



Untapped Potential: Consumer views on water policy



February 2018
Consumer Futures Unit publication series 2017/18 – 13



Untapped Potential: Consumer views on water policy



Report author: Gail Walker
Contact: CFUwater@cas.org.uk

Electronic: ISSN 2398-6220
Hard copy: ISSN 2398-6212
Consumer Futures Unit publication series 2017/18 – 13



Contents

Executive Summary	1
1. Introduction and Methodology	3
2. Service Standards within Urban and Rural Areas	4
3. Consumer engagement with water and the environment	6
4. Recommendations	11
Annex 1	13

Executive Summary

In recent years Scotland's water industry has recognised the benefit of bringing the consumer's voice into policy and decision-making. Not only has this driven improvements in customer services, it has also begun a process of looking for ways to strengthen dialogue between the industry and consumers.

During the first quarter of 2017, the Consumer Futures Unit worked with the Scottish Government, the Water Industry Commission for Scotland and Scottish Water to commission innovative deliberative research that sought consumers' perspectives on two important aspects of water policy:

1. Whether there should be similar standards of service across urban and rural areas.
2. The role of the water industry in supporting consumers to engage with water and the environment, and how this could be enhanced.

Deliberative research was used to get a deeper insight into how consumers relate to the services they use, the charges they pay and their engagement with water and the environment. It was recognised by industry bodies that this could challenge the industry's current assumptions on these issues.

These research findings will inform the Consumer Futures Unit's response to Ministerial policy on the next Quality and Standards period 2021-27, which will direct Scotland's water industry on future investment priorities. It will also provide industry stakeholders with a helpful steer in terms of service delivery and price setting. A more detailed report covering the deliberative research methodologies that were tested¹ will be published at a later date.

-
- 1 Deliberative research methods were also applied to specific policy areas for energy and post.



Findings

Consumers' views on similar service standards across urban and rural areas

The deliberative research offered helpful insights into how consumers view the industry's services and what they want from them:

- Beyond the provision of information on what services Scottish Water delivers to its customers, there is a clear requirement for information to also include an explanation of why, in some cases, consumers in different geographical locations may experience variable levels of service.
- Consumers associate geographical harmonisation (where householders pay the same water charges regardless of their geographical location) of charges with receiving the same standards of service. When a rural consumer experiences a different service in comparison with someone in an urban area, or vice-versa, some form of financial recompense is viewed as fair compensation.
- There is limited awareness amongst consumers of the significant difference in the cost to serve rural areas. Based on harmonised charging, they view the issue solely in terms of value for money. Therefore Scottish Water may need to consider how it manages consumer expectations of service level differences in different locations. This may require a review of Scottish Water's Code of Practice and Price Promise payments to address instances when services do not meet promised standards of delivery.

Consumers' engagement with water and the environment and how this can be increased

The deliberative research highlighted that:

- Scottish consumers are immensely proud of Scotland's natural assets. They strongly support measures to protect and conserve water and the environment, and recognise its value for future generations.
- However, consumers require support from the industry to better understand how their behaviour, in terms of inappropriate disposal of household waste using the public network, may negatively impact on Scottish Water's assets, for example fatbergs, and also the environment, such as sewerage debris on beaches.
- Consumers are keen to be more involved in public sector activities that impact upon their communities. However, Scotland's water industry needs to do more to support the development of stronger, more resilient communities, and develop innovative engagement mechanisms to increase consumers' say in how services are delivered.

More support is required to strengthen consumers' relationship with the water industry, and to help them to adopt behaviours that protect water and sewerage services, and the environment.

Consumers who better understand how their behaviour impacts upon the water environment are more likely to engage with measures to help them to change it. We believe that greater collaborative working between the water industry, and those that pay for and use its services, could more effectively educate and engage consumers' 'hearts and minds'.

The Christie Commission on the future delivery of public services² concluded that increasing community participation in the design and delivery of them is more likely to result in positive outcomes. This raises some questions: what is the role of future consumers, beyond existing levels of engagement, within Scotland's water industry and how should they be engaged? Are we fully realising the benefits of including consumers as more equal stakeholders or partners in the water industry? And what more can Scotland's water industry do to develop stronger, more resilient communities?

