

# Final Drought Plan

## 2022

### Appendix B: Communications Plan



# 1 Introduction

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Our drought communications strategy is developed and designed to do two things:

- Encourage behaviour change among consumers so that we can see a reduction in consumption at a time or in a specific location when it is needed most and in doing so improve the resource position and avoid the need for more formal restrictions, such as Temporary Use Bans (TUBs).
- Keep key stakeholders with an interest or concern about the supply and demand situation in our region informed and help facilitate their support and influence in sharing information to the wider community.

The activities detailed are supplemented throughout each year with an ‘always on’ approach to communicating with our customers on how they can be more water efficient, linked to our 2019 Water Resources Management Plan (WRMP19), saving themselves money if metered, and protecting the wider environment.

Our approach and the communication techniques deployed have been informed by regular research and time spent exploring attitudes to water usage and consumption with our customers, as well as adopting best practice techniques from behavioural change science and from other sectors where such change has been delivered. A summary of our research findings can be found in Annex B of this document. During 2020, we also trialled new activities to understand impact and effectiveness, particularly where focused messages were needed or where a change in behaviour was required in a condensed timeframe. Examples of these and their effectiveness are highlighted later in this section.

# 2 Why we communicate

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At a time of dry weather, our specific purpose is to reduce demand, whether that is region-wide or area specific where there are particular needs or where we can see high consumption. By directly appealing to customers to use less water earlier in a dry weather event, we have found that water demand can be reduced. As described in Appendix C, we have assumed a voluntary demand reduction of 2% in our modelling. However, as described in the main Drought Plan document, we will ask customers to play their part voluntarily to reduce usage through a series of phased interventions designed to deliver a targeted reduction in their demand at each point. These interventions combine a variety of activities, which are more specifically directed at customers and their particular circumstances, tariff type and lifestyle. Our stretching targets accumulate to a 5% reduction overall in customer demand which is equivalent to the savings predicted through historical evidence and research. This can be achieved through a range of interventions to ensure that the focus and messaging is relevant for the right customer to encourage the change required and reduce the likelihood of having to take further actions.

# 3 Who we communicate with

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In the event of a drought, we will communicate with our customers, the wider community and a wide range of other stakeholders and interested parties. Based on our previous experience of dry weather events together with the requirements of the drought plan guidance, we have compiled the following list which we believe is a comprehensive set of stakeholders who need to be kept informed and who are able to help us in meeting our demand reduction targets.

- Customers – both household and businesses
- Sensitive customers – such as particular water users or those more vulnerable, such as Priority Service customers
- MPs
- The media
- Regulators, such as environmental regulators, Public Health England, Drinking Water Inspectorate and Consumer Council for Water
- Other regulators and government departments
- Local Resilience Forums – which bring together a number of interested bodies by county
- Other water companies, including NAVs
- Business retailers with customers in our region
- Business organisations, such as the Confederation of British Industry
- Other bodies (including emergency services and local authorities)
- Other stakeholders and groups (including environmental/conservation, recreation, agricultural, local industry/power plant operators)

This document describes our approach to communicating with customers from section 3.1 to 6 inclusive. Section 7 details communications with regulators and stakeholders.

## 3.1 Customers

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Our year-round focus on water efficiency will be enhanced during a dry weather event in terms of the intensity of our activity, its frequency and reach. The main purpose of our communications is to drive a behaviour change so we can see a reduction in demand for water. Alongside this, and to encourage the positive response from customers and the wider community, we keep them informed of the current water resources position and amplify what actions United Utilities itself is doing to protect water supplies such as tackling leakage.

During dry weather, we will firstly seek to manage demand by an appropriate, phased escalation of our water saving campaign, ensuring customers are fully informed of the water resources situation and what they can do to use only what's needed and help avoid formal restrictions.

An important aspect of that is the context setting through the collaboration with others to demonstrate to the wider community the impact the drought and use of water is having on their local environment. This helps signify an important step change to the customer and community, as the impact of the dry weather becomes more visible. The use of other influencers, beyond just that of the water company and its relationship with its bill-paying customers, is an important aspect of creating the context for the behaviour change required.

A key element of the communications will be the positive impact of water saving on the local environment including sensitive and protected freshwater habitats and species and using proof points and imagery which help convey that and add resonance to those customers. We saw how this approach was effective during the summer of 2021 and also helped better connect communities to where their water comes from.

Our comprehensive research has shown that one size does not always fit all and that even in a drought situation, targeted messages and interventions are required to generate the response required in terms of reducing consumption. Motivations and barriers to change are driven by a number of factors and can be influenced by life-stage, whether customers are metered or not metered, an understanding of how much water is being used and the perceived ability of how easy it is to save water, as well as the desire itself to use less.

While the principal objective of our communications is to reduce consumption, the plan also needs to balance other factors such as the local economy, public health and social considerations. We therefore need to avoid generating undue concerns whether this is for broader economic or tourism-related reasons, public health, such as the pandemic of 2020, or cultural purposes, such as important events like Ramadan. If we fail to do this, we may turn customers away from our messaging and this could be counter-productive to the ultimate aim to ask customers to reduce demand.

# 4 How will we communicate?

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There are a wide range of channels we will utilise in order to raise awareness of the need to save water and to keep customers and the community informed about the situation. We will make most effective use of those as appropriate to the need to ensure we are reaching the community and the different audiences within it.

Social media and digital advertising are important channels, which can be used to precisely target individuals, specific customer segments or locations, and delivered in real time. These can be combined with more traditional methods of newspaper advertising and features in the press or on TV and radio, as well as our own websites.

Out of home placement is also important and supplements the above so we will be visible in communities during a dry weather event, using high footfall opportunities to create pop-up shops to deliver water efficiency advice and incentives and distribute water efficient devices – this will range from supermarkets, city and town centre locations, garden centres to community events like major flower shows.

United Utilities will also use direct messaging to all its customers and this can be delivered via email, text or landline messaging. Targeted communications can also be provided to the more than 800,000 customers registered for its online My Account service app. In years to come we are planning to add to this range of direct messaging via the ability to send push notifications to our mobile app users.

Our online water savings calculator ‘Get Water Fit’ means that customers can better understand how much water they use at home and receive tips on how to save. They can order water saving gadgets and take challenges to contribute towards a donation to charity. There are currently over 100,000 customers who have registered for Get Water Fit. We use local press advertising to build greater awareness and to include customers who may not have access to online and social media and also advertise on key local radio stations across the region.

We now have digital screens on our water and wastewater vehicles which allows us to target messages by locality while we are undertaking work across the region.

Table 1: Examples of water efficiency actions that are used during normal operations and during a drought

Communication Channel	Examples
ITV Granada and Border weather sponsorship	Reached 50.3% of North West adults, seeing messages 19 times on average
Dedicated radio messaging	1,588 20" spot ads across the key regional stations, radio sponsorship and DAX digital radio
United Utilities website	More than 48,000 home banner views; 100,000 splash screen peak demand views
Online education portal	More than 9,000 visits to our new home learning hub
Water efficient devices	Significant uplift in orders compared to 2019 – more than 67,500 ordered since April
Social media	Facebook posts reaching 1,465,427; more than 589,000 views of videos Twitter more than 119,140 impressions; 2,274 engagements and 9,699 video views
YouTube ad campaign	More than 205,400 impressions/a view rate of 45%
Partner vehicle digital screens	Carried water messaging in the region and hotspot areas during peak demand
Direct messages	2.6 million direct emails and texts sent to customers and to all retailers in our area. Targeted direct emails and texts sent to 1.3 customers in the Greater Manchester and Lancashire areas
Regional Press ads	Ran adverts in 13 titles region-wide
Media	8 national newspaper interviews, 5 NW Radio interviews; 4 NW TV interviews
Key worker campaign	Fixing leaks, responding to bursts, key leakage signage and on PPE

## 4.1 Influencing behaviour change

In addition to the awareness-raising activities by channel, we have seen that by targeting messages by customer type/segment or using community based incentives to inspire residents to save water for an important local cause, we can deliver a reduction in usage, helping to avoid the need for formal restrictions. This is one of the methods that we will use to try to achieve our aspiration of reducing demand using communications by 5% as discussed in section 2.

