

**Yorkshire Forum for Water Customers
Minutes of Meeting
22 August 2024
Microsoft Teams Meeting**

Attendees:

Chris Griffin	Independent Member
Dave Merrett	Independent Member
Kursh Siddique	Independent Member
James Copeland	National Farmers Union
Steve Grebby	Consumer Council for Water
Tom Keatley	Natural England
Fiona Morris	Environment Agency

Apologies:

Jodie Hall	Citizens Advice
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Guests:

Donna Hildreth	Yorkshire Water
Richard Hepburn	Yorkshire Water
Rachel Barnard	Yorkshire Water

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1. Minutes

a) The minutes from the July meeting were approved.

2. Actions

a) Open and in-progress actions were reviewed.

b) Actions from January:

- i. *The Company to circulate the outcome of the horizon scanning with details of how this will feed into Customer Research and Business Planning.* Update added to the August agenda. Remains **in progress**.

c) Actions from February:

- i. *The Company to share data tables detailing benefits with the Forum [Working with Others PC].* The Company are commissioning a 6 capitals review to demonstrate the value generated across Yorkshire. This report will be a comprehensive external assessment of wider benefits and is due to be complete by March 2025 at which point it will be shared with the Forum. Remains **open**.

d) Actions from April:

- i. *The Company to source additional information on Ofwat's consultation relating to the Innovation Fund and share with the Forum.* This has been raised with Ofwat, but as yet there is no reply. Remains **open**.

e) Actions from May:

- i. *Review detailed findings from the 2023 Water Matters report at a future Forum meeting.* Moved to the agenda for September. **In progress**.
- ii. *The Company to circulate details of the fish passage research on completion.* The report will be brought to the environment subgroup on completion. **Open**.

f) Actions from June

- i. The Company to distribute notes from Ofwat's Your Water, Your Say event to Forum members. **Open**.
- ii. The Company to provide an update on the Total Household Complaints PC classification once resolved. **Open**.
- iii. The Company to share the final version of the draft Vulnerability Strategy document with Forum members. **Completed**.

g) Actions from July

- i. The Company to share further details of the request with members of the Forum's environment subgroup for consideration outside of the meeting [Living With Water change request]. **Complete.**
 - ii. Forum members to review June's minutes and raise comments before 2nd August. **Complete.**
- h) New actions from August
- i. **Action 1:** The Company to respond directly to the Forum member with answers to the questions posed by close of 23rd August [clarification questions for preparation of the Forum's statement].
 - ii. **Action 2:** The Chair to redraft the Forum's statement and circulate to members by 27th August.
 - iii. **Action 3:** Members to provide feedback on the statement to the Chair urgently in order that the statement can be sent to the Company on 27th August.
 - iv. **Action 4:** The Company to share top line willingness to pay research with members on receipt (expected 23rd August).

3. Discussion of the Forum's statement in response to Draft Determination (DD)

- a) Due to commercially sensitive information, these minutes will not be publicly published on the website until January 2025.
- b) Following an extended session of the private members meeting, the Chair updated the Company on progress towards its statement to Ofwat in response to their DD.
- c) The statement will be ready for submission on 28th August.
- d) A Forum member asked whether statutory requirements on storm overflows and coastal bathing waters and related dates could be clarified by the Company.
- e) Other questions will be shared by the Forum member on email to the Company requiring an urgent response.
- f) The Chair sought guidance on content and progress from Forum members and the Company to coordinate the response.
- g) The Company highlighted the importance to customers of Living with Water (LWW) and Net Zero and were grateful that the Forum's response reiterates this.
- h) A Forum member asked whether, given the redirection of storm overflow funding from coastal programmes to inland, alternative mechanisms would be proposed as part of the Company's response or at a later stage.

- i) The Company responded that in its Draft Determination Response (DDR) it will emphasise the importance of the coastal programme to both customers and stakeholders and asking that discussion on funding extends beyond the submission of the DDR.
- j) The Chair asked whether the Company knows what approach other companies are taking in their responses to Ofwat.
- k) The Company replied that, based on what has been shared through Water UK, companies are in similar positions and intend to respond challenging reduced funding and the setting of Performance Commitments (PCs) particularly where this results in the whole sector starting AMP8 in penalty.
- l) The Chair inquired about the level of adjustment between DDR and Final Determination (FD) needed to stop the Company from taking the matter to the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA).
- m) The Company responded that its intention was to provide strong evidence to Ofwat in support of a change in decision on areas of particular importance.
- n) A Forum member asked the Company to clarify several technical points – pre-Covid PCC levels; mains repair benchmarks and efficiency assumptions; storm overflow modelling and regional challenges; Cook’s distance analysis; Industrial Emissions Directive (IED) cost and fairness challenges.

