

Transforming how we work
with communities

Wessex Water's
**Community
Connectors**

February 2023



Wessex Water
YTL GROUP

FOR YOU. FOR LIFE.

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Wessex Water
YTL GROUP



Foreword

We support all aspects of life in our region. Safe and reliable water and wastewater services are essential for our day-to-day lives, our wellbeing and our natural world. But we recognise that we have a critical role to play that goes far beyond the responsibility of providing an essential public service.

We have an opportunity to help tackle climate and nature emergencies, and respond to the need for carbon neutrality, rising public expectations of the environment, higher living costs and long-term resilience.

These opportunities form the core of our Strategic Direction Statement, reflecting our long-term commitment to build a sustainable future with the support of our customers, communities, employees and stakeholders.

Delivery of this vision, will need to be a shared endeavour with everyone playing their part.

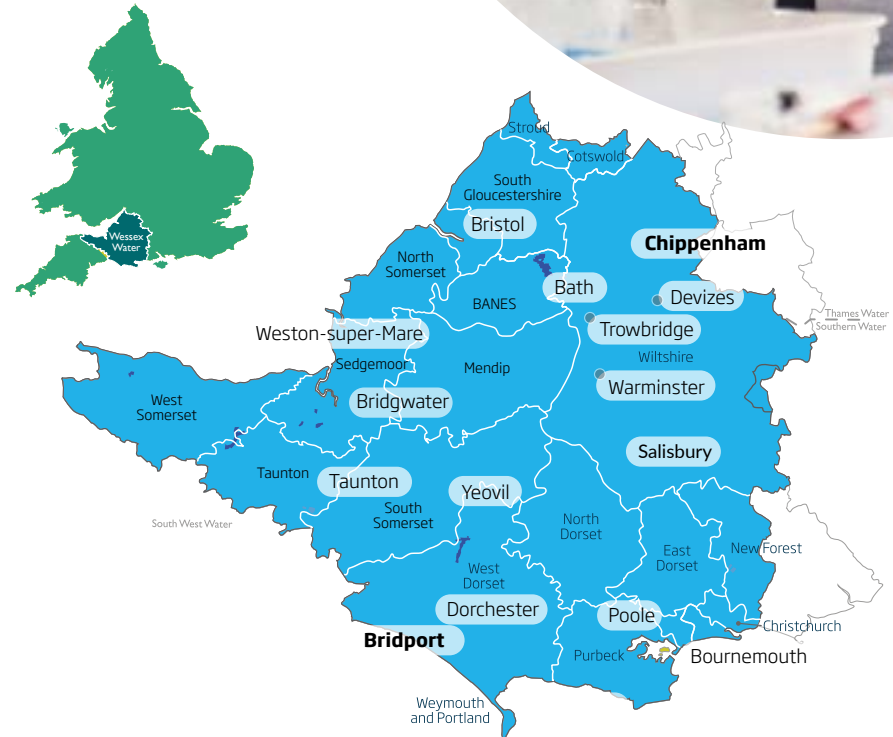
So, we are testing a new approach through our **Community Connectors** programme, to transform the way we work in partnership with our local communities to achieve shared environmental and social goals together. That might be working together to reduce the demand for water, eradicate water poverty or improve biodiversity.

Our two-year pilot projects in the communities of Chippenham and Bridport will test this new approach and allow us to build a framework to use with all our communities in the future.

This report provides an update on our work so far.

We look forward to working with the communities of Chippenham and Bridport this year to make a real difference to local lives and the environment.

Colin Skellett
Chief Executive



About the Community Connectors Project

For the first time we are aiming to work with whole communities to identify and tackle a number of shared environmental and social goals together. We've chosen Chippenham and Bridport as our first communities, one being urban and one coastal. Ultimately, we hope to be able to champion these communities as 'Watermark' communities, who have transformed their approach to saving water and valuing their local green and blue environment.

In both pilot areas we have established a local advisory group to help us work with the wider community. Through a series of community engagement activities, we have agreed our shared priorities for change and are co-designing projects to tackle them. This year, through a combination of Wessex Water and community led projects, funded through the Wessex Water Foundation, we will deliver improvements to the environment and the lives of local people and make progress towards achieving our shared goals.

If this new way of working is successful, we will expand the programme to add more communities across our region to deliver our outcomes for 2025-30 and beyond.



Phase 1

Gathering insight and initial engagement (2022)

Phase 2

Community engagement and agreeing common goals (2023)