During the summer of 2020, we undertook two community based trials in West Cumbria and Blackburn, both with the objective of incentivising the local residents to save up to 150 million litres of water, restricting their own use by at least 10 litres per person per day, and if achieved generating a donation of £25,000 for their local hospice. Alongside this, we undertook a direct mail and text campaign to metered customers in the Stockport area with above average consumption, focused on 'save water, save money', to understand the impact of community based versus individual household level targeted communications. Both trials had control groups so we could assess the impact of the targeted activity on consumption.

The direct message campaign was particularly successful in a shorter time-scale, for example by week 5, we had seen a 20% reduction in the Stockport test area of 5,000 metered customers' consumption versus an 8% reduction in the control area. While we are confident that these reductions can be replicated in discreet communities for certain customer segments, more trials are needed to forecast a region-wide response. Furthermore, these efficiencies were made by metered customers. The response from unmetered customers needs to be established but is likely to be lower. Savings were also achieved through the community based activity, although it took longer (a three-month period) to realise the benefits. However, Covid-19 also impacted the delivery of the campaign with a restriction on being able to undertake direct activity within the community or face-to-face promotion. Taking this into account, we have established a voluntary reduction target of a 5%. While this is a highly aggressive target, the trials described above provide a strong indication that this target is achievable.

The details of these two trials are set out below and serve as an example of what we will do in the future. This sort of activity will be a crucial ingredient of our agile communications.



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Furthermore, home checks have been trialled to help upgrade existing homes by offering water efficiency devices. These audits offer water-saving advice, install water saving devices and find and fix leaks e.g. 'leaky loos'.

We are currently scheduling further trials where we can better understand the response of individual customer segments to different messages. This will also help us to understand how to effect long-term change. As we drop through drought levels customer messaging will be enhanced to match the seriousness of the situation. Examples would include: Frequency and penetration, community presence and activation, targeted interventions and support for media (TV, online and radio).



# 5 When will we communicate?

If persistent dry weather is experienced and the onset of a drought is predicted, we will engage in proactive communications.

Although tailored communications, targeting and activity will be important to reducing consumption, our broader communications will be grouped into two stages with a subtle change in messaging from **“Let’s all save water”** to **“Do what you can to save it now”**. This will happen before we cross drought level 1. These stages are also referred to as Green and Amber respectively as part of our communications approach.

Within drought level 1, our messaging will change to **“Act now – use only what you need for essential purposes”**. This stage is referred to as Red as part of our communications approach. A summary of the communications that will take place from Enhanced Monitoring and Operation to Level 2 is provided in Table 2.

Table 2: Summary of drought communications and implementation

Drought Zone	Activity	Time to implement	Likelihood
Normal Operation	Ongoing water efficiency programme		BAU
Enhanced Monitoring and Operations	Establish internal drought incident meeting	1 Day	N/A
	Enhanced water efficiency communications	1 Week	
Level 1	Establish Environment Agency (EA) drought incident meeting. Consider the possibility of joint media briefings with the EA.	1 Week	1 in 5 years (20% risk/year)
	Further enhancement of water efficiency communications	1 Week	
	Stakeholder update "We have crossed into Level 1 – we are implementing drought actions to manage the possible risk of a drought"	3 Days	
Level 1	Campaign for voluntary use restraint	3 Days	1 in 12 years (8% risk/year)
	No Stakeholder update (Still in zone 1)	-	
Level 2	Enhanced communications or Commence representation period for introduction of Temporary Use Ban	3 days to start TUB notification; 2-5 days' notice depending on the situation.	1 in 20 years (5% chance)
	Introduce Temporary Use Ban with extensive communications campaign		

This plan sets out the drought levels that we use as decision points to guide us in determining what drought action measures to take in any particular drought event. Table 3 maps each level to communication actions to show at what stage we would anticipate undertaking communication with various organisations. Organisations would only be contacted if drought powers of interest to them are being considered.

Some communications activity can be undertaken within a few days of crossing levels, but other activities can take longer. For example, advertisements will need design work within a drought event to ensure they reflect the particular situation and some local newspapers are only published weekly. We will circulate weekly update reports to our regulators and undertake weekly telephone conferences with a Multi-Agency Drought Group comprising senior managers from the Environment Agency, United Utilities, Natural England, Canal and River Trust and others as appropriate.

Table 3: Organisations that we may contact following the crossing of levels (managed using incident management procedures to confirm ownership of activity as appropriate)

Group	Organisation	Stakeholders contacted by zone			
		Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4
Regulators/ Government	Environment Agency	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Natural England	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Natural Resources Wales	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Ofwat		✓	✓	✓
	Water UK		✓	✓	✓
	Drinking Water Inspectorate / Public Health England		✓	✓	✓
	Consumer Council for Water		✓	✓	✓
	Defra		✓	✓	✓
National Park Authorities			✓	✓	✓
Neighbouring water companies			✓	✓	✓
Inset appointees	Leep Water Networks Ltd.		✓	✓	✓
Licenced suppliers operating in our area			✓	✓	✓
Local councils and MPs	Local MPs			✓	✓
	Department for Communities and Local Government			✓	✓
	Local Authorities			✓	✓
	County Councils			✓	✓
	Borough Councils			✓	✓
	Unitary Authorities			✓	✓
Local Resilience Forums			✓	✓	✓
Navigation authorities			✓	✓	✓
Fire service				✓	✓
Local environmental organisations and stakeholder interest groups including local businesses			✓	✓	✓

For more information on how we communicate with stakeholders, please see section 7.

# 6 Adapting our communications to achieve the desired change

## 6.1 Agile communications

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In section 5, we set out the communication actions we will take at different drought levels. Our communications strategy has evolved from previous drought plans, learning lessons from the outcomes of trials to understand the effectiveness of interventions and from insight-driven research with customers, which has considered attitudes to and motivations for saving water through to the response to specific messaging and information provided in a dry weather situation.

All year round, we encourage customers to be water-efficient, adapting messages and activities each season, and tailoring the advice and help to customers already on a water meter and those who are not. This is part of a wider strategy of nudging customers to change their long-term behaviour to save water. In order to promote this, we have used the following tools:-

- **Customer Insights:** Our research team has run surveys on how the attitudes of different customer segments vary. They have also worked with customers to complete 'Water Diaries' to understand how they perceive the value of water and the quantity of it they consume. This helps in segmenting our messages. The activity is regularly repeated so that we can evaluate change in attitudes over time.
- **Water Efficiency Trials:** United Utilities has commissioned trials to forecast the likely reduction in demand that communications can bring about in different circumstances. For example, both individual and community communications have been trialled and meter data examined to calculate the effect on demand for different socioeconomic groups. These are further detailed in Section 4.1.
- **Use of demographic segmentation data** to target the right message to the right customer, using demographic, life-stage or customer type and payment data.

Building the knowledge by telling customers where their water is from to establish a more emotional connection with saving water as it comes from a reservoir, not just from their tap. By combining the information from these tools and considering the severity of a drought, the segments we are trying to influence and the knowledge of what has worked in the past, a multi-channel tailored campaign has been developed.