Action 1: The Company to respond directly to the Forum member with answers to the questions posed by close of 23rd August.

4. Update on Environment subgroup

- a) Urgent items only were discussed at the subgroup due to a low number of attendees.
- b) The Living with Water (LWW) programme was thoroughly covered.
- c) The subgroup challenged the Company on the issue of work financed as part of AMP7 being reintroduced in AMP8 planning. The challenge was resolved and explanations of delivery challenges and related spending were given to the subgroup.
- d) The subgroup debated the 40% efficiency challenge on WINEP required by Ofwat and the potential oversimplification of the modelling used given the complexity of different cases in plan.
- e) Inland bathing waters were discussed including the proposal of Knaresborough bathing water involving Harrogate North wastewater treatment works where the discharge point is close to the bathing area meaning significant impacts to the wastewater plant will be required.

- f) The Company provided an update on the Environment Strategy which has been accelerated and is now due to be launched in January 2025.
- g) As a result of the new date, opportunities for stakeholder consultation are reduced and although statutory stakeholders will be consulted there may not be an opportunity for wider consultation. The subgroup expressed concern about this.
- h) The subgroup identified that delivery of key aspects of the environment strategy is in partnership with other organisations and raised concerns that some consultation is undertaken with potential delivery partners.
- i) A fuller briefing is expected in September, which would have to be made to the main Forum since there is no environmental subgroup meeting during that month.
- j) A Forum member highlighted that for Direct Procurement projects, it is crucial for the Company to retain the knowledge, expertise, and experience gained during these projects within the business rather than losing them to the partner. This will ensure the Company maintains the capability to handle similar projects in the future.
- k) The member also emphasised the importance of building and maintaining relationships with strategic stakeholders.
- l) A member raised that without consultation it may be overlooked that there are other environmental business opportunities and landowners may find conflicting programmes more appealing.

5. AOB

- a) A Forum member asked whether the Company has seen a ramping up of media covering as DDR submission approaches.
- b) The Company agreed that media coverage is ramping up and covering more than storm overflows, with PFAS and forever chemicals being debated.
- c) A Forum member added that chemical pollution in rivers is starting to be discussed in the media as being more problematic than sewerage, and asked what the Company is doing to address this media coverage.
- d) The member opined that where criticisms are raised in public, e.g. Twitter, they should receive a response in public and not via private message. The Company agreed that the industry can improve handling of unwarranted criticism.
- e) The Chair recognised the efforts of Dave Merrett in the work undertaken to prepare the Forum's statement.

Action 2: The Chair to redraft the Forum's statement and circulate to members by 27th August.

Action 3: Members to provide feedback to the Chair urgently in order that the statement can be sent to the Company on 27th August.

Action 4: The Company to share top line willingness to pay research with members on receipt (expected 23rd August).

Actions tracker –

August 2024

Ref.	Action	Status
1	The Company to respond directly to the Forum member with answers to the questions posed by close of 23rd August [clarification questions for preparation of the Forum’s statement].	Open
2	The Chair to redraft the Forum’s statement and circulate to members by 27th August.	Open
3	Members to provide feedback on the statement to the Chair urgently in order that the statement can be sent to the Company on 27th August.	Open
4	The Company to share top line willingness to pay research with members on receipt (expected 23rd August).	Open

July 2024

Ref.	Action	Status
3	The Company to share further details of the request with members of the Forum’s environment subgroup for consideration outside of the meeting.	Complete
5	Forum members to review June’s minutes and raise comments before 2nd August.	Complete

June 2024

Ref.	Action	Status
2	The Company to distribute notes from Ofwat’s Your Water, Your Say event to Forum members.	Open
3	The Company to provide an update on the Total Household Complaints PC classification once resolved.	Open
4	The Company to share the final version of the draft Vulnerability Strategy document with Forum members.	Complete

May 2024

Ref.	Action	Status
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1	Review detailed findings from the 2023 Water Matters report at a future Forum meeting.	In progress
4	The Company to circulate details of the fish passage research on completion.	Open

April 2024

Ref.	Action	Status
2	The Company to source additional information on Ofwat's consultation relating to the Innovation Fund and share with the Forum.	Open

March 2024

Ref.	Action	Status
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February 2024

Ref.	Action	Status
5	The Company to share data tables detailing benefits with The Forum [Working with Others PC]	Open

January 2024

Ref.	Action	Status
4	The Company to circulate the outcome of the Horizon Scanning with details of how this is going to feed into Customer Research and Business Planning.	In progress