

BESPOKE PERFORMANCE MEASURES (Part 2) CUSTOMER RESEARCH

March 2023

CONTENTS

XECUTIVE SUMMARY	3
IETHODOLOGY	3
INDINGS	5
NLINE SURVEY RESULTS	7
ECOMMENDATION	8
PPENDIX 1 – ALL SURVEYS	9

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In July 2022 Ofwat published it's <u>draft methodology for PR24</u> which sets out its thinking on bespoke performance commitments for PR24.

Ofwat's draft methodology states that any bespoke measure proposed must be supported by **compelling evidence** that it is in the interests of customers and the environment. Additionally, it **must have a reward and penalty** against performance.

The objectives of this customer engagement were to:

- Explore customers' views on the principles of common and bespoke performance measures.
- Explore customers' views on rewards and penalties.
- Determine customers' levels of acceptability for converting fifteen performance commitments for 2020-25 into bespoke measures for 2025-30.

This research was conducted via a series of online surveys and was managed in-house within our Strategic Customer Research and Engagement Team.

To enable us to interpret the results fairly and transparently we felt it was appropriate to set an acceptability threshold which each measure would have to reach to be included in our PR24 plan. The latest industry research we have on setting thresholds of acceptability is <u>CCW's 2013 PR14 research</u>, which recommends a threshold of 70-75% as this is *"significantly higher than 50% but also allows room for those customers who are unlikely to accept any plan which may be presented."*

On this basis we have set a threshold of 70% support for any bespoke measure to be considered for inclusion in our 2025-30 business plan.

None of the bespoke measures we tested met the 70% threshold. Therefore, it is recommended that no bespoke performance measures are included within our 2025-30 business plan.

METHODOLOGY

This research was conducted via a series of online surveys and was managed in-house by our Strategic Customer Research and Engagement Team.

Survey format

Four surveys were designed and hosted in-house. Each survey had three sections to reflecting the objectives:

- Principles of common and bespoke performance measures
- Rewards and penalties
- Levels of acceptability for converting fifteen performance commitments for 2020-25 inro bespoke measures for 2025-30.

We tested the proposed bespoke measures over four surveys to reduce survey fatigue, which could have arisen due to the repetitive nature of the questions. The four surveys covered:

Survey 1

- Customers' perception of trust
- Response time to written complaints
- Percentage of households in water poverty
- Gap sites
- Voids

Survey 2

- Risk of severe restrictions in a drought
- BlueSpaces (Water Environment Improvements)
- Event Risk Index (ERI)

- British Standards Institute Aware for Inclusive Services
- Independent value for money survey

Survey 3

- Satisfaction of customers who receive additional non-financial support
- Awareness of additional non-financial support
- Satisfaction of customers who receive additional financial support
- Awareness of additional financial support

Survey 4

- Risk of flooding in a severe storm

Copies of each survey can be found in Appendix A.

Sampling and response rate

Each survey was sent via email to customers from our customer database, who had agreed to be contacted for marketing purposes. Customers were randomly selected.

We achieved a good response rate and high sample size across the survey, which gives us confidence that all results reflect those of the overall populations we serve.

	Sent	Opened email	Clicked through to survey Link	No. starting the survey (response rate)
Survey 1-Customers' perception of trust-Response time to written complaints-Percentage of households in water poverty-Gap sites-Voids	20,651	11,161 (54%)	967 (4.7%)	753 (3.6%)
 Survey 2 Risk of severe restrictions in a drought BlueSpaces (Water Environment Improvements) Event Risk Index (ERI) British Standards Institute Aware for Inclusive Services Independent value for money survey 	20,692	11,094 (54%)	949 (4.6%)	692 (3.3%)
 Survey 3 Satisfaction of customers who receive additional non-financial support Awareness of additional non-financial support Satisfaction of customers who receive additional financial support Awareness of additional financial support 	20,706	11,116 (54%)	904 (4%)	657 (3.2%)
Survey 4 — Risk of flooding in a severe storm	9,240	4,719 (51%)	586 (6%)	469 (5%)

Incentive

As a thank you for completing a survey, participants were given the opportunity to enter a prize draw for the change to win a £200 amazon voucher.

