



# A Manifesto for Water



Summary of the Water Industry's Plans in England 2020-25



# Foreword



**The ambition in this manifesto shows an industry that is dynamic and passionate about delivering real benefits**



Every five years, water companies in England and Wales set out how they plan to provide the water and sewerage services on which we all depend.

This approach has seen companies invest £150 billion over nearly 30 years - equivalent to the cost of completing a new Wembley Stadium every month over that period.

With around 90% of customers satisfied with the service they get and 86% of the public saying they trust their water company, it is an approach which has brought real improvements.

But in a world of high customer expectations and increased impacts from climate change and population growth, the plans for 2020-25 set out the ambition of companies to do much more as long-term, responsible businesses.

In looking to strike the right balance between affordable bills, better services and environmental improvements, companies have consulted millions of their customers, to understand what matters most to them and to help shape their future commitments.

As a result, each plan is unique, reflecting the priorities of the communities served by individual companies. Taken together, the proposals summarised in this document represent a manifesto for how companies will work in the public interest.

Our record over the past 30 years - cutting leakage, keeping bills affordable, improving water quality, and cleaning up rivers - has been good, but the business plans offer to take it to another level.

The ambition in this manifesto shows an industry that is dynamic and passionate about delivering real benefits for customers, the environment and the country as a whole. The industry has set out an ambitious vision for the future of water that puts customers right at the heart of everything that companies do.

**Michael Roberts**  
**Chief Executive**

# Highlights



## Business Plans

Companies have consulted



**5.3M**  
customers

to come up with the best ideas



## Investment



spend across next five years

A **13%** increase from current period



## Water and Sewerage Bills

Domestic bills to fall on average by more than



**4%**

in real terms



## Customers Receiving Help

By 2025, companies plan to help

**1.4M** <sup>£</sup>  
customers <sup>£</sup>  
<sup>£</sup>

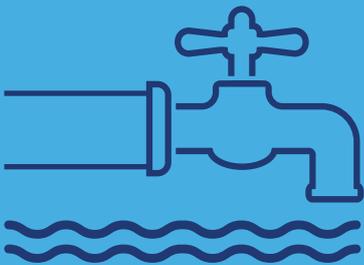


each year with their water bills, an increase of around

**90%**



## Supply Interruptions



A **36%** decrease in the time that supplies are interrupted

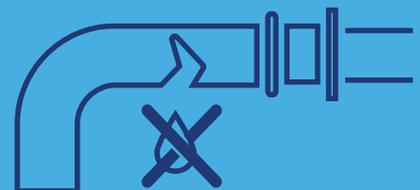


## Leakage

Technology and innovation to reduce water leaked by

**461M**

litres every day



That's more than a

**16%** reduction



## The Environment



**8000km**

of river improvements, benefitting people and wildlife, and

**98%**

bathing water areas are expected to meet tough European standards





# Business Plans

2020–2025

Companies have consulted

**5.3M**  
customers



**to come up with  
the best ideas  
using the very latest  
techniques for finding  
out people's priorities**

**Every five years, water companies in England submit business plans to the economic regulator, Ofwat, for approval.**

Plans must show how water companies propose to respond to pressures from growth and climate change while also improving the service offered to customers and strengthening protection for the environment.

For business plans covering 2020 to 2025, companies sought the views of over five million customers – believed to be one of the biggest ever exercises undertaken by an industry to work with customers to understand the issues which matter most to them.

Companies' plans describe the breadth of improvements they will make over the next half-decade, covering everything from better customer service, through to support for new developments, to protection against drought.

This document summarises some of the most important improvements proposed for customers in England, with more details available in companies' own individual business plans.

Ofwat will now review companies' plans. There may be some changes between now and December 2019, when final plans are confirmed. But what won't change is the ambition and vision driving the plans, and the determination to deliver the best ever service for customers.

