

Yorkshire Forum for Water Customers
Minutes of Meeting
21 January 2021
Teams call

Attendees:

Andrea Cook	Chair
Chris Griffin	Independent Member
Dave Merrett	Independent Member
James Copeland	National Farmers Union
Janine Shackleton	Consumer Council for Water
Pam Warhurst	Pennine Prospects (in part)
Kirstin Hutchinson	Yorkshire Water
Sumayya Mahmood	Yorkshire Water

Guests:

Amanda Crossfield	Yorkshire Water (in part)
Aimee Linfoot	Yorkshire Water (in part)
Dean Stewart	Yorkshire Water (in part)
Joanne Dixon	Yorkshire Water (in part)
Paul Chapman	Yorkshire Water (in part)

Apologies:

Melissa Lockwood	Environmental Agency
Wendy Kimpton	Yorkshire Water
Steve Foers	Citizens Advice
Tom Keatley	Natural England

1) Welcome

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

2) Minutes and actions of the last meeting

- a) There were no comments on the minutes from the December meeting.

Action 1: complete

Action 2: transcript to be circulated after the meeting

Action 3: complete, document has been circulated to members and an offline discussion has been held regarding Ofwat's views of the value of the CCGs. The Forum queried presenting a definitive case outlining the difference it has been making, the Chair advised Ofwat's consultation paper invites comments by 29 January.

Action 4: update to be provided at today's meeting

- b) The Forum queried the Land Strategy update which was postponed at the last meeting due to unforeseen circumstances, an update was provided offline via email correspondence and the item is due to be delivered at the February meeting.

3) CMA update

- a) The final closing remarks will take place on 3 February 2021 and then the company will await the final report and decision from the CMA. Another paper is due to be sent on 22 January 2021 regarding leakage.

The Forum queried the issue of potentially not being able to finance environmental issues, such as WINEP, and expressed their concern over the wider capital impact.

The company advised Ofwat have a new environmental lead, who has been in contact with the company to discuss climate change adaptation and net zero emissions and discussions are moving in a positive direction.

4) Working with Others (WVO) Outperformance Community Benefit Fund

- a) A paper was sent to the Forum prior to the meeting, noting the existence of the Community Benefit Fund. The company previously attended the Forum meeting in April 2020 to discuss the WVO Performance Commitment (PC) regarding the process for reinvesting the reward earned by outperforming the WVO PC in AMP6 (the community benefit fund).
- b) A total of 67 organisations were invited to apply to the Community Benefit Fund. These were the organisations which have helped the company earn the reward during AMP6 as well as a handful of other organisations to widen YW's reach from traditional environmental non-governmental organisation (NGO) partners. YW received 26 applications from across the region. The company have chosen six organisations, ensuring there is a different mixture of activity, geographical spread, and where they can create a legacy, all consistent with providing value for money. The Forum

acknowledged the opportunities this presents and queried how the outputs can be shared with other organisations to build lessons learnt within other areas in the region. The company advised a report will be delivered back to the company at the end of each of the projects, to track the benefits, which will be provided to the Forum, and will be a part of the Annual Performance Report (APR).

- c) At the end of the AMP the company will also provide a report, as requested by Ofwat, that sets out the benefits accrued by the WWO PC. This will quantify the additional benefits gained from working in partnerships and will value these using the six capitals evaluation framework. The Forum queried if this is the same for all companies, the company advised this is a requirement specific to this PC for the company.

The Forum commented on how well the company are working with organisations to help them become sustainable and the importance of leaving a legacy after the funding ends. The company advised one of the criteria for the reward fund is to try and make sure what they are funding has a legacy.

The Forum queried if the company have asked applicants how they found the application process, which the company have not done. The Forum expressed concern for smaller organisations who sometimes miss these applications due to the complexity of the application process. The company advised the application was just two pages, kept simple and organisations were given over a month to apply, taking into consideration smaller business capacity.

A member asked whether one of the projects was duplicating the work of other agencies/voluntary organisations. The company was unsure, but another member felt there was room for additional support.

The Forum commented on the variety of the organisations and positivity of the work. The company advised they are intending to run this again next year, cost permitting.

5) Ilkley Jury update

- a) The company were in attendance to provide an update on the Environmental Agency's (EA's) Citizens Jury, which will commence from February 2021 and run through to March 2021. The company are supporting the EA from an advisory panel perspective. The Citizens Jury in Ilkley is one

of three being undertaken across England. Insight derived from the jury will help to inform the EA's Rethinking Water strategy. The aim is to understand how citizens within the River Wharfe catchment connect with water in the local environment and what needs to be changed in the future to benefit people and wildlife.

- b) The jury will consist of 20 participants recruited from the catchment, and four events will be held. The EA have recruited a facilitating company which will support the sessions. The advisory panel is made up of various organisations, including Andrea Cook as the Independent Chair of the Forum and James Copeland from the NFU. The EA will work with the advisory panel to agree the topics to be addressed in the jury session. The company will confirm the topic areas with the Forum in due course.