Increasing consumer involvement in dialogue with the industry, and in the design and delivery of its assets, would help to redress the balance between protecting consumers' rights to public water and wastewater services, which they pay for, and imbuing a stronger sense of responsibility and understanding of how services need to be used. In turn, this could help prevent unnecessary consumer-related costs, such as addressing inappropriate household waste disposal, and lead to more resilient infrastructure in terms of increased protection and conservation of water, water network assets and the environment.

Successful delivery of policy often requires consumer attitudes and behaviours to change, and for that to succeed, the required shift in behaviour needs to be made as easy as possible. Moving consumers from being largely disengaged users of water services, to willing and informed participants, will require insight into their motivations and aspirations and a creative approach by the industry. The challenge for the water industry and government is to bring this change about.

² Dr Campbell Christie 'Commission on the future delivery of public services' 2010.

1. Introduction and Methodology

- 1.1 The Consumer Futures Unit (CFU), part of Citizens Advice Scotland, uses research and evidence to put consumers at the heart of policy and regulation in the energy, post and water sectors in Scotland. We work with government, regulators and business to put consumers first, designing policy and practice around their needs and aspirations.
- 1.2 Over the years, research has been based largely on traditional methods such as focus groups, omnibus surveys and in-depth interviews. Whilst such methods are valuable in understanding peoples' opinions, there are times in developing policy when a fuller understanding of what motivates people, or would be likely to prompt them to act, would be of benefit. To that end, in 2017 the CFU tested qualitative research methods, intended to provide a deeper understanding of the underlying reasons, opinions, and motivations that influence consumers' preferences and priorities, and apply these to live policy issues within Scotland's water industry.
- 1.3 A workshop was convened by the Consumer Futures Unit, working with Scottish Water, the Water Industry Commission for Scotland and the Customer Forum, to identify suitable deliberative methodologies that would support the development of a stronger evidence base to inform strategic policy issues. Two were selected:
 - Structured Dialogues³ –
 - Citizens Assembly⁴.
- 1.4 In addition, focus groups were used as a control method and baseline against which any further benefits of using in-depth deliberative research methods could be measured.
- 1.5 Workshop participants were drawn from a mixture of urban and rural areas.
- 1.6 A further workshop with industry stakeholders, including the Scottish Government, was held to select two aspects of policy, which it was felt would benefit from consumers insight. Deliberative research aimed to establish:
 - The level of consumer engagement in matters related to water and the environment, and what is required to increase their engagement in these matters.
 - Whether consumers think there should be similar service standards across urban and rural areas and if so, to what degree.
- 1.7 As well as asking questions related to the two policy issues, research guides helped participants to walk through aspects of the water industry to develop their understanding of the background to issues, and ensure that they were able to effectively contribute to discussion.
- 1.8 This Insight Report, which accompanies the Technical Summary Research Report⁵, summarises the research and outlines the key findings and policy insights to emerge.

3 Structured Dialogues usually take the form of a workshop or public meeting, although they are increasingly taking place on line. A central element in the design of any Structured Dialogue are techniques to help people communicate in a productive way. Diversity of the group is therefore an asset to a successful dialogue process and diversity of opinions and knowledge is welcomed. Structured Dialogues are strongly framed and robustly facilitated, and as such can be repeated and analysed comparatively or cumulatively as part of a single engagement process.

4 A Citizens' Assembly involves a fairly large group of citizens, selected to be broadly representative of the demographics of the area, to deliberate on an issue. Participants given time to develop a deeper understanding of the issue based on unbiased information are able to assimilate quite complicated and technical issues. With the help of facilitators, participants then engage in dialogue about a topic (usually in small groups), deliberate over options and make recommendations to inform policy making.

5 Ipsos Mori and Involve 'Consumer Participation in Water Policy'. Research conducted for the Consumer Futures Unit.

2. Service Standards within Urban and Rural Areas

This section of the report summarises consumers' opinions of service standards for public water and wastewater services, and explores their views on aspects of the urban-rural dimension and the relative importance of service standards across different geographical areas.

Service standards and customer guarantees

- 2.1 Overall, research revealed that consumers place greater importance, in terms of future investment, on more resilient infrastructure and protecting catchment areas and natural water quality, than ensuring no difference in service standards across urban and rural areas.
- 2.2 Consumer satisfaction with the standards of service they receive from Scottish Water is generally high. Issues are rare and when they do arise, consumers believe that they are efficiently resolved with evident consideration by Scottish Water of those affected.
- 2.3 Compared to other utilities such as gas or electricity, Scottish Water is viewed more favourably by consumers in terms of its stated service standards and guaranteed payments⁶, in particular, for its general focus on keeping customers informed. However awareness among consumers of compensation that is available to them, on those occasions when Scottish Water fails to achieve its promised service standards, is low. This suggests that some people may be missing out on payments to which they are entitled.