Phase 3

Co-designing projects and delivery

Phase 4

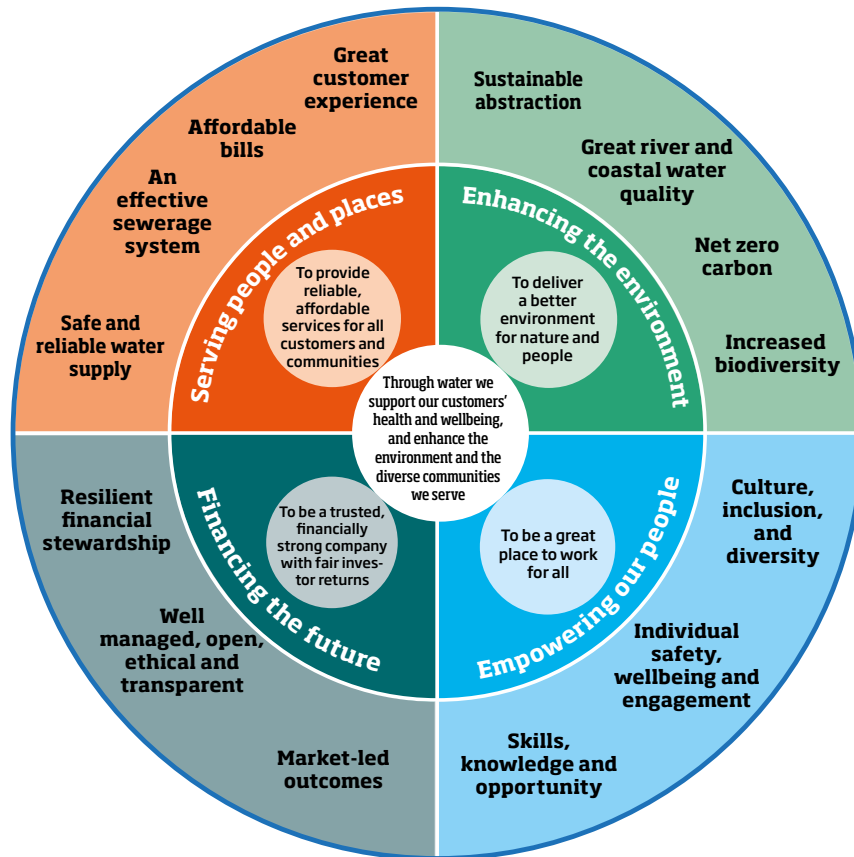
Evaluation (2024)

How this project links to our 25-year strategic direction

Our latest strategic direction statement has been developed in partnership with more than 1,600 customers, businesses, colleagues and stakeholders.

It is our long-term plan, setting out our vision and ambitions through to 2050. At its heart are eight outcomes that customers and stakeholders have told us are their priorities including tackling climate change, affordability, environmental improvement, and service excellence. Each outcome has an ambitious associated aim.

Delivery of our outcomes will need to be a shared endeavour with everyone invited to play their part.



Safe and reliable water

Our customers will always receive drinking water that is wholesome, safe and 100% compliant with the standards, and we will keep our customers supplied with water whenever they need it. In the event of emergency or planned interruptions, we'll ensure any time without water is set to a maximum of three hours.



An effective sewerage system

We will halve the impact of internal and external sewage flooding incidents, working on both the frequency of event and the impact they have. We know how devastating it is to experience sewage flooding.



Affordable bills

We want no customer to spend more than 5% of their disposable income on our services. We want to end water poverty and our customers to be able to afford their bills.



Great customer experience

We want to go beyond being an industry leader and aim to be ranked among the top 10 customer service providers in the UK.



Sustainable abstraction

We will comply 100% with abstraction licences and are acutely aware of the need for sustainable abstraction, as we continue to provide for the needs of our communities.



Great river and coastal water quality

We will restore the health of our river and coastal waters, ensuring there are zero pollutions and reducing the levels of harmful nutrients in the water.



Net zero carbon

We will drive down carbon emissions to net zero from our own operations by 2030 and from the embodied carbon associated with the materials, productions and services we use by 2040 at the latest.



Biodiversity improvement

We will commit to doubling the biodiversity improvements we make as we continue to adapt our Biodiversity Action Plan.

For more information visit our website: [Our strategic direction](#)

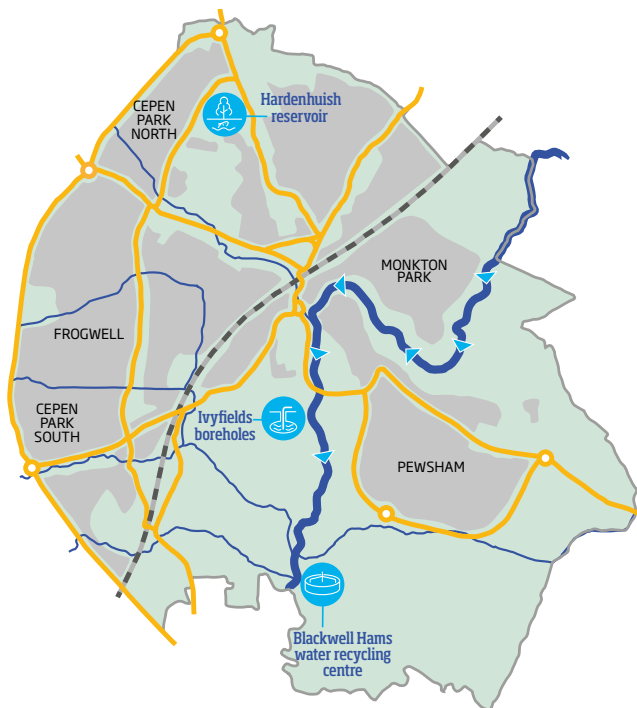
Our pilot areas

Chippenham

Chippenham is a growing market town in the northwest of Wiltshire, with a population of around 36,000 located on the upper reaches of the Bristol Avon River which meanders through the centre of the town. The town has a history of good transport connections, and it is a major commuter town, serving Bristol, Bath, Swindon and beyond, making it economically affluent, although there remain pockets of deprivation.

The town is supplied by a series of boreholes into the groundwater aquifer located on the western bank of the river Avon, just south of the town centre. Following treatment, it is pumped north to the highest point in the town and stored in the covered Hardenhuish reservoir. From here, it enters a network of distribution pipes to meet household and non-household demand across Chippenham. Drinking water supplies are supplemented by the Allington reservoir, northwest of the town.

