

# YourVoice statement | 2022/23



## Who we are and what we do

We, the YourVoice Independent Challenge Group, have been operating for around 10 years.

We aim to make sure United Utilities Water (the company) consults its customers and stakeholders (those with an interest in the company) to understand and take account of their views and priorities.

We make sure that engagement activities, such as customer workshops, focus groups and surveys, and research carried out by the company are clear and understandable to those taking part, and that the results are reflected in the company's business plans and in its day-to-day operations.

We monitor the company's actual performance against its published performance targets. We receive reports on the company's ongoing improvement plans, and review areas where its performance falls short of these targets.

We monitor the company's research and engagement with customers and stakeholders in preparing the next business plan for the five-year period from 2025 to 2030. We aim to make sure that results from our monitoring are reflected in the final document. Our experience in monitoring the company's performance helps us comment on and challenge the performance targets of future business plans.

Our members represent customers, stakeholders, large and small businesses, regulators, the voluntary, charitable and environmental sectors, vulnerable customers, future bill payers, and money and community advice services.

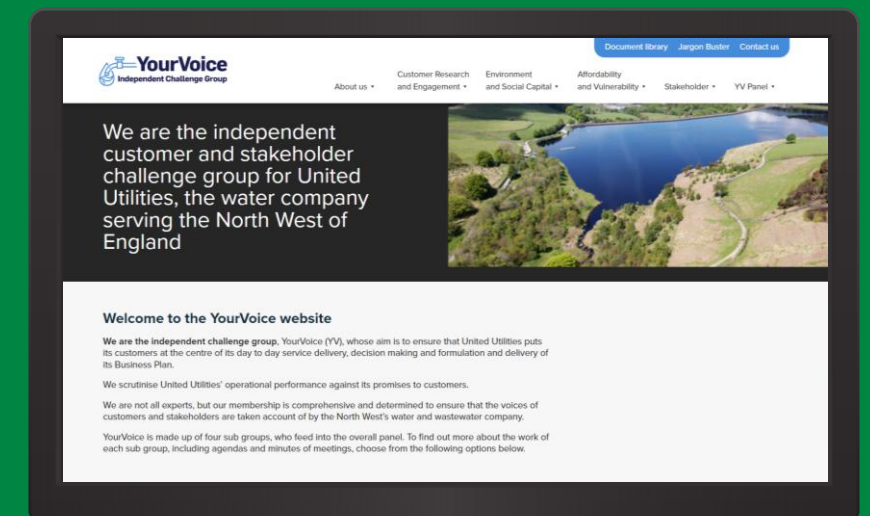
We are not all industry experts and are fully independent of the company. We act as informed customers and challenge the company on that basis.

So that we can have meaningful discussions and monitor the company's work at an appropriate level of detail, we have four subgroups:

- customer engagement;
- environment and social capital;
- affordability and vulnerability; and
- stakeholder.

The company's directors and senior staff attend our subgroup meetings. And we have regular access to the company's Chief Executive and board members.

You can read the minutes of our meetings on our website at [yourvoiceicg.co.uk](https://yourvoiceicg.co.uk)



## Overview of performance for 2022/23

2022/23 is the third year of the company's current five-year business plan, which runs from 2020 to 2025. The business plan was widely discussed and the subject of extensive research and consultation with customers and stakeholders. In fact, over 142,000 North West household and business customers were directly consulted on this plan.

The company's performance shows many areas of good performance at or above target. It achieved 83% of its performance commitments for the last year. However, it did not meet 17% of its targets.

### **Some areas where targets have not been met are as follows.**

- Having a reliable and high-quality water supply is a major priority for customers in the North West. All water companies use the Compliance Risk Index (CRI) to monitor water-quality standards, as required by the Drinking Water Inspectorate. The challenging target is a score of zero, but in year three of the business plan the company scored 3.67. This is an area for improvement and is the subject of a water-quality improvement programme, which the company is confident will address issues and mean they can achieve the target in the future. The company has given us several updates on this measure and recent reports have shown that its performance is improving.
- The target for reducing water-supply interruptions was not met. The time customers were without water averaged 38 minutes and 45 seconds, a large increase against the company's performance target. This was the result of weather events in 2022 – the dry summer and a freeze-thaw in December (where freezing temperatures were followed by a sharp increase in temperature, causing a rapid thaw) caused bursts and leaks across the water-supply network and in customers' properties.

This unprecedented level of supply interruptions led to the company facing a penalty of around £16 million. The company is determined to improve its performance for customers.