CFU Recommendation:

- 1. The introduction of a comprehensive suite of automatic associated payments would ensure that **all** consumers receive compensation when service failures occur. Therefore, Scottish Water should give consideration to automating all payments to consumers, to compensate for non-delivery of promised standards of service.
 - 2. In the interim, Scottish Water should produce a communications strategy for the wider dissemination of information about the Code of Practice, its guaranteed service standards and payments, focusing on where consumers will look for this information, for example, council offices, local libraries and local Citizens Advice Bureaux.
- 2.4 Deliberative research findings highlighted the following points in relation to Scottish Water's Code of Practice:
 - > Clearer language around Scottish Water's response times could increase certainty for consumers, improve consumer trust, and help to manage consumer expectations.
 - > Some issues, such as interruptions to supply caused by contamination to water supply or large scale flooding⁷, currently receive a shorter response time from Scottish Water. Consumers view the current criteria for determining response times to a large scale

⁶ <http://www.scottishwater.co.uk/assets/domestic/files/you%20and%20your%20home/your%20home/scottishwatercodeofpractice0716.pdf>

⁷ More than 13,500 affected properties constitutes a major incident for Scottish Water.

flooding incident as applying to urban areas, rather than addressing the needs of rural communities that may experience similar issues and levels of detriment. Therefore, it could be argued that major incidents should be determined by the severity of the impact on consumers, rather than relative to the population size.

- Aspects of Scottish Water service delivery and policy could be clearer, for example, the level of support consumers can expect to receive when they experience internal sewer flooding. In addition, consumers feel that more information within the Code of Practice on complex issues such as pipework ownership would be helpful.
- Scottish Water needs to provide clearer criteria for how they identify vulnerable consumers, and how Scottish Water will respond to their needs⁸.
- Consumers also support quicker response times from Scottish Water for both internal and external sewer flooding incidents, and support the provision of specific details on to how Scottish Water will support those affected.

- 2.5 Regarding Scottish Water's response times, some issues are viewed by consumers as a greater priority, such as sewer flooding, particularly within the home, compared to other issues such as an interruption to supplies. This suggests that consumers place greater priority on health and safety related issues which may impact fewer consumers, compared to issues that may affect many more properties.

CFU Recommendation:

3. Scottish Water should consider conducting a review of its Code of Practice to address the research findings. Service standards should be unambiguous and more exact so that consumers are clear on what support they will receive from Scottish Water. Furthermore, Scottish Water's policy on service delivery should ensure that guaranteed service standards reflect the level of support that consumers need the organisation to provide, based on the degree of impact they experience from the issue affecting them.

Service standards across urban and rural areas

- 2.6 Uniform customer charges for water and sewerage services across urban and rural areas create a corresponding expectation among consumers of a right to similar service standards. On this basis, consumers view any attempt to vary future services based on urban or rural locations as deserving of financial recompense or equaliser, for areas facing reduced standards.
- 2.7 Centralised Scottish Water functions, such as Customer Services, or notifying customers of any changes to service, should have the same standards of service delivery across all locations. However, consumers recognise that although *response times* may vary because of unforeseen or difficult circumstances beyond Scottish Water's control, for example weather or remoteness of location, this should be the exception rather than the rule.
- 2.8 The communication of future policy decisions on the delivery of service standards to urban and rural areas will need to explain the reason for any variations between locations.

CFU Recommendation:

4. A revised Code of Practice should clearly state Scottish Water's policy regarding any differentiation in service standards between urban and rural areas, and where and when variations will apply. This should include consideration of when and how financial compensation will be paid.

⁸ The CFU is currently undertaking research into improving the identification and registration of consumers in vulnerable situations.

3. Consumer engagement with water and the environment

This chapter explores the level to which consumers are engaged in matters related to water and the environment. It investigates what would help to increase consumers' awareness and understanding of, and engagement in, water and the environment.