Wastewater is collected from homes and businesses and conveyed via a partially combined sewer network (foul sewage and rainwater) to the Blackwell Hams water recycling centre at the southern edge of the town. Within the sewer network, there are also a dozen storm overflows that prevent properties from flooding during heavy rainfall by releasing dilute wastewater into the main river or Hardenhuish brook.



Bridport

Bridport is an historic town close to the coast in rural West Dorset and popular holiday destination. It is a preferred place for people to retire to with a mix of cultural events, exhibitions and entertainment. West Bay is a focus for tourism which is extremely important for the economy, employment opportunities and vitality of the area.

With a population of around 14,700 at least 34% are over 65 years old. In the town, Wessex Water provides drinking water via a series of boreholes into the groundwater aquifer to Dottery Reservoir in the north and Bothenhampton Reservoir in the south, providing around 3.1m litres of water a day.

Wastewater is collected from homes and businesses and conveyed via a partially combined sewer network (foul sewage and rainwater) to the West Bay water recycling centre. Within the sewer network, there are also a few storm overflows that prevent properties from flooding during heavy rainfall by releasing dilute wastewater into the main river.



Phase one: Gathering insight

Initial engagement with the community and stakeholders

a) Setting up local advisory groups

In May 2022 we initiated the projects in local communities by bringing together local advisory groups to consult on the formation of the project and support engagement throughout the two years. These early meetings led to the development of the community workshops that took place towards the end of 2022 and start of 2023.

The Chippenham advisory group includes representatives from Wiltshire Council Local Area Board, Chippenham Town Council, Wiltshire Citizens Advice, Bristol Avon River Catchment Partnership, Chippenham Community Hub and Wiltshire Community Foundation.

The Bridport advisory group includes representatives from Dorset Council, Bridport Town Council, Dorset AONB, Litter Free Coast and Sea Dorset, Dorset Wildlife Trust, Dorset Community Action, Dorset and Wiltshire Fire and Rescue, Bridport Citizen's Advice Bureau and Dorset Community Foundation.



b) Community survey and face-to-face questionnaire

In September 2022, we carried out some initial baseline research to gain insight into the Chippenham and Bridport community, explore local concerns and identify the priorities for the project.

We interviewed 250 local residents in the Chippenham and Bridport town centres and local advisory group members distributed a link to the questionnaire through their own networks.

Local people were asked to rate (from 0-10) the importance of a series of nine contemporary environmental and social issues and give information about their day-to-day interests.



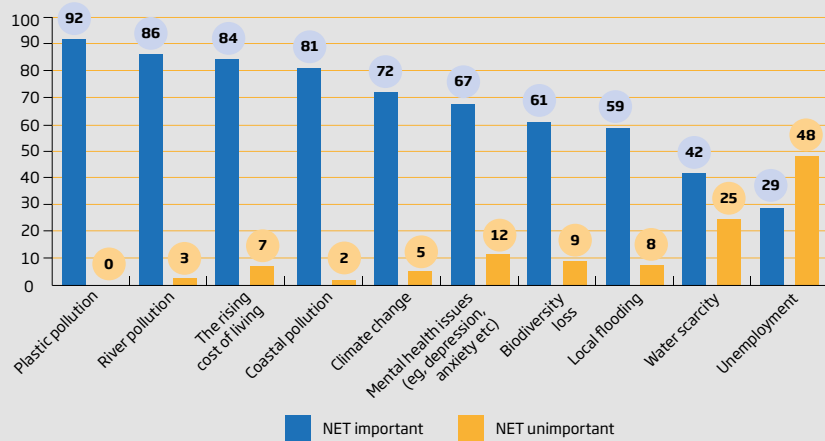
Bridport

Customer comments

- Water quality in the river Brit and sea.
- Consumption of single use plastics, particularly as a thriving tourist town.
- Impact of other towns like Beaminster where pollution is travelling downstream.

The graph below shows a summary of the concerns of local residents.

Environmental and social issues



c) In depth interviews

We also interviewed our local partner representatives to gather their views and measure the initial understanding of the project.

"My impression is that obviously it's environmentally focused in that Wessex Water wants to help the community understand what the key environmental problems are and they want to engender new Community initiatives that will help to address those key environmental issues." **Bridport**

"If I was being really cynical. I would say well if I'm a corporate organization I want to improve my relationships in a given community hopefully with the benefit that you will pay their bills on time and we can work with communities to address situations such as water shortages and summer months." **Bridport**

"I feel it's important to be involved, they want to be engaging as much as possible with the community to bring about change. We feel that Wessex is a great partner because they have a vested interest in sorting out water related issues as it causes so many problems for them as a business." **Bridport**

"There's a genuine desire to make an impact in the community. So we're more than happy to partner with them." **Bridport**

"I'm probably somewhat cynical. This is obviously connected to the reputation that not just Wessex Water has but all the water companies have..." **Chippenham**

"Not necessarily letting the powerful lobbyists have the loudest voice but making sure they're (low income) heard, and their interests are picked up." **Chippenham**

"It needs to be more strategic than just 'shoving messages down people's throats' which doesn't change behaviour. Can they be incentivised with money saving alongside positive messaging?" **Chippenham**

"There are a lot of mutual aims and objectives where we are already quite involved in the community, we want to make sure that everyone's working collaboratively together rather than stepping on each other's toes. So yeah, lots of potential there." **Chippenham**

The perception was that raising awareness is easy but changing behaviour is much more difficult, particularly when people are so focused on the cost-of-living crisis.

