

12th December 2019

Thirty Second meeting of the Customer Forum

Held at 09.30am Carnegie Conference Centre, Halbeath Rd, Dunfermline KY11 8DY

Attendees and in attendance

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|------------------------|---------------------------------|----------------------------|--|
| Peter Peacock (PP) | Chair | Attendee | |
| Agnes Robson (AR) | Vice Chair | Attendee | |
| Jo Dow (JD) | Member | Attendee | |
| Rachel Bell (RB) | Member | Attendee | |
| Andrew Faulk (AF) | Member | Attendee | |
| Bob Wilson (BW) | Member | Attendee | |
| Stuart Housden (SH) | Member | Attendee | |
| Mairi Macleod (MM) | Member | Attendee | |
| Tom May (TM) | Member | Attendee | |
| Sue Walker (SW) | Member | Attendee | |
| Sam Ghibaldan (SG) | Director | In attendance | |
| Rachael Picken (RP) | Customer Forum Support Manager | In attendance | |
| Fraser Stewart (FS) | Customer Forum Research Support | In attendance | |
| Simon Parsons (SP) | Scottish Water | Attendee (SW section only) | |
| Tom Harvie-Clark (THC) | Scottish Water | Attendee (SW section only) | |
| Fiona Templeton (FT) | Scottish Water | Attendee (SW section only) | |
| Alistair Kerr (AK) | Scottish Water | Attendee (SW section only) | |

Introduction

1. Apologies

There were apologies from Tom May.

2. Declaration of interest

There were no new declarations of interest.

3. Minutes of the last meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting (November 2019) were approved.

Matters Arising

4. Actions from the November 2019 meeting

The Forum discussed the outstanding actions.

Updates

The Chair and members provided an update on activities since the last meeting, including:

5. Stakeholder Advisory Group (Chair, Agnes Robson, Sam Ghibaldan)

The Strategic Advisory Group (SAG) had met on 29th November 2019.

The main points highlighted were:

- **WICS Prospects for Prices Decision Paper:** Stakeholder responses at the SAG were discussed. The Forum had noted that it was seeking to formulate its response to the draft paper. The formal response sent to WICS since the SAG had been circulated to the Forum members. This focused on the principles of EBP, the Forum's current analysis of customer research, and what that is telling us about their views on strategy and prices, and the national engagement exercise.

6. Prospects for Prices Decision Paper (Chair, Sam Ghibaldan)

This item was covered above in the discussion about the SAG meeting.

7. Strategic Plan (and supporting documents) update (Chair, Sam Ghibaldan, Rachael Picken)

Copies of the draft formal response to Scottish Water on the Strategic Plan had been circulated around the Forum on 2nd December 2019. The letter states that at this point the Forum considers that the Strategic Plan has taken proper account of the evidence that the Customer Forum has provided on the views and aspirations of current and future customers and the Forum is minded to agree the plan, subject to the Minute of Agreement currently under discussion and the following excerpt from the letter:

1. "The pace at which implementing the Strategic Plan is achievable will depend on many factors, and the upward pressure on costs that implies will need ongoing consideration. **Being minded to agree the 25-year Strategic Plan does not imply that the Customer Forum is endorsing any specific long-term price profile.**
2. Scottish Water and the Customer Forum will discuss and seek to agree prices for 2021-27, and suitable safeguards for customers, after the Water Industry Commission for Scotland publish their approach to consideration of potential price ranges in early 2020. The Forum will approach these discussions in the context of the customer research and at this stage it is **not endorsing any particular approach to prices or customer safeguards for 2021-27."**

The draft Letter is appended to the Minutes.

8. Minute of Agreement update (Sam Ghibaldan, Rachael Picken)

SG and RP updated the Forum on progress on drafting a Minute of Agreement with Scottish Water on issues related to the Strategic Plan. Current draft to be circulated for Forum comments prior to a meeting with Scottish Water on 17th December. A further meeting with Scottish Water is scheduled for 17th January 2020.

9. Prices for 2020-21 (Chair, Sam Ghibaldan)

The Chair updated the Forum on the current position for information given that it has no locus in this decision. The Commission had written to the Scottish Government proposing that prices rise by in nominal terms of 0.9% in 2020/21. The Minister has noted this position.

The Forum noted it had previously made clear to Scottish Water and other stakeholders that there was a case for maintaining prices at a 1.6% increase if the proceeds from that were invested in climate and/or invest to save measures, and in the interests of price stability; or that prices reflected the agreement reached by customers and demonstrating such agreements could be honoured.

10. Reporting, Performance and Information (Sue Walker, Mairi Macleod, Sam Ghibaldan)

A high-level presentation was received at the November SAG. Further proposals will be taken to the February 2020 SAG by Scottish Water for stakeholder views. A strawman will be based on 2018/19 data.