Based on our research findings, two themes are highlighted that explore how to strengthen partnerships between Scotland's water industry and its consumers:

- Supporting consumers to better understand the role they have in protecting public services and the environment
- The water industry's role in strengthening the consumer voice within service provision

Support consumers to better understand the role they have in protecting public services and the environment

How consumers relate to public water and wastewater systems and paying for services

- 3.1 Scotland's water industry has been described as a 'silent service', providing safe, clean drinking water on a daily basis to consumers, and allowing them to 'flush and forget'⁹.
- 3.2 The reality of a 'silent service' is reflected in the way that consumers' interact on a day-to-day basis with the water and sewerage services they use, or their awareness of how water and wastewater services operate, which is low. Many consumers are unclear on Scottish Water's role in terms of managing the public network, or would not know how to contact Scottish Water if they had a problem.

- 3.3 CFU research shows that approximately one fifth¹⁰ of consumers do not understand the basis on which they are charged¹¹ i.e. Council Tax bands, and also are unaware of how much they pay. These factors suggest that many consumers are relatively disconnected in how they engage with the water industry and pay for its services.
- 3.4 Generally however, when provided with information about their charges, consumers state that they are broadly content with what they pay, and perceive the standard of service they receive as value for money.

CFU Recommendation:

5. Consideration should be given by water industry partners to the development of measures that would more effectively engage consumers and improve their awareness of the industry.
6. Furthermore, measures should aim to support a stronger understanding for consumers of their relationship with Scotland's water industry: what they pay, what they receive and value for money.

⁹ 'Strategic Review of Charges 2021-2027 – Initial Decision Paper 11: Innovation' Water Industry Commission for Scotland

¹⁰ 20% of those who participated in the focus groups and structured dialogues did not know that charges are collected with Council Tax.

¹¹ The Consumer Futures Consumer Tracker Survey 2017 stated that 1/3 of those surveyed did not know what their water and sewerage charges are based on; and 1/3 think that water charges are not due if user is in receipt of 100% reduction in council tax

Existing levels of consumer engagement by the water industry

- 3.5 A challenge facing Scotland's water industry is how it should more effectively engage with consumers. Our research showed that consumers' engagement with Scottish Water and understanding of its role is low.
- 3.6 Generally, engagement from Scottish Water reaches a relatively small number of its service users. Direct engagement can be initiated through customer complaints and enquiries, or community engagement during the delivery of capital investment projects. Indirect engagement includes customer research and third party work delivered by Scottish Water contractors.

CFU Recommendation:

- 7. Scotland's water industry needs to move away from being largely 'silent' and consider how it can strengthen effective partnership working with consumers.

A role for consumers in protecting public services and the environment

- 3.7 Consumers recognise the value of water and the environment; they are proud of Scotland's water, accepting that its abundance is something to be grateful for, especially compared to other parts of the UK and internationally, where water may not exist in such plentiful supply.
- 3.8 Consumers recognise that people need to take a greater interest in how they can more responsibly take care of Scotland's natural resources. They are concerned about actions that compromise Scotland's water quality and threaten the wellbeing of the environment such as illegal dumping near waterways and inappropriate disposal of household items that cause sewer blockages and spillages to the environment, such as disposing of oil and fat down sinks and drains.
- 3.9 Consumers support measures that help to conserve Scotland's natural resources, such as using less treated water for purposes other

than immediate consumption or cooking¹², and recognise that this could conserve energy in the water treatment process. They also recognise that metering and installing water efficient products in the home could be ways of encouraging more water efficient behaviour. However, consumers need support to better understand how their day-to-day behaviours could minimise water wastage.

- 3.10 Increased and targeted support using a variety of messaging and engagement methods could improve consumers understanding of how they use water services could have a positive impact on the environment. This has been recognised by water industry, which has begun to consider more innovative methods of engaging with consumers.

- 3.11 Future challenges and pressures on Scotland's water industry include how to respond to longer term issues such as climate change, population shift and aging infrastructure. An important aspect of this is protecting water and sewerage services for future consumers, which may require significant expenditure on capital investment and maintenance. Therefore, it seems reasonable to suggest that the industry look for further ways to work with consumers to improve their use of the public network.

CFU Recommendation:

- 8. Scotland's water industry should develop initiatives that will support a stronger understanding for consumers of how their use of water services can support the protection of the environment.

Support consumers to protect public services and the environment

- 3.12 Water industry stakeholders are currently working with the OECD¹³, to identify where 'behavioural insight' (BI) research could highlight methods that support consumers to adopt more proactive behaviours that would enhance the water environment and reduce the need for maintenance. Although

¹² Reclaimed or recycled water (also called wastewater reuse or water reclamation) is the process of converting wastewater into water that can be reused for other purposes. Reuse may include irrigation of gardens and agricultural fields.