PR24 Consultation

- c) The Forum queried the company working on the Ofwat consultation documents regarding lessons learnt and, in part, how Ofwat have advised that Citizens Juries might be a way forward in attaining customer views on future service prioritisation. The company advised it was responding to Ofwat's discussion paper and was considering its response in the context of how it could triangulate different data sources and methodologies, through an agreed national framework, to address the regulators concerns around the variance in customer valuation.
- d) The NFU informed the Forum it had been invited to respond from an agricultural perspective, and their view is that it is potentially a political topic, and there is a wealth of customer research of what companies do to implement their strategies and plans. The NFU are keen to do a triangulation piece of work between all the pieces of research, and potentially how this type of jury will be triangulated. There is concern over the holistic information in a geographical area that Ofwat may not have sight of to provide an informed decision on behalf of customers.
- e) The Forum noted that the consultation paper produced by Ofwat regarding customer engagement has raised several questions about the best way forward.

A concern was raised that the strong emphasis on a qualitative approach could cause problems later in the next AMP process when quantitative results to inform choices would be required. The Company noted that a

representative would be attending an Ofwat session the following week and would feedback on it.

Action 1: Company to circulate output from the Jury when complete

Action 2: Company to feedback on Ofwat session

6) Direct Support Tariff

- a) The company's strategy at the start of the spring lockdown was to promote existing support schemes for customers to help them and tailor their support based on customer needs. This included payment breaks, lower tariffs, spreading instalments, charitable grants and debt write-off schemes. To further protect customers the company paused cash collection activity. To maximise awareness in the absence of fewer inbound contacts they engaged with their existing partners and reached out to new organisations. In total the company connected with 127 partners throughout lockdown. This is through a mix of large housing associations, support organisations such as Job Centre Plus, Step Change & Christians Against Poverty.
- b) The company assessed the schemes in place which would eventually support customers, ensuring they were 'fit for purpose'. There was a focus on promoting the existing support mechanisms and there were some press releases regarding payment holidays. The company linked in with Water UK to ensure consistency and to ensure not to miss any opportunities. The company felt they had the mechanisms in place to help customers in the short term, regarding payment breaks, lower tariffs and spreading costs. The company advised it was hard to avoid being reactive due to lower customer contact, but they had used their partnerships with others to build on opportunities.

The company advised they are seeing more customers engage and join the social tariff, there was a target to support 58,000 customers and they are currently at 56,000.

The company has introduced a new Scheme to help customers paying via the Department of Work and Pensions, called Direct Support, which was introduced in October 2020 to help 10,000 customers this year. The scheme allows those previously not eligible for the payment matching scheme, Resolve, to receive the same kind of benefit.

The Forum queried what the end of the support looks like when someone returns to financial health before being removed from a scheme; the company advised the social tariff scheme has an annual review process, and customers are encouraged to contact Yorkshire Water if circumstances change. Other schemes vary, the debt write off scheme sees small amounts written off, and this review is ongoing, with the ability to switch schemes when circumstances change.

The Forum asked further questions about the likelihood of debt being a problem in other areas. The company advised it provides guidance and there are other partners and organisations who refer customers to ensure customers get the full spectrum of help.

The Forum acknowledged the value of this work, especially considering the schemes being created in the context of Covid.

The Forum asked about the development of new schemes and requested the Forum's involvement in the development of any further schemes from the outset. The company advised any other new schemes will be brought to the Forum in the planning stage.

Action 3: The affordability and vulnerability subgroup to arrange a team meeting

Action 4: Research results to be shared with the Forum

7) Engaging with our customers

- a) The company were in attendance to discuss communications and engagement with customers throughout the ongoing Covid pandemic.
- b) Over the course of the last year the company have been working on refreshing their brand, which has mainly been internal but has started to be rolled out externally to customers. The company explained the challenges of the campaign considering Covid and the inability to meet with customers face to face, as well as the limitations it has brought to utilising some of the key traditional engagement channels like outdoor advertising and community events. An ongoing research programme has helped to keep track of how the messages are 'landing' with customers and feed in any learnings from broader issues like Covid apathy that need to be taken on board as communications are planned. The company found there is a big shift between the first lockdown and now in terms of customers attitudes, needs and engagement with any form of messaging from any organisation. The company found there is evidence of Covid 'fatigue' in

relation to messages being able to be heard and cut through to customers which has made it extremely challenging.

Action 5: Company to provide feedback

The company provided a summary of their key worker campaign in April, showing their relevance to still working, ensuring customers understood why, through various means of communications. The company discussed the challenging summer and their water saving campaign, which was a difficult message to balance with a higher water demand due to customers being at home due to the pandemic.

- c) Regarding measuring engagement, the company highlighted that their CMEX results in the first quarter placed them 4th overall. They advised they are the most engaged water company on social media platform Instagram, for the 29th week running, and they are surpassing their engagement target on other social media platforms. The company have created 350 million opportunities to hear and see their messages across all channels to date.

The Forum recognised the amount of work given budget restrictions and asked how the Forum can be engaged more fully at an earlier stage in interventions. The company advised the community engagement pilot which is upcoming would benefit from having the Forum's input.

