your car breaks down, it's the same with equipment and treatment works, so when we're working them really hard, we have to look after them more. And the resilience we get from having these storage reservoirs is useful so we're putting in more of those as well to help reduce the number of times we would have to have a hosepipe ban, hopefully to zero.

There is ongoing work from Yorkshire Water, it has been for nearly a year or more, with traffic management in the Castleford area on Wheldon Road. When is this expected to be completed?

This area on Wheldon Road is in between the town and our sewage works in Castleford, so we've got quite a lot of pipes in the ground around there. The area also has a history of flooding so we're in there at the moment doing some work to help reduce flooding and help solve that problem. We started that work in April and we're due to be finished in August. The work is about automating some of our valves and improving our connections so when we've got high flow, we can divert the water and prevent the flooding. Now I do know that there was gas mains replacement happening directly before us, so I think probably from the point of view of anyone driving through there, you'll have seen the traffic management out on the road, which was the gas people first and now us. But the good news is we'll be finished in August, and we'll have improved and reduced the flooding risk in the area. It is worth saying, going back to the subject of combined sewer overflows (CSO), we've got a CSO just off Wheldon Road. This area is right in between the railway line and the river area, and we've got a big project to reduce the number of spills at that CSO over the next couple of years. That is another one that we're in the design process; we're looking to start on the ground on that one in October. There are a few different things that we're doing, most of the work will be happening in the sewage works itself; we're building a six million litre storage tank in the sewage works to hold back the overflows rather than spilling into the river. I don't know 100% what the traffic management arrangements are going to be for that, but we are talking to the Council at the moment and we're

making plans that will make sure the disruption caused will be minimised as far as we can in order for us to get in and do the work safely. So, plenty going on in that area.

You've talked about the large programme of investment you are planning to deliver over the next five years. I assume other water companies have similar programmes. Does the UK have the engineers and the skilled workforce to deliver these improvements in the water sector?

We have brought a lot of people into Yorkshire Water; I think we mentioned earlier the apprentices and graduates are the most we've ever recruited on record, in terms of bringing people into the organisation. We are aware that we've got a number of different things that we need to improve based on not just the investment but the different things that are happening, whether it's AI or different systems that people need to use and different roles that people and jobs need to do. We are more than aware that there's a lot to do in terms of how we develop the people that work at Yorkshire Water, as well as the partners that we work with. We also know which areas we're more concerned about than others, so we've definitely got some particular areas where we're spending a lot of time making sure that we've got the right people with the right skills. I'm sure Richard can build on that because a lot of it sits in his part of the business.

It's a great question and it is something that we're thinking about a lot. I think when you look at the water sector, it's a real step up in the level of investment that we're making, and making sure that we bring in people with the right skills, experience and knowledge to help to deliver that investment is really important. The first answer is there are not enough people in the water sector to deliver, but we're looking well beyond the water sector. It's an infrastructure and it's a construction industry problem and it is one of these big national challenges. We've brought a lot of people into Yorkshire Water, some of those have come with great experience from working in other sectors like railways, roads, telecoms. And when you look across all these big investment programmes across different areas, they go through different cycles. We're finding that there's less demand in highways and less demand in telecoms installation. But on the flip side of that, the energy sector is ramping up so, yes, it's a big challenge. What we're trying to do about it; we've got a number of different tactics. The long-term sustainable answer is about graduates and apprentices, and making sure that we're bringing through the next generation of talent, so we've significantly increased our programme of both apprentices and graduates, which is great to see, the next generation coming in. We're also thinking about our supply chain and what we can do to make it easier for them to meet the demand. So, some of that comes down to simply giving them better visibility if the work is coming down the pipeline; making it really clear what it is that we need and when we need it, so they can have more time to prepare their teams and find the people. We're also looking at things that we can do to build things with fewer people, things like what can we take off site

and what can we build in factories and then bring it into site on lorries and install it that way. It's one of these kinds of complex multifaceted problems that we're definitely scratching our heads about but making good progress on, I think.

