

A summary of the consultation on our 2018/19 and 2019/20 Assurance Plan

March 2019



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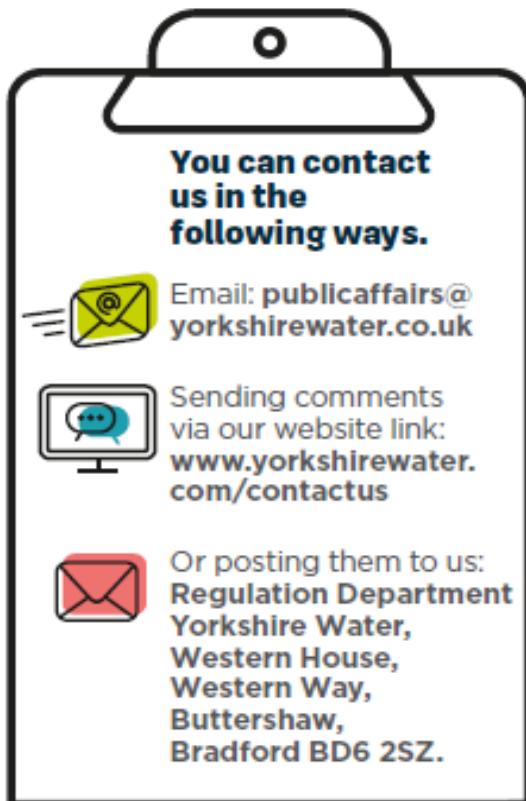
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1 – Introduction

This document sets out Yorkshire Water's response to the feedback we received during the consultation on the Assurance Plan for 2018/19 and 2019/20.

The purpose of this document is to provide our customers and stakeholders with a response to the issues they raised during the consultation on our Draft Assurance Plan. We engaged with customers to seek their opinions on the document and to obtain their feedback on how the plan could be improved.

Your views matter to us. We aim to be transparent and to get it right first time, so that customers have confidence in the information we publish. We welcome any comments you may have on our plan and encourage you to get in touch using the contact details below.



**You can contact
us in the
following ways.**

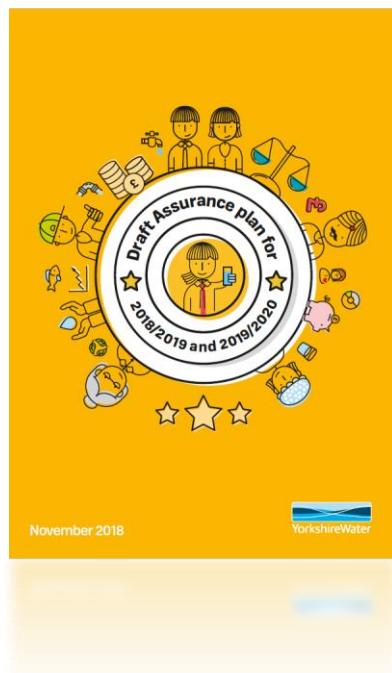
 Email: publicaffairs@yorkshirewater.co.uk

 Sending comments
via our website link:
[www.yorkshirewater.
com/contactus](http://www.yorkshirewater.com/contactus)

 Or posting them to us:
Regulation Department
Yorkshire Water,
Western House,
Western Way,
Buttershaw,
Bradford BD6 2SZ.

Our consultation period began on 29 October 2018 when we shared the Draft Assurance Plan with our customer forum, the Yorkshire Forum for Water Customers. Following their feedback, we made some amendments and then published our Draft Assurance Plan on 16 November 2018. Alongside the Draft Assurance Plan, we had an online questionnaire on our website and social media pages. The plan and questionnaire were available for customers to provide their feedback until 4 January 2019.

We wanted to reach as many of our customers as possible so we used multiple methods of communication and engagement including: our website and social media, an online survey, face to face meetings with our customers, workshops and discussions. For the first time, we also collaborated with students from Bradford University's School of Management to get their views on the content and quality of the plan.



We are extremely grateful to the customers that gave up their time to review the plan and provided us with some excellent feedback. This feedback has positively contributed to the quality and content of our final Assurance Plan.

2 – Our consultation

Our consultation aimed to gather feedback on how our customers thought the Assurance Plan looked and whether the activity we were planning met with their expectations.