Action 6: Company to involve the Forum on the community engagement pilot

The Forum queried the cost on engagement in comparison, to the industry average. Business cases are built for each type of engagement, but the company advised this can be the first cost to be cut when other work takes higher priority.

Action 7: Additional feedback on how industry spend on communications compares across various companies will be examined to see if these figures are available for sharing.

The Forum queried how the effectiveness of each campaign is monitored. The company advised each campaign, dependent on budget, links in with the communications team, for qualitative and quantitative research. It was also noted that customers are contacted to understand if their behaviour has been adapted as a result of these campaigns. The Forum requested sight of this information.

Action 8: End of project reports to be shared with the Forum at the end of the year

The Forum queried the targets the company measures themselves against, and how relevant it is to customers. The company advised these targets have been there for some time, and work is being undertaken to understand more about this and make appropriate adjustments.

8) Customer complaint - catchment update

- a) An update was provided to the Forum on progress in managing a customer complaint, including the installation of specific assets to remove the problem faced by the complainant.
- b) The Forum were pleased with the progress of the work and suggested now only being advised of adverse developments regarding this case, rather than it being a continuous standing item. All agreed.
- c) The Forum queried the lessons learnt, and the interventions proposed, and how this work is being built into some of the issues where too much water is exacerbating issues such as CSOs, or areas of the network which are experiencing high pressure. The Forum asked if surface water is reduced from the catchment, and this is an urban catchment, then customers aren't proactively taking up offers to reduce the volume of water. The alternative would be major infrastructure investment and there could be environmental damage and greater expenditure from individuals. The company advised all these issues are taken into consideration when investigating an area which is overloaded and how, in some respects, when there is a particular area that suffers, it is an opportunity to provide customers with information and educate them on surface water.

The Forum asked about the analysis of complaints, the company informed members that all complaints have been tracked from November 2020. The tracker will be used to drive relationships with the operational teams via hub meetings and will raise awareness in the operational world regarding what is happening within their area. The company suggested returning in six months' time to update on this work.

Action 9: Company to attend the July 2021 meeting to provide an update on tracking complaints

9) AOB

- a) Comments on the Ofwat consultation to be provided to the Chair by 26 January 2021.
- b) The Forum queried the challenges and strains to colleagues in the company regarding Covid. The Chair advised it would be useful to see a paper on the impact on the company and company finances, and the general wellbeing of staff. The company briefly highlighted the support from Occupational Health and the company overall to its colleagues. The Forum also asked to hear about support to Loop colleagues.

Action 10: Colleague support during Covid to be presented at the next meeting, specifically regarding Occupational Health

- c) The Forum requested more detail on the next price review and setting themes and suggested re-evaluating the subgroups and if they are fit for purpose, and to discuss the need for a potential vice chair. The Chair advised the first task is re-evaluating memberships, and expansion of the Forum, to meet any gaps

Action 11: Internal review of subgroups and membership of the Forum

Next meeting

18 February 2021, Microsoft teams meeting

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

3	Company to assess setting up specific engagement Forum regarding land strategy Post meeting update Company to attend the Forum in December 2020	
9	Company to investigate river pollution 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	

Summary of actions: 23 April 2020

3	Company to discuss land and property and environmental partnerships and feed back to the Forum Post meeting update Company due to attend to discuss at the February 2021 meeting	
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Summary of actions: 22 October 2020

1	Company to report on Avoiding Drain Blockages Campaign at November Forum meeting. Post meeting update Meeting cancelled, to be rescheduled	
2	Company to report on Stakeholder engagement at a future Forum meeting.	

3	Company to share Six Capitals assessment when published.	Complete
4	Company to provide snapshot and a brief report on GSS complaints handling statistics. Post meeting update Planned for the November meeting - meeting cancelled. Scheduled for the January 2021 meeting	Complete
5	Chair to amend the draft response to the CMA, circulate and submit on behalf of the Forum.	

Summary of actions: 10 December 2020

2	Forum to circulate CMA hearing transcript once published	Complete
3	Lessons learnt document from PRI4 to be circulated to the Forum	Complete
4	Company to provide a catchment update regarding the ongoing complaint at the next Forum Post meeting update Scheduled for the January 2021 meeting	Complete

Summary of actions: 21 January 2021

1	Company to circulate output from the Jury when complete	
2	Company to feedback on Ofwat session	
3	Affordability and Vulnerability subgroup to arrange a team meeting	
4	Company to share research results regarding the support tariff with the Forum	

5	Company to provide feedback	
6	Company to involve the Forum on the community engagement pilot	
7	Additional feedback on how industry spend on communications compares across various companies will be looked at to see if these figures are available for sharing.	
8	End of project reports to be shared with the Forum at the end of the year	
9	Company to attend the July 2021 meeting to provide an update on the complaint's tracker Post meeting update Added to the July future agenda	Ongoing
10	Colleague support during Covid to be presented at the next meeting, specifically regarding Occupational Health Post meeting update Company attending the February 2021 Forum	Ongoing
11	Internal review of subgroups and membership of Forum	