

2014 Price Review
Business Plan Supporting Appendices
2015-20 Communications Strategy

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Executive Summary

As a modern, progressive business, we recognise the importance of communicating well with **customers, regulators and stakeholders** to achieve our desired customer outcomes and business goals - indeed we have set our key performance objectives for the next five years directly against customer satisfaction and expectations.

We feel that measuring **customer satisfaction**, although novel, is the right approach as our operational area faces growing pressures such as increasing population, a reducing pool of affordable new water resources and, new and emerging environmental legislation. These will inevitably have some impact on the price of water in the future and this will only be accepted by our customers if they trust us and consider our approach to be legitimate.

Importantly the role of communications is to better **inform** and **empower** customers (and not about encouraging customers to accept lower performance levels than they are entitled to expect). All materials and messages produced will reflect this and will be tested and challenged by our customers and **Customer Panel** to ensure we are meeting this objective.

The means by which we can and need to communicate is growing and we anticipate this trend will continue over the next five years. We are committed to rising to this challenge and being even more innovative in our communications than we've attempted in the past.

Over the next five years, we will execute a confident **communications and marketing strategy** that embraces reactive and proactive activities to heighten awareness of water matters, our reputation and customer satisfaction. We will, also, ensure that our internal business communications are in tune with those targeted at customers, regulators, shareholders and stakeholders.

This strategy will support the successful delivery of all three parts of our business plan i.e. a wholesale plan and two retail plans covering household and business customers.

Key developments over the next five years include:

- Greater investment in **customer and digital communications** such as web technology and social media
- The development and management of the South East Water **brand** and **marketing** of our services
- Enhanced **customer, community and stakeholder engagement** on our operational priorities and future plans
- Greater investment in our **customer and market research** so we can target our activities to where we will get the greatest 'return'
- More collaboration with industry partners to execute **innovative campaigns** i.e. to support our existing efforts on water efficiency, drought management or leakage
- More extensive **training and development** of our employees and contractors so they are confident in engaging with the customers and communities they serve
- Enhanced **internal communications** to motivate employees and ensure consistently great performance, putting employee engagement at the heart of what we do.

Within South East Water, we recognise that effective communications and engagement is everyone's role and responsibility and not the preserve of specialist in-house teams. We want all employees and our contractors to communicate in a clear, timely fashion with customers, regulators and stakeholders to engender trust and greater customer satisfaction.

Contents

Executive Summary	2
Section 1. Introduction	4
The importance of communications.....	4
Improvements to our customer-driven communications to date	5
Section 2. Where we are and where do we want to be	11
Our desired outcomes for customers.....	11
What customer research tells us.....	12
Wider challenges to our reputation and customer satisfaction	13
Our Communication Objectives	14
Section 3. Developments in customer-driven communications over the next five years.....	16
Section 4. How we will reach and listen to our audiences	17
Section 5. How we will deliver our business plan through better communications.....	21

Section 1. Introduction

We have embraced the concept of ‘outcomes’ in our business plan for 2015-20. We have taken inspiration from the customer experience surveys, introduced with the Service Incentive Mechanism (SIM), to develop and measure our performance against business outcomes that directly relate to the customers’ satisfaction on the service they receive. This has driven a step change in how we engage with customers and we want to see this approach reflected across a greater range of interactions and services we offer customers. More details of this innovative approach are given in the ‘Outcomes, Performance Commitments and Incentives’ supporting appendix. This approach will complement the existing reporting of measured activity and service failures.

As well as increasing our legitimacy by delivering the services customers want and being able to act in a broader way to increase satisfaction, we believe this approach will support our developing customer-centric culture and improve our relationship with customers and stakeholders.

Effective communications and marketing is vital if that aspiration is to be realised. Our strategy to achieve it is set out in this appendix.

We are not starting from scratch. We have continually improved and developed our customer focus and communications over the last seven years including the introduction of digital services and social media – providing a sound footing on which to further our customer, stakeholder and regulator communications and engagement from 2015 to 2020.

The importance of communications

This appendix on 2015 to 2020 communications has been prepared primarily for our customers, regulators, stakeholders, shareholders and other key audiences. It aims to set out how our investment in communications will support the delivery of our business plan, in particular our strategic aim to improve the customer experience and how our service is viewed over the next five years.