The RP&I meeting for December was cancelled. The Forum has sent Scottish Water a paper setting out its views on the purpose of RP&I, reporting themes, the measures/narratives/tracking required and the need for public facing reporting. The Forum have offered to have constructive discussions with Scottish Water in January 2020 (TBC). The Forum have concerns around whether targets are set via RP&I (or another group) and that the Forum focus is to ensure they are appropriate for the needs of stakeholders and customers.

11. OECD review (Chair, Agnes Robson, Stuart Housden, Sam Ghibaldan)

The Chair summarised the OECD feedback session at the November SAG.

12. Research Coordination Group (Agnes Robson)

There has been no Research Co-ordination Group since the last Forum meeting. The date for next meeting is confirmed as 21st January 2020. The focus of this meeting will be the forward programme for 2020/21. The Forum have had early discussions with IPSOS Mori on possible focus areas building on the Future Strategy research. This will be discussed further at the RCG.

13. Flourishing Scotland Business Group (Bob Wilson, Tom May, Rachel Bell)

There has been no meeting held since 10th October 2019. The Forum agreed it would be necessary to engage with Scottish Water on the future remit of this group.

14. Principles of Charging and Ministerial Objectives (Chair)

Papers will be publicly available in January 2020 for a 3-month consultation. Both the Chair and Director had been briefed on the contents of the papers by the Scottish Government.

Scottish Water

Opening remarks

Scottish Water provided an update on 2021 prices. In previous years this has been discussed with the Forum; this year this is for an update only due to a change in the usual process. (As previously covered) the Commission have written a letter to Scottish Government setting out prices for 2020-21, which will be a 0.9% price nominal increase. This meant price rises would remain below inflation on average across the SRC15 period, but above the level agreed for the period with the previous Forum.

Vulnerable customers update

Scottish Water updated the Forum on developing approach to vulnerable customers, the Strategic Plan commitments and the commitments in the current draft MoA.

The main areas covered were:

- Customer research and findings
- Strategy development
- Service developments
- Partnership opportunities
- Communication updates
- Training and Development
- Next steps

Customer research and findings: Updated on the recent qual/quant research project by Turquoise Thinking. The main objective was to understand customer attitudes and expectations towards the Additional Support Register and support services offered. More specifically, it looked to; understand whether customers perceive Scottish Water as a company that cares for its customers. Are there companies that do this better and if so, how and what do they do and what do they offer?

The methodology involved:

- 2 x 2.5hr co-creation workshops with household customers who are eligible for, or are already on the Additional Support Register, alongside Scottish Water staff
- 30 x tele-depth interviews with those who could potentially benefit from the service
- 10 x tele-depth interviews with a number of potential signposting partner organisations including charities close to customers with additional support requirements (facilitated via Turquoise Thinking)
- 50 x house to house quantitative surveys in areas that have previously experienced water supply interruption
- 400 x online surveys with defined target groups including; customers with disabilities, carers, elderly and parents with young children.
- A documentary film consisting of a number of Scottish Water customers with additional support requirements sharing their opinions of the additional support service.

Findings highlighted:

- The majority (64%) of customers included in the quantitative research would agree to utility companies directly **sharing personal information** for the different registers
- Testing the customer appetite for selecting 'service needs' instead of the current industry standard of '**needs codes**'. It was suggested that 'service needs' would be less intrusive to

customers and would further encourage customers who would benefit from the service to sign up. It would also limit the sensitive customer data Scottish Water would need to hold. However, the majority of participants in the quantitative research were happy to share their specific disability i.e. needs codes. Some respondents mentioned it is the information they are used to providing to other companies, and on that basis, it was easier than having to select individual service offerings. A number of customers mentioned they didn't know what they would need in the event of a water or waste water interruption, so trusted Scottish Water to decide. Prioritisation of service was also discussed and welcomed by customers, and it could be argued that unless Scottish Water knows about the condition they cannot prioritise. **AK confirmed that Scottish Water will continue to use 'needs' codes; recently amended to match other companies 'needs' codes.**

- **Perception of Scottish Water:** Customers generally had a positive perception of Scottish Water. They felt the quality of the product was good, and the vast majority had never experienced a service issue. For those who had experienced a service issue, they felt the customer service provided by Scottish Water was good due to early communication and delivery of bottled water.
- **Expectations of service:** bottled water and proactive updates were key expectations of service when there were unplanned interruptions to supply. There was a resounding positive response to other elements of the service including the 'knock and wait' scheme, password option, support with mobility/accessibility and the variety of communication options.
- Scottish Water to change the name to the '**Priority Service Register**'. The reasoning being that, customers understood this name was common across other utilities and therefore found it easy to understand and remember.

