

Yorkshire Forum for Water Customers
Minutes of Meeting
17 May 2021
Teams call

Attendees:

Andrea Cook	Chair
Chris Griffin	Independent Member
Dave Merrett	Independent Member
James Copeland	National Farmers Union
Melissa Lockwood	Environment Agency
Pam Warhurst	Independent Member
Kirstin Hutchinson	Yorkshire Water
Sumayya Mahmood	Yorkshire Water
Wendy Kimpton	Yorkshire Water

Guests:

Ez Chowdhury	Yorkshire Water
Amanda Crossfield	Yorkshire Water
Leah Humphries	Yorkshire Water

Apologies:

Janine Shackleton	Consumer Council for Water
Tom Keatley	Natural England
Steve Foers	Citizens Advice

1) Welcome

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

2) Minutes and actions of the last meeting

- a) No comments were received on the minutes.
- b) There are three actions outstanding from the last meeting.
- Action 1: ongoing, company to arrange attendance at a Forum from the Director of Customer Experience
 - Action 2: ongoing, update to be delivered today

- Action 3: ongoing, update to be delivered today

3) Environmental subgroup update

- a) Dave Merrett, chair of the Environmental subgroup, provided an update to the main Customer Forum on the key points arising from the most recent subgroup meeting and shared information on key areas of focus for the subgroup and the company.

At the last environmental subgroup, the company provided an update on Water Resources North including an update on abstraction rates, climate change considerations, and looking at enhancements in terms of protecting new rivers. The final validation is ongoing including national engagement with Defra.

An update was provided to the subgroup on customer engagement regarding this, Yorkshire Water is working close with Northumbria Water regarding the public engagement process; the subgroup requested involvement with this.

The drought plan from Defra was discussed which was approved with Yorkshire Water's proposals; the public consultation will start early June and last up to 8 weeks.

- b) An update was provided on the current water position, with comments that Yorkshire Water is in a good position this year due to the amount of rainfall.
- c) A presentation on the value from waste performance commitment (PC) was delivered, and the subgroup felt content on the current position. There was also an update on the capital carbon PC, which looked 'reasonable'.
- d) The main discussion was on the storm overflows. The government made an announcement in March about prospective legislation on this in terms of reducing sewerage discharges and a potential requirement on water companies to produce plans by September 2022 and to publish data on the position annually. The company have already put its information on its website, the subgroup reviewed this and advised that a quarter of the data sets were not complete and reported there is a clear issue with data capture. Noting a challenge for the company to resolve these issues they also concluded that it wasn't very customer friendly and suggested the company improve the display of the information. The subgroup found one of the biggest challenges going forward into the next price review is that

the monitoring does not report the 'volume' going into the environment and this is information that is needed.

4) Working with Others (WWO) – overview of completed projects

- a) The company were in attendance to provide an update on the WWO PC 2020/21.

The PC was first introduced during AMP6; the target was to deliver 17 partnerships, however the company delivered 43 projects with more than 50 organisations. The PC in AMP7 is reward only and it is 5% of the average Yorkshire Water contribution to all schemes. For AMP7 the company aim to deliver at least 45 projects – at the request of the regulator, the company will exclude any land conserved and enhanced projects from the WWO reporting, to ensure these are not double counted in the two PCs. The annual targets were shown to the Forum, so far this year seven projects have been delivered, contributing to £1.15m towards projects to assess bathing water quality, improve fish passage, clear drainage ditches, share telemetry data and understanding how to best engage with customers around flood resilience and rain water harvesting.

- b) The Forum queried the nature of the groups the company have partnerships with and the company advised the projects are varied, across local authorities and communities. Various teams in the company contribute to creating these partnerships. The company explained that by the end of this AMP they need to create a report for Ofwat outlining the benefits of working with others, and then a six capitals assessment will be completed.
- c) The Forum asked if, as part of the outcomes, the company are demonstrating customer change and value and if they are creating case studies, to be promoted to customers. The Forum may be asked to comment, and members would like to know what customers have said. The company advised the objectives and benefits are summarised in the annual report but noted more could perhaps be done regarding learning.

The Forum queried the cross between behavioural shift and evidence of shifting behaviours from the partnership work. The company advised all the projects must go through a normal business process for funding, to ensure they demonstrate customer benefits. The company instructed that lots of the projects help to deliver the messages.