As a modern progressive business, we recognise the importance of communicating well with customers, regulators and stakeholders if we are to successfully deliver our desired customer outcomes (see section 2) and business goals.

Effective communication supports operational improvements to win hearts and minds, to shift perceptions of us and to improve customer satisfaction with the service received. We understand that to be truly effective our service performance needs to go hand in hand with a cultural change in customer communication. No matter what the project, issue or challenge, communications can support in making things happen, and help customers and others to view us in a more positive light.

Much of that cultural change has already been driven by our focus on achieving customer satisfaction through the SIM process; we’ve changed our approach to customer communications – whether that’s how our bills look, or the notices and leaflets we produce around our daily activities.

Recent research (see Section 2) told us that we are still considered by many customers as invisible within their community, but where customers do know us we have a reputation for being reliable and providing a safe product. This communications and marketing strategy is vital if we are to bridge this gap.

Improvements to our customer-driven communications to date

The last five years has seen us significantly develop our customer and stakeholder communications. This is a direct result of the way a focus on SIM has changed the way we look at communicating with our customers – from the bill they receive, the leaflets we send during our Customer Metering Programme to inviting customers to meet our employees at open days.

As well as responding to enquiries we also endeavour to deliver proactive, up-front communications. We have embraced opportunities to use new technology to deliver messages and encourage dialogue with our customers.

Examples of the improvements include:

- **Capital Programme communications**

Early engagement with customers and communities impacted by our capital programme of works has helped us to minimise disruption and generated positive feedback.

Early engagement allows us to introduce some flexibility to many schemes so that we can adapt our timing or construction methods to minimise disruption and avoid loss of business. We use drop-in sessions and visits to businesses before we put a spade in the ground to get that vital local knowledge which helps us plan our schemes.

One form of engagement is to write to customers and stakeholders about our work. This has grown substantially over the last few years:

Table 1

Year	2008/9	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13
Numbers	1,764	1,733	15,489	24,064	55,544

“I actually meant to write to you earlier to say how impressed I was with the way the work was carried out and to ask you to congratulate the team and thank them for making life so easy for us. Thanks to the traffic lights, there was really very little disruption – more like living in a private road. And we were treated with great courtesy and consideration. In fact I am sorry normal life is back –with all the buses, lorries and fast cars. So, again, thank you. And come any time!”

(Cllr Gabrielle Davis – Herne Bay)

Our Customer Metering Programme has been a major part of our capital programme in recent years and our communications approach has sought to ensure everyone is well-informed, and engaged on water issues and opportunities for water efficiency.

We employed customer focus groups to ensure the information developed for customers on metering was clear and useful, and developed the brand “Making Every Drop Count” to increase visibility of the programme. As the programme has progressed, we have ensured that feedback from customers is taken on board and improvements made where necessary. Regular review and evaluation continues to be an important part of all our communications activities.

- **Digital communications**

Digital and social media is transforming the customer service experience, bringing new opportunities for engagement with customers at the time and method of their choosing.

Principally we have worked to redesign our website to create a one-stop shop for customers. Customers increasingly view it as a key source of information and a place to do business. This was particularly striking during the 2012 drought which saw unprecedented website visitor numbers, with a 175% increase at peak times.

Our new look website went live during autumn 2012 and gives customers, who prefer not to telephone, the convenience to contact us when they want - whether moving house or wanting to check an account balance, it can now be done at the touch of a button.

By automating a number of key services customers can choose to carry out simple transactions directly online such as balance checking, managing payments and printing copy bills. Over the next five years, we intend for our metered customers to be able to access details of their water consumption online.

An online panel of customers helped test the website to ensure the design and layout was easy to use, enabling visitors to find the water facts they wanted quickly. We will continue to use this online panel to help us test our digital contact with customers.

Faster broadband services, combined with more integrated social media channels and more detailed data capture means that services can be more effectively targeted to customers. The use of online channels such as live web chat and social media enable direct, real-time communication with customers, for an instant response. We launched our Twitter account in 2013 to engage with customers and stakeholders and 15% of complaints are now resolved via our live chat service.

"Thank you so much...this has been the easiest communication with a Utility EVER!!"