If we apply this in a drought situation, the target customer segment will be identified. This may be metered or non-metered customers. Our extensive research will help us select the most effective type of messaging. During normal operations, i.e. when there is no drought, a lower intensity 'nudge' approach will be used to affect long-term behaviour change in water consumption. This will be turned into a multi-channel campaign, which will be evaluated over time and the results fed back so that plan can be refined.

This is outlined in Figure 1 below.

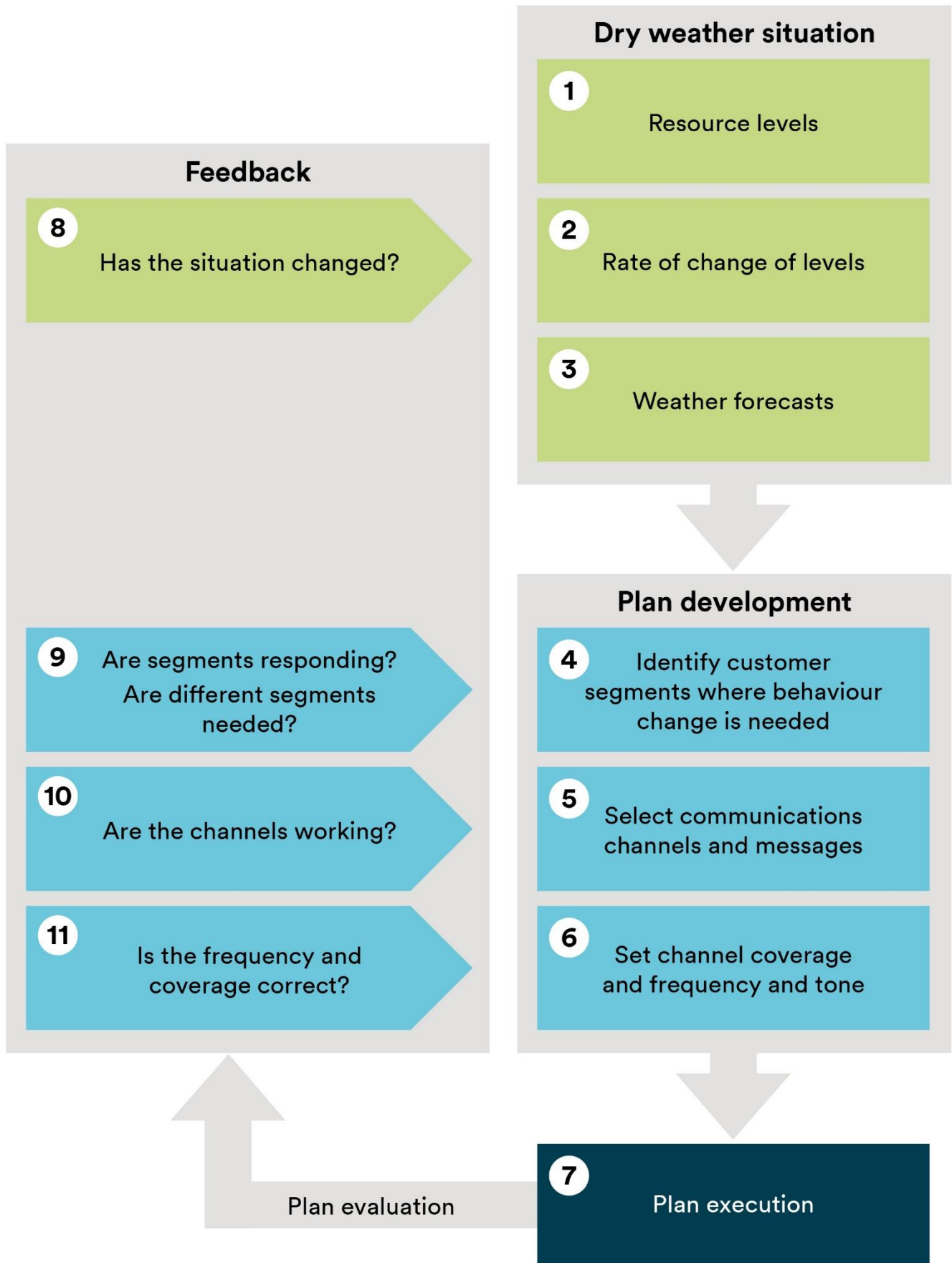
The framework that we utilise works for both our business as usual “always on” and dry weather communications. We begin by assessing the situation that we are trying to address. When dry weather is not an issue, this will be measures such as our per capita consumption (PCC) targets. When there is dry weather, we will consider resource levels and their locations (Figure 1 – step 1), the rate of change of these levels (Figure 1 – step 2) and our forecast as to how the weather will affect those resource levels (Figure 1 – step 3).

Once we have assessed this information, we will modify our existing communications to deliver the demand saving we need by influencing customers to alter their behaviours. We will first identify segments that we want to reach (Figure 1 – step 4). This may be related to geographical location, whether customers have a meter, hard to reach groups etc. Based on the customers identified, the communications channels are selected based on our insights from trials and previous experience (Figure 1 – step 5) and the coverage, frequency and tone adjusted (Figure 1 – step 6). For example, if our resource levels have recently worsened and this is forecast to continue, it is likely that we would increase the frequency of our communications. If the incident is across the whole region, we are likely to choose a channel that the whole region will receive. However, if the segment that we want to reach is localised, we may choose to use a local channel such as influencers.

The plan is then executed and its success evaluated. We will look at our primary objective which is whether the plan and resulting demand reduction has resulted in a situation change (Figure 1 – step 8). If it has and the incident is resolved, we would adjust our plan accordingly. Assuming the incident persists, we will look to see how well our targeted segments are responding and whether any more need to be added (Figure 1 – step 9). In conjunction, we will review the channels and messaging that we are using to determine how well our messages are “cutting through” (Figure 1 – step 10). We will also assess whether our message frequency needs to be increased or decreased (Figure 1 – step 11).

It is through the ongoing evaluation and review that messages, channels and frequency can be refined but also remain agile so that they can respond to short and longer dry weather events.

Figure 1: Agile communications schematic



It should be noted that although it is not easy to accurately evaluate the specific effectiveness of the communications when there are other factors that could be influencing demand, we have developed a methodology and are in the process of standing up dashboards that will support this key element of agile communications.

In this way, communications during spring and summer months are more likely to focus on activities which are more common around the home and in the garden. In the winter months, we provide more help and advice on how to protect pipes from bursting or detecting leaks in the home. This would be decided in Figure 1 – step 5 above. There will also be all year-round promotion of water-saving devices, water home checks and discounted offers for products such as water butts.

During a drought, these communications would be increased and would start to intensify in tone and urgency (Figure 1 – step 6) from when the risk of drought is first identified. The extent to which the frequency is increased would be dependent on all the factors described above and identified in boxes 1 – 10 in Figure 1.

In order to support the selection of the correct tone for our communications (Figure 1 – step 6), we operate a Green, Amber, Red (GAR) terminology. This is described below in section 6.2 below.

### 6.1.1 Non-household communications

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This approach works for non-household customers. During Enhanced Communications and Level 1, communication would typically be by signposting retailers to our website, identifying specific customers / groups that may require immediate contact and reviewing retailer plans. The intensity of this activity would intensify from Enhanced monitoring and through level 1.

On moving into level 2, the communications above would intensify still further but Business Market Services would start to work more intensively with our internal communications team by using the very same framework as explained above. This would enable the specific non-household segments to be targeted (Figure 1 – step 4) and a plan developed in the same way as for household customer segments.