Interviewees recommended that Community Connectors needs to be creative in its approach to behaviour change, to consider if people need an incentive, or to get something out of it to engage eg, save water, save money on your bills.

There was recognition that the world can change rapidly, and there may be a need to switch focus from droughts or storms and flooding across the seasons.

Additionally, it was recommended that the project must represent residents from deprived and low-income areas.

Phase two: Engaging with the wider community

From September 2022 we started to engage with a wider range of local community groups and attended local events to gather views and opinions through more informal routes.

For example, at an 'Earth Care Choices' event in Chippenham, visitors were asked to air their dirty laundry, by adding their views on the local environment to clothing-shaped paper and pegging onto the washing line. This gave a good indication of current issues and concerns:

- Pollution of rivers and amount of litter dumped/ thrown into rivers.
- Applying the same standards for streams and rivers and beaches so that people can swim and paddle
- Checking and monitoring water quality and sewage overflows.
- Raising awareness of how to save water.
- Drinking water fountains.

Community Workshops

- In November 2022 and January 2023 Wessex Water hosted community workshops for local stakeholders including statutory bodies, charities, and voluntary groups. These workshops were facilitated and developed in partnership with Dr Tessa Lynn, community development and consultation researcher (www.kingfishercommons.co.uk).

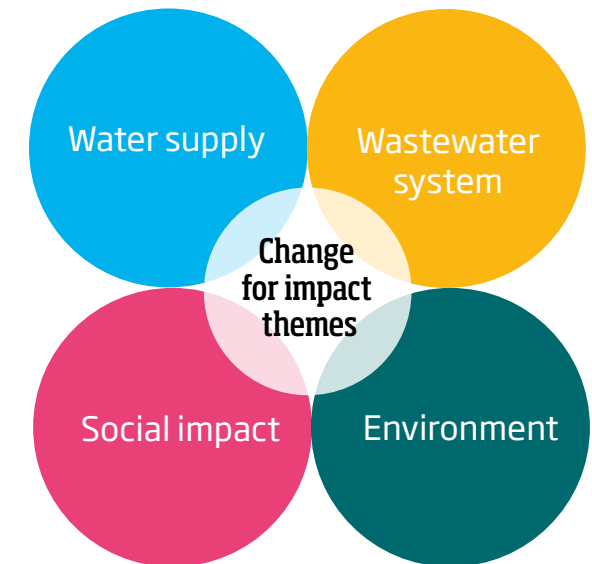


Stakeholder mapping

- Attendees were asked to list who is directly or indirectly impacted by Wessex Water's operations and the Community Connectors project, and who might be involved in the outcomes, decision making or changes but have no influence, money or an initial desire to be involved.

Making an impact

- Building on what we'd already learned in Phase 1 initial research and engagement, attendees took part in a change for impact (also known as Theory of Change) process, to identify what they want to change in the local community, the impact they want to see and how we can achieve it together. The process defined long-term goals or outcomes and the steps needed to achieve them.
- Four themes were considered by the attendees: the environment, water supply, wastewater and social impact and the outcomes from the workshops are shared at the end of this report (appendix).



Phase three: Co-creating projects to deliver impact

Through our engagement with the local community, we have now identified our shared goals, outlined in the following pages. We have taken the ideas from the workshops and ideas from our own teams to identify projects that we can deliver over the next year to help achieve them, along with what Wessex Water and the community can each do and how we can measure success..

In some cases, we are not able to do exactly what the community would like but we will always explain why. For example, we aren't statutory consultees in the planning process and cannot refuse connections to the public water supply and sewer network for new development.

Through 2023 we will continue to work with the communities in Chippenham and Bridport to deliver these projects.

For community led projects, we will be providing funding of £50,000 for local groups in each area in partnership with the Wiltshire and Dorset Community Foundations. The funding will be awarded using a local representative decision-making panel.

Other projects will be delivered directly by Wessex Water.

The Community Connector managers for each area will continue to support network development and implementation of local Wessex Water projects through 2023 and will be available as a first point of contact for any local ideas or issues.



Environment



Sustainable abstraction



Great river and coastal water quality



Net zero carbon



Biodiversity improvement

	Goal	Wessex Water action	Community-led action	Measurable Output
Chippenham	To improve river water quality and surrounding environment.	Wessex Water Guardians' support for river monitoring.	Citizen science activities.	Number of citizen scientists.
		Provision of water quality kits and support for recording data for citizen scientists.		Regular monitoring of the river, number of times a year.
		Transparent and shared data.		
		Advice and support for wetland and pond creation.	Creation of ponds or wetlands.	Number and area of wetland or ponds created.
		Advice and support on 'right tree, right place' and longer-term management.	Tree planting.	Number of trees planted.
		Attendance at local events to provide in-person information and advice.	River and environmental engagement events.	Number of people engaged in local environmental events.



Environment



Sustainable abstraction



Great river and coastal water quality



Net zero carbon



Biodiversity improvement

	Goal	Wessex Water action	Community-led action	Measurable Output
Bridport	The people of Bridport know why nature matters and have an improved relationship with the local environment that is clean, healthy and full of life.	Local schools' engagement with Wessex Water education advisors.	Investment in forest schools, hides and info hubs.	Number of students and families reached.
		Signposting to existing interactive environment maps and apps.	Tourist information on the local environment to encourage care and protection.	Number of tourists reached.
		Wessex Water Guardians' support for river monitoring.	Citizen science activities.	Number of citizen scientists.
		Provision of water quality kits and support for recording data for citizen scientists.		Regular monitoring of the river, number of times a year.
		Transparent and shared data.		
		Advice and support on 'right tree, right place' and longer-term management.	Plant orchard trees.	Number of trees planted.
			Improved protection of spaces for wildlife.	Signage and interpretation installed.
		Water Force employee volunteer days for local groups.	Plastic-use reduction and litter picks.	Weight of litter collected.
				Reduction of trolleys and plastic pollution in the river.
	Advice and guidance on permissions required and suitable interventions for environmental work.	Riverbank planting and restoration.	Area of riverbank planted or restored.	