"You've been really helpful. I've changed from being really cross to pleased that someone has actually listened to me. Well done and please add this to your positive feedback."

We are continuing to develop other activities such as YouTube, LinkedIn and Facebook to develop two-way conversations with customers.

A rapid growth in the use of electronic devices such as tablets and smartphones is continuing, with almost 30% of traffic to our website now coming from them. We intend to develop our website and tools to ensure that we deliver key services for these and other devices, providing 'adaptive content' across the different channels.

- **Bill re-design and customer literature**

During 2012 and 2013, we carried out a review of our current bill format to test whether it could be improved. We also wanted to check our understanding of what customers' expectations were in relation to the purpose of the bill itself, and the associated information it contained.

Our research showed that customers review bills at two levels; firstly, they seek basic information about what payment is due, when it is due by, and how they can pay; at a secondary level customers want to validate the payment period and the accuracy of the charges, and find contact information.

We have therefore improved our bill design with these two principles in mind. Our new bills provide greater clarity to customers, along with clear signposting for easy ways to pay and what to do in a water supply emergency. Customers also commented favourably that details of our website and telephone numbers were much clearer and easier to find. We are aiming, therefore, for our customers to be more satisfied and able to pay their bill without resorting to calling our contact centre, etc.

We have worked hard over the last few years to review our customer literature to ensure it is written in plain English and has a clear design. We know the importance of testing this material and so consulted our online customer panel and held focus groups to review material to ensure it meets our customers' needs.

"Thank you very much for organising the brochures for our visit. All of the team was very impressed by the layout and information contained."

More on our past and future improvements can be found in our retail business plans.

- **Community engagement**

Progress in digital communications complements other tried and tested communication methods – actually meeting customers and stakeholders remains important as ever and something we have continued to develop.

Our school talk programme, aimed at encouraging an interest and understanding of water issues in young people, has developed from reaching 600 pupils in 2009 to 3,500 pupils in 2012-13.

"Please could you pass on my thanks to Rachel and Hannah for their talk ... The children loved it and it was pitched at just the right level to challenge their thinking but enable them to understand. They were friendly and professional and a delight to deal with."

Research tells us that we're considered by many customers as invisible and yet trustworthy. We don't want to be a hidden utility and are, therefore, working hard to ensure we are seen as a part of the communities that we live and work within.

We have developed a Community Chest Fund to help charities and community organisations develop projects for their neighbourhoods. As well as enabling us to support some important

initiatives, it helps to build our brand, position us as being at the heart of communities and emphasises our role as the local supplier.

Similarly we have used public open days at our water treatment works and reservoirs to both engage with customers and raise understanding of the skill and investment required to source, treat and supply water.

Feedback from visitors showed that they found the tours had given them a valuable appreciation of the work involved in providing top-quality drinking water. Surveys conducted before and after the tour showed that only 8% had a good knowledge of the water treatment process before the tour, but this had increased to 77% by the end, with the other 23% feeling they now had an excellent understanding.

“It was excellently led and promoted and everyone was very approachable. We now have faces to think of when we see South East Water or get our bills.”

“More appreciative of the lengths the water companies go to provide good quality safe water.”

- **Proactive media relations**

We are moving increasingly from reactive responses to media enquiries to engaging proactively with journalists. This has worked particularly well during supply interruptions – enabling us to get messages out to the wider community quickly:

Table 2

Year:	2009	2010	2011	2012
Number of Press releases issued:	92	111	181	232

Two examples help demonstrate how the proactive approach has made a difference:

- When a **water main burst** in East Sussex in July 2013, we contacted journalists before they called us. They helped to promote the location of bottled water supplies and direct customers to our website for regular updates. Despite this being one of the longest running incidents in the company’s history, we received balanced press coverage and customers praised South East Water’s efforts to manage the event in the local paper.
- During **the 2012 drought**, our **media day at the Friston borehole** (see case study below) received widespread coverage and was praised by Waterwise and WWF as “innovative”. This gave journalists a unique and unusual opportunity to descend 30m to film inside a borehole and at the bottom of an aquifer. This was a hugely successful media day which achieved print and broadcast coverage (both national and regional) - helping us explain the importance of groundwater.