## 6.2 Green, Amber and Red Communications

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The Green status will be used as escalation to reduce demand in the ‘enhanced monitoring and operations’ level. Amber and Red will come into force at level 1 and will continue through levels 2, 3 and 4 with increasingly strong messaging. By using the agile approach set out in 6.1 and the flexibility that it will allow, we will dampen demand, thus reducing the likelihood of a temporary use ban.

### 6.2.1 Business as usual communications

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At this point we are above our enhanced monitoring and operations level (see Figure 2) so we will continue with our usual communications activities/enhanced water efficiency messages. This is one of the key tools in effecting long term water saving behaviours which will also benefit per capita consumption.

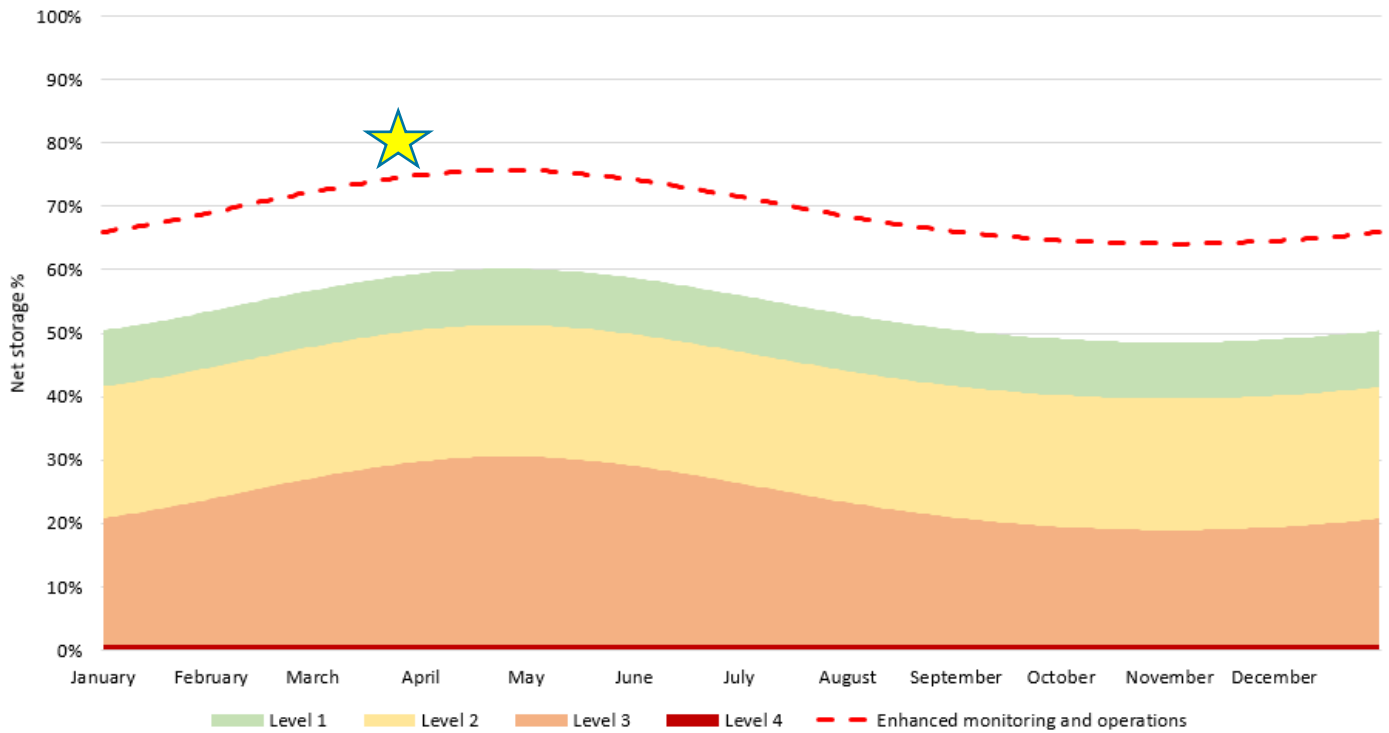



Figure 2: Business as usual communications

### 6.2.2 Enhanced monitoring and operations

At this point we have crossed our enhanced monitoring and operations level and heading towards level 1. (See Figure 3)

- Continue with enhanced water efficiency communications
- Move to ‘Let’s all save’ status prior to reaching level 1 shown by the green line on Figure 3.

Table 4: Messages on crossing Enhanced Monitoring Level

Drought Level	Audience	Message
Enhanced monitoring and operations	 <p>Customers <i>Let's all save</i></p>	<p>Enhanced water efficiency communications</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The weather has been drier than normal and reservoirs are lower than we'd like for the time of year</li> <li>2. You can help by saving water where you can around the home and garden</li> <li>3. We have lots of ways to help you save water and money – get your free water saver's pack</li> <li>4. If you spot a leak when out and about, please report it to us</li> </ol>
	Internal	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Assessment of current water resources situation (set up incident meeting)</li> <li>2. United Utilities initiate operational actions to ensure resilience to drought</li> <li>3. We have crossed our Enhanced monitoring and operations curve – the risk of drought is higher than normal</li> </ol>

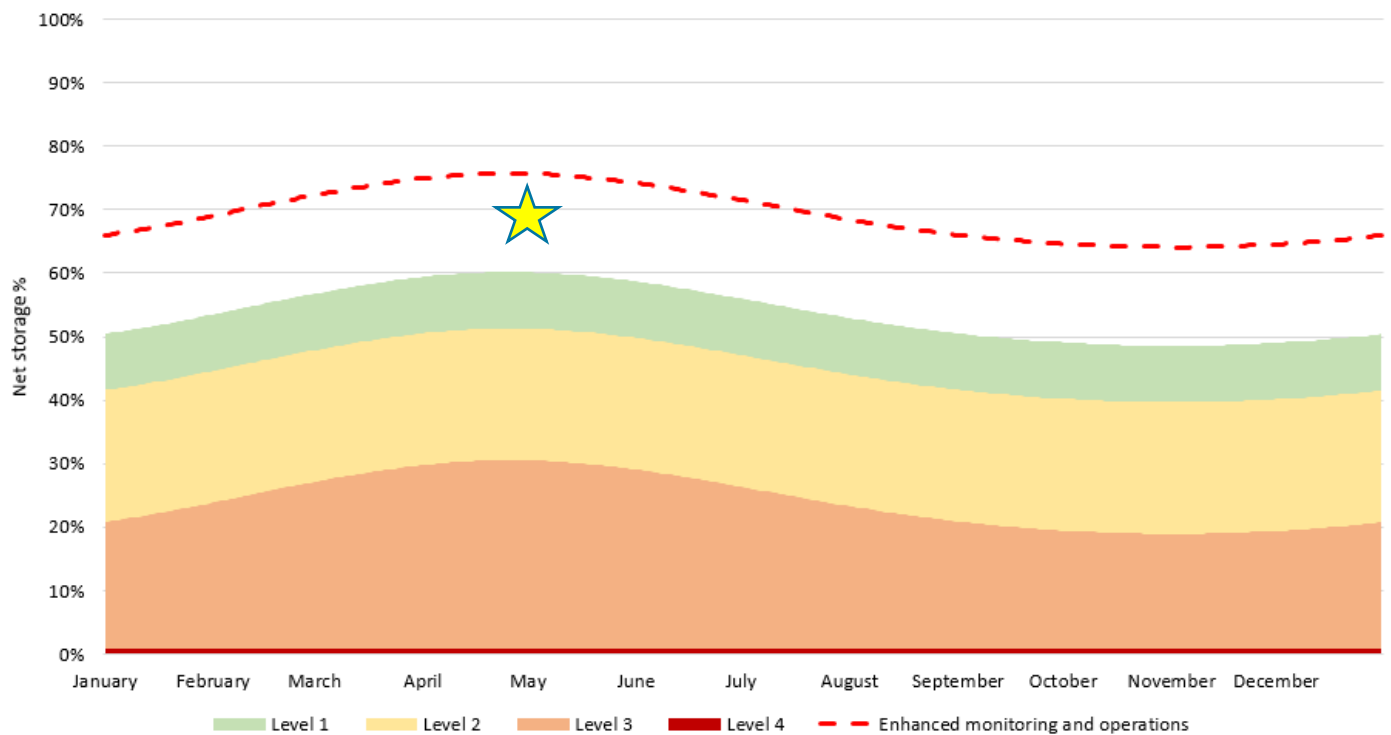


Figure 3: Communications on entering Enhanced Monitoring and Operations



### 6.2.3 Level 1

We are now within level 1 (see Figure 4).