Wastewater



An effective sewerage system



Great customer experience



Great river and coastal water quality



Net zero carbon

	Goal	Wessex Water action	Community-led action	Measurable Output
Chippenham	To reduce sewage spills	To provide installation of pilot community soakaways and water butts.		Number of water butts and soakaways installed.
		Provision of Chippenham focused school education packs to promote water saving and wastewater system awareness.	School and pupil engagement.	Number of children and families reached.
		Providing devices to use sewers wisely eg, gunk pots as part of 'home check' visits.	Local charity, business and council engagement to promote water saving and wastewater system awareness.	Number of local residents reached.
		Promotional campaign to reduce flushing of wet wipes and sanitary products into system.	Local water champions to promote water saving and wastewater system awareness.	Number of water champions and people reached.
				Reduction in number of blockages and weight of blockages.
		Contact local contractors and builders doing retrofits about issues and options for connections and water saving.	Campaign to reduce volume of rainwater entering the wastewater system.	Reduction in volume of rainwater entering the system.
				Reduction in volume of greywater entering the system.
		Clear identification of local Wessex Water assets with link to information about the asset.		Number of local assets with QR signs and information.
		Wessex Water Guardians' support for river monitoring.	Citizen science activities.	Number of citizen scientists.
		Provision of water quality kits and support for recording data for citizen scientists.		
Transparent and shared data.				
			Regular monitoring of the river, number of times a year.	

Wastewater



An effective sewerage system



Great customer experience



Great river and coastal water quality



Net zero carbon

	Goal	Wessex Water action	Community-led action	Measurable Output
Bridport	Everyone understands the impact of their actions regarding local water quality	Providing devices to use sewers wisely e.g., gunk pots as part of 'home check' visits.	Local charity, business and council engagement to promote water saving and wastewater system awareness.	Number of local residents reached.
				Reduction in number of blockages and weight of blockages.
		Contact local contractors and builders doing retrofits about issues and options for connections and water saving.	Soakaways and water butts installed to increase rainwater separation at homes.	Reduction in volume of rainwater entering the system.
				Number of water butts and soakaways installed.
		Provision of Bridport focused school education packs to promote water saving and wastewater system awareness.	Yellow fish scheme across Bridport, with local school engagement.	Number of children and families reached.
		Promotional campaign to reduce flushing of wet wipes and sanitary products into system.	Local community champions at the supermarkets to help raise awareness of what products affect drain blockages.	Number of water champions and people reached.
		Information packs provided to new parents via the midwife pack to include offer free pack of wipes with a leaflet raising awareness.	Local network of parents that use re-usable nappies to help raise awareness.	Number of new parents reached.
		Share publicly visible information about local and specific impact of wastewater system at a council location or somewhere tangible on the street, as well as website.		Number of local assets with QR signs and information.
		Wessex Water Guardians' support for river monitoring.	Citizen science activities.	Number of citizen scientists.
		Provision of water quality kits and support for recording data for citizen scientists.		
Transparent and shared data.				
			Regular monitoring of the river, number of times a year.	

Water supply



Safe and reliable water



Great customer experience



Sustainable abstraction



Net zero carbon

	Goal	Wessex Water action	Community-led action	Measurable Output
Chippenham	To reduce the use of tap water.	'Homecheck' service to reach higher consumption customers to help reduce leaks and bills.		Reduction in water use per person, per household and at community level.
		'Schoolcheck' service to help local schools reduce water use and bills.	School and pupil engagement.	Number of schools reached.
				Volume of water saved by schools.
		Provision of Chippenham focused school education packs to promote water saving and wastewater system awareness.		Number of children and families reached.
		Promotional campaign to reduce water use per person.	Local charity, business and community support for campaign to reduce water use per person and promote water saving.	
		Providing water saving devices for households e.g, shower heads or water butts, and advice on appliance water usage.		Number of local residents reached.
			Campaign to support water refill provided by local businesses.	Number of 500ml bottle refills provided.
		Promote water metering for customers to help reduce bills.		Number of meters installed.
Contact local contractors and builders about issues and options for water saving.		Increase in water saving measures.		



	Goal	Wessex Water action	Community-led action	Measurable Output
Bridport	In the future, Bridport will know where their water comes from and will waste less than they do today because they value it more.	Water wastage information provided on how much water local residents use a day .		Reduction in water use per person, per household and at community level.
		'Schoolcheck' service to help local schools reduce water use and bills.	School and pupil engagement.	Number of schools reached.
				Volume of water saved in schools.
		Provision of Bridport focused school education packs to promote water saving and wastewater system awareness.		Number of children and families reached.
		'Homecheck' service to reach higher consumption customers to help reduce leaks and bills.	Support community scale rainwater harvesting projects.	
		Promote water metering for customers to help reduce bills.		Number of meters installed.
		Contact local contractors and builders about issues and options for water saving.		Increase in water saving measures.
		Promotional campaign to reduce water use per person.	Local charity, business and community support for campaign to reduce water use per person and promote water saving.	
		Providing water saving devices for households eg, shower heads or water butts, and advice on appliance water usage.		Number of devices distributed.

