

**Yorkshire Forum for Water Customers**  
**Minutes of Meeting**  
**19 March 2020**  
**Skype call**

**Attendees:**

Andrea Cook	Chair
Dave Merrett	Independent Member
Chris Griffin	Independent Member
Pam Warhurst	Pennine Prospects
Melissa Lockwood	Environmental Agency
Janine Shackleton	Consumer Council for Water (ccw)
James Copeland	National Farmers Union
Wendy Kimpton	Yorkshire Water (in part)
Kirstin Hutchinson	Yorkshire Water
Sumayya Mahmood	Yorkshire Water
Laura Crook	Yorkshire Water (in part)
Gaynor Craigie	Yorkshire Water (in part)

**Apologies:**

Tom Keatley	Natural England
Alistair Maltby	The Rivers Trust

## **1) Welcome**

- a) Members were welcomed to the meeting and apologies were noted as above.

## **2) Minutes and actions of the last meeting**

- a) Minutes of the 13 February 2020 meeting were agreed. February actions are as follows;

Action 1: action complete, the EPA consultation paper was sent to Forum members on 2 March 2020 following submission to the Environment Agency

Action 2: Ongoing – the company is in the process of sending a draft CMA process timeline to the Forum

Action 3: action will be completed at the Forum today

## **3) Customer complaint**

- a) The customer care team leader from the company handles operational written complaints and joined the meeting to provide an update on their process.
- b) Operational risk and complaints are sent to the company via written correspondence regarding all water and wastewater queries. All investigations are completed within the team, who complete a desktop investigation as a first-time resolution. The company aims to respond within 7 working days as per its customer charter. The desktop investigation is completed within 2 days and then the company contacts the customer to provide information.

If required, an information request is sent to the operational owner and, if needed, an onsite investigation is carried out. The customer is then contacted to discuss the outcome of the investigation and to check for satisfaction.

The company advised that it ideally requires one channel of communication with the customer. This is to minimise the risk of over-servicing, miscommunication and to ensure fairness.

- c) The Forum queried the process regarding the most recent complaint, where a customer contacted the Forum regarding an ongoing complaint. The company advised there are various steps within the complaint process and if a customer is not satisfied, they can escalate to stage 2, written correspondence. The customer can also contact the Consumer Council for Water (CCW).

The Forum queried why the company haven't been able to satisfy the ongoing complaint sent to the Forum. The company advised the complaints team had been in contact with the customer directly and provided an update on the action that has been taken.

The company advised additional visits are planned but, due to the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, some visits may be delayed and/or postponed. A letter was provided to the customer on 16 March 2020 via email and post. The Forum chair requested a copy of this.

#### **Action 1: Copy of the letter to be sent to the Forum chair**

The Forum concluded it was currently satisfied with the ongoing engagement and the planned resolution.

- d) A proposal for the management of complaints sent to the Forum was reviewed and agreed. The company also proposed a quarterly slot at the Forum for any trends on complaints and any ongoing complaints. The company is keen to ensure there is one channel of communication to minimise the risk of 'queue' jumping. Miscommunication and the Forum acknowledged this.

#### **Action 2: A quarterly update on complaints to be provided to the Forum**

### **4) Land strategy engagement**

- a) The land strategy remains on track to go live in April 2020. The company is developing an engagement and communication plan to accompany the launch. It will forward the latest version of the land strategy to the Forum once released. The company is confident that the activities under land strategy engagement will continue in light of CMA pressures and Covid-19.

The company advised the Forum about a press release regarding the use of reservoirs. This is now active on social media and may be appearing in some local papers. They are also looking at a shared message with one of its partners, the National Trust.

- b) With regard to the Yorkshire Land Network, representatives from major landowners are to test the proposition for governance and structure. The company feel confident it has an objective to lead on which could be carbon positive for the Yorkshire region. The Forum was assured that they it would be included in this engagement.

- c) The company have conducted online customer testing and is anticipating results in the next few weeks. Towards April it will introduce workshops around engagement with customers and communities, however the company noted it will need to rethink how to do this due to ongoing Covid-19 issues. A potential focus is to target flood hit communities and to engage with customers affected by flooding.

The company advised that it will ensure the strategy is flexible and ambitious.

- d) The company asked the Forum for its thoughts on workshops and engagement.

The Forum stated it would want clarity and engagement across partnerships, resulting in no confusion across the customer base. The Forum will collaborate with the company, ensuring the same shared message is provided to all customers. The company advised it would be useful to have specific engagement Forum.

