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# Guernsey Water Customer Priorities: Focus Group Review

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**Alex McCluckie, Research Director**

**Jamie Lawson, Senior Research Executive**

**Head office:** 3 Pavilion Lane, Strines,  
Stockport, Cheshire, SK6 7GH

**Leeds office:** 2 St. David's Court,  
David Street, Leeds, LS11 5QA

+44 (0)1663 767 857  
[djsresearch.co.uk](http://djsresearch.co.uk)



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# Core outcome: **valued by customers**



Customers value our services.

When viewed in isolation from the accompanying service measures, there is a degree of cynicism regarding this outcome. Because of Guernsey Water's monopolistic position, there is a feeling that it does not matter how valued Guernsey Water is by customers because they lack an alternative.

However, when this outcome was discussed in conjunction with the relevant service measures, customers highly value it and have strong views about the customer service they receive from Guernsey Water.

**Importance:** high

"I bluster over 'valued by customers'. We don't really have a choice so it doesn't matter in a sense to the average person."

**Male 45-54**

# Valued by customers: service measures



## Core measure



### Customer satisfaction

'Customer satisfaction' is seen as the core of the 'valued by customers' outcome. Most customers feel this measure is very important because of GW's monopoly, contrasting with the more cynical reaction that the overall outcome receives without this further context.

## Essential measures



### Customer contacts

'Customer contacts' and 'customer support' are seen as two essential measures which naturally feed into 'customer satisfaction'. Cess pit users are particularly passionate about these given their increased need to contact GW, and these customers feel that there is room for improvement in this area.



### Customer support

## Less important measures



### Support for vulnerable customers



### Community engagement

Finally, 'support for vulnerable customers' and 'community engagement' are seen as less important, optional measures by most customers. This is not to say that customers believe that they have no value, but they are deemed less essential than the other measures for this outcome. For many, 'support for vulnerable customers' is seen as worthy, but it ultimately only benefits a minority of people which counts against it when measuring importance. For 'community engagement', customers are positive about the educational aspects of the outcome, but there is scepticism regarding schemes like tree planting and water fountain provision.

**Suggestion:** Remove or combine 'support for vulnerable customers' and 'community engagement'

"The management of the collection service [cess pit] is a bit archaic."

**Male 45-54**

"Tree planting? What's that about? That's expensive."

**Male 45-54**

# Core outcome: drinking water of choice



The quality, sustainability and availability of our water make it the drinking water of choice.

There are mixed feelings around this outcome. Numerous customers highlight that many islanders do not like the taste of the tap water, causing them to rely on filters or switch to bottled water. Therefore, any improvement would be welcomed and having this as a core outcome is reassuring.

Others value this outcome less – either because they live in an area where tap water taste is not an issue or because they have come to accept the poor taste and feel the issue should not be 'over dramatised'.

Following from this, some customers would rank 'drinking water of choice' as one of the least important core outcomes. These customers believe that there are more important outcomes which, if achieved, will mean this outcome will follow.

**Importance:** low to moderate

"At the minute Guernsey Water isn't the drinking water of choice. A very large proportion of the island uses bottled water... My parents won't touch it."

**Female, 45-54**

# Drinking water of choice: service measures



## Core measure



**Water quality compliance**



## Essential measure



**Water quality service**

Both water quality measures are seen as key to their wider outcome. For most, water quality compliance is seen as core to this outcome because without safe water the other measures do not really matter.

Customers sometimes speak more generally about “water quality”, rather than distinguishing between the two measures. This suggests that there is a degree of crossover in the minds of customers and that the service measure titles could be made more distinct *or* collapsed into a single measure.

## Less important measure



### **Water accessibility**

Element 1: Access to water mains

Access to water mains is seen as a good principle, although there is an acknowledgement that this needs to be balanced against the practicalities of achieving this for all houses and the fact that resources may be better spent elsewhere.

Element 2: Access to water outside of the home

Feelings are mixed on this element. Some are enthusiastically in favour, noting that it would be good to reduce the reliance on disposable water bottles, while others view either it as a waste of resources or as a ‘nice to have’.

“I agree it would be great to improve accessibility going forward, but it doesn’t make a great impact on my life.”

**Male, 25-34**

# Core outcome: sustainable drainage



Customers are protected from flooding and wastewater is returned safely and efficiently to the environment.

This core outcome prompted strong feelings among a section of customers. They comment that there is a lack of joined up thinking between organisations with a stake in the planning process (i.e. building control, traffic and highways, architects and Guernsey Water) and that this causes drainage issues which could otherwise be avoided.

Moreover, there is some discontent regarding the continuing of the wastewater charge. Some customers believe that this charge was a temporary measure to pay for upgrades to the drainage system and cannot understand why this is still in place.

**Importance:** high

"There are issues with this... I don't think there's a very good collaboration between Guernsey Water and other agencies. I suffered from flooding and damp issues from where a new development was set in place, but there was no consideration for drainage and surface water movement. These are very serious issues which I know a lot of people have experienced."