Social impact



Affordable bills



Great customer experience

	Goal	Wessex Water action	Community-led action	Measurable Output
Chippenham	To help customers to access support and advice.	Drop-in advice sessions for customers available at community hub and other public access locations.	Local networks to share information and advice on support for cost-of-living.	Increase in number of customers registered for priority services to expected community level.
		'Train the trainer' sessions for local groups to share info and advice on support for bills.	Support for households on low incomes to save money or reduce household costs.	Increase in number of customers receiving support for bills to expected community level.
		To have a partner at local organisations to help them understand the support that is available and sign up or provide devices to save water, money or energy.	To support communities in reducing isolation by providing cheap or free activities and events to support wellbeing.	Number of activities or sessions and people supported.
		Clear and concise billing formatting that is user friendly, to understand what their usage means and how it compares with average use	Share relatable case studies of local people who have been helped by Wessex Water.	Number of case studies.
		To form partnerships with energy companies to share information.		Number of local partners and local referrals.
		Assist with signposting for other advice and support, to form a directory - a one-stop community based referral system.		Reach and local impact of messaging.
		Increase an awareness of support schemes direct with customers, through visuals, social media and web.		



	Goal	Wessex Water action	Community-led action	Measurable Output
Bridport	To collaborate with partners in supporting people through financial challenges so that the people of Bridport thrive.	To form partnerships with energy companies to share information.	Training local champions, specifically young people.	Number of local champions.
			To teach budgeting in schools.	Number of budgeting sessions and young people reached.
		Assist with signposting for other advice and support, to form a directory - a one-stop community-based referral system.	A named point of contact who is trained to ask questions that lead to identifying support needs.	Number of local partners and local referrals.
		Less restriction on schemes that support people.	Community and home growing projects, to encourage growing your own plants and food to reduce mental health stress and impact on the environment.	Number of community and home growing projects and people supported.
		Clear and concise billing formatting that is user friendly, to understand what their usage means and how it compares with average use.	Share relatable case studies of local people who have been helped by Wessex Water.	Number of case studies.
		To have a partner at local organisations to help them understand the support that is available and sign up or provide devices to save water, money or energy.	To support communities in reducing isolation by providing cheap or free activities and events to support wellbeing.	Number of activities or sessions and people supported.
		Increase an awareness of support schemes direct with customers, through visuals, social media and web.	To work with local influencers who can share information about help available.	Reach and local impact of messaging.

Stage four: Evaluation and legacy

We will repeat our initial community surveys one year on in Autumn 2023 and again in April 2024 to help evaluate the success of the project for both Wessex Water and the local communities.

We will also share and review performance data on the shared goals and publish a final report.

In 2024 we aim to celebrate the efforts of the local communities in Chippenham and Bridport by awarding the first civic **Watermark Awards**, recognising their commitment to excellence in water saving and improving environmental and social impact.

If anyone has any comments on the report, or wants to know any more about our work then please do get in touch with me.

Kirsty Scarlett

Head of Community Engagement



Appendix: Feedback from the community workshops

Chippenham – Environment workshop session

Challenge question: *“How can we protect and enhance the local river, coastal and green environment in Bridport for current and future generations?”*

Agreed aim: to improve river quality, maintain water levels and protect the surrounding environment.

Long-term outcomes

- Establishment of a local multi-agency river project and creation of a part-time river warden.
- Tree planting to increase biodiversity and outdoor community engagement activities, including along the river corridor.
- Wetland and pond creation (perhaps on Town Council owned or managed land).
- “Slow the flow” of the river to provide buffers from intensive agriculture.
- Improve the river downstream of the Town Bridge or weir for leisure and walking with better signposting and more visible access points.
- Influence house building and development policies so that brownfield sites are favoured over green fields and empty properties are brought back into use, including redesignation of commercial space into residential use (for example, flats above retail).
- Ensure developments meet local housing needs, do not encroach upon the river corridor or increase flood risk

Medium-term

- Regular monitoring of the river to include indicators such as oxygen levels, invasive species, microplastics and bathing quality.
- Action on invasive species and pond creation in partnership with Wiltshire Wildlife Trust.
- Creation of safe spaces to normalise conversations about the environment.
- Review bill information and other communications to improve understanding of the importance of identifying and reporting potential pollution incidents.
- Increase the number and coverage of Wessex Water Guardians.
- SUDs Birdsmarsh, just clay and rubbish for more than two years. Who changes this to a wildlife haven?

Short-term

- Run a campaign about the local environment and link it to the rising cost of living.
- Include messaging on where water comes from and link water use (links to water supply theme) to its impact on the local environment, including the impact of hot water use in the home on carbon and bills.
- Highlight key indicators of river quality and partner with the Garden & Allotment Society to showcase responsible gardening practices.
- Collaborate on the Yellow Fish campaign to raise awareness of the drainage system, and create fun visuals for the public, such as a mock-up toilet to show what gets put down them that shouldn't. (Links to wastewater theme).
- Idea for a quick win, netting two ends of Chippenham.

Chippenham – Wastewater workshop session

Challenge question: *“How can we better explain the wastewater cycle?”*

Agreed aim: to reduce sewage discharges through rainfall separation and blockage prevention measures.