- ***Keeping customers informed during an incident***

As well as working proactively with media during an incident, we ensure that our customers are regularly updated e.g. via telephone and website messages.

During long running supply interruptions, we work quickly to let customers know where to get alternative supplies from, and we work with parish councils and use Twitter to help spread the word.

“Just wanted to congratulate you on your handling of the disruption to the water supply to Robertsbridge and surrounding areas. You have been so efficient and the updates on your website were most useful. The provision of bottled water was in place before many of us knew there was a problem! The gentleman handing out water in Station Road, Robertsbridge was smiling and charming and carried the water to my car! All this and he had been up all the previous night working. Very well done!”

Case study – Communicating during drought

South East Water significantly increased its proactive customer communications efforts during the last drought in 2011 which saw the introduction of the Temporary Use Bans in 2012.

These communications played an important role in keeping customers informed – our research showed that 93% of customers had seen or heard information about a drought in South East England. This was most commonly via television (71%), national (38%) and local newspapers (35%) and word of mouth (35%). A fifth recalled receiving information about drought directly from South East Water.

Our Drought Communications Plan had clear goals:

- To publicise the drought situation
- To foster good working relationships with customers and local communities and give them clear water efficiency advice and information
- To develop contacts with key stakeholders to engage them in assisting with drought and water efficiency messages
- To promote the positive work the Company is undertaking, separately and jointly with others, to manage the drought and minimise negative publicity or comment.

We used a range of communication tools to ensure we engaged with our different audiences during the drought. While a consistent message was essential, each required a different approach and specific information produced to meet their needs. Examples include:

Media engagement and advertising – The *Let's Save It* campaign in newspapers; Engaging photography; Public Notices; Radio advertising campaign; Very successful media day at Friston borehole in East Sussex which was attended by many broadcast outlets- BBC News, BBC South East Today, ITN News, Sky News and Meridian Television. This gave journalists the opportunity to film inside a borehole, something that was vital for helping explain the importance of groundwater.

Digital communications – introducing online “Take the Pledge” campaign and groundwater graphics on the Company website; using Twitter via @DroughtShout; Blogging about water saving tips and news; Creative web video to explain the groundwater issues.

Section 2. Where we are and where do we want to be

Our desired outcomes for customers

Our purpose is to produce and deliver a reliable supply of high quality drinking water – that customers consider good value for money.

Our business plans are centred on the customer priorities we have identified through our extensive engagement and research. And we have responded with a range of outcomes that will deliver against the priorities of both household and business customers.

Table 3 CLEAR: outcomes for Household customers

Priority	Outcome
Clean Water	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Customers consider the appearance of their water is acceptable • Customers consider the taste and smell of their water is acceptable
Low Leakage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Customers consider the level of leakage is acceptable
Effective Service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Customers consider their direct interaction experience to be positive
Affordable Bills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Customers consider bills to be value for money and affordable
Reliable Service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Customers consider their water supply is of sufficient pressure • Customers consider the frequency and duration of supply interruptions is acceptable • Customers consider the frequency of water use restrictions is acceptable

CHOICE: outcomes for Business customers

Priority	Outcome	Commercial Success Measures
Clear Prices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Customers consider bills to be value for money and affordable 	
Help, Advice and Additional Services		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Customers value our additional services
Operational Stability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Customers consider their water supply is of sufficient pressure • Customers consider the frequency and duration of supply interruptions is acceptable • Customers consider the frequency of water use restrictions is acceptable • Customers consider the level of leakage is acceptable 	

Innovative Customer Contracts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Customers value our enhanced tariffs
Clean Water	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Customers consider the taste and smell of their water is acceptable
Effective Service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Customers consider their direct interaction experience to be positive

As well as providing a reasonable return to our investors, we know we are successful if we achieve these outcomes.

We also need to ensure that we meet:

- Our **compliance outcomes** i.e. all of our legal obligations
- Our **sustainability outcomes** i.e. making sure we operate a socially, ethically, environmentally, financially responsible and sustainable business.

Clearly, effective communications and marketing has a crucial role in achieving all these outcomes.