- At this point we are following the amber status messages
- Further into level 1 we implement our red status messages



Table 5: Messages on crossing Level 1

Drought Level	Audience	Message
Level 1	 <p>Customers <i>Please do what you can to save it now</i></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The weather has been drier than normal and reservoirs are lower than we'd like for the time of year</li> <li>2. Please do what you can to use less – there are many ways to save</li> <li>3. Increase region-wide messaging (Media and Radio sponsorship, social media messaging, direct messages)</li> <li>4. Plan behavioural change campaigns (individual incentive tests, community incentive test)</li> <li>5. Promote our campaign for voluntary use restraint</li> </ol>
	 <p>Customers <i>Act now - help us by using only what you need for essential purposes</i></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The weather continues to be drier than normal and this is now impacting the environment and our ability to keep water flowing for everyone</li> <li>2. Act now to avoid restrictions</li> <li>3. Analyse behavioural change campaign results (have we achieved our desired % benefit)</li> <li>4. Provide updates on community incentive tests (progress towards incentive targets)</li> </ol>
	Regulators and Stakeholders	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. We have crossed into Level 1 – we are implementing drought actions to manage the possible risk of a drought</li> <li>2. Increased assessment of current water resources situation and updates on the actions we are taking.</li> <li>3. Environment Agency and United Utilities dry weather meetings</li> <li>4. Managing leakage and pressure</li> <li>5. Please support us by promoting water efficiency and using your organisation's social media to raise general awareness of the dry weather and the need to save water</li> </ol>

In order to analyse the results of the behavioural change campaign, the savings required will be measured against the modelled peak of demand during a dry weather scenario to demonstrate whether customer usage is below, in line or above those predictions. Achievement of those savings will be tracked through a dynamic dashboard which will aggregate usage data from metered and unmetered customers and businesses and be operated in real-time to allow changes to be made in the interventions being used.

This information is used to feed back into our agile communications as described in section 6.1.

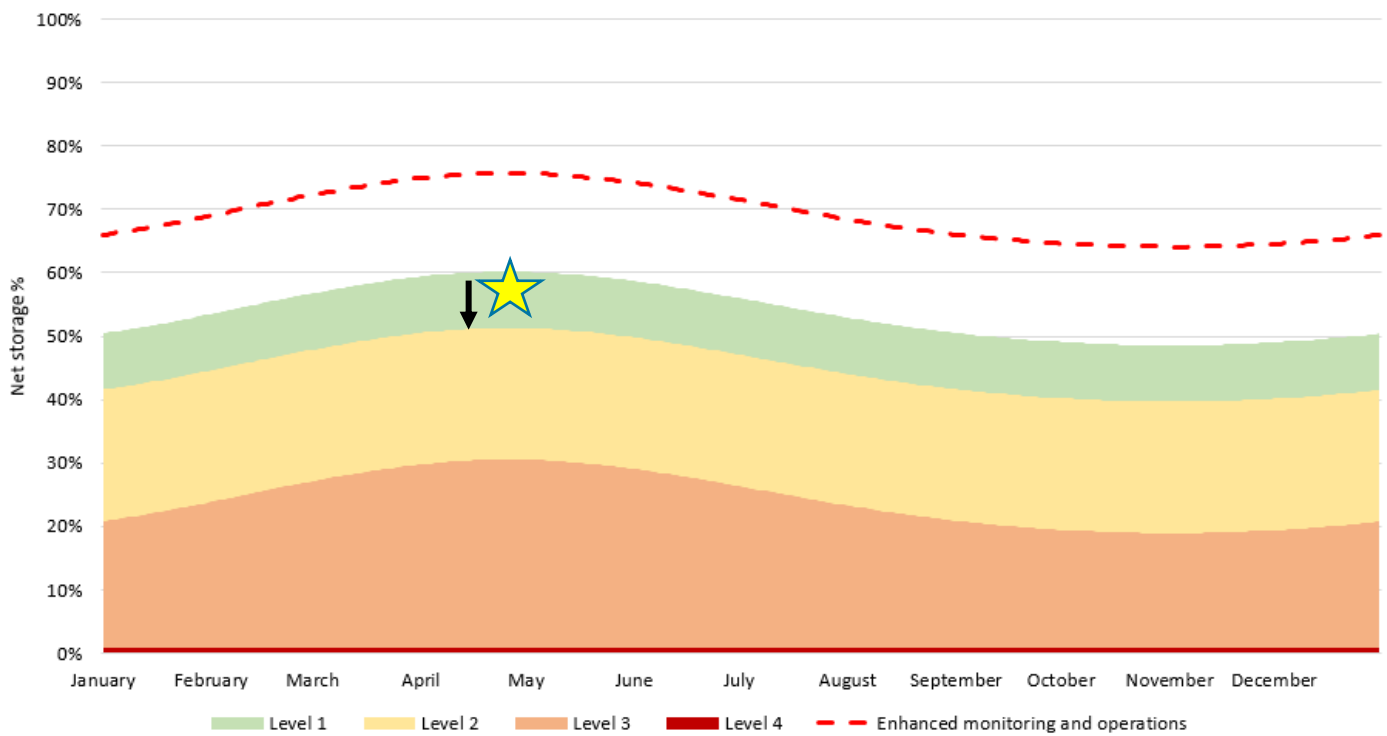


Figure 4: Communications on crossing Level 1



### 6.2.4 Level 2

We are now within level 2 (see Figure 5).

- At this point we are following the Red status (Act now) messages
- Continue these messages into level 2
- Representations on the introduction of a TUB (2-5 day implementation period)

We will consider the needs of customers who benefit from extra support from us and have registered as Priority Services customers. This could be due to factors such as age, ill health, disability, mental-health problems, financial worries or language barriers. We will take into consideration what impact any drought-related restrictions would have on those customers and introduce supportive interventions and more direct and personal communication to keep them informed. This may mean introducing exemptions for some of those customers where a restriction would cause significant issues for them. We would also engage with our broader stakeholders from the health and local authority sector on this approach.