Throughout this section the number of responses reported varies from section-to-section. This is due to respondents dropping out of the survey or skipping/choosing not to answer questions. Numbers of responses are shown in brackets within the answer tables.

Common and bespoke measures

The following background information was provided:

Every five years we develop a business plan which sets out a number of targets for the services you receive.

We'll submit our latest plan to the water industry regulator Ofwat, in October.

There are some targets that Ofwat asks all companies in England to Wales to have, such as the quality of your drinking water. These are called **Common Measures**.
In addition each company can set targets based on issues that are important to customers or the local environment. These are called **Bespoke Measures**.

This survey is about which, if any, **Bespoke Measures** we should set from 2025-2030.

Question 1: How do you think water companies' performance should be measured?

	Average	Survey 1 (753)	Survey 2 (692)	Survey 3 (657)	Survey 4 (469)
Common measures only – All companies should be measure in the same way	27%	27%	29%	26%	26%
Common and bespoke measures – All companies should be measures in the same way and set their own measures based on local issues	65%	64%	64%	65%	65%
Don't know	8%	9%	7%	7%	7%
Prefer not to say	1%	1%	0%	1%	1%

Conclusion – common and bespoke measures

Most participants across all surveys thought that companies should have a mixture of common and bespoke measures. However, the majority was not above the threshold of 70%.

Rewards and penalties

The following background information was provided:

Ofwat will only agree that we can include a bespoke measure if:

• It is supported by our customers

• It has a financial **reward** attached to it, this means if we beat our target all customers reward us through an increase in their bill

• It has a financial **penalty** attached to it, this means if we fail to meet our target all customers receive a reduction on their bill

The two examples below show a reward and penalty from 2022.

Example 1

2021/22 Target agreed with Ofwat	To fix visible leaks within 8 days
Performance tracked	Over the year we recorded how long every visible leak took us to fix. We beat our target , taking an average of 7 days to fix visible leaks.
Reward received	For beating our target we increased all customers' bills by an average of 15 pence.

Example 2

2021/22 Target agreed with Ofwat	Wear agreed a maximum amount of water that could leak from our pipes .
Performance tracked	Over the year we measured how much water leaked. to fix. We missed our target.
Reward received	Penalty received - For missing out target we reduced all customers' bills.
	Bills for Northumbrian Water customers were reduced by an average of 2p
	Bills for customers in Essex and Suffolk were reduced by an average of 3p.

Question 2: Participants 'strongly agree' or 'agree' with statements on rewards and penalties

	Average	Survey 1 (753)	Survey 2 (692)	Survey 3 (657)	Survey 4 (469)
They are a good way to incentivise companies to deliver better service	68%	67%	67%	69%	70%
If my water company's performance is good my bill should increase slightly to reward them	22%	23%	22%	24%	20%
If my water company's performance is poor my bill should go down so that they receive less money	61%	61%	59%	62%	61%

Conclusion – rewards and penalties

Most participants across all surveys thought that rewards and penalties were a good way to incentivise companies to deliver better services. However, the majority was not above the threshold of 70%.

Participants were significantly more supportive of penalties than rewards.

Individual performance measures

A description of each individual performance measure was provided.

For common measures it was explained:

For the last five years Ofwat have told all water companies to measure X. Ofwat are planning to stop this common measure from 2025.

We want to know if you think we should keep it as a bespoke measure. This would mean that we'd have to set our own targets and put a reward and penalty against our performance.

For our current bespoke measures, it was explained:

At the moment there isn't a reward or penalty linked to this measure, to keep it we would have to add them.

If customers want the **satisfaction of customers who receive additional non-financial support** to be a bespoke measure from 2025 we must put a reward and penalty against our performance.