As well as focussing on communications with our household and business customers, we will build positive relationships and partnerships with a wide range of other individuals and organisations:

- Our regulators (Ofwat, the Environment Agency and the Drinking Water Inspectorate)
- Neighbouring water companies
- Our elected representatives (MPs and councillors), local authorities, government bodies
- Water industry associations such as Water UK
- Organisations such as environmental charities, trade associations and other interested parties
- NGOs and campaigning and consumer bodies such as Consumer Council for Water and Waterwise.
- Our employees and supply chain partners.

What these parties say publicly about us or the water industry more generally, has a significant impact on customers' perception of our performance and our overall reputation. Our existing stakeholder forums; the Environment Focus Group and the Customer Challenge Group (Customer Panel) will remain vital touch-points and test-beds as we deliver our business plan and communication strategy – please see chapter 19 of the household retail business plans for more details on the Customer Panel.

Our planned communication strategy is based on evidence - we need to understand where we are now in terms of the elements described above and our audiences' preferences for how we communicate with them. We will use existing and new insight to plan developments and activities over the next five years that enable us to improve our customers' experience and satisfaction in the service we provide.

What customer research tells us

We conducted a wide-ranging programme of customer engagement and research (including business customers) during the development of our business plan in 2012/13. This was to inform and ensure that our business plan focussed on 'outcomes' that customers valued, were delivered at the right time and at a price they were willing to pay. Further details of our approach and research

findings are given in the Engagement supporting appendix.

A key part of our communication strategy is to build our insight into how we are viewed by customers and other key audiences, and also their respective communications preferences. Digital communications including our website traffic and social media channels helps to build a picture of customer behaviour and to measure the success of both our targeted communications activities and the delivery of customer satisfaction.

In summary, the 2012/13 customer research told us that:

- Water supply is taken for granted
- South East Water is relatively invisible to the public
- Those familiar with us generally found us reliable and helpful but considered us to be a conservative and old-fashioned company
- Levels of leakage remain a concern and the public is unwilling to pay more to address it
- Customer priorities are (1) low cost bills, (2) quick action on and reduction in leaks, (3) maintaining good water quality and (4) more information and tips.

Additionally, a July 2013 Waterwise, WWF and Water UK *Water Efficiency and Drought Communications Report* concluded:

- Although water companies did commendable communications and engagement during the 2012 drought, it started from a very low customer knowledge base
- Water companies in partnership with each other and stakeholders need to communicate on water resources issues, water efficiency and services
- Leakage and the perception of leakage is the water industry's Achilles heel which undermines drought and water efficiency communications and 'calls to action'
- Water company communications need to shift from being an 'add on' to undertaking sustained water efficiency communications linked to the water resources planning process.

The *Consumer Council for Water* carried out research in June 2013 which looked at customers' perceptions of leakage and has provided us with useful insight into the public's understanding. Some of the interesting findings of this report, *Research into Customers' Perceptions of Leakage* are:

- When prompted the majority of respondents (69%) stated that leakage should be a priority for water companies and it is distinguished as the top priority. Before prompting, only 22% of respondents stated that leakage was a challenge for water companies.
- Three quarters of respondents commented that all members of their household take steps to conserve water, and half have purchased water saving devices. But customers are sceptical over how their water saving practices can impact against wider leakage issues.
- Prior to seeing the research material, 69% of customers generally feel that companies are not doing enough about leakage and should be doing more. Most uninformed customers believe that better leakage management would lead to bill reductions over time.
- Customers would most value information from their water company on how to report a leak (48%) and guidance on how households can reduce water consumption (44%). But, paradoxically, only 15% of customers study material included with their water bills.

Wider challenges to our reputation and customer satisfaction

Beyond the direct experience of dealing with South East Water as a customer or professional partner, we know from our research that there are a number of wider issues that can affect our reputation, how we are perceived and also how satisfied our customers or stakeholders feel:

- Water companies being monopolies with lack of customer choice

- Water company dividends to shareholders including ‘foreign’ owners
- How the water industry as a whole is perceived
- Taxation status of water companies
- Amount of water that is leaked from the water supply system, etc.

There are, therefore, risks associated with our planned approach to devise our business plan and success measures around customer satisfaction when there are elements of it that we can’t control.

Our communications strategy aims to help manage this risk.