7 Bills and affordability Q&A

I do my best to reduce my bill; I'm on pension credit so every penny counts. I really can't use any less, I use one unit per month, but my bill is close to £100 per quarter. That's around £35 per unit, it's too much.

Thank you for focusing on water usage, it's brilliant to hear. We always encourage people to get in touch to talk to us about their bill, we have a number of different support schemes that we offer. It can depend on circumstances, and there's a variety of different options; whether you live on your own, or you have a young family, or it's related to income, there's a range of different schemes that we offer to support people. What I will also say around the bill is that usage is only part of the cost. There are a number of elements of the bill that relate to fixed charges such as the people that we employ in contact centres to answer the phones, or the wastewater, or the runoff water from the property that gets taken away and treated and put back into the river. So, usage is one part of the bill, which I think is just helpful to understand, but I would encourage you to get in touch and we can we work through that specific example and really understand what support we can offer.

Why are billing and pricing continuing to escalate despite the ongoing restrictions on water consumption, such as hosepipe bans?

Nicola talked earlier about the amount of investment that's going into Yorkshire, which is the main driver for the bill, and around all of the work we're doing, whether it's replacing a thousand kilometres of water mains to stop leaks and bursts from happening, and all of the work we're doing on storm overflows as examples. That's the driver of bills increasing. I think it's important that we say thank you again for last year, because obviously we did have the hosepipe ban, and we did see a reduction in usage from customers. We saw around a 10% reduction, which is brilliant, because that was all about making sure that we use water as wisely as possible during that period; appreciating the frustrations of that, and people not being able to do some of things that they would have wanted to do. But like I said, the main reason for the bill increase is more about the investment over this next number of years.

Do you have any plans to improve your billing system?

We made some changes a couple of years ago, because we needed to make sure that it was easy for colleagues to use; people who work at Yorkshire Water who work in our contact centre and do billing support, helped design some of the changes that we wanted to make to speed it up. Ultimately, that means that customers get a better service when they get in touch relating to a query they might have about the bill, or

the bill support that they need. There are no immediate changes planned, that's not to say that we won't look at our billing system, there's always room for improvement on systems, I think.

How does someone know if they have a smart meter installed at their home?

Our smart meter programme has only started in the last 12 months; we started in Sheffield and Rotherham area. That's probably the first indication because a lot of the contact we'll have made with customers is to try and book appointments to come in and fit them, that requires customers to agree those appointment times so they know when they've been fitted. I can understand if you've moved into a property that's in that area and you might not know we can help with that because we'll understand which properties have had them fitted. There are also a number of other meters that have been installed in properties that are not smart meters; we have a number of different meters, just to make it confusing, we have the smart meters we're installing but we also have more traditional meters. Then we have properties that don't have meters that are built in a different way. It's probably something that we just need to help with – does that address and that property, based on our records, have a smart meter? We can pick that up as part of the survey that goes out, that specific case.

My girlfriend in Brighouse has bought a bungalow and cannot get a smart meter.

If we can get your details, we can have a look because we encourage people to get meters fitted. We're going around Yorkshire to fit the smart meter programme, but that doesn't mean that we fit meters if customers don't want a meter. I think it's also important just to say that customers who move on to a meter have two years to be able to revert back to their previous bill should that not be something they want to continue with once it's been fitted. If it's been fitted for the first time, that doesn't necessarily work if the property has already got a meter, but I think that's just worth being aware of as well, as an option.

What support is available for people not able to fully keep up with their monthly bill payments?

There are so many different support schemes. We have debt schemes depending on the circumstance, and there are loads of specifics around people who live on their own or with a young family or have certain conditions. There are a number of different ways that we offer support. It can also be in terms of when you pay, so monthly, quarterly, six months; there's a range of different avenues we've got around how we can support people who are struggling to pay their bill. We appreciate they have gone up quite a bit from previous, based on that investment I've mentioned, so we're trying to do everything we can to support those customers who are struggling to pay. Nicola mentioned earlier the number of people who we've supported, it was just short of 250,000 people last year that we supported with their bill. We're doing as much as we can to support people who need that help.