- The amount of water used each day by each person in the region is called 'per capita consumption'. The company is working to reduce the amount of water used by customers and had a target to bring this down by 3.9% from the starting position of 144 litres per person per day. It did not achieve this target and per capita consumption was 0.5 % above the starting position.

The company continues to use social media and advertising campaigns to educate customers on the need to save water. The improved metering programme and the lowest bill guarantee scheme, along with the company's commitment to provide water-saving devices, will continue. Saving water, saving energy and helping the environment has been an active campaign theme recently, particularly in light of the current economic situation and the challenges of climate change. The company has found that its campaigning is now having a positive impact on how much water is used.

- Preventing flooding continues to be a priority for the company and customers as sewer flooding is one of the worst service failures customers can experience. There were 801 flooding incidents inside homes and businesses (internal flooding) in 2022/23, which is above the target set. However, this is a reduction on 2021/22 and is the best performance the company has ever achieved. Improvements have been largely down to the company's use of dynamic network management, where monitors in sewers mean that problems can be spotted and dealt with before customers experience a problem. Alongside this, a 'stop the block' campaign was used to educate and inform customers about problems caused by flushing items such as wipes down the toilet or pouring oil and grease down sinks. A new dedicated blockage team now responds quickly to incidents and finds out what caused the problem with the aim of reducing repeat incidents. This work will continue and should improve the company's performance in this area, but we will continue to monitor this. The number of flooding incidents outside homes and businesses (external flooding) reduced in 2022/23, and the company achieved its target.

## Overview of performance for 2022/23

Some areas where performance targets have been achieved are as follows.

- Good customer service has been reflected in the company's performance against Ofwat's measure of customer satisfaction (C-MeX). The company was ranked fourth of the 11 water and wastewater companies and fifth out of 17 companies overall.
- The number of contacts the company received from customers about the taste, smell and appearance of their water fell by 20% in 2022/23 and should improve further as the company's mains-cleaning programme continues.
- Over 84,000 customers were lifted out of water poverty (where customers spend more than 3% of their disposable income on water bills) through the company's industry-leading range of affordability schemes.
- The company replaced 3,487 of lead pipes.
- 75% of customers interviewed said the company provided value for money.
- Targets for reducing leaks were achieved for the 17th year in a row.
- There were no serious pollution incidents in 2022/23.
- The company's Priority Services scheme continues to help customers who need extra support. The company successfully works with other utility companies to share information so that vulnerable customers can be enrolled onto the Priority Services scheme. This year this service has achieved ISO22548 kite mark accreditation.
- Ongoing work to identify and bill as many people as possible who are receiving a water and wastewater service has been successful. This helps to make sure bills are fairer for all customers.



There has been extensive media coverage about the impact of storm overflows on the environment and water quality in our rivers. The company published two reports to provide updates on its progress in improving its performance in this area. Its first storm overflow report in 2022 explained how overflows work and introduced its Better Rivers: Better North West plan, which contained 29 service commitments. A second report described its progress in meeting those service commitments. These reports were shaped by feedback on the Better Rivers plan from customers, who were clear that they expected the company to report on the steps it is taking to reduce the impact of storm overflows on rivers. These documents reported that all of the company's 2,200 storm overflows will be monitored by the end of 2023 and explained what the company is doing to deliver a significant reduction in the number of incidents and the impact caused by these overflows.

Our environment and social capital subgroup has taken on a formal role in monitoring and challenging the company's performance in delivering its Better Rivers plan. The chair of this subgroup chaired the first ever United Utilities Environmental AGM meeting earlier this year.

The Environment Act 2021 sets ambitious targets to achieve substantial reductions in the frequency of spills. The investment needed to meet these targets has already started in the North West and, with customer support, will be a major investment priority in the company's business plan for 2025 to 2030. This will be one of the main areas we will focus on when monitoring the company's performance in the future.

This year, the company has again produced an easy-to-read performance summary, which is available online and is accessible on mobile phones. It has received Plain English Campaign's Crystal Mark, showing it has been approved for clarity. The company continues to use social media to share key performance messages with more customers.

We are pleased to report that, in our opinion, the United Utilities Annual Performance Report accurately reflects the company's performance for 2022/23.

As ever, during the coming year we will continue to monitor and challenge the company on behalf of customers. If you would like to contact us about the company's performance or our work, please email us at [myview@uuplc.co.uk](mailto:myview@uuplc.co.uk)

## **Bernice Law**

Independent Chair, YourVoice  
July 2023



You can read our Annual Performance Report at [annualperformancereport2023.unitedutilities.com](https://annualperformancereport2023.unitedutilities.com)