

Water Resources Forum, 27 October 2016

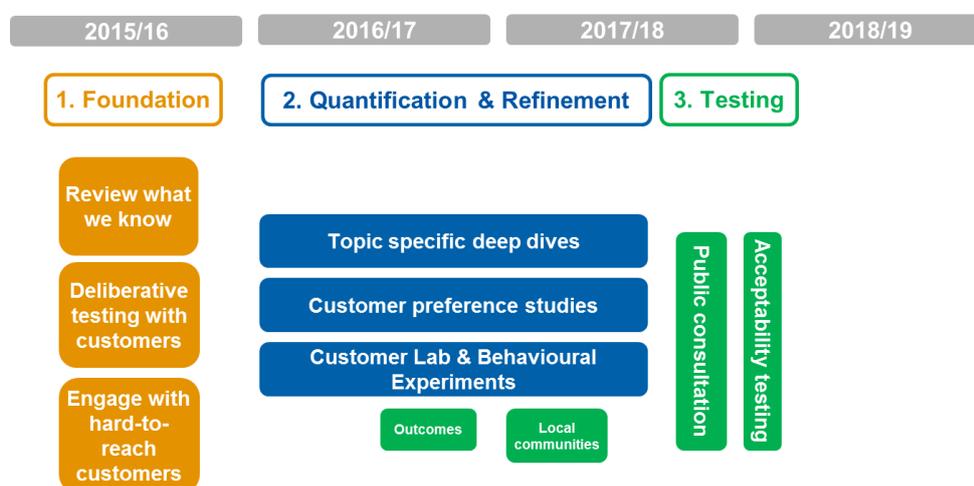
Briefing paper: Customer engagement and research

The purpose of this paper is to provide background information on our customer engagement and research programme. At the Water Resources Forum, on the 27 October 2016, we will focus on the research completed to date on water resources.

Introduction

We are undertaking a programme of customer engagement and research to ensure we understand the needs and expectations of our customers and reflect these in developing our long term plans. The programme is summarised in Figure 1. We engage with our Customer Challenge Group as we plan, develop and implement our programme.

Figure 1: Customer engagement and research programme



Stage 1: Foundation

The first stage focused on compiling information from a wide range of existing sources such as previous research studies, insight via day-to-day operational activities and complaint data, and deliberative research. This provided a “consolidated customer view” and a starting point for ongoing engagement. Figure 2 provides the high-level long term-priorities that have emerged from this initial stage of research.

Figure 2: High-level long term-priorities





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Stage 2: Quantification and refinement

We are currently working on quantification and refinement of information and data. This involves several approaches to build a more detailed understanding of customer's priorities and preferences.

Topic specific deep dives: We are undertaking detailed research on specific topics, called "deep dives". The topics include interruptions to supply, low water pressure, sewer flooding and blockages, odour and water resources. The research has comprised a series of workshops, focus groups and individual depth interviews ensuring inclusion of customers from key segments across the region and those who may have different service needs.

One deep dive focused on intergenerational fairness, we talked to customers from different generations to understand how they feel investments should be paid for over time and how different generations should share the burden. This provided some interesting feedback and overall customers told us that everyone should pay for investment as they go, strongly favouring smooth bill profiling rather than fluctuations.

Customer preferences studies: The 'customer preferences' research will help us to understand what customers prioritise and where they value improvements to service across our whole business. This is detailed and complex research, and to assist this we are exploring the development of an interactive engagement tool. The tool will encourage customers to participate, consider the issues and challenges that we face, and give their views on the services they want the company to deliver, in a more fun and engaging way.

Future customers: Future customers are a key audience in our programme. So in addition to involving younger generations in the research outlined above, we are involved in other routes to help us to understand their views including:

- "The Battle of Ideas", a two day public debating festival on 22/23 October at the Barbican, London. There will be 400 speakers taking part in over 80 debates with a public audience of over 3,000. The debates Thames Water is participating in are:
 - Humanity's big challenge: Water wars;
 - Britain's infrastructure: the road to nowhere?
 - Generational fairness: who pays for the future?
- The Great Debate, a debating initiative aimed at sixth formers to start conversations about important future issues including planning future water and wastewater services.

Stage 3: Testing

This stage includes formal consultation on our draft plans and the testing of these with customers and stakeholders to seek comment and feedback on our proposals.

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