Electricity companies provided free or discounted light bulbs to avoid building new power stations. What can Yorkshire Water do to help customers given you appear reluctant to invest in things like reservoirs?

We do have free water saving packs that you can have, they give you help with devices around the home. We also do water saving visits with a company, it's a partner company called Aqualogic. If you want to go onto our website, there's a section of the website that deals with water saving. It's www.yorkshirewater.com/savewater and you can find that and get more information.

When you don't receive a service, or get a lesser service, you should expect to get a refund or discount. Why does that not happen with Yorkshire Water?

There are a number of things that Yorkshire Water have to make sure that they compensate customers for, that's no different to other water companies in the country. Examples are, if you have a water outage for over 12 hours, we have to compensate customers. If you have sewage in your home, we have to compensate customers; the Guaranteed Service Standards is the terminology. So, there are things in place that we have to make sure happen when we don't provide the level of service that is required, whether that's providing clean water or taking it away again.

8 Corporate and company matters Q&A

Why have you only received a one star from the water regulator, down from two stars?

The rating system from the Environment Agency has six issues with it, three of them we improved, really good and nice to see improvement. Three of them, we didn't do so well and that is total pollutions, serious pollutions, and where we are on our Water Industry National Environmental Programme (WINEP). So, the first two, total pollutions and serious pollutions, we didn't do as well as we need to. We know we need to improve and we've got a detailed improvement programme in place - Pollution Incident Reduction Plan. We've published that and it contains things like investing in technology to help us find issues quicker and to get people out to resolve them. We're investing in the network, we're doing things to our system both at the treatments works and, in the network, and we've got more people to help us maintain it. We're doing a lot of investigation to understand what's causing the problems. Last year, a lot of the problems were caused at some of our small treatment works when it was really dry, as they were discharging quite naturally as you'd expect them to, but they were discharging into ditches that were already dry and that was causing a problem, because there was no flow going through the river at that point. We've acted, we've integrated and we've got involved and we've changed that situation and over time, we'll do more of it. But it's one of the things we've learned about, and we've been downgraded for those two things; the pollutions but also this historic issue. We were supposed to be working at a place called Pudsey in West Leeds over the period from

2020-25, we had a long conversation with the Environment Agency and didn't do the work we were intending to do because we were talking to them about changing it. In the end, in 2024, they decided they didn't want us to change it, so we were delayed, and now the work won't finish until 2028. Because of that, and because relatively few other schemes got delivered in the first year of this new programme, we were below the 98% threshold that we have to get to in delivery and that therefore causes our rating to go to red overall. Three reds is a one star performance. I'm very hopeful that we will improve again this year.

Pre-tax profits up to financial year 2025 were £429.6 million, so why was there a surge in pollution incidents up from 151 to 260 resulting in Yorkshire Water being downgraded to a 1 by the Environment Agency?

It isn't because we didn't spend more money on looking for and sorting out any issues on our networks. In fact, we spent a lot more money on our networks, in particular at these smaller treatment works and generally in fixing leaks and getting to bursts quickly. It's because we have an ageing network and because we've got higher obligations. All of us want to do better but the ageing network is causing more problems for us, and we need to address that by all of the investment that everyone is paying for and supporting now.

How do Yorkshire Water feel about the increased bills faced by customers when considered against bonus payments made to board members?

We know that increases in bills have been really difficult for some of our customers, particularly at a time when cost of living challenges are difficult across the country. And we also know that people don't like bonuses, but actually we didn't pay any bonuses, I think it's a bit of a misunderstanding. The payments that went to board members are fixed, they aren't related to performance, they are paid by shareholders for work done to encourage them to put more money into the business. We know that customers don't like it, but it isn't a performance related bonus.

You've been privatised for almost 40 years, yet you present as if such issues such as population growth, underinvestment, climate change and environmental pollution happened yesterday, and have little to do with Yorkshire Water.