Strategy Development: A strategy to address the needs of vulnerable customers has been developed within Scottish Water. Defines vulnerability and the materials which will be available.

Service developments: Scottish Water updated on a proactive contact pilot started within the last 2 months for areas of small unplanned interruptions to supply. Also to run a proactive communication pilot in the near future.

Early insights from the pilot are:

- 35% of customers were still in supply when they were contacted proactively
- 47% were not in/no answer
- 2% requested bottle water
- 4% not accepting calls
- 7% information incorrect (this provides a Scottish Water data cleansing opportunity)

The pilot will continue, seeking to increase understanding of customer needs.

Key service offerings:

- Knock and Wait service
- Password options
- Support mobility/accessibility
- Support in the event of a large scale interruption to supply
- Next Generation Text Relay
- Large print materials
- Braille/Audio materials
- Alternative language documents
- British Sign Language (via ContactScotland-BSL- with potential partnership opportunities)

Partnership opportunities: Partnership with AgeScotland via Field and Sewer Response team staff provides the opportunity of the identification of potential vulnerabilities and provision of information to customers who may require additional support. AgeScotland are keen to continue and promote this opportunity; and this is a two way relationship with Scottish Water promoting AgeScotland initiatives.

Communications updates:

- Events in 2020-Jan/Feb 2020 events planned to raise awareness of the Priority Services Register (in public areas such as supermarkets with other public organisations)
- Refreshing Scottish Water web page
- Updating Scottish Water videos

Training and development: Training is being built into Customer Service Training team including:

- **CEC Challenging Customers 2019** (links to Wellbeing project). Includes tailored and certified 'train the trainer' course, internal mental health training, case studies and examples, 2 day accreditation programme to Customer Service training team. Delivered in January 2020.
- **NSO Vulnerability Pilot**- run by Scottish Fire and Rescue service with some of the Field Response team. The training pilot will help them identify and effectively deal with customers who may be in a vulnerable situation. Delivered in January 2020.

Next steps:

- Publish strategy (Dec/Jan)
- Training to Field staff (Fire Scotland) (Jan/Mar)
- Events early 2020 (Jan/Feb)
- Refresh register and communication with customers (Feb/Apr)
- Internal roadshow (Mar/Apr)
- Name change to register (Mar/Apr)
- External campaign (Mar/Jul)
- Partner engagement (Apr/Jul)

Forum feedback: The Forum responded positively to the Scottish Water's progress on the approach to vulnerable customers and how far this has come in the last year. The feedback to Scottish Water was that this approach has been systematic, comprehensive and well considered with huge partnership opportunities. The Chair reflected that lessons from this broad, comprehensive approach could be taken to other opportunities at catchment level, or with other specialist customer/community groups as it builds on best practice, research outcomes, partnership opportunities and embeds the lessons learnt.

Questions from the Forum were around:

- How to keep a register updated and active
- If a single utility priority services register was possible
- How to understand best practise data share (Scottish Water updates via Water UK Project)
- The need for Scottish Water online materials to be subtitled for deaf and hard of hearing customers
- Partnership opportunities to increase numbers on the Priority Services Register
- The balance of vulnerabilities/needs on the water/wastewater side

RP&I

The Chair fed back the Forum's views on progress to date.

Scottish Water fed back on the 3 component parts of RP&I:

Performance report: This will be brought back to February 2020 SAG, providing an example narrative report. Building on feedback from this session, Scottish Water will build the Annual Return in the format required in 2020 (using older information).

Measures and Indicators: a mosaic of information required by stakeholders has been completed. Many measures and indicators will be in a shadow format to start trials from April 2020.

Accessibility of information: Stakeholder/customer Currently working with digital team in this area. Timescales are to be confirmed. The Forum reflection is that this will be a learning process both for customers and Scottish Water and there will a balance between a push and pull for information and the variety of formats this could be presented in.

Flourishing Scotland Business Group

The Forum asked for feedback on the status of this group. Scottish Water confirmed their intent that it should continue.

Internal discussion

15. Reflections on Scottish Water session

Vulnerable customers: Positive reflections on the progress on the approach to vulnerable customers and how far this has come in the last year. Provides a good example of how Scottish Water can change behaviour within the organisation and an example to be used to shape the national engagement campaign.

RPI: Awaiting action and agenda for 8th January discussions. Wider Forum attendance discussed.

16. Prices decision paper response

Covered in previous discussions.

17. Future role of customers in SRC21- further discussion

The Forum had a further discussion around an independent, active customer perspective on the services Scottish Water provide in SRC21. This will inform a paper currently being developed.

AoB

None

Meeting Closed. -----END-----