If this is not a bespoke measure, it doesn't mean that we will stop our work in this area. It will still be important to us.

Question 3: Participants 'strongly agree' or 'agree' with statements on rewards and penalties

	Keep 'X' as a bespoke measure and put a financial reward and penalty against it	Don't have this bespoke measure	Don't know	Prefer not to say
Survey 1				
Customers' perception of trust (633)	50%	34%	15%	2%
Response time to written complaints (623)	52%	36%	11%	2%
Percentage of households in water poverty (609)	46%	39%	14%	1%
Gap sites (597)	52%	31%	16%	2%
Voids (582)	53%	34%	13%	1%
Survey 2				
Risk of severe restrictions in a drought (602)	42%	35%	21%	2%
BlueSpaces (Water Environment Improvements) (572)	66%	22%	12%	1%
Event Risk Index (ERI) (557)	54%	31%	13%	2%
British Standards Institute Aware for Inclusive Services (552)	51%	24%	13%	2%
Independent value for money survey (543)	46%	41%	11%	2%
Survey 3				
Satisfaction of customers who receive additional non-financial support (547)	50%	27%	21%	3%
Awareness of additional non-financial support (545)	47%	31%	19%	3%
Satisfaction of customers who receive additional financial support (525)	58%	26%	13%	3%
Awareness of additional financial support (522)	58%	26%	13%	3%
Survey 4				
Risk of flooding in a severe storm (414)	54%	24%	21%	2%

Conclusion – individual performance measures

None of the individual performance measures achieved greater than the 70% threshold level of support.

RECOMMENDATION

The recommendation from this customer engagement is that **no bespoke performance measures** are included in our 2025-30 business plan.

APPENDIX 1 – ALL SURVEYS

1. Setting targets

Every five years we develop a business plan which sets out a number of targets for the services you receive. We'll submit our latest plan to the water industry regulator Ofwat, in October.

- There are some targets that Ofwat asks all companies in England to Wales to have, such as the quality of your drinking water. These are called Common Measures.
- In addition each company can set targets based on issues that are important to customers or the local environment. These are called Bespoke Measures.

This survey is about which, if any, Bespoke Measures we should set from 2025-2030.

How do you think water companies' performance should be measured?

- **Common Measures only** All companies should be measured in the same way
- Common and Bespoke Measures All companies should be measured in the same way and set their own measures based on local issues
- Don't know
- Prefer not to say

2. Rewards and Penalties

Ofwat will only agree that we can include a bespoke measure if:

- It is supported by our customers
- It has a financial reward attached to it, this means if we beat our target all customers reward us through an increase in their bill
- It has a financial penalty attached to it, this means if we fail to meet our target all customers receive a reduction on their bill

The two examples below show a reward and penalty from 2022.

2021/22 Target agreed with Ofwat To fix visible leaks within 8 days.



Performance tracked

Over the year we recorded how long every visible leak took us to fix.

We beat our target, taking an average of 7 days to fix visible leaks.

Reward received

For beating our target we **increased all customers' bills** by an average of 15 pence.



2021/22 Target agreed with Ofwat

We agreed a maximum amount of water that could leak from our pipes.





Performance tracked

Over the year we measured how much water leaked.

We missed our target.

Penalty received

For missing our target we reduced all customers' bills. Bills for Northumbrian Water customers were reduced by an average of 2p

Bills for customers in Essex and Suffolk were reduced by an average of 3p

Please rate your agreement with the following statements about rewards and penalties

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know / prefer not to say
They are a good way to incentivise companies to deliver better service						
If my water company's performance is good my bill should increase slightly to reward them						
If my water company's performance is poor my bill should go down so that they receive less money						

3. Bespoke Measures

We'd like to show some bespoke measures that we could include in our next plan, if customers support them. Please click next to continue.

[Bespoke measures included in survey 1]

Customers' perception of trust

Every year we survey 2,000 customers to ask if we are a company they can trust. We set a target for how many customers will agree that they trust us.