¹³ Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

there is a challenge in bringing about sustained behavioural change, innovative consumer engagement methods could, in addition to ongoing industry campaigns, support the development of more comprehensive strategies to help consumers to adopt positive behaviour over the longer term.

CFU Recommendation:

9. A better understanding of tools that could influence consumer behaviour in their use of water services, would helpfully inform the development of future initiatives in this respect. Insights into consumer behaviour studies should be carried out to explore the use of influential interventions to help generate more positive consumer behaviours.

- 3.13 Longer term change in consumer behaviour can take several generations. Concepts such as ‘life-wide learning’¹⁴ recognise that learning occurs across the length of a person’s life (school, home, work, etc.). If associated interventions were applied to consumers’ use of water and wastewater services they could, over time, make a significant difference in terms of protecting both public infrastructure and the environment. Some measures already exist. The Curriculum for Excellence in Scottish schools includes education on the appropriate use of wastewater services; this work is supported by Scottish Water as part of its ‘Keep the water cycle running smoothly’ campaign¹⁵, and integrated volunteering and community support programme.

CFU Recommendation:

10. Consideration should be given by the Scottish Government and Scottish Water to developing and targeting longer term ‘life-wide’ learning strategies at specific consumer groups, beyond primary education, focusing on appropriate use of public services and clearly linking these to protecting and conserving the environment.

- 3.14 Other consumer engagement and educational methods could include reasonably simple activities, for example, site visits to a wastewater treatment works, to help consumers better understand what infrastructure needs to operate properly.

- 3.15 Finally, consumers may be incentivised to adopt more positive behaviour if they are provided with the physical means to do so. Scottish Water’s ‘Keep the cycle running’ campaign consists of a programme of customer engagement activities and tools, to encourage consumers ‘to play their part’ in helping to keep Scotland’s water and wastewater services going. It asks them to take simple steps to save water and help prevent blockages in drains and sewers’¹⁶. As part of this campaign, households within identified ‘choke’ areas in Scotland are issued with a container by Scottish Water and encouraged to store cooking fat until it can be disposed of in the bin.

- 3.16 Longer term studies on the effectiveness of this approach, and other engagement measures, could inform policy on the feasibility of distributing containers to all Scottish households. However, appropriate fat disposal may gain better traction if the means to do so, such as fat recycling, is linked to wider recycling policy initiatives with which consumers already engage, such as the use of multi-coloured bins to dispose of other household waste.

CFU Recommendation:

11. Further consideration should be given to additional interventions that support consumers to engage with and support the aims of Scottish Water’s ‘Keep the cycle running’ campaign. Longer term studies into the effectiveness of Scottish Water’s campaign could usefully inform the development of these interventions and additional measures. This could include issuing all Scottish householders with a fat storage container with clear information on its purpose and clear instructions for its use.
12. Furthermore, the Scottish Government should give consideration to exploring the possibility of broadening recycling strategies to find a more permanent solution for used household fat and oil.

¹⁴ <http://www.lifewideeducation.uk/lifewide-learning.html>

¹⁵ <http://www.scottishwater.co.uk/you-and-your-home/your-home/keep-the-water-cycle-running-smoothly>

¹⁶ Scottish Water ‘Annual Report and Accounts’ 2016-17

Adopt broader strategies for engaging consumers in water and the environment

- 3.17 Research highlighted that consumer values support those of the Hydro Nation¹⁷ agenda in terms of Scotland's economy, health, social wellbeing and environment.
- 2.18 Discussions are taking place around the appropriate use of and disposal of plastics and pharmaceuticals and what strategies are required to remove the threat they pose to the environment.
- 3.19 There is an opportunity for Scotland's water industry to more clearly link the appropriate use of public water and wastewater services with the wider aims and objectives of the Hydro Nation and the delivery of positive outcomes for Scotland's water and the environment.

CFU Recommendation:

- 13. Further consideration should be given to ways of harnessing consumer interest, and strengthening dialogue and co-design of initiatives with consumers, to address the issues raised within this report and support the wider aims and objectives of the Hydro Nation agenda.
- 14. The water industry in Scotland should develop a collaborative approach towards developing strategies that support wider environmental protection initiatives within the context of the Hydro Nation agenda.