**Male, 55-64**

# Sustainable drainage: service measures



## Essential measures



Sewer flooding



Sewer collapses



Sewer blockages



Wastewater pollution



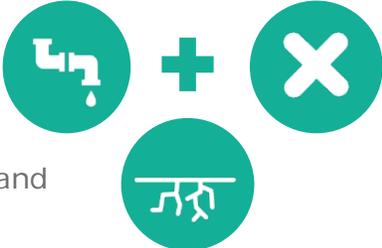
Wastewater accessibility

In general, all of these measures are seen important to achieving sustainable drainage and customers are either unable or struggle to prioritise these. Where offered, prioritisations are led by personal experience of the problems linked to these measures. For instance, customers who have experience of flooding feel this should be a priority while cess pit users feel wastewater accessibility is important. This means that there is little consensus.

It should be noted that customers struggle to perceive the risk of freak events like sewer collapses. So, while customers appreciate the severity of such an event, the uncertainty means customers find it particularly difficult to confidently rank this measure.

"Least important...? I couldn't really say. They're all important."  
Male, 45-54

**Suggestion:** Given customers' struggle to understand the risk of specific events like sewer collapses, this measure could be rolled up with one or both of the other sewer related measures to ensure customer comprehension and reduce the number of service measures.



**Suggestion:** Some customers feel that sewer flooding and wastewater pollution are inherently linked, indicating that there could be an opportunity to combine the two measures.



# Core outcome: **protect our environment**



**Water quality is protected from source to sea and our environmental impact is carefully managed**

A number of residents report that they are concerned about the environment so they are positive about its inclusion as a core outcome.

Numerous customers express worry regarding the pumping of untreated waste into the sea. This is particularly acute among frequent water users such as swimmers, one of whom reports that they are deterred from swimming on the East Coast because of sewage.

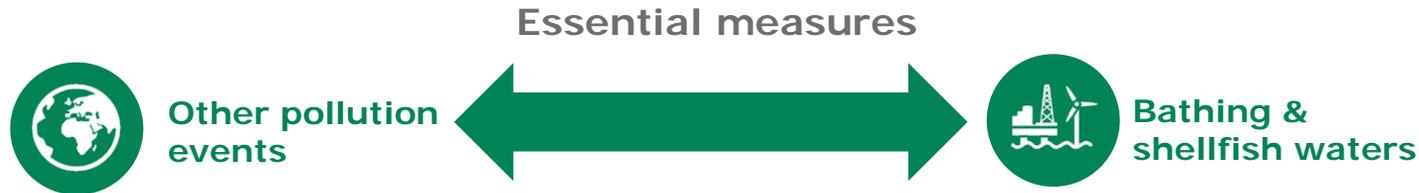
Wider environmental concerns also exist. For instance, some are worried about the impact untreated sewage has on local wildlife.

**Importance:** high

“I swim in the sea all year round and I don’t want to swim with anything floating next to me. Also, there is a lot of habitat in Belle Grave Bay that needs to be saved and having raw sewage going out to sea isn’t protecting them.”

**Female, 35-44**

# Protect our environment: service measures



Customers tend to see 'other pollution events' and 'bathing & shellfish waters' as essential measures to this outcome. Residents value these two aspects because of the impacts on their activities (e.g. swimming and bathing in the sea) and because of a wider concern for island life, such as the long term implications pollution could have on fishing and wildlife. Some comment that there is a degree of overlap between the two as pollution events directly impact upon the quality of bathing and shellfish waters.

"We do have a huge variety of things we can do in Guernsey so if we couldn't go fishing in the reservoir that wouldn't be such a big issue."

**Female, 55-64**

## Less important measures



Customers feel that both of these elements are quite similar/interlinked so struggled to prioritise them.

Moreover, a number of customers have criticisms of both measures due to perceived superfluous elements. In terms of 'minimal environmental protection', some customers feel that the focus on things like renewable energy should not be a concern for GW. Similarly for 'environmental protection', customers approve of the principle of safeguarding biodiversity and habitats but feel that the public access and recreation element is not as important, relative to other elements.

These measures could be combined into a broader environmental measure with improved focus.



# Core outcome: Sufficient & resilient



Our water and wastewater services are reliable. We are ready for climate change and we have enough water for the future.

This is seen as a very important outcome by customers, with many ranking it as one of the most important.

Due to Guernsey being a small island, customers feel vulnerable about the implications that a failure of critical infrastructure would have and the unrest this could cause. There is also some long term concern regarding the impact that climate change will have on the island in the future.

There is, however, a feeling of optimism for some around this outcome, as they feel that the island's infrastructure is in a good condition to cope with adverse situations.

**Importance:** high

"We're in a precarious position as an island. We've got to be planning for the long term. As soon as our water resources dry up... we'll have big problems on the island. This outcome is important to me."

**Male, 45-54**

# Sufficient & resilient: service measures



## Essential measures



Supply interruptions



Leakages



Water restrictions



Network pressure



Continuity of customer service

Thoughts on these measures are mixed, with customers divided on what should be prioritised. Overall, 'supply interruptions' is thought of as the most important because customers are aware of the disruption that interruptions can cause. Other than that, views are divided on which are the most and least important and whether the focus should primarily be on long or short-term problems.