Table 6: Messages on crossing Level 2

Drought Level	Audience	Message
Level 2	 <p>Customers – Phase 1 <i>Act now - help us by only using what you need for essential purposes</i></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The weather continues to be drier than normal and this is now impacting the environment and our ability to keep water flowing for everyone</li> <li>2. Act now to avoid restrictions</li> <li>3. Only use what you need in the home and garden</li> <li>4. Help avoid the need for restrictions by acting now</li> <li>5. Further updates on community incentive tests</li> </ol>
	 <p>Customers – Phase 2 <i>Introduce water use restrictions</i></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5. A Temporary Use Ban is in place (if restrictions are introduced, 2-5 days to implement)</li> <li>6. Please visit our website or contact us via if you feel you should be exempt from these restrictions</li> <li>7. Drought permits/orders are now in place (application and approval required)</li> </ol>
	Regulators and Stakeholders	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. We have crossed into Level 2</li> <li>2. Assessment of current water resources situation</li> <li>3. Updates on the actions we are taking (including water use restrictions and drought permit/order applications if appropriate)</li> <li>4. Please support us by promoting water efficiency and restricting your own use of water where appropriate (e.g. vehicle washing) and using your organisation’s social media to raise general awareness of the drought</li> <li>5. Provide updates on the situation in regards to Temporary Use Ban</li> <li>6. Provide updates on the status of drought permit applications</li> </ol>

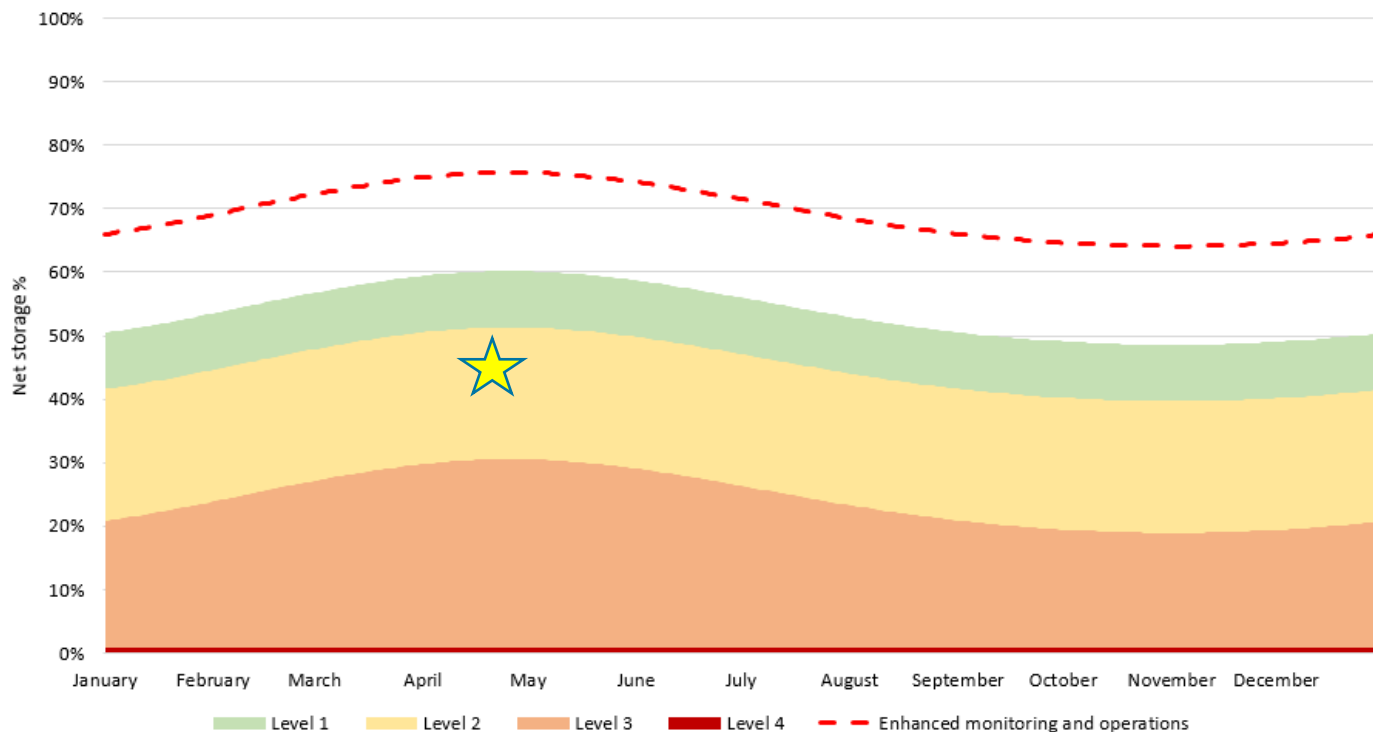


Figure 5: Communications on crossing Level 2

### 6.2.5 Level 3

We are now within level 3 (see Figure 6).

- At this point we are following the Red status (Act now) messages and TUBs are in place

- Non-essential use bans (NEUBs) to be implemented

Business customers may be affected more by a drought order which prohibits non-essential uses of water. In the event of an application for such power, we will discuss the measures with the Consumer Council for Water and organisations representing businesses in our region to discuss ways we can minimise any adverse impacts that taking such measures may have on them.

Table 7: Messages within level 3


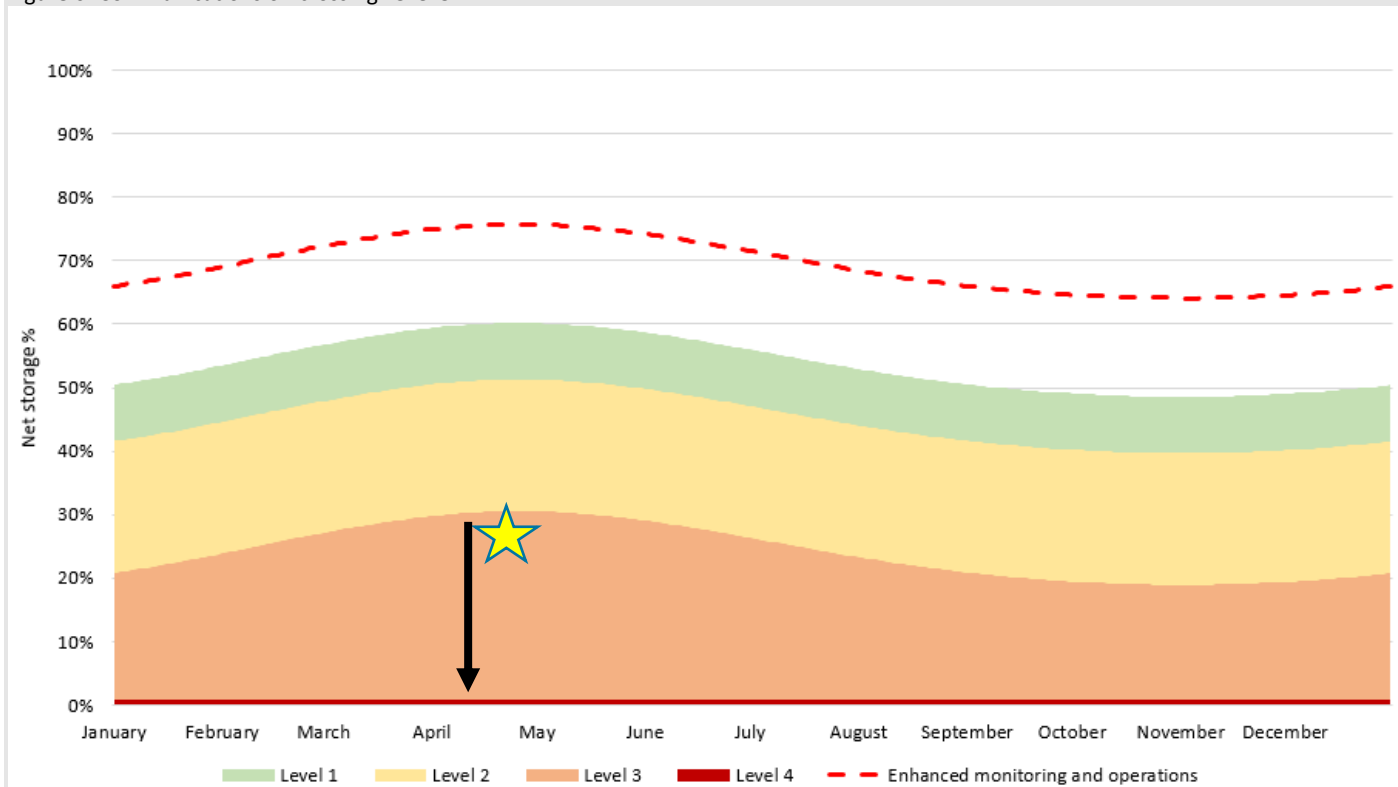
Drought Level	Audience	Message
Level 3	 Customers	1. We have crossed into Level 3 2. Assessment of current water resources situation 3. We are taking further action to protect water supplies 4. Restrictions are now in place 5. A Temporary Use Ban is still in place 6. Drought permits/orders are still in place 7. <b>NEUBs</b>
	Regulators and Stakeholders	1. We have crossed into Level 3 2. Assessment of current water resources situation 3. Updates on the actions we are taking (including water use restrictions and drought permit/orders) 4. Provide updates on the situation in regards to Temporary Use Ban 5. <b>NEUBs</b>