At the moment there isn't a reward or penalty linked to this measure, to keep it we would have to add them.

If customers want customers' perception of trust to be a bespoke measure from 2025 we must put a reward and penalty against our perf If this is not a bespoke measure, it doesn't mean that we will stop our work in this area. It will still be important to us.

What do you think we should do?

- Keep customers' perception of trust as a bespoke measure and put a financial reward and penalty against it
- Don't have this bespoke measure
- Don't know
- Prefer not to say

Response time to written complaints

We have set a target to respond to all written complaints we receive from customers within two working days. At the moment there isn't a reward or penalty linked to this measure, to keep it we would have to add them.

If customers want our response time to written complaints to be a bespoke measure from 2025 we must put a reward and penalty against our performance.

If this is not a bespoke measure, it doesn't mean that we will stop our work in this area. It will still be important to us.

What do you think we should do?

- Keep response time to written complaints as a bespoke measure and put a financial reward and penalty against it
- Don't have this bespoke measure
- Don't know
- Prefer not to say

Percentage of households in water poverty

Water poverty is when a customer spends 3% or more of their income, after their mortgage or rent, on their water and wastewater bill. We have many ways to bring people out of water poverty including payment plans, discounts and advice on saving water.

We have a goal to eradicate water poverty by 2030. We track our progress and publish the percentage of households living in water pov year as part of our Annual Performance Report.

At the moment there isn't a reward or penalty linked to this measure, to keep it we would have to add them.

If customers want the percentage of households in water poverty to be a bespoke measure from 2025 we must put a reward and penalty If this is not a bespoke measure, it doesn't mean that we will stop our work in this area. It will still be important to us.

What do you think we should do?

- Keep the percentage of households in water poverty as a bespoke measure and put a financial reward and penalty against it
- Don't have this bespoke measure
- Don't know
- Prefer not to say

Gap sites

A small number of properties used by businesses, charities and other organisations are connected to the water [and wastewater networks] but aren't known to us. This means that our services are being used, but not paid for.

We can try to find out where these properties are by matching our data with government data. If everyone who uses our services pays this will make charges between customers fairer and help us to lower bills for everyone.

Every year we set a target for how properties we have matched.

At the moment there isn't a reward or penalty linked to this measure, to keep it we would have to add them. At the moment there isn't a reward or penalty linked to this measure, to keep it we would have to add them.

If customers want gap sites to be a bespoke measure from 2025 we must put a reward and penalty against our performance. If this is not a bespoke measure, it doesn't mean that we will stop our work in this area. It will still be important to us.

What do you think we should do?

- □ Keep gap sites as a bespoke measure and put a financial reward and penalty against it
- □ Don't have this bespoke measure
- Don't know
- Prefer not to say

<u>Voids</u>

A small number of homes are incorrectly listed as vacant in our system. This means the property is connected to water and wastewater not receiving a bill.

Every year we set a target for how many homes like this we will find and bill. We publish whether or not we have met our target on our w our Annual Performance Report.

If customers want voids to be a bespoke measure from 2025 we must put a reward and penalty against our performance. If this is not a bespoke measure, it doesn't mean that we will stop our work in this area. It will still be important to us.

Do you think we should continue to earn rewards or pay penalties depending on whether we meet our target between 2025-2030?

- □ Keep voids as a bespoke measure with a financial reward and penalty against it
- Don't have this bespoke measure
- Don't know
- Prefer not to say

[Bespoke measures included in survey 2]

Risk of severe restrictions in a drought

We expect to experience a very severe drought once in every 200 years on average.

We calculate the risk of having to introduce severe restrictions to water supply in a drought. This could include turning water supplies off and customers having to collect water from standpipes (taps) in the street.

We publish the level of risk every year as part of our Annual Performance Report.

At the moment there isn't a reward or penalty linked to this measure, to keep it we would have to add them.