The 'leakages' measure is discussed in both the context of both short-term waste (cost) and the longer term impact this could have on supply security, especially in the context of climate change. Equally, water restrictions do not seem to be an immediate concern, but there is an acknowledgement that this could change in the future owing to climate change. A similar thought process follows for 'continuity of customer service' because, while an emergency situation is thought to be unlikely, customers appreciate the importance of contingency planning.

'Network pressure' is slightly more divisive. Customer accounts indicate that this is highly variable across the island, with some experiencing very poor water pressure and others pressure that is too high. Some of those affected by this do identify this measure as important but others have learned to live with this and think that other measures should be the focus.

"The most important is supply interruptions. People without water is going to cause a lot of grief."

**Male, 35-44**

# Core outcome: **firm financial foundations**



Include making our operations as efficient as possible so that we do not waste money and resources.

Many customers rank this among the most important outcomes because without this, none of the other core outcomes can be successfully achieved.

**Importance:** high

"Without this, the rest won't exist anyway."  
**Male, 54-65**

# Core outcome: **proud performing people**



Guernsey Water is a great place to work, where people perform to their full potential and are proud of their contribution to our island community.

This is considered to be the least important core outcome by customers because they do not feel like it is directly relevant to them. They hope that GW staff are happy in the abstract, but this is not really a concern. Thus, customers feel that this would be more appropriate in an internal document like an employee handbook.

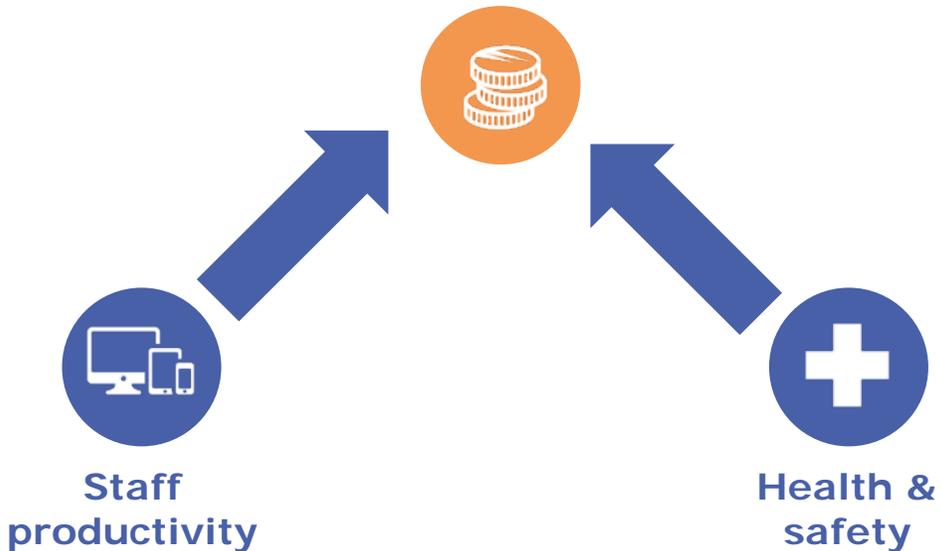
**Importance:** low

"It's nice that they want to have a good working environment, but I don't particularly care much. It's a good outcome but all the others are how they can help the Guernsey community whereas this is inward looking."  
**Male, 25-34**

# Firm financial foundations/Proud performing people: service measures



## Efficiency savings



**Suggestion:** Given that, on balance, customers do not see the importance of the 'proud performing people' measures relative to other service measures these could be removed.

Customers tend to feel that 'efficiency savings' is a very important service measure because it is vital that bills are kept as affordable as possible. However, some customers do note that these savings should not be made at any cost, indicating the importance of finding the right balance in pursuit of this.

Following from this, some customers feel that the 'efficiency savings' measure is heavily linked to the two 'proud performing people' measures. They believe that efficiency savings will naturally occur from ensuring the 'staff productivity' and 'health & safety' measures are met. Indeed, there is also a feeling that the two 'proud performing people' measures should be taken as standard for any business and do not need to be explicitly stated.

"I would put efficiency savings really high up. I would really like them to focus on providing the services as efficiently as possible. Obviously happy staff are more productive so that aids an efficient service."

**Male, 35-44**



# Summary of *preliminary* suggestions



**Suggestion:** Remove or combine 'support for vulnerable customers' and 'community engagement' due to their lower importance.



**Suggestion:** Remove 'water accessibility' given its relative importance, which was seen as lower than many of the other service measures.



**Suggestion:** Due to the overlap in the minds of customers, 'minimal environmental impact' and 'environmental protection' measures could be combined into a broader environmental measure with improved focus.



**Suggestion:** Given customers struggle to understand the risk of specific events like sewer collapses, this could be rolled up with one or both of the other sewer related measures to ensure customer comprehension.



**Suggestion:** Some customers feel that sewer flooding and wastewater pollution are inherently linked, indicating that there could be an opportunity to combine the two measures.



**Suggestion:** Remove the proud performing people service measures (but still focus on them internally).