Figure 6: Communications on crossing Level 3



### 6.2.6 Coming out of a drought

Exactly the same messages to customers and stakeholders apply when coming out of a drought as they do going in. As we move down through the levels from 3 to Enhanced Monitoring and Operations, we will use the same Green, Amber and Red methodology to progressively de-escalate the tone of our communications. In this way, customers will be kept aware of the drought status right up to and including the point that it ends. Crucially, our

communications on water saving will not stop. As outlined in our agile communications methodology, our communications will move into Business as Usual (BAU) and will contribute to reducing our per capita consumption. Similarly, we will communicate with regulators and stakeholders using the actions set out in the table above as our process. This will slowly de-escalate the drought, keeping regulators and stakeholders apprised as we cross through each subsequent level.

# 7 Regulator and Stakeholder Communications

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The following section describes how United Utilities will communicate with regulators and stakeholders in the event of a dry weather incident. The groups covered are as follows:

- Environmental regulators
- Other regulators and government
- Other water companies
- Business retailers
- Stakeholders

## 7.1 Environmental regulators

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In developing and activating the plan, we liaise with the Environment Agency, the Consumer Council for Water and other bodies on water conservation messaging and promotion during drought events. This may involve collaborating on joint communications or announcements, where appropriate, to help raise the profile and consistency of the messages, demonstrate consensus of the need for water saving actions and how that can positively affect the impact this is having on the wider environment.

There will be close dialogue with the Environment Agency and the Consumer Council for Water, for example, in relation to the need for any water use restrictions on the community, protecting supplies to minimise the risk to the environment and ensure security of supply. This will ensure that the response and communications take into account their feedback. During normal conditions we hold regular liaison meetings with our environmental regulators to discuss water resource issues at various management levels. In particular, there are quarterly technical water resources meetings.

In a developing drought situation, a United Utilities/Natural England/Environment Agency Drought Technical Liaison Group is formed. If any of our sources in Wales are affected by the drought, this group will be extended to include Natural Resources Wales. As the drought develops a further group is created of directors from both United Utilities and Environment Agency. These groups will meet to ensure:

- A clear line of communication is maintained between us and the Environment Agency
- A consistent application of policy across the region by us and the Environment Agency
- Any actions agreed by the liaison groups represent corporate decisions
- An ongoing review of our Drought Action Plan developed for the specific drought event including stakeholder communications.

The frequency of liaison with environmental regulators changes as a drought develops.

This will be in line with the following table.

Table 8: Frequency of regulator liaison

Level Crossed	Communication action Taken
Enhanced monitoring and operations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We will share data and information with the Environment Agency</li> <li>• This data will provide evidence that we are adhering to the actions as detailed in our drought plan (table 3 and 8 in the main document)<sup>1</sup></li> </ul>
<b>Level 1</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The liaison group will meet weekly</li> </ul>
<b>Level 2</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The meetings of the liaison group will continue</li> <li>• Director level engagement will also increase in frequency as the drought progresses</li> </ul>
<b>Level 2 at Haweswater Reservoir</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Convene a meeting of the Windermere Stakeholder Group which also includes the Environment Agency</li> </ul>

If appropriate we will engage Natural England and Natural Resources Wales at an early stage as the drought develops, particularly for sources within or upstream of a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and/or a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), and also in general for non-designated sites. During a drought, we will review the existing environmental monitoring arrangements for drought permit/order sites with our environmental regulators.

In a public water supply drought United Utilities will also establish a Multi-Agency Drought Group. This will comprise senior managers from the Environment Agency, United Utilities, Natural England, Natural Resources Wales, the Canal and River Trust and others as appropriate.

## 7.2 Other regulators and government

We will provide regular and timely updates to Defra as a drought situation develops. Such updates will include details of available water resources and measures taken to conserve reservoir storage and reduce demand. We will also attempt to provide Defra with as much notice as possible of any drought order applications.

We will ensure that we keep the Drinking Water Inspectorate, Ofwat, Consumer Council for Water, and the Welsh Government informed of the drought situation. Customer communications and issues will be discussed with the Consumer Council for Water.

In relation to specific drought permits/orders, we will endeavour to provide as much prior warning as practicable.

## 7.3 Other water companies

We will liaise with other wholesale water companies as appropriate with respect to bulk supply arrangements or actions that could affect other companies. In the event of us introducing water use restrictions, we will inform neighbouring water companies and discuss with our regional group. The decision to impose water use restrictions for each water company ultimately depends on the water resource position of that company. We will work constructively

<sup>1</sup> We are working with the Environment Agency to establish the full detail on what this data share will look like

with our regional group, for example we will work to ensure our drought management communications are consistent. We will participate in any national communication initiatives organised by Water UK.

New Appointment and variation (NAVs) and licensed/appointed suppliers operating in our area, operate under their own instrument of appointment; as such we have no control over demand restrictions imposed on their customers. However, in the event of a drought, we will endeavour to engage with NAVs in our area to help them/influence them to reduce demand. During the 2010 drought, we engaged with and agreed with NAVs in our area that they would mirror the restrictions imposed by us, and their Final Drought Plan 2018 mirrors our approach to drought actions. In any future drought event we would seek to reach similar agreements with any inset appointees or licensed/appointed suppliers operating in our area.

This will enable us to coordinate our activities in the event of dry weather as part of our wider communications plan.

## 7.4 Business retailers

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From April 2017 non-household customers of water and wastewater services have been able to choose their retail supplier. We will liaise with all non-household retailers, with business customers in our region, through a dedicated United Utilities team who share regular information on the current dry weather situation and provide specific business focused water efficiency related advice and information which can be used and shared by those retailers directly to their bill-paying customers and across their own channels of communication<sup>2</sup>.

We will also work with retailers in our region to ensure there is a direct line of advice and guidance in relation to water usage and water efficiency to their customers. We will share information that is available on our broader channels, such as website and through social media, and ask retailers to use and promote this out through their channels too to increase its visibility and accessibility.

## 7.5 Stakeholders

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Our liaison during a drought will also include discussions with organisations including:

- Customer and community interest groups
- Fire Service
- Local Authorities
- Public Health England
- Canal and River Trust
- Members of Parliament (MPs)
- National Park Authorities
- Angling associations
- Environmental/conservation organisations
- Recreational users of our reservoirs and lake water sources
- Local industry and businesses (including those dependent on lake water sources such as Windermere and Ullswater)
- Dee Consultative committee
- Local stakeholders.

