



## Water Resources Forum, 16 March 2017

### Briefing paper: Metering

The purpose of this paper is to provide background information on our metering programme. At the Water Resources Forum we will provide an overview of the programme, feedback on some of our experiences and learning points, and set out some early findings.

### Introduction

Water resources are under pressure, and London and the Thames Valley face an increasing water supply-demand deficit driven by a growing population, sustainability reductions, and the effects of climate change.

Metering is an important part of our plan to manage water resources efficiently and effectively. Metering will provide essential data to improve our ability to identify and target activity to reduce leakage, and to work with our customers to raise their awareness of water use and opportunities to reduce their usage. Over the 5 year period from 2015 to 2020 we plan to install around 900,000 meters including over 440,000 meters as part of the progressive metering programme.

### Overview of the progressive metering programme

Our progressive metering programme is currently focused in London. We are working borough-by-borough across the capital, and are working in the London Boroughs of Bexley, Enfield, Greenwich, Islington and Waltham Forest. We will extend the programme to the Thames Valley from around 2020.

In October 2016 we installed our 100,000th smart meter. We have learnt a huge amount since the start of the programme and are still learning and developing our programme. Two key areas of challenge have been technology and customer engagement.

**Technology:** We are using smart meters, connected to a wireless network. Smart meters provide a more detailed understanding of where water is being used, and in what quantities, across our network. They also provide customers with information to help them manage their own water use, and bill. Smart meters therefore provide huge benefits and we consider it is the right technology to use but it is the first time this technology has been used in the sector and there have been considerable challenges to overcome in the roll out.

**Customer engagement:** Effective customer engagement is key to the success of the progressive metering programme, in terms of the efficient delivery of the programme, and also to ensure that the meters are used to their full potential. We have used a range of methods to contact and communicate with customers but have found engagement with customers to be challenging. This is particularly an issue where meters are internal and require access to the property to fit the meter. The access rate experienced has been around 50% of properties with successful installs in around 20% of those properties. We are exploring alternative approaches for internal meter installation, and we are seeking feedback from customers on an ongoing basis and amending our approach in response.

We are offering a 'Smarter Home Visits' to all homes where smart meters are being installed. These involve water efficiency audits; water saving advice and the latest water-saving devices professionally fitted in homes to help reduce water and energy bills. These have been successful with customers. We are considering opportunities to develop the communication and engagement activities to ensure we can gain the most benefit from the programme.



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Alongside the progressive metering programme we are continuing to provide meters to customers who request them, referred to as optants, replace meters which have come to the end of their life, and install meters on new properties. We are proposing to install smart meters for these programmes where they are in fixed network areas.

### **What have we found so far?**

We are evaluating the metering programme as it is implemented, in respect of the costs and benefits. Customers are offered a 2-year period during which they can switch to a metered bill. At present we are collating data to understand the usage benefits of customers switching to a metered bill. The benefits of the programme and the data available will steadily increase in the years ahead. We will present some of our early findings at the Forum.

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