We were really interested in seeking feedback on these areas in particular;

- 1. Whether we were planning to assure the information that is important to customers.**
- 2. Whether the assurance we had planned gave our customers confidence that our information will be accurate and accessible.**
- 3. Whether customers felt that the plan is easy to read and understand.**

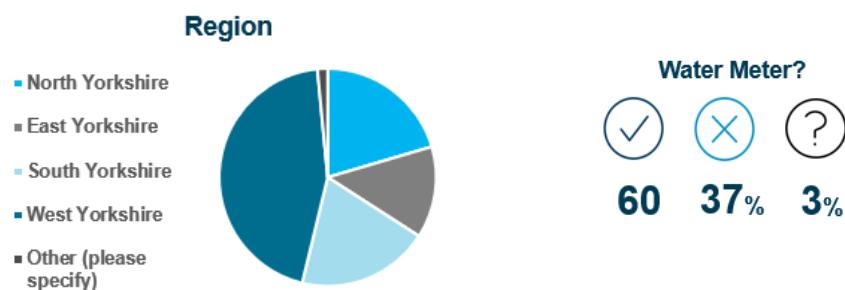
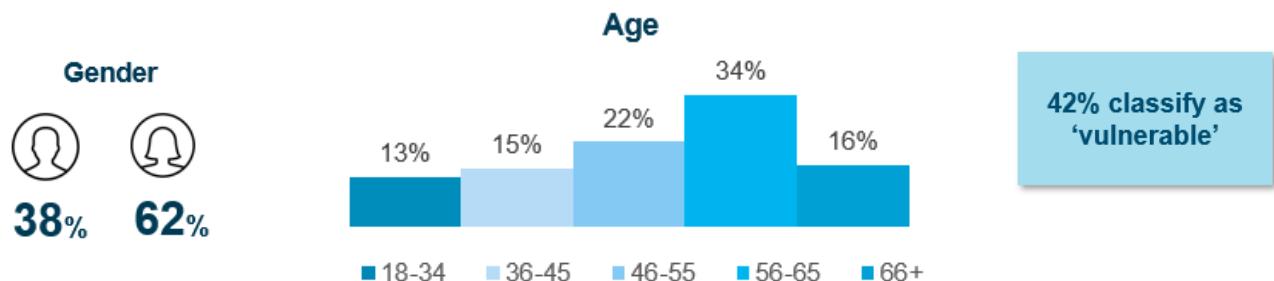
We wanted to make the consultation process accessible to as many of our customers as possible so that we could understand their wide range of views and opinions.

To do this;

- We provided open access to the consultation survey on our website.
- We used social media to make customers aware of the plan and our customer consultation.
- We contacted over 150 customers who we deal with on a regular basis, asking for their views and opinions on our plan.
- We held focus groups with customers and students.

As a result, we received excellent feedback which has resulted in several improvements to the final Assurance Plan. The improvements we've made are explained in the next section of this report.

We are grateful to the customers who gave up their time to help us improve our Assurance Plan. They have provided important feedback that will help us shape our plan for the coming years. The customers who participated came from a range of backgrounds. The tables below provide some information about those involved.



We asked the customers involved in the consultation to read the Assurance Plan and consider how well it met their expectations. We asked a specific set of questions using the online questionnaire or held in-depth discussions with customers during focus groups to understand their views. **We asked them to sum up their thoughts about the Assurance Plan in a few words and the diagram below shows how they responded;**



Whilst our customers felt that the Assurance Plan was reassuringly thorough, they also felt that it was challenging to comprehend. This high-level summary provided a useful starting position allowing us to explore how customers felt about the plan in a bit more detail and how it could be improved.

The consultation revealed several key themes and improvement opportunities as shown below;

- A vast proportion of customers consulted are confident in Yorkshire Water to assign the right level of assurance to target areas, and for any data reported to be accurate and correct.
- The assurance process is considered worthwhile and robust and (further) develops customer trust in Yorkshire Water.
- Customers are positive towards the new draft Assurance Plan with the majority satisfied with the overall assurance process.
- The Assurance Plan is reassuringly thorough but challenging to comprehend. Despite mostly being written in 'plain English', most customers struggled to understand the plan in any real depth.
- Customers are interested in receiving a summary of the Assurance Plan, with over 70% saying they would like to see a shortened version with the key points broken down.

Opportunities

1. *Being clear upfront about what assurance is and who this document is aimed at to boost understanding and engagement.*
2. *A reduction in content.*
3. *Greater use of diagrams, charts and colour to aid understanding and encourage engagement.*
4. *A summary of our detailed assurance plan*

The following pages provide a snap-shot of some of the thoughts and opinions of customers who contributed to the development of the final Assurance Plan.

Website and Online Customer Community:

82% are satisfied with Yorkshire Water's assurance process?

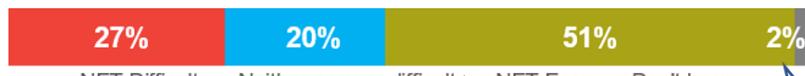


Use of 'management speak' language is questionable. Risk Assessment, Assurance, etc all have different meanings in common usage.

It seems very thorough and detailed and can only improve how Yorkshire Water do their business reporting

Yorkshire Water seem to be aware of what is needed, have considered risks and feedback. They seem to have a positive approach and are

51% found the plan easy to read but those that didn't suggested shortening the report and simplifying the language used



The plan is very pretty (colourful, lots of pictures etc) but it's simply far too long. If you expect customers to engage with it, it needs to be MUCH shorter

As always, I think a condensed version should be available to customers, as I can't see many wanting to read the full document

There must be a way of simplifying it and lose all the legal jargon

I'd like the main areas that affect customers in a simple and brief format with links to the main plan should anyone care to look deeper

77% would like to see a summary of the main points of the plan

I think it would have to include the main points and tables but less of the background of the company and how it was decided to publish it.