Develop stronger, more empowered and resilient communities

- 3.20 Inclusive and positive engagement and consultation by responsible bodies, will ensure consumers are involved in decision making and that their needs are understood and met. The Christie Report¹⁸ states that *'effective services must be designed with and for people and communities'*. Whilst this was contextualised around public services reform, the same principle can be applied to activities taking place within a community with an impact or outcome.
- 3.21 Research highlighted consumers' support for partnership working between the Scottish Government, Scottish Water and local communities. Three options were put forward by consumers to support this approach:
 - a) A local representative of the community, working as part of a decision making process with public bodies, ensuring the views of the community are fairly represented
 - b) Listening to local knowledge on issues such as flooding, pollution and damage to the environment during the planning phase would allow communities to influence decision making, strengthen collaboration between public bodies and communities, and result in greater legitimacy and local support for public projects.

¹⁸ Dr Campbell Christie 'Commission on the future delivery of public services' 2010

¹⁷ <http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Business-Industry/waterindustryscot/ScotlandtheHydroNation>



- c) Communities should be invited to work on environmental improvement or education projects initiated by organisations such as Scottish Water or SEPA. Not only would this strengthen engagement between public bodies and communities but it would also create greater awareness among consumers of the role of each organisation.

A number of frameworks¹⁹ already exist to set standards for, and evaluate, levels of community engagement by public bodies. If applied, they can support the development of more consumer-focused culture and inclusive decision making that will deliver better outcomes to communities and individuals, as well as the industry.

- 3.22 Greater engagement by Scottish Water would be welcomed by communities, particularly when their activities may affect them. This may relate to greater inclusion of communities in decision making, such as during the planning and design of local projects that form part of Scottish Water's capital investment programme.
- 3.23 Scottish Water has committed to a set of engagement principles within its current Consultation Code²⁰. Strategic adoption of these principles more broadly across the organisation would highlight further opportunities to work in partnership with communities, and would support a consistent and inclusive approach to engaging with consumers, beyond existing measures. Transparent engagement strategies would strengthen trust and buy-in between consumers and the water industry, and should clearly demonstrate where consumers have influenced outcomes.

CFU Recommendation:

- 15. Scottish Water needs to strengthen effective partnership working with individuals and communities, and increase consumers' ability to influence how services are delivered, which could also improve consumers' experience of Scottish Water. This process could be supported by:
 - a) A comprehensive review of all activities that result in consumer contact, including direct contact (such as service delivery or delivering projects) and indirect contact (such as billing and collection, innovation such as slurry spreading or affinity partnerships) to identify the scope of a comprehensive, organisation-wide engagement framework.
 - b) Developing high level engagement principles that govern and strengthen cooperation and partnership working between Scottish Water and consumers, and support the delivery of outcomes that work better for both consumers and the water industry.
 - c) Increasing community empowerment and their ability to influence outcomes. A review of the Consultation Code has been suggested by Scottish Water; this would be an ideal opportunity to design a tool to strengthen partnership working with consumers, and doing this without it becoming unnecessarily onerous.

¹⁹ Annex 1

²⁰ Scottish Water's Consultation Code is a statutory document that sets out how it engages with communities during the delivery of investment work

4. Recommendations

Service standards within urban and rural areas

1. The introduction of a comprehensive suite of automatic associated payments would ensure that **all** consumers receive compensation when service failures occur. Therefore, Scottish Water should give consideration to automating all payments to consumers, to compensate for non-delivery of promised standards of service.
2. In the interim, Scottish Water should produce a communications strategy for the wider dissemination of information about the Code of Practice, its guaranteed service standards and payments. It should focus on where consumers will look for this information, for example, council offices, local libraries and local Citizens Advice Bureaux.
3. Scottish Water should consider conducting a review of its Code of Practice to address the research findings. Service standards should be unambiguous and more exact so that consumers are clear on what support they will receive from Scottish Water. Furthermore, Scottish Water's policy on service delivery should ensure that guaranteed service standards reflect the level of support that consumers need the organisation to provide, based on the degree of impact they experience from the issue affecting them.
4. A revised Code of Practice should clearly state Scottish Water's policy regarding any differentiation in service standards between urban and rural areas, and where and when variations will apply. This should include consideration of when and how financial compensation will be paid.