That is certainly not how we feel; that it isn't down to us to improve the situation. From where we are, we do think that and that's why we're open and talking to you about the plans that we've got. But the nature of this industry has been complex and is complex and we have to work with the arrangements that we have in place. One of things that the government did recently was ask Sir Jon Cunliffe to have a look at them and say whether they're fit for purpose for where we need to be now. The answer to that, of course, was no they're not and we need to change a lot. So, there is going to be a new water bill that will help us change faster. If you think about where bills have been over the last ten years, they've been kept down, they've been rising less

than inflation and then suddenly of course in the last two years, this huge increase above inflation. We think it would be much better if we had a steady programme of investment, it'd be easier for people to deal with in their bills and their planning, and it'd be easier for us to deal with, and we would have made much more progress faster. But unfortunately, we haven't been allowed to invest and so we're looking forward to this opportunity. We think that what we're doing now is going to help a lot to improve the things that people care about, river quality is obviously one and making sure that we can cope with climate change. There are things we have done that I should talk about in those regards, for example, if you think about ten years ago and the awful flooding that we had across Yorkshire, there's been a huge investment across Yorkshire Water in making sure that we can continue to operate our wastewater and our clean water treatment works in those times of great floods. That's really important because it means that we can keep water flowing to the vast majority of the population in those circumstances when people need it, and that's by lifting equipment out of the flood zones or protecting the equipment so that it can operate and we can control it; it's those things that have been very helpful and will continue to be. There's been lots of investment too in treatment works so in 1999, there wasn't one in Bridlington and there wasn't one in Scarborough. There is now because in 2000 we opened those treatment works for the first time, so you can see the changes that are happening and are continuing to happen. But now we've got this huge programme of investment in the next five years and hopefully you'll see lots more.

Are you proud to be a monopoly?

I'm not sure I know how to answer that. I don't think it makes us proud or not, it just is the situation that we're in. We have a regulator; an economic regulator, we have environmental regulators and we have water quality regulators, all of whom make sure that we don't exploit that position. I think everybody at Yorkshire Water wants to do what we've described, which is do our part in creating a thriving Yorkshire, doing the right things for customers, doing the right things for the environment. We know we're not there and we absolutely acknowledge that, and we need to do more and that's why we've got this plan. It's why we're pleased that we've found new investors who want to support us in delivering the plan, but we know we've got a long way to go.

One of the charts said 'investing to improve our services' and that 23p of each £1 goes to borrowing and returns to investors. How does return to investors contribute to improving our services?

So, the 23p as you said is for investments and for the dividend. Let's start with investments. What we do is we don't all pay for all the investments in the network that we make this year. In fact, what happens is they're paid for over the life of the asset that we use; just like if you have a mortgage on your house and you're going to live there for 25 years, you pay for that mortgage over 25 years, it's exactly the same

principle. With water investments we invest in something, you pay a bit, and the next person who lives in your house pays a bit, so that over time it gets paid back, and we borrow to support that. That's why we have that borrowing rate. And then in relation to investors, they are putting their money in, and like everyone, they want to get a return. Our investors got a less than 3% return last year on their investment, and they're investing over £3 billion, so a lot of money, and that investment is getting a very low return. You'd want to get more than that if you put it in the bank at the moment. We recognise that it's important that we continue to have investor support and to have equity. That's one of the problems that happened to Thames, they don't have any equity now; their equity investors walked away because they weren't making any money. What we've seen is our equity investors putting more money in and they're going to put another £600 million in before the end of March next year. It's important that we continue to have them, it's a sustainable business if we have equity support that is here and helps us and is willing to take a lower return than you might expect.

9 Recreation Q&A

It was interesting hearing about the sort of improvements Yorkshire Water are making, including lots of improvements to bathing waters. I think as a resident of Sheffield it's been a hot topic, swimming in reservoirs. Lots of people swim in reservoirs in the Peak District all the time without anything going wrong, and yet Yorkshire Water's guidance remains 'do not swim, you're probably going to die'. I think it seems to not face up to the reality that people are swimming in reservoirs and also not take seriously our changing environment and the fact that people need places to swim. I wondered if you have any thoughts on taking an approach that's more considerate and thinking about harm reduction more in line with successes in other countries like Scotland and Scandinavia.