### **Action 3: Company to assess setting up specific engagement forum**

The Forum asked if customers understand the relationship between Yorkshire Water's land network and its overall strategy. The company advised it was not sure of the proposition yet so the engagement is separate, but it will progress to the point where they become the same.

- e) A Forum member advised that the Cabinet Office had queried land access for customers with disabilities. The Environment Agency (EA) supported the company advising that across Yorkshire Water public sites access is available for all customers. It was proposed that the land strategy should continue engagement with customers regarding this.

## **5) PR19 – Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) referral process**

- a) The CMA referral process had begun. 4 companies have asked Ofwat to refer their Final determinations. Yorkshire Water has also presented some information to the CMA, primarily to allow the CMA to consider the resources it will need to review this case.
- b) All four companies had spoken to the CMA in relation to Covid-19. The CMA will be requesting an extension to the process with Ofwat, which is then likely to mean the process will take 12 months. All hearings will now be done remotely. The process will continue but will be different, including no CMA site visit to Yorkshire Water premises.
- c) The Chair asked about membership of the CMA panel. The company advised there is a provisional panel and it was expecting finalisation that day and hoping to get a firm timetable and a confirmation on panel members. The company would circulate this for information. It is also expected that Ofwat would formally start the process by issuing the CMA with referral documents for the four companies seeking an amended determination.

### **Action 4: Company to circulate timetable and details of membership**

- d) The company is planning to submit its statement of case in the next week. The time between Ofwat making a referral and the company submitting its statement of case is 7 days. Companies have requested this be increased to 14 days. The company have been asked to provide lists of third parties stakeholders and advised that the Yorkshire Forum for Water Customers was on this list. This will also be sent to the Forum of information.

**Action 5: Company to circulate statement of case for information**

- e) The Forum queried its input into the CMA process; the company assured the Forum they will know more once the company has the timetable.

**6) AOB**

- a) The company requested a refresh of the terms of reference which was last updated in 2019. More specifically, there are six performance commitments (PCs) that detail a specific role of the Forum in the review and assurance of the PCs. This additional activity needs to be incorporated into the terms of reference for the new AMP. The Forum discussed the process of how this would work if there was any difference of opinion between the company and the Forum.

**Action 6: Company to provide a process for the steps between Yorkshire Water and the Forum in the management, review and assurance of the PCs.**

Forum and company agreed to work on a draft term of reference which will be circulated back to the Forum for review.

**Action 7: Colleagues to provide written additions to the chair by 1 April 2020**

- b) The Forum raised the increase in volume of wipe and other materials across two rivers and asked what the company is doing about this. The company advised it will investigate further and update the Forum. The Forum queried whether the company has an obligation to clean up the riverbanks.

**Action 8: Company to investigate river pollution**

- c) A company incident management team (CIMT) for Covid-19 had been meeting daily for over a week and have been meeting regularly over the last month. The company is in as good a position as it can be and is taking precautionary steps. In the original planning all teams were asked to run a scenario where teams are reduced by circa 25% due to illness. The company reassured the Forum there is a step plan in place to enable the company to cope with resource reduction and core services will still run. The company has recently tested home working for 2 days in readiness of the likely event that the government would advise working from home. The company instructed everyone who can work from home to do so and is reviewing this weekly.

There are a significant number of colleagues who cannot work from home. They have been provided with additional PPE and new safe working procedures. Safe working procedures for those working from home have also been provided, with the company being mindful of the impact of isolation on mental health. The company is coping and expects to manage going forwards.

- d) The Forum suggested reassuring customers and vulnerable customers to ensure they are aware of the work the company are doing. Considering the reaction of customers is important, and they should be made aware of the specific support available to elderly and vulnerable customers and those having difficulty in paying their water bills.
- e) The company was asked how much room it has to absorb loss of income. The company website advises customers who to contact if they're struggling to pay bills due to the current circumstances. The company has a reserve to deal with such situations. The company also advised this is an industry wide issue and it is in contact with Water UK which speaks as one voice to Ofwat.
- f) The company was asked if there are challenges between the wholesale and retail market. The company advised it was not currently aware of any problems but would raise this with the Markets team and feed information back into the Forum.

**Action 9: Company to liaise with the Markets team and provide feedback to the Forum**

- g) The Forum also raised the issue regarding the shortage of toilet rolls due to Covid-19 and the need for proactive social media messages. The company advised it has been reminding customers what can and cannot be placed down the toilet and the impact it can cause. A message to customers is also on the website regarding priority services and staying safe.

**Next meeting**

23 April 2020, Skype conference call

## Actions

### Summary of actions: 14 June 2018

No	Action	Comment
4	<a href="#">Company</a> to project the level of investment and timescales to display how discolouration will be reviewed to help the Forum understand the plan and resources.  <b>Post meeting update 06/06/2019:</b> To be reviewed when received Final Determination (FD).	Ongoing

### Summary of actions: 13 December 2018

No	Action	Comment
3	<a href="#">Company</a> to consult the Forum on the risk analysis regarding pollution and ISF alongside the EA and CCW (in 3 months' time).	Ongoing

### Summary of actions: 24 July 2019

5	<a href="#">Company</a> to circulate the result from the blockages campaign.	
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### Summary of actions: 20 August 2019

4	<a href="#">Company</a> will send a communication regarding totex and bill impacts.	
6	<a href="#">Company</a> to set up a meeting with a number of Forum members to discuss initiatives, speed and products of National Trust.	Ongoing

### Summary of actions: 18 September 2019

2	<a href="#">Company</a> to share Economic Insight paper with Forum members	
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### Summary of actions: 18 October 2019

2	<a href="#">Company</a> and Chair will draft a holding response for all future queries.	Complete
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### Summary of actions: 13 November 2019

6	<a href="#">Forum</a> member to work with the Company to review and update webpage as discussed	Ongoing
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**Summary of actions: 13 December 2019**

<b>1</b>	<b>Forum</b> members to review and update their personal profiles for the website.	<b>Ongoing</b>
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**Summary of actions: 15 January 2020**

<b>2</b>	<b>Company</b> to include number of customers who have opted out of surveying in the consultation response.	<b>Complete</b>
<b>3</b>	<b>Company</b> to liaise with customer research team to see if there is any research that could be used to support the company view.	<b>Complete</b>
<b>4</b>	<b>Company</b> to consider using an alternative data source to census data.	<b>Complete</b>
<b>5</b>	<b>Company</b> to circulate the CMEX consultation response to the Forum.  <b>Post meeting update</b> Response sent to the Forum on 12.03.2020	<b>Complete</b>
<b>6</b>	<b>Company</b> to add pollution reduction plan to the sub-group meeting.  <b>Post meeting update</b> Draft plan sent to the EA on 11 March 2020 and item added to the April subgroup agenda	<b>Complete</b>
<b>7</b>	<b>Company</b> to circulate a follow-on paper for the EPA consultation and add to a future agenda  <b>Post meeting update</b>  Draft paper was circulated to the Forum on 23 February 2020 EPA added to the February 2020 agenda.	<b>Complete</b>

### Summary of actions: 13 February 2020

<b>1</b>	<p><b>Company</b> to circulate response to EPA consultation</p> <p><b>Post meeting update</b></p> <p>Response to the EPA consultation was circulated to the Forum on 2 March 2020.</p>	<b>Complete</b>
<b>2</b>	<p><b>Company</b> to provide a timeline of the CMA process.</p>	
<b>3</b>	<p><b>Company</b> to provide a full update to the Forum on customer complaint.</p> <p><b>Post meeting update</b></p> <p>Update will be provided at the 19 March 2020 meeting.</p>	<b>Complete</b>

### Summary of actions: 19 March 2020

<b>1</b>	<p><b>Company</b> to circulate a copy of the customer complaint letter to the Forum chair</p>	
<b>2</b>	<p><b>Company</b> to provide a quarterly update on complaints to be provided to the Forum</p> <p><b>Post meeting update</b></p> <p>Added to the forward agenda</p>	<b>Complete</b>
<b>3</b>	<p><b>Company</b> to assess setting up specific engagement forum regarding land strategy</p>	
<b>4</b>	<p><b>Company</b> to circulate CMA referral timetable</p>	
<b>5</b>	<p><b>Company</b> to circulate statement of case for information</p>	
<b>6</b>	<p><b>Company</b> to provide a process for the steps between Company and Forum in the management, review and assurance of the PCs</p>	
<b>7</b>	<p>Colleagues to provide written additions to the chair by 1 April</p>	
<b>8</b>	<p><b>Company</b> to investigate river pollution</p>	
<b>9</b>	<p><b>Company</b> to liaise with the Markets team and feedback to the Forum</p>	