I think all of it, or the mains points of each section just a lot shorter with less explanation of each part

The key areas where assurance is required and what is being done to address those areas

Customer Focus Groups:

The Assurance Plan is not easy to understand in its entirety, but nevertheless feels trustworthy and customers support it

The Assurance process is considered worthwhile and feels robust enough.

Customers did not expect Yorkshire Water to be taking the trouble to ensure its publications are completely accurate and accessible. They were surprised and pleased to discover that Yorkshire Water is (credibly) concerned about the quality and accuracy of its publications.

Despite mostly being written in 'plain English', most customers still struggled to understand the plan in any real depth.

Customers were impressed with the use of "layman's terms" and the straight forward tone, however, the subject matter and process is very unfamiliar, and customers were not confident they understood all the details.

The Assurance Plan is too much for most customers to try and take in

Be clear on the concept of assurance and why some of the contents feels detailed / technical

Being clear upfront about what assurance is and who this document is aimed would boost understanding and engagement.

Being clear that the plan is written for customers, but contains some info and details which are required by Ofwat will help readers be more 'forgiving' when they come across pages / passages which feel dense

A lack of conciseness damages engagement and increases confusion.

While customers recognised that this draft plan is more concise and less repetitious than previous versions, there were still calls for the document to be shorter, avoiding repeated messages and less detail on some busier pages.

A desire for greater conciseness

Key messages in a short document with the detailed plan for those that want more information

Students provided analytical insight into the document and there was strong consensus that the Assurance Plan builds trust and confidence.

A very short visual summary document was suggested... but customer also questioned whether it would generate anymore engagement than the full plan?

Students and customers stated they would access the document online and their digital expectations are high so suitability for this channel is key.

3 – Our response to the findings

We have been busy analysing the issues raised by our customers to better understand how we could improve the final Assurance Plan for 2018/19 and 2019/20. Whilst customers had very positive things to say about our plan, they also identified some opportunities to improve it. Customers told us that, whilst the plan was very thorough, they did find it challenging and difficult to understand some of the key messages.

We have listened to the feedback we received and used it to improve the plan. The table below describes the key themes and explains the action we have taken.

Theme	Our response
Customers would like us to be clearer about what assurance is and who this document is aimed at.	<p>We have tried to improve our explanation of assurance and tried to balance the way we present information. As a result, we have;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provided an overview of assurance earlier in the document.• Simplified some of the language used in the plan.
Customers would like us to reduce the length of the document.	<p>We have tried to balance the amount of information we provide in the plan with the needs of our customers and Ofwat. We have carefully considered how we have presented some of the information. To improve the plan, we have;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Removed some of the information that was considered too much detail.• Made greater use of diagrams and charts to explain key messages and reduce the amount of text.• Removed any repetitive messages and adopted a single contents page to reduce duplication.• Improved the flow of the document• Made a connection between the different parts of the plan to direct the reader to more detail.
Customers would like us to make greater use of diagrams, charts and colour.	<p>In addition to making greater use of diagrams as described above we have also improved our plan by;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Updating the data assurance and wider assurance process maps so that customers have a better understanding of the differences between them.• Using a diagram in the 'About the document' section to explain the purpose of the document.
Customers would like us to provide a summary document that provides shortened explanation of the key messages.	A customer summary version of the Assurance Plan has been produced and can be accessed by clicking on the following link .

Analysis of the comments made by customers resulted in approximately 200 comments and over 130 individual actions.

Of those, we have resolved 90% of the actions. The remaining 10% are actions that we will include in future publications or where we considered the action but decided against making the change as either this would have contradicted other feedback or would have not met the Ofwat requirements. **The table below provide a summary of the action we took in response to the issues raised;**



Resolved..

- Addressed comments about formatting such as imagery, backgrounds, use of bullet points.
- Simplified some of the language used in the plan.
- Brought forward an updated overview of assurance to provide early explanation.
- Adopted single contents page to remove duplication.
- Provided links to other sources of information.
- Produced a summary version of the assurance plan.



Future publications

- Adopt hyper-links to provide readers with an immediate definition of words contained in the glossary.
- Improve the appendices without losing some of the detail required by Ofwat.

4 – Continued Consultation



Whilst our consultation activities for the Assurance Plan 2018/19 and 2019/20 have now ended, your views matter to us. Our customer engagement is continuous and ongoing, so that we get it right first time.

We welcome all comments and invite customers to continue to provide their views on our assurance activity and publications. We also encourage our customers to provide feedback and comments on our consultation activities.

To do this, please email your views to

publicaffairs@yorkshirewater.co.uk

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