I think it's a really great question because it is something that is on our minds too. We have over 100 reservoirs in Yorkshire and there's all sorts of stuff under the water that you may or may not have seen when it was very dry last year. You saw the reservoirs go down and you could see things like rebar [steel reinforcing bar] sticking up from the base or old buildings and we always worry that someone is going to swim somewhere and be injured by those things. We also worry because we sometimes drain the water out of the reservoir, let it go like a plug in a bath; a plug in a bath you can withstand but water being drained out of a reservoir is a lot of pressure change very quickly and it can be quite dangerous if somebody's swimming around there. The other thing to worry about is the cold of the water, people get a lot of shocks from going into water when it's cold, and if they're not used to it – we've seen that a few times this year in Yorkshire, it's been really sad to see the deaths of people who have been swimming in rivers or other lakes. It's really sad that people have lost their lives doing these things. What we've been doing is talking to some of the sailing clubs that operate on the reservoirs that we have, to see whether they would like to help us by

policing it in some way; you could have somebody there when people are swimming to make sure it is safe, because you want to be able to respond if someone gets into difficulty. But with 100, we can't do that everywhere. We need to find a way to make it safer for people so we have sympathy, but we're struggling to work out how to do it in a way that is fair to everyone because everyone pays their Yorkshire Water bills, so we need to find a way of making it work.

Lots of the things mentioned aren't routine. The reservoirs aren't drained regularly, that's not a regular risk and there's lots of examples of other countries where it doesn't require constant supervision. It's actually a case of more public education and a lot of the risks that you talk about would be mitigated by better communication about the real risks rather than outright banning swimming.

It's a real challenge. In England, the liability sits with us so if somebody goes into the reservoir and we haven't said 'don't do it', the liability sits with us. In Scotland it's slightly different, the liability is on the person who gets in, and so one of the things that we could do is change some legislation but more generally, I think it would be better if we can find a way to make it work so that it does work for the people in Yorkshire without having to wait for legislation centrally. We are keeping going, but I don't want to confuse people with mixed messages; we've got to get it clear when we do move.

10 Independent Chair closing

The Chair concluded the session by thanking participants for their time and engagement. It was noted that all questions submitted during the session or in advance had been shared with Yorkshire Water, with responses to be included in the official meeting record.

The Chair confirmed that the Yorkshire Water presentation would be published on their website shortly, and the written meeting record, including responses to all questions, would be made available within 14 working days.

11 Outstanding questions not answered in the meeting

Questions were submitted both prior to and during the event through various channels, including advance submissions, the chat function (the Q&A box), and live participation via the hand-raise feature. While many questions were addressed during the session, not all could be answered on the night due to time constraints.

The outstanding questions, along with Yorkshire Water's subsequent responses, are listed below for reference.

Question area	Question	Answers
Clean water and wastewater	Why is it compulsory to even have water? I can survive off bottled water and use public toilets.	Water companies have a legal duty to supply water and sewerage services to any property connected to the public water and sewer mains. For public health reasons, this ensures everyone has a supply of fresh and potable water on demand when required regardless of whether they choose to use it, and so they don't have to deal with the disposal of waste from their homes. In Yorkshire, the average person uses 127 litres a day, even though the NHS recommends drinking a minimum of 2 litres a day! So, most water consumption isn't for drinking but for other things such as showers, brushing teeth, washing clothes and dishes, heating, doing the garden and cleaning the house. It's also much cheaper to use tap water. The cost of cheap bottled water in a multipack from a supermarket can be around 50p a litre, so for £1 a day, you'd be spending £365 just to drink the NHS recommended minimum amount! If you were to use bottled water for all your water needs, it could cost £60 a day (based on using 127 litres). So, for providing all that water, and taking the sewerage away, it's good value for money that the average bill in Yorkshire is £636. Background: Water and sewerage services evolved as a response to the big stink of 1851 and to ensure quality of water supplies, to eliminate water-borne diseases like cholera. Over time, all properties have become connected to mains water and sewerage services to support public health. After all, we all need water to live and some way of having waste, foul and surface water taken away from our homes.
Clean water and wastewater (Leakage)	Last year we had a burst water main four days after the hosepipe ban came into effect. It was left running for eight days, it was mended then went again on the ninth day. Then it went again in August six times in four days. This same	I'm sorry to hear you've had issues with burst pipes in the past. Please can you send us the location of the leak so we can look into it for you? We do our best to fix leaks as quickly as we can, but we have to prioritise larger leaks that are losing the most water. It may take a while to fix certain leaks, for example, if they're on or near a busy road we need permission from the local highways authority to close the road and pop a diversion in place to keep everyone safe. Another factor to consider is if we need to shut off the water supply to residents while we fix the leak, so we need to plan these jobs carefully to make sure everyone has enough warning. We also get leaks reported to us when they're not from our pipework, such as groundwater, and we need to pass these reports on to other authorities or landowners.