Consumer Engagement with Water and the Environment

Support consumers to better understand the role they have in protecting public services and the environment

5. Consideration should be given by water industry partners to the development of measures that would more effectively engage consumers and improve their awareness of the industry.
6. Furthermore, measures should aim to support a stronger understanding for consumers of their relationship with Scotland's water industry: what they pay, what they receive and value for money.
7. Scotland's water industry needs to move away from being largely 'silent' and consider how it can strengthen effective partnership working with consumers.
8. Scotland's water industry should develop initiatives that will support a stronger understanding for consumers of how their use of public services can support the protection of the environment.
9. A better understanding of tools that could influence consumer behaviour in their use of public services would helpfully inform the development of future initiatives in this respect. Insights into consumer behaviour studies should be carried out to explore the use of influential interventions to help generate more positive consumer behaviours.
10. Consideration should be given by the Scottish Government and Scottish Water into developing and targeting longer term 'life-wide' learning strategies at specific consumer groups, beyond primary education, focusing on appropriate use of public services and clearly linking these to protecting and conserving the environment.

11. Further consideration should be given to additional interventions that support consumers to engage with and support the aims of Scottish Water's 'Keep the cycle running' campaign. Longer term studies into the effectiveness of Scottish Water's campaign could usefully inform the development of these interventions and additional measures. This could include issuing all Scottish householders with a fat storage container with clear information on its purpose and clear instructions for its use.
12. Furthermore, the Scottish Government should give consideration to exploring the possibility of broadening recycling strategies to find a more permanent solution for used household fat and oil.

Adopt broader strategies for engaging consumers in water and the environment

13. Further consideration should be given to ways of harnessing consumer interest, and strengthening dialogue and co-design of initiatives with consumers, to address the issues raised within this report and support the wider aims and objectives of the Hydro Nation agenda.
14. The water industry in Scotland should develop a collaborative approach towards developing strategies that support wider environmental protection initiatives within the context of the Hydro Nation agenda.

Develop stronger, more empowered and resilient communities

15. Scottish Water needs to strengthen effective partnership working with individuals and communities, and increase consumers' ability to influence how services are delivered, which could also improve consumers' experience of Scottish Water. This process could be supported by:
 - a. A comprehensive review of all activities that result in consumer contact, including direct contact (such as service delivery or delivering projects) and indirect contact (such as billing and collection, innovation such as slurry spreading or affinity partnerships) to identify the scope of a comprehensive, organisation-wide engagement framework.
 - b. Developing high level, engagement principles that govern and strengthen cooperation and partnership working between Scottish Water and consumers, and support the delivery of outcomes that work better for both consumers and the water industry.
 - c. Increasing community empowerment and their ability to influence outcomes. A review of the Consultation Code has been suggested by Scottish Water; this would be an ideal opportunity to design a tool to strengthen partnership working with consumers, and seeking to do this without it becoming unnecessarily onerous.



Annex 1

Frameworks that support collaborative work between communities and public bodies include:

- The Local Government in Scotland Act 2003 which placed a duty on community planning partners to “consult and co-operate” with community bodies in the design and delivery of services²¹.
- A framework for measuring performance standards²² for community engagement, introduced by Communities Scotland in 2005.
- The Christie report²³ which, in 2010 set out recommendations for the future delivery of public services, including that “public services are most effective and provide best value for money when users have a pivotal role in designing and evaluating them.”
- In 2011, Consumer Focus Scotland published high level principles for promoting consumer engagement in public services²⁴.
- In 2017, the Consumer Futures Unit published²⁵ a good practice framework, based on high level consumer engagement principles, for Scottish Water and other relevant bodies to guide their engagement with communities at risk of flooding.

21 This was replaced by the Community Empowerment Act in 2015.

22 Communities Scotland ‘National Standards for Community Engagement’ 2005

23 Dr Campbell Christie ‘Commission on the future delivery of public services’ 2010

24 Consumer Focus Scotland ‘Consumer Engagement in Decision Making: Best Practice from Scottish Public Services’ 2011

25 The Consumer Futures Unit ‘Riding the Waves: keeping the community on board’ December 2017





For more information about the Consumer Futures Unit, visit:

www.cas.org.uk/spotlight/consumer-futures-unit

 **@CFUcas**

Copyright © Citizens Advice Scotland

Large print copies available on request.

www.cas.org.uk

 **@CitAdviceScot**

 **CitizensAdviceScotland**

The Scottish Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux –
Citizens Advice Scotland. Scottish charity (SC016637) and
company limited by guarantee (89892)

Spectrum House, 2 Powderhall Road, Edinburgh EH7 4GB
Tel: 0131 550 1000