The list above demonstrates the groups of stakeholders we may communicate with in any drought event. The specific stakeholders within each group will be determined by the nature of the drought event and will be relevant locally, for example for Windermere we would always liaise with the Windermere liaison group.

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<sup>2</sup> In a drought our communications with retailers will follow Process E6, droughts or dry weather conditions, in the Operational Terms of the Wholesale-Retail Code ([www.mosl.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/3a-20161013-appendix2-wrc-part3-operationalterms.pdf](http://www.mosl.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/3a-20161013-appendix2-wrc-part3-operationalterms.pdf))



We will disseminate information to these key stakeholders during a drought, including the potential need for drought permit/order applications. The following section describes the communications activities that we carry out.

During a drought, we work with other relevant organisations to reinforce the message to save water and to help highlight the effect the drought is having on people and the environment (for example, wildlife habitats, gardens, rivers and lakes). Partnerships with some other organisations, such as the Royal Horticultural Society, enable us to provide more expert advice on how customers can be water-efficient in a number of ways.

Furthermore, we will engage with our neighbouring water companies via Water Resources West. As set out in Appendix I, we have agreed to consistently adopt Level 1 to 4 definitions to categorise our drought actions. We have also agreed to align our drought communications wherever appropriate. WRW's customer and stakeholder management group will support the members in the alignment of communications across WRW.

## 7.6 Other bodies

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Communication with the Fire Service will be maintained through the normal liaison channels at level 3 and meetings will be arranged to discuss any concerns that may arise. This will include but not be limited to pressure management actions that may affect their service. We will discuss any specific issues relating to interactions between our sources and the Canal and River Trust canal systems with local trust staff or with their head office as appropriate.

With respect to Local Authorities and Public Health England, our normal communication channels will be maintained and briefings on the drought situation will be provided as necessary. In the event of an application for a drought order to prohibit non-essential uses of water, we will contact these organisations to explain the need for the restrictions and any mitigation measures that we are taking.

### 7.6.1 Windermere Water Bank Agreement

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The Windermere water bank agreement, updated in December 2012, states that at any time when Windermere is 2.5 cm below weir crest and/or Haweswater storage has crossed Level 2; a meeting of a Windermere stakeholder group will be convened. This group will include representatives from the following organisations: United Utilities, Environment Agency, Holker Estates, Windermere Lake Cruises Ltd and Windermere Marina Village Ltd.

### 7.6.2 Dee Consultative Committee

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We are a member of the Dee Consultative Committee. If storage in the River Dee regulation reservoirs falls to the drought action level, a meeting of the Committee will take place to discuss the introduction of drought alleviation measures as enshrined in the Dee General Directions. The Committee will continue to meet on a regular basis during a drought to review the sustainable operation of the River Dee regulation scheme.

### 7.6.3 Local stakeholders

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The environmental studies that we have undertaken for the drought permit/order sites included in this plan, were carried out in consultation with regulators (Environment Agency, Natural Resources Wales and Natural England, where appropriate) as well as local interested organisations and individuals. Through this process we have developed a database of local contacts, and their involvement in the drought planning process ensures that they are better informed regarding any future proposals for actual drought permit/order applications that may be required.

## Annex A - Examples of Communications

Figure 7: Example adverts using partnerships with others, such as the RHS, to provide specific advice that may be used in drought level 1 (campaign for voluntary water use restraint)

**The Garden Ninja**

One of the most popular things to come out of the current lockdown is increased enthusiasm for gardening, with more of us spending the time growing our own veg and herbs.

Whether it's enjoying planting out flower beds with your kids or heading to our banks, the availability of food from the garden is fantastic.

For those of you with green fingers, there's one more tip for growing, starting with choosing water-wise plants. These activities can offer you up to 10% of your budget, and with the correct advice, supporting it is important that we can save water.

While working up with several thriving garden designs, we built the Garden Ninja to get you the best for saving water while keeping your garden in top condition. For those of you with a water-saving, saving water and saving money.

**Top tips from the Garden Ninja**

1. When a weathering rain instead of a hose, to save less water.
2. Install a water butt to collect rainwater for watering your plants.
3. Water your garden in the early morning or late evening to minimise water lost via evaporation.
4. Leave your lawn alone! Or use a knock-out with water.
5. Mulch your borders by adding a layer of compost, bark, chips or grass clippings to your borders to stop excess water evaporating.
6. Harvest water from washing salad or fruit and use it to water your plants.
7. If you carry a bucket of water to use throughout the day, remember that you don't drink from the garden.
8. Choose plants that require less water like Lavender, Echinacea, Succulents and Peppercorn.
9. If you're choosing not to fish tanks, the water is full of nitrates that are great for plants.
10. Be selective 'weed' watering by selecting those new plants that look in need of water.



**Water. Save it, right now.**

As you're aware, low rainfall, the recent hot spell and high demand over the past few weeks means that Ennerdale reservoir levels are lower than we'd like for this time of year.

We now need your help. To reduce demand, protect nature and conserve as much water as possible, please only use water for essentials until there's enough rain to top up Ennerdale.

- Turn off the tap when you brush your teeth
- Use a washing up bowl
- Reduce the number of washes and only wash a full load
- One minute less in the shower
- Shut off the sprinkler and leave the lawn
- Don't re-fill the paddling pool or hot tub

**Water. Save it, don't waste it. Let's all save water this summer.**

For more water and money saving tips, FREE water saving products and much more, please go to [unitedutilities.com/savewater](https://unitedutilities.com/savewater)

**United Utilities**  
Water for the North West

Ennerdale, Summer 2021

**Water. Save it, don't waste it. Let's all save water this summer. Only use it for the essentials.**

**Ennerdale Water, Summer 2021**

**Water levels at Ennerdale are lower than they should be. Let's all save water, then we can avoid the need for restrictions.**

For more water and money saving tips, FREE water saving products and much more, please go to [unitedutilities.com/savewater](https://unitedutilities.com/savewater)

**United Utilities**  
Water for the North West

Example of an introduction to water restrictions ad

**Water restrictions are now in place. Save it, right now.**

Only use water for the essentials.


As you're aware, low rainfall, the recent hot spell and high demand over the past few weeks means that Ennerdale reservoir levels are lower than we'd like for this time of year.

To protect supplies, restrictions are now in place. We now need you to only use water for the following essentials:


- Drinking
- Cooking
- Washing
- Flushing

Do not use hose pipes, sprinklers or jet washers. Don't re-fill the paddling pool or hot tub.


We'll keep you updated for how long these restrictions will last.



Water for the North West



Ennerdale, Summer 2021



**Water. Save it, don't waste it. Let's all save water this summer.**

For more water and money saving tips, FREE water saving products and much more, please go to [unitedutilities.com/savewater](http://unitedutilities.com/savewater)

**Water. Save it, don't waste it. Let's all save water this summer.**

**Only use it for the essentials.**



Water for the North West



**Ennerdale Water, Summer 2021**



Water for the North West

**Water levels at Ennerdale are extremely low. Restrictions are in place. Let's all save water right now.**



Water for the North West

For more water saving advice and details on how long the **current restrictions** may last, go to: [unitedutilities.com/savewater](http://unitedutilities.com/savewater)



Water for the North West

Outdoor generic and location targeted ads

**Water. Save it, right now.**

Cumbria, only use it for the essentials.

Shut off the sprinkler.



Hang up the hosepipe.



Until we get enough rain to top up Ennerdale Water.



**Water. Save it, don't waste it. Let's all save water.**

Full details about the restrictions currently in place in (region) can be found on our website at (WEB).

For more water and money saving tips, FREE water saving goodies and much more, please go to [unitedutilities.com/cumbria-save-water](http://unitedutilities.com/cumbria-save-