Being open and transparent in how we operate through effective communications will help position us appropriately in terms of these issues – this includes engaging with industry stakeholders such as our regulators, Consumer Council for Water and Water UK, as well as seeking the input of the Customer Challenge Group (customer panel) and Environment Focus Group (of stakeholders) going forward. Engaging on these matters helps to bolster our legitimacy and reputation with customers when challenged on leakage levels or other issues.

Developing our brand will also help communicate the improvements we are striving for and how we are distinct from other water supply or water and sewerage service companies.

We will continue to monitor and evaluate regularly during the plan period to ensure our investment in communications and marketing is effective, adapting our approach as required.

Our Communication Objectives

Our outcomes research, as described in our appendix titled ‘Engagement’, indicates that there are generally high levels of satisfaction with the current service levels from both household and business customers. In particular we are seen favourably when looking at interruptions to supply and discolouration. However there are areas such as leakage and hosepipe bans that we find less satisfaction and these are bringing our overall score down.

Notably when focus groups of relatively uninformed customers were encouraged to learn more about South East Water and what providing high quality water supplies entails, their levels of favourability towards us and appreciation of the issues increased. One exception, which antagonised some participants, was around current levels of leakage and our investment in resolving it.

This feedback will drive our communications, stakeholder engagement and marketing activities over the next five years including a new campaign to raise awareness of leakage management based on informing customers of the facts and empowering them to take action (see below).

Through the successful execution of our communications and marketing strategy, we want future research to show, in addition to meeting our customer outcomes, that:

- Through maintaining and enhancing awareness of our brand, our work and the issues that matter to us that **South East Water is more visible**
- We are considered in **more favourable** terms by customers, regulators and stakeholders – is trusted and enjoys a good reputation
- Customers feel informed and empowered by the materials and messages we provide so that more people in our company area are **aware** of and are advocating or **taking action** on the

things that matter to us such as responding to consultations, water efficiency, metering or leakage

- We have maintained and **enhanced relationships** and strategic partnerships with water industry colleagues, regulators, stakeholders, community leaders and opinion formers
- We are communicating and engaging more effectively with all our audiences – developing capability across **all existing and new channels** to meet demand, delivering consistently **high quality and creative** 'content'.

Section 3. Developments in customer-driven communications over the next five years

Our new communications strategy is comprised of the following key developments:

- Greater investment in **customer and digital communications** such as web technology and social media (YouTube, LinkedIn and Facebook) to provide more choice and flexibility
- Development and management of the South East Water **brand** and **marketing** of our services. This will require a fresh impetus on developing compelling content that really connects with customers and others, that can be used across a range of media, and a commitment to keeping websites and materials up to date
- Enhanced **customer, community and stakeholder engagement** on our operational priorities, future plans, and to profile our work supporting communities and the environment
- Greater investment in our **market research** so we can target our activities to where we will get the greatest 'return'
- More collaborative working to execute **innovative campaigns to inform and empower customers** i.e. water efficiency, drought, leakage or increased uptake of *WaterSure*, etc.
- More extensive **training and development** of our employees and contractors so they are confident in engaging with the customers and communities they serve
- Enhanced **internal communications** to support us to motivate employees and ensure consistently great performance, putting employee engagement at the heart of what we do.

Again, the context to these developments is driven by the 2013 customer research. For example, brand awareness of our vans and bills made customers feel we were 'old fashioned and bland' whereas customers who read our customer literature felt more favourable and considered us 'younger' and more friendly. Therefore, we want all our customer touch-points and branding to be more consistent and make customers perceive us in the most positive light possible.

The research also stressed that the South East Water brand should be based in product quality, performance, reputation, reliability, value for money and customer service – from providing more information about our environmental performance through to how meters are installed.

One key area to focus on is how we engage and communicate the leakage challenge to customers - including the work that takes place to find and fix leaks across all parts of the network; and better explain the help we can give customers who have leaks on their own pipework.