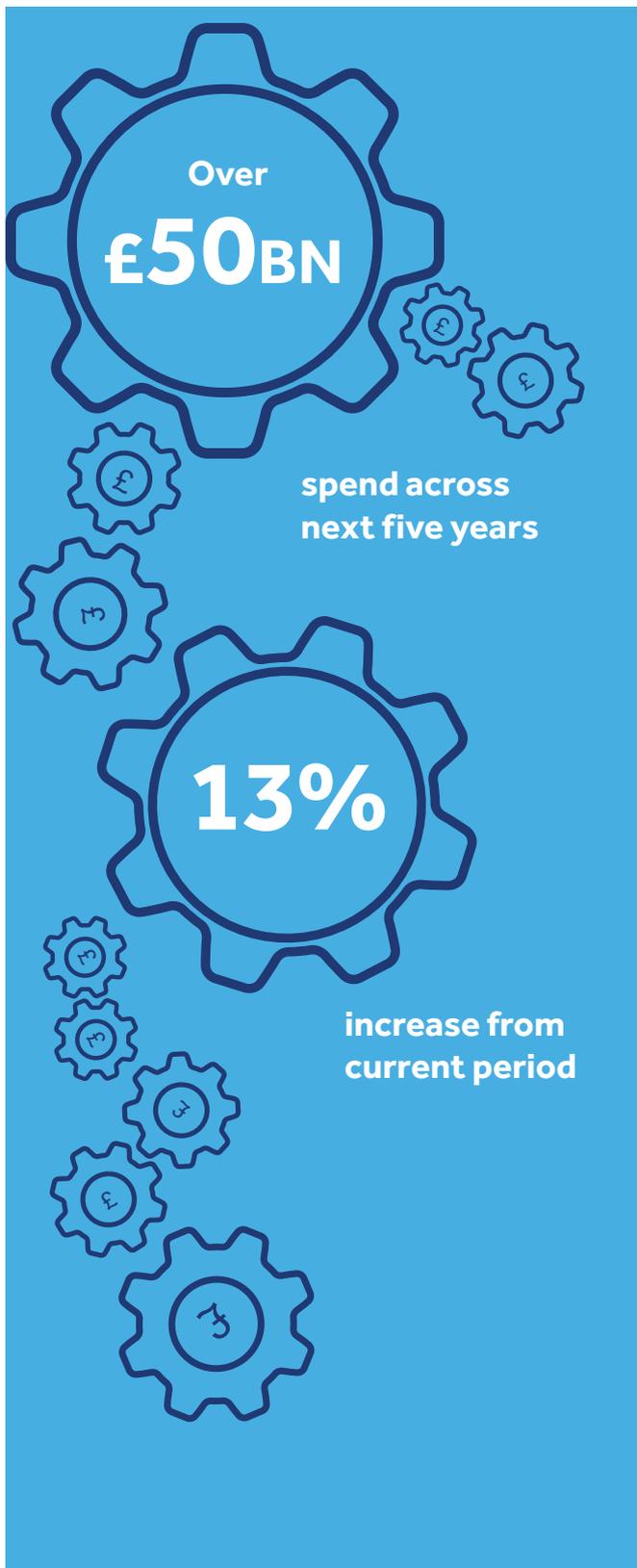
Once agreed, companies will be held to account for delivering their plans, with their income tied to results.

Companies in Wales follow a similar process and will publish their own proposals in parallel.



# Investment

2020–2025



Since privatisation, water companies in England and Wales have invested around **£150 billion** on improving their services for customers, and protecting the environment. **Between 2015 and 2020 they're spending an average of £8 billion a year to keep on improving.**

For the next five years, to improve services to customers, keep upgrading the network, and deal with issues caused by population growth, new houses and climate change, companies in England propose increasing their level of investment by **£6 billion or 13%** compared to the current 5-year period - that's more than **£50 billion** for 2020-25.

This will enable companies to meet ever-increasing expectations from customers about the service they receive and for the environment around them.