If customers want the risk of severe restrictions in a drought to be a bespoke measure from 2025 we must put a reward and penalty against it. If this is not a bespoke measure, it doesn't mean that we will stop our work in this area. It will still be important to us.

What do you think we should do?

Keep the risk of severe restrictions in a drought as a bespoke measure and put a financial reward and penalty against it

- Don't have this bespoke measure
- Don't know
- Prefer not to say

BlueSpaces (Water Environment Improvements)

We're making improvements to 'BlueSpaces' in the areas we serve. BlueSpaces are natural spaces linked to water such as reservoirs. Improvements include activities like:

- Making it easier for people to access and enjoy these spaces
- Improving the quality of water
- Making improvements for the benefit of wildlife, animals, plants, fungi, and insects Our target is to make improvements to 500km of BlueSpaces by 2030.

If customers want BlueSpaces to be a bespoke measure from 2025 we must put a reward and penalty against our performance. If this is not a bespoke measure, it doesn't mean that we will stop our work in this area. It will still be important to us.

Do you think we should continue to earn rewards or pay penalties depending on whether we meet our target between 2025 - 2030?

- □ Keep BlueSpaces as a bespoke measure with a financial reward and penalty against it
- Don't have this bespoke measure
- Don't know
- Prefer not to say

Event Risk Index

Before drinking water is delivered to your tap it goes through a rigorous treatment process to make sure it is clean, clear and safe to drink.

If we have any concerns that part of the treatment process hasn't worked, or that something has happened to the water on it's way to you we must notify the Drinking Water Inspectorate (DWI). This is an independent part of the UK government, whose role is to provide independent reassurance to you.

The DWI has a system to score any event looking at what happened, how well we managed it and the impact on customers. At the moment there isn't a reward or penalty linked to this measure, to keep it we would have to add them.

If customers want Event Risk Index to be a bespoke measure from 2025 we must put a reward and penalty against our performance. If this is not a bespoke measure, it doesn't mean that we will stop our work in this area. It will still be important to us.

What do you think we should do?

- □ Keep Event Risk Index as a bespoke measure and put a financial reward and penalty against it
- Don't have this bespoke measure
- Don't know
- Prefer not to say

British Standards Institution Award for Inclusive Services

Every year we're audited by the British Standards Institution (the group which Kitemarks products and services) to assess how inclusive services are for people living with disabilities, ill health, financial hardship, mental health problems, or going through different life event

If the audit finds that our services meet the standard we're awarded the BSI Kitemark for Inclusive Services. At the moment there isn't a reward or penalty linked to this measure, to keep it we would have to add them.

If customers want the British Standards Institution Award for Inclusive Services to be a bespoke measure from 2025 we must put a reward and penalty against our performance.

If this is not a bespoke measure, it doesn't mean that we will stop our work in this area. It will still be important to us. What do you think we should do?

- □ Keep the British Standards Institution Award for Inclusive Services as a bespoke measure and put a financial reward and penalty against
- Don't have this bespoke measure
- Don't know
- Prefer not to say

Independent value for money survey

Every year we survey 2,000 customers to ask how satisfied they are with the value for money of the services we provide. At the moment there isn't a reward or penalty linked to this measure, to keep it we would have to add them.

If customers want the independent value for money survey to be a bespoke measure from 2025 we must put a reward and penalty again If this is not a bespoke measure, it doesn't mean that we will stop our work in this area. It will still be important to us.

What do you think we should do?

- □ Keep the independent value for money survey as a bespoke measure and put a financial reward and penalty against it
- □ Don't have this bespoke measure
- Don't know
- Prefer not to say

[Bespoke measures included in survey 2]

Satisfaction of customers who receive additional non-financial support

We offer support to customers who need it. This includes:

- Delivering bottled water directly to customer's homes if their water supply is interrupted and they're unable to collect water
- Sending bills and letters in large print, Braille or audio formats
- Providing telephone interpreters for customers who don't speak English as their first language

Every year we survey 1,000 people who are registered for these services to ask them how satisfied they are with the extra support we pr how satisfied customers will be.