Section 4. How we will reach and listen to our audiences

Informed by our evidence base and future targets, we will apply a wide range of communications and marketing techniques to achieve the improvements we seek. Given below is a range of the ways we will communicate with our audiences in the future. This builds on the step change in communications and engagement we achieved over the last five years, especially lessons learnt during the 2012 drought, PR14 process and the Water Resources Management Plan consultation:

Sector	Audiences	Examples of how we will reach and listen to them
Customers	Household	Media – print, broadcast, online, social media (twitter, Facebook)
	Business	Customer Contact & Services – Bills with campaign messages and information, telephone, online, service improvements
	Consumer Council for Water	Public Relations, direct mail, Campaigns and Competitions
	Customer Panel	Drop-ins/Events/Open days/Community talks Business Customer Forums Customer engagement i.e. Customer Panel (successor to customer challenge group) and other means such as focus groups run by us or Ofwat to inform next round on price review, business plan and Water Resources Management Plan Corporate Communications – well-edited and designed publications, website, vans, signage and branding Market Research including annual tracker survey
Communities	Parish Councils	<i>All of the above plus</i>
	Community leaders	Consultations and community engagement i.e. ahead of pipe laying or metering installation in the community
	Charities/action groups	Schools talks and initiatives
	Schools	Community Chest award scheme for local charities and good causes
	Housing/Residents associations	Water efficiency communications e.g. South East Water trailer at county shows, water butt giveaways
	National Association of local councils	Incident management and communications e.g. bottled water distribution to the vulnerable

Sector	Audiences	Examples of how we will reach and listen to them
Regulators and statutory bodies	Ofwat	<i>Much of the above plus:</i>
	Environment Agency	Contact programme – formal and informal meetings, correspondence and collaborative working to build personal rapport and relationships
	Drinking Water Inspectorate	Statutory/regulatory processes and consultations
	Consumer Council for Water	Briefings/FAQs
	Natural England	Water Industry events/campaigns
	Environment Focus Group	Government events/campaigns
Government	Defra	<i>Much of the above plus:</i>
	DECC	Digital engagement such as online discussion forums (webinars), blogs and LinkedIn
	BIS	
	41 MPs	Targeted contact programme and briefings
	Select /Scrutiny Committees	Correspondence
		'VIP' involvement in Community Chest , employees recognition awards and other initiatives
		All party parliamentary groups and public affairs opportunities
		Evidence to Committees
Local Authorities	Unitary	<i>Much of the above plus:</i>
	County	Consultation and collaborative working on our work and also development planning
	District	
	Borough (Officers/members)	Environment Focus Group
	South East Local Enterprise Partnership	Evidence to scrutiny and other committees
	Fire Brigade	Support to Resilience Fora
	South Downs National Park	
	Local Government Association	

Sector	Audiences	Examples of how we will reach and listen to them
Other Stakeholders	Includes many of the above plus: National Trust English Heritage Energy Savings Trust British Geological Survey Met Office Wildlife Trusts Trade bodies such as Horticulture Trade Association/Turf Growers Association	<i>Much of the above, plus:</i> Trade/stakeholders own media Environment Focus Group Face to face meetings The Source South East Water's e-newsletter Involvement in their initiatives/campaigns e.g. Biosphere Collaborative communications products, services, campaigns – advocacy by others helps us target our audiences successfully.
Water Industry & related sectors	Neighbouring water companies Water UK Waterwise Water Aid charity CIWEM ICE Developers/House Builders Federation NFU Water-related business interests – chambers of commerce, landscape gardening Academia/Research Councils	<i>Much of the above, plus:</i> Water Resources in the South East – water company group and communications Collegiate input to new legislation e.g. Water Bill Share how we've supported charity projects Entering industry awards

Sector	Audiences	Examples of how we will reach and listen to them
Shareholders and The Board		<p data-bbox="719 230 1007 264"><i>Much of the above plus:</i></p> <p data-bbox="719 271 815 304">Surveys</p> <p data-bbox="719 338 975 371">Annual Reports Suite</p> <p data-bbox="719 405 831 439">Meetings</p> <p data-bbox="719 472 783 506">Visits</p>
Employees and supply chain partners		<p data-bbox="719 521 1007 555"><i>Much of the above, plus:</i></p> <p data-bbox="719 589 1326 656">Employee engagement programme on purpose and values</p> <p data-bbox="719 701 1246 734">Employee and contractor recognition awards</p> <p data-bbox="719 768 1374 835">Range of internal communications such as intranet, in-house newsletter, <i>Chatter</i></p> <p data-bbox="719 880 1038 913">Training and Development</p> <p data-bbox="719 947 927 981">Employee survey</p>

Section 5. How we will deliver our business plan through better communications

We are committed to continuing customer and stakeholder engagement and research to build our communications evidence. We want to achieve a step change in the quality and means of communications – showing innovation and applying best practice from other successful organisations.