To make this happen while also reducing bills, companies are introducing more efficient operations, such as the use of 'big data' technology to predict problems before they occur, and using digital systems to make repairs faster.

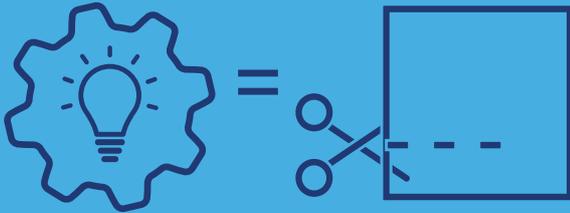
This builds on the **64%** increase in productivity of the sector since privatisation – which is better than the economy as a whole.



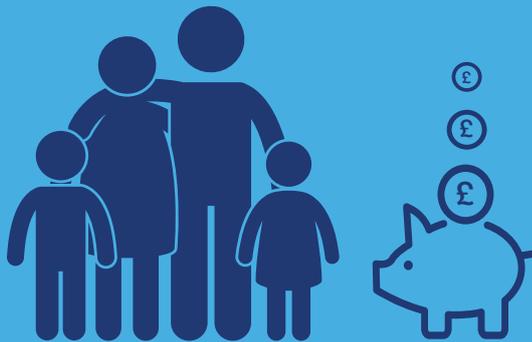
# Water and Sewerage Bills

2020–2025

Domestic bills to fall on average by



more than **4%**  
in real terms



The average domestic water bill is currently around £1 a day. Customers pay this for all the world-class clean water they need, to get all their sewage taken away, and for long-term investment in protecting supplies and the environment.

After inflation, bills have stayed pretty much the same since 1994, and are around £120 lower each year than they would have been without the 1990s' introduction of privatisation and tough independent regulation.

With determined action from water companies they are now set to fall again in real terms. The plan is for average domestic water bills to go down over the period by more than 4% before taking inflation into account.

The exact changes in bills will vary across England, depending on local investment programmes and customer priorities - but by the end of the 2020-2025 period we expect the average customer to have seen their bills rise by less than inflation for a whole decade.

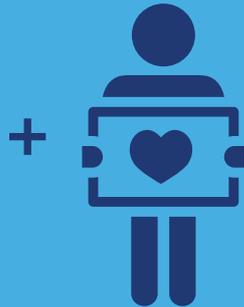


# Customers Receiving Help

2020–2025

By 2025, companies plan to help

**1.4M**  
customers  
£ £ £ £



each year with their water bills, an increase of around

**90%**



**The water industry is determined to help customers who find themselves in circumstances where they find it difficult to pay their bills.**

Each company has its own schemes to help those people struggling to pay, and some also run or support charities which provide additional help.

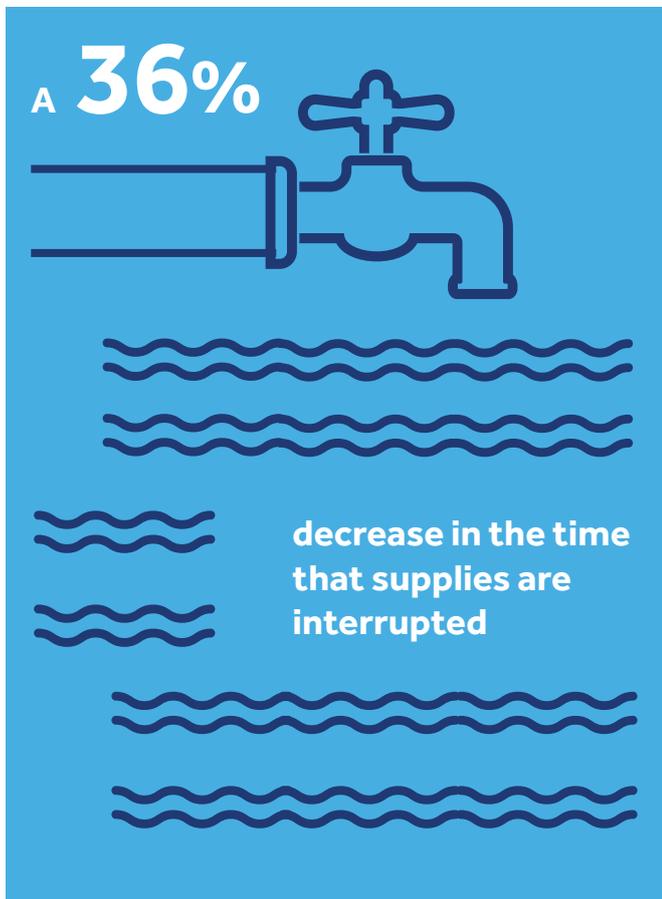
Over the coming year companies are also joining forces with other utilities to share information on who needs the most urgent help in the event of problems.