Long-term

- Reduce the volume of storm water entering the combined sewer system through rainfall separation by diverting roof run-off to water butts, rain gardens and soakaways.
- Reduce the volume of greywater* entering the sewer system (this links directly to the water supply theme through water efficiency measures).
- The need to reduce blockages and reduce the impact of wet wipes being flushed and fats being poured down the drain.
- To support the development of wetland and sustainable urban drainage ponds.
- To reducing chemical contaminants – eg, in cleaning and laundry products in the wastewater stream (linking to water supply theme) and pesticides (linked to the environment theme).

Medium-term

- The creation of soakaways on private land and residential gardens to help to mitigate for storm runoff from impermeable surfaces such as roofs and driveways
- The potential for a trained group of Water Champions (to complement the Water Guardians programme) to advise local residents on practical household and community-level actions that could help to reduce the volume and frequency of sewer overflow spills to the river was suggested.
- Review bill information and other communications to improve understanding of the impact of sewer misuse and blockages and the surface water rebate for rainwater separation.
- Increase the number and coverage of Wessex Water Guardians (link to environment theme).
- For Wessex Water to invest in improvements on new builds, grey water recycling, separating sewage and surface water etc. if may not be policy but is an ideal investment opportunity.

Short-term

- Immediate campaign raising awareness of the purpose and operation of the wastewater system.
- For community to understand which developments in the town are separately sewered but still ultimately connected to the combined sewer system
- To identify potential locations where surface water sewers could instead be diverted directly to the river (perhaps via a wetland or drainage pond) instead of contributing to sewer capacity restrictions near the town centre overflows.
- The need to influence builders and developers via improved town planning policy.

Chippenham – Water supply workshop session

Challenge question: *“How can we help people in Chippenham to value tap water as a limited resource? Know where their water comes from? Save water?”*

Agreed aim: to reduce use of tap water.

Long-term

- While a simple aim, the route to achieving it is not straightforward.
- It was agreed that a smart target of reducing water consumption by a set volume over the two-year duration of the Community Connectors project was an achievable outcome, supported with an extensive water saving campaign including water sensitive gardening advice and installing water butts (link to the wastewater theme).

Medium-term

- To encourage re-use and eliminate single-use plastics, the delegates suggested that national water Refill scheme (a campaign rolled out by the City to Sea charity) in which members of the public can get reusable water bottles refilled for free in participating establishments should be refreshed and relaunched.
- Some delegates were concerned about the level of water consumption of the children’s splash pad at John Coles Park and questioned whether it is a responsible use of water during a drought. Conversely, it may be more preferable for safe cooling during heat waves, rather than the alternative of swimming in the river.
- Review bill information and other communications to improve understanding of the importance of identifying, reporting and fixing leaks, and meter optant guarantee (see also environment theme).

Short-term

- To raise awareness of where tap water comes from and how water use affects the environment (links to environment and wastewater themes) through provision of easily understood information.
- To provide a school curriculum pack developed by the Wessex Water Education team and delivered to all schools in Chippenham.
- Tying in with the local Water Champions initiative (initiated under the wastewater theme), the training pack should include information on water supply and practical advice on how to save water. This could be linked to reducing *greywater that emerged under the wastewater theme.
- Advice on understanding basic hygiene standards and the potential to reduce cleaning of bodies, clothes, cars and houses.
- To promote shorter and less frequent showers and reduced laundry, and the use of dishwashers, washing up bowls and sink plugs. This also links to the social impact theme through saving money on water and energy bills, and the environment theme through lower carbon emissions across the entire water cycle.
- Support projects that promote the value of water as a precious resource (link to environment theme).
- To improve the response to repairing leaks.
- Promoting water meters.

Chippenham – Social impact workshop session

Challenge question: *“What is the best way to support the people of Chippenham who need help during the cost-of-living crisis?”*

Agreed aim: To help customers to access support and advice.

Long-term

- Families to understand the full extent of what their water bill covers and how they can save water to save money.
- One phone number for all utilities for Priority Services Register and bill advice – the water bill is just one of many – energy, council tax, telephone/broadband, food, etc.

Medium-term

- Develop partnerships with social housing providers, foodbanks, churches, credit unions and local charities.
- Run regular drop-in advice sessions for local people to help them access the full range of support available.
- Explore data sharing protocols.
- Use existing networks, case studies in newsletters and communications channels to raise awareness of the range of support available, including word-of-mouth via trusted agents, case workers and friends.
- Assess level of PSR uptake and target locations of low participation through outreach promotion and engagement, such as via GP surgeries and supermarkets.
- Assess payment methods as a proxy for identifying and proactively targeting households that may benefit from additional support.
- Assess whether high metered water use is an indicator of health need or social deprivation (link to water supply theme).
- Review bill information and other communications to improve understanding of the support available to people who are struggling financially (and link to water saving advice) or who have additional support needs.
- Change language from ‘hard to reach’ customers to ‘seldom heard’ customers.

Short-term

- Wessex Water Community Connectors to collaborate with relevant stakeholders and agencies already engaging with struggling families to identify gaps in understanding and available support to better scope out what needs to happen.
- Demonstrate what support is available at first point of contact, such as lower bills, payment plans, meter opt-in and Priority Services through a ‘train the trainer’ session on the resources available on the Wessex Water Partner Hub website, to help grassroots community groups to signpost end users towards Wessex Water bill support and Priority Services Register benefits.
- Citizens Advice to promoting trials on saving money.
- Explain how £3 million a month invested in improvements.