Talking with and listening to customers and stakeholders helps us become more credible and legitimate. We want to work with our customers, beyond their water bill, on a wider range of future challenges and opportunities.

Our ‘outcomes’ research tested how much customers’ views of a particular our service was influenced by direct experience or from more general perceptions of us or the water industry as a whole (please see Engagement supporting appendix for more details).

A crucial example is how the issue of leakage impacts on our relationship with customers and their view on the service we provide. As touched upon above, we know from our research that customers believe the level of leakage is too high and is a waste of a valuable resource. It is perceived that this is a problem we need to fix. And if leakage continues, it is problematic asking customers to then conserve water when there are shortages. We know that just measuring and reporting on leakage is not enough and hence we are proposing an outcome satisfaction measure as well. The 2013 baseline score for household customers is 3.6 and by 2020 we want this to improve to 4.0 (please see the ‘Outcomes, Performance Commitments and Incentives’ supporting appendix for more details).

We believe that better information and communications on leakage and our investment programme over the next five years as well as supportive development of our brand and corporate communications will help make a substantial contribution to meeting that target as well as providing credibility to the wider work we do. Please refer to the Household Customer Plan (chapter 11 Low leakage) for further details.

We will base our leakage communications campaign around two key needs; to inform and to empower customers and community leaders in this area. Focus groups have demonstrated that customers, if given the facts (e.g. length of mains, number of joints, location of water mains, etc.) will begin to understand the challenge we have with reducing leaks while ensuring we minimise impacts on bills. We will also empower customers, through better materials across a range of channels, to be able deal with leaks on their own properties and to ensure they know how to report a leak to us which will help our continued efforts to reduce leakage levels.

Another area of focus for us over the next few years will be around promoting services such as *WaterSure* and our new social tariff. We will use evidence to assess the potential number of eligible customers and how targeted and creative communications across existing and new channels can heighten awareness and ultimately increase the numbers of people able to access support and these services. To be successful, it is likely that we will need to work in partnership with bodies that represent particular interest groups or communities in executing these campaigns.

As set out in our retail plan for business customers, there is a need for good communications and engagement to:

- Ensure existing and new tariffs (and related terms and conditions) are transparent
- Develop and promote more bespoke account management, billing and payment initiatives that meet the expectations of these customers
- Inform and work with commercial customers and their trade organisations in a timely and

effective manner if supplies are likely to be affected by, for example, drought-related temporary restrictions

- Empower educators, food manufacturers or hospitals, for example, to manage their operational risks as a result of instances of reduced water quality or supplies.

The table below gives other examples of how communications will directly support the achievement of the business plan.

Outcomes Supported	Communications
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Customers consider the appearance, taste and smell of their water is acceptable 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better information in publications and through website • Good relationships with DWI and local authorities • Timely customer, stakeholder and media relations when things go wrong
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Customers consider the level of leakage is acceptable 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compelling information, footage and campaign materials • Work alongside other water companies and stakeholders in developing awareness and understanding • Timely customer and media relations to show our response and investment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Customers consider their direct interaction experience to be positive 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing our brand to be consistent and appealing • Improve customer touch-points to make us easier to do business with and increase satisfaction • Train employees and delivery partners on good communications and customer relations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Customers consider bills to be value for money and affordable 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better information and transparency across all communication channels so price, terms and range of tariffs are clear • Events and open days to meet with customers and stakeholders and bring the 'water story' to life.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Customers consider their water supply is of sufficient pressure • Customers consider the frequency and duration of supply interruptions is acceptable • Customers consider the frequency of water use restrictions is acceptable 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Timely and effective communications with customers and partners when things go wrong • Effective water resource and efficiency messaging and campaign communication, before, during and after droughts.

Through the successful execution of our customer and marketing strategy over the next five years, we want to enhance the value of the broader improvements we will deliver through our business plans. In turn we want our customers, stakeholders and regulators to see South East Water as an affordable, high quality service provider that cares genuinely about the households and businesses we supply as well as engaging effectively on the wider issues affecting society and the environment.