This effort is growing. By 2025, companies expect to help 1.4million people with their water bills every single year, compared to 760,000 today, an increase of nearly 90%.



# Supply interruptions

2020–2025



**Water is the most essential of public services, and we know how difficult it can be if it isn't available due to a burst pipe, or necessary repairs. And, while there have been no recent hosepipe bans in England, the risk of drought is increasing, with the pressures that brings for water supplies.**

That is why making sure people can get the water they need is such a big priority for water companies.

We are seeing the benefit of previous investment working, as customers are now five times less likely to suffer from supply interruptions than before privatisation, and 100 times less likely to experience low water pressure.

However, companies' plans propose going even further by cutting the time customers are without water – down by 36% over the period.

Specific proposals include investment to reduce the reliance of particular customers on single sources of supply, strengthening the integration of water networks across regions – allowing different parts of the network to make up for shortages – and further improvements to the speed and effectiveness of predicting, preventing and tackling burst pipes.



# Leakage

2020–2025

Technology and innovation to reduce water leaked by



**461M**  
litres every day



That's more than a  
**16%**  
reduction



There are more than a quarter of a million kilometres of mains water pipes running under the ground in England, taking treated water to homes all over the country.

Because our country was a pioneer in developing public water supplies, much of the underground water network is old and difficult to replace without major disruption. The pipes and joints are vulnerable to things like ground movement from temperature changes.

When leaks do occur, it can sometimes be hard to pinpoint them quickly. The industry has reduced leakage to levels which today are a third lower than they were in the mid-1990s. But we know there is more to do and leakage remains one of our top priorities.

That is why companies are committing more resources and using new techniques, such as satellite imaging, drones, and even acoustic equipment invented by naval scientists, to find and fix more leaks.

Companies are proposing to reduce leakage by 461 million litres every day over the 2020-25 period. That's more than a 16% reduction and equivalent to around 180 Olympic-sized swimming pools every 24 hours, and represents the most ambitious programme to fix leaks in twenty years.



# The Environment

2020–2025



The water industry is committed to the very highest environmental standards. Investment since privatisation has seen wildlife return to rivers that had been biologically dead since the Industrial Revolution.

Between 2020 and 2025 companies are proposing innovative new schemes to deliver more for the environment, like 367 ‘catchment management’ schemes (a two-thirds increase over five years) that use natural features such as tree planting. These often bring additional benefits locally, such as improving protection against floods, or providing new wildlife habitats and outdoor leisure facilities.

Companies’ plans include over 8,000 km of new schemes to improve river water for people and wildlife to enjoy, and ensure that over 98% of bathing water areas will meet European standards in 2025.

As well as investing in environmental improvements, companies are redoubling efforts to ensure they avoid pollution incidents, which can happen from things like untreated sewage escaping from a treatment works and entering waterways.

Companies propose reducing by nearly 90% the number of serious pollution incidents, from 52 today to around a half-dozen by the end of the period.





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