At the moment there isn't a reward or penalty linked to this measure, to keep it we would have to add them.

If customers want the satisfaction of customers who receive additional non-financial support to be a bespoke measure from 2025 we must put a reward and penalty against our performance.

If this is not a bespoke measure, it doesn't mean that we will stop our work in this area. It will still be important to us. What do you think we should do?

- □ Keep the satisfaction of customers who receive additional non-financial support as a bespoke measure and put a financial reward and penalty against performance
- Don't have this bespoke measure
- Don't know
- Prefer not to say

Awareness of additional non-financial support

Every year we survey 1,000 customers who might be registered for these services to ask if they are aware that we offer them. We set a target for how many customers will be aware of this service.

At the moment there isn't a reward or penalty linked to this measure, to keep it we would have to add them.

If customers want the awareness of additional non-financial support to be a bespoke measure from 2025 we must put a reward and penalty against our performance. If this is not a bespoke measure, it doesn't mean that we will stop our work in this area. It will still be important to us.

What do you think we should do?

- □ Keep the awareness of additional non-financial support as a bespoke measure and put a financial reward and penalty against it
- Don't have this bespoke measure
- Don't know
- Prefer not to say

Satisfaction of customers who receive additional financial support

We have a number of ways to help customers who are genuinely struggling to afford their water and wastewater bills. The support we offer includes:

- Discounts of up to 50% for customers on low incomes
- Payment breaks for customers who've experienced a change in their circumstances, such as losing their job
- Caps on bills for people who need to use more water than average because of a medical condition

Every year we survey 1,000 people who are registered for these services to ask them how satisfied they are with the financial support that we provide. At the moment there isn't a reward or penalty linked to this measure, to keep it we would have to add them.

- □ Keep the satisfaction of customers who receive additional financial support as a bespoke measure and put a financial reward and penalty
- Don't have this bespoke measure
- Don't know
- Prefer not to say

Awareness of additional financial support

Every year we survey 1,000 customers to ask if they were aware that we provide these services.

At the moment there isn't a reward or penalty linked to this measure, to keep it we would have to add them.

If customers want the awareness of additional financial support to be a bespoke measure from 2025 we must put a reward and penalty against our performance. If this is not a bespoke measure, it doesn't mean that we will stop our work in this area. It will still be important to us.

What do you think we should do?

- Keep the awareness of additional financial support as a bespoke measure and put a financial reward and penalty against it
- □ Don't have this bespoke measure
- Don't know
- Prefer not to say

[SURVEY 4]

Risk of flooding in a severe storm

For the last five years Ofwat have told all water companies to measure how many properties in their area at risk of being flooded with se storm. Ofwat are planning to stop this Common Measure from 2025.

We want to know if you think we should keep it as a bespoke measure. This would mean that we'd have to set our own targets and put a our performance.

If customers want the risk of flooding in a severe storm to be a bespoke measure from 2025 we must put a reward and penalty against o If this is not a bespoke measure, it doesn't mean that we will stop our work in this area. It will still be important to us.

What do you think we should do?

- □ Make 'risk of sewer flooding in a storm' a bespoke measure
- Don't make 'risk of sewer flooding in a storm' a bespoke measure
- Don't know
- Prefer not to say

Any comments

Do you have any comments you would like to make?

Prize draw

To enter the prize draw to win £200 worth of Amazon vouchers, please fill in the boxes below and consent to our terms and conditions.

□ I confirm I am aged 18 or over

□ I consent to NWL using my name and contact information to administer the prize draw. I understand that I can withdraw this consent at a haveyoursay@nwl.co.uk

Prize Draw Terms & Conditions

<u>Thank you</u>

Thank you for taking part in our survey. If you have any further questions about this research, please contact haveyoursay@nwl.co.uk

BESPOKE PERFORMANCE MEASURES ONLINE SURVEY - RESULTS