	pipe has been bursting on and off for the best part of five years. It has also burst on previous occasions since 1996 doing untold damage to my property and that of my neighbours. This pipe is about 150 years old. Don't you think it's about time that something should be done about it?	We have a huge mains replacement programme underway at the moment, so it may well be that this pipe has been earmarked for upgrades already, but we can confirm once we know its exact location.
Clean water and wastewater (Water resources)	Why does Yorkshire Water get PR campaigns so wrong? For decades we have known about population growth, global warming and ageing infrastructure. Why haven't Yorkshire Water been taking action decades ago?	We have a robust Water Resources Management Plan, which sets out how we balance supply and demand in the face of future challenges such as climate change, population growth, etc. Our Water Resource Management Plan plans for a certain frequency of restrictions, something we have researched with customers when developing our plan. Immediate actions on this include a range of measures to help us meet increased water demand in the long-term through our Water Resources Management Plan. These include: - Halving leakage by 2050 - Implementing smart meters across the network - Developing new groundwater and surface water supplies - Building new Water Treatment Works to increase storage - Making use of new surface water supplies As part of this, it's important we talk to customers about how they can play their part in helping to reduce their consumption.
Clean water and wastewater (Water resources)	Do you still propose to abstract water from our rivers?	Yes. Around a third of Yorkshire's water is supplied through river abstraction.

Bills and affordability	My water usage is actually less than a quarter of my actual bill, is that fair?	Well first off, thank you as if this is the case then it means you're being really conscientious with your water use! Because your water usage is low, it means proportionally your standing charges are increased. Standing charges are fixed amounts which cover things like producing bills and providing customer services. The other fixed amount is the surface water drainage charge, which covers the removal and treatment of surface water. Whilst I fully appreciate that your usage is low, these charges are fixed and are the same for each household regardless of how much water is used. Your water volume charge is payable for each complete cubic metre of water used. The sewerage volume charge is based on 95% of the water used, as we allow 5% for water not returned to the sewer. <i>If more detail is needed on standing charges:</i> Standing charges are part of the mix of charges that include the costs of billing, providing our customer service and the fixed costs in the provision and maintenance of the water supply and sewerage system. For example, for metered customers, standing charges cover the cost of reading a meter and eventually replacing it. Your supply is metered and therefore water and sewerage are charged by the volume of water that passes through your meter. If your home is in receipt of water, sewerage and surface water services and each of these services also attract a standing charge – which are 'fixed charges' i.e. they are not related to the amount of water which you use. If you have a water meter and don't use any water, only the standing charges will be payable. The surface water drainage charge covers the cost of draining rainwater from your property. If no rainwater from your property drains to the public sewer, then you will not have to pay this charge. Like all water companies in England and Wales, we collect standing charges to recover the cost of the fixed services we provide, which would be unfair or impractical to recover as a variable charge. Our standing charges are the same for all customers who receive identical services from us. It could be seen as unfair to include the charge for these services within the volume charge, as someone who uses a lot of water would pay more for receiving identical services.
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Thank you

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