In November 2022 the Chippenham community workshop for local stakeholders included the following statutory bodies, charities, and voluntary groups.



PUTTING LITTER IN ITS PLACE
FULL STOP



Bridport – Environment workshop session

Challenge question: *“How can we protect and enhance the local river, coastal and green environment in Bridport for current and future generations?”*

Agreed aim: The people of Bridport remember why nature matters and have an improved relationship with the local environment that is clean, healthy and full of life.

Long-term outcomes

- Bridport becomes an exemplar ‘Watermark’ town.
- Creation of interactive maps and apps of green trails to encourage greater participation in the local environment.
- Local incentives and enforcements are in place to reduce pollution.
- Influence local planning to trigger land use changes to protect the water environment.
- Engage local schools and tourist information and share tread lightly leaflet.
- Investment in forest schools, hides and info hubs.
- Habitats and species conserved and enhanced, including areas like Askers Meadow.

Medium-term

- Reduction of trolleys and plastic pollution in the river.
- Planting of orchard trees.
- Riverbank planting and restoration days.
- Increase in community engagement around environment.
- Support for environmental networking.
- Working with farmers.
- Improve the state of the Bridport catchment.

Short-term

- Improve ways of learning about the local environment, including the recruitment of citizen scientists.
- Awareness raising of how people can interact with and improve the local environment, including schools and at visitor centres.
- Tree planting.
- Litter picks.
- Regular monitoring of the river.
- Protection spaces for wildlife.
- Support biodiversity work in progress at Asker’s meadow.
- Improve the sharing of local environment knowledge and improve local signage.

Bridport – Wastewater workshop session

Challenge question: *“How can we better explain the wastewater cycle?”*

Agreed aim: Everyone understands the impact of their actions regarding local water quality.

Long-term

- Yellow fish scheme across Bridport, with local school engagement.
- Share publicly visible information about local and specific impact of waste water system at a council location or somewhere tangible on the street, as well as website.

Medium-term

- Installation of soakaways to increase rainwater separation at homes.
- WW to lobby shops to place signs to raise awareness of what is not flushable.
- Public information advertisements to raise awareness of wastewater system with bolder messaging.
- Information packs provided to new mums via the midwife pack, this could offer free pack of wipes with a leaflet raising awareness.

Short-term

- QR codes located across Bridport to find details of outfalls.
- Installation water butts/
- School based education about wastewater and blockages with a call to action to tell your parents.
- Work with local community champions at the supermarkets to help raise awareness of what products affect drain blockages.
- Contact local network of parents that use re-usable nappies – ask to also help raise awareness.

Bridport – Water supply workshop session

Challenge question: *“How can we help people in Bridport to value tap water as a limited resource? Know where their water comes from? Save water?”*

Agreed aim: In the future, Bridport will know where their water comes from and will waste less than they do today because they value it more.

Long-term

- Water wastage information provided on how much water you use a day.
- Bridport energy champions could also support water information.
- Recruit water champions.
- Provide educational material to local schools that is in line with the curriculum – where water comes from, including geology and practical tours of local sites.

Medium-term

- Introduce tariffs to incentivise less use like energy peak use reductions and rebates for those who use less.
- To carry out home check visits, leak checks and create case studies to help increase take up.
- To increase levels of awareness of personal use of water and reducing average use.
- To make sure there is fairness for all income levels.
- To work with local businesses to increase feelings of responsibility.
- Bridport to become a smart meter trial but noted that the community would want to know what Wessex Water is doing about leakages.
- To reduce feelings of shame associated with reducing water and how to be careful around the messaging of decreasing use. Some are doing all they can.

Short-term

- Using experiences of people within Bridport to help inspire others through lived experience by creating and sharing case studies.
- Targeted approaches for different community segments.
- Install water butts.
- Support community scale rainwater harvesting projects.

Bridport – Social impact workshop session

Challenge question: *“What is the best way to support the people of Bridport who need help during the cost-of-living crisis?”*

Agreed aim: To collaborate with partners in supporting people through financial challenges so that the people of Bridport thrive.

Long-term

- Teach budgeting in schools.
- Help with energy production to help reduce energy bills.
- Spend on infrastructure, short and long term.

Medium-term

- Training local champions, including a number of young people.
- Form partnerships with energy companies to share information.
- Share relatable case studies of local people who have been personally helped by Wessex Water.
- Wessex Water to assist with signposting for other advice and support, to form a directory.
- Less restriction on schemes that support people.

Short-term

- Increase an awareness of support schemes, direct with customers, through visuals, social media and web, not just via post.
- Wessex Water to have a partner at the following organisations, to help them understand the support that is available via Wessex Water, and how to reduce water consumption, without spreading fear or guilt:
 - Homestart
 - Citizens Advice
 - Foodbanks
 - Children’s centre
 - Age concern
 - Parish Councils
 - Housing associations
 - Children via school, flyers in book bag, communication with parents
- To work local influencers who can share information about help that is available.
- To provide a point of contact who is trained to ask questions that lead to identifying support needs.
- Clear and concise billing formatting that is user friendly. People need to be able to understand bills and what their usage means and how it compares with average use.
- Wessex Water to support community and home growing projects, to encourage the growing of plants/food due to mental health (and environmental) impacts.
- Wessex Water to actively support communities in reducing isolation by providing cheap or free activities and events to support wellbeing.

In January 2023 the Bridport community workshop for local stakeholders included the following statutory bodies, charities, and voluntary groups.





Wessex Water
YTL GROUP

FOR YOU. FOR LIFE.