The company is hoping to achieve 15-20 projects from the 'Living with Water' area and the same with biodiversity, leaving space for other schemes. They noted it is a stretching target, but they are confident they will reach it, reflecting on AMP6 and the number of partnerships delivered then.

The Forum asked if this information is on the Yorkshire Water website, the company advised it will be published in the Annual Performance Report (APR) which is delivered in July and uploaded onto the website. The Forum suggested that an increased outward facing could be helpful.

The Forum questioned how much funding is made available for this work. The company advised there is no set budget, some of the teams have ring fenced budgets, but some projects must go through a business approval process. They advised it doesn't need additional funding, it is how the company are delivering it that is the difference.

Action 1: Company to consider a partnership section on the YW website

5) Forum report review

- a) The company were in attendance to update on the Forum Annual Performance statement. Forum members have completed their statements which have been compiled into the report and a final draft has been created to send to the Plain English Campaign. A draft has also been sent to Jaywing for them to begin designing the document, including obtaining photos for the content. A further progress update will be provided at the July Forum.
- b) The Forum commented that they felt the company could improve on working with the Forum more effectively regarding communications and that it was not using the Forum to its best advantage with regards to its communication strategy and ensuring communications are customer friendly.

Action 2: Company to review comms team updates with the Forum on a regular basis

6) Bathing Water PC – Covid-19 impact on bathing water

- a) The Government imposed restrictions through the duration of 2020 and this current year to mitigate the spread of Covid-19. As a result, Defra announced that no classifications would be issued for bathing water quality in 2020. This impacted Yorkshire Water's ability to report on its performance in relation to its Bathing Water PC.
- b) As there is no classification data for the year 2020 the business is unable to report against its PC as expected in the APR. A few reporting options have been considered in relation to the treatment of this PC. The options available for how the company chooses to report have included :
- The best value approach for customers
 - The levels of uncertainty regarding possible future reporting related to missing data and how this may impact the PC in future years
 - A reasonable approach for the company that does not unduly penalise it for matters beyond reasonable management control
- c) The first option is to report this PC as not applicable due to no classification data for 2020. The second option would be to report beaches at the last known classification, therefore re-reporting the 2019 figures. This would be 17 of 19 beaches at 'Good' or 'Excellent', which brings a penalty of £1.235m.

The Forum referred to the second option and asked what this could mean from a customer perspective. As there is no data, the company do not know whether the beaches have improved or deteriorated in quality. The beaches were not closed, and the public were able to continue to enjoy them, within the government restrictions in place.

The company advised that the activities and investments planned in the last financial year that have been aimed at maintaining and improving beaches have been completed.

The Forum asked if this PC includes bathing water at Ilkley ; the company advised it does not. This PC for AMP7 detailed the 19 designated coastal bathing waters that were in place at the start of the AMP. The company commented that it was likely that Ilkley would be built into an appropriate PC for the next AMP. The Forum asked what other companies are doing regarding the reporting of bathing waters for 2020; the company noted that it is a bespoke PC for the company, but there are similar ones with other water companies and, based on current knowledge, it is thought that they will report 'not applicable'.

- d) With the 2020 data gap, a review is needed to see how this will impact future years' classifications (bathing water classifications are based on four years of sampling data).

- a) In summary, the company are unable to report against this PC as expected for the APR21 due to the impact of no classification being made by Defra in 2020. Their preference of the two options is to report against Option 1, which is N/A for the year 2020 due to Covid factors being beyond reasonable management control. The company advised when the detail is added to the APR, they will bring this to the Forum for review before the document is published.

The Forum supported the company in reporting the Bathing Water PC against Option 1.

Action 3: Company to circulate text for the APR for review and comment

Action 4: Forum to provide letter of support regarding bathing water PC

7) Forum interviews

- a) The Forum Chair advised members that, although two suitable candidates had been identified, the recruitment is now on hold. The company has advised that going into PR24, various forums and engagement groups are being reviewed. Whilst the company is likely to deliver more than the minimum requirements prescribed by Ofwat, they want to hold a review in line with Ofwat's PR24 Framework document to understand Ofwat's views and feed this into the review process.

The Forum advised they are a constructive Forum, providing a granular insight for customers, and shared their disappointment with not being able to embrace the new members at this time.

The Forum understands the company's review in light of Ofwat's methodology for PR24. With the trajectory of Yorkshire as a region and the value the Forum has been able to feed into this, great weight has been added to the importance of Yorkshire's business's partners and stakeholders. The Forum asked about any support they can provide to the review, and they commented that they would like assurance that, in addition to understanding the Ofwat and formal PR process, the value that a local customer focus provides will be acknowledged and this was given. In the meantime, Forum work will continue as normal.

The Forum asked if there is a timeline to this review, the company advised there is no timeline currently, and they are hoping to know more once the framework is published by Ofwat in May. The company advised they need to put a programme together to carry out this review.

The Forum queried how many engagement groups there are currently within th the company advised they aren't sure but one of the first steps is to pull the 'map' together to get a better picture.

The Forum noted that they recognise Ofwat is the lead but questioned if there is a wider review for the company to do.. The Forum noted the tension between having a regulator moving towards national based research and a government encouraging growing regionalisation, which the company will need to try and consider as they go through the PR24 process.

The Forum asked if those who were interviewed will be provided with some information. . The Forum Chair advised they will be written to that day advising of the delay with recruitment.

They Forum asked about the engagement with Water UK and other water companies, to understand their reviews and processes; the company advised they expect some conversation within Water UK around the differing approaches companies will take , but it is a predominantly Yorkshire conversation.

The Forum commented how much they have fed into the delivery of PR19, and welcomed the acknowledgement of their performance in the outcome within the CMA. They asked when the company engages with wider stakeholders, do they have the relevant information to allow those stakeholders to understand what the Forum do and their remit? The company explained they will share how well sighted the Forum is and how it has contributed throughout the review process.

The Forum noted the CMA was very positive about the work of the Forum, on the basis of members having a a broad remit, setting out how it looks at efficient costs versus risk and not simply customer engagement.

The Forum also commented that it is written into the PCs about the Forum's contribution. The company noted this.

The Forum Chair concluded by advising the Forum is here to engage and provide support about it does and she will be actively involved in the review.

Action 5: Company to keep the Forum up to date and included in the review process

8) AOB

a) No other business was discussed.

Next meeting

17 June 2021 via Microsoft Teams

Actions

Summary of actions: 14 June 2018

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

Summary of actions: 13 November 2019

6	Forum member to work with the Company to review and update webpage as discussed	Ongoing
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Summary of actions: 19 March 2020

9	<p>Company to investigate river pollution</p> <p>Post meeting update Yorkshire Water cleared the debris from the River Ouse on 14 and 15 April 2020, investigation on going into reported debris in the River Aire</p>	
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Summary of actions: 21 January 2021

1	<p>Company to circulate output from the Jury when complete</p> <p>Post meeting update Updated expected in April 2021</p>	Ongoing
3	Affordability and Vulnerability subgroup to arrange a team meeting	Ongoing
5	Company to provide feedback	Ongoing
7	Additional feedback on how industry spend on communications compares across various companies to be shared with the Forum	Ongoing
8	End of project reports to be shared with the Forum at the end of the year	Ongoing
9	<p>Company to attend the July 2021 meeting to provide an update on the complaint's tracker</p> <p>Post meeting update Added to the July future agenda</p>	Ongoing
11	<p>Internal review of subgroups and memberships across all, including Forum</p> <p>Post meeting update Planned for March meeting.</p>	Ongoing

Summary of actions: 18 February 2021

1	Forum to provide the company with a statement of support regarding the Education PC	
2	Company to share the Land Strategy programme with the Forum once developed.	

Summary of actions: 18 March 2021

1	Company to consider content and attendance from the Director of Customer Experience	Ongoing
2	Jaywing to circulate visuals to the Forum for feedback. Post meeting update This is ongoing and expected in June	Ongoing
3	Company to liaise between Jaywing and the Forum in collating feedback Post meeting update This will be ongoing up to the statement being finalised	Ongoing

Summary of actions: 17 May 2021

1	Company to consider a partnership section on the YW website	
2	Company to review communications updates with the Forum on a regular basis	
3	Company to circulate text for the APR for review and comment	
4	Forum to provide letter of support regarding bathing water PC	
5	Company to keep the Forum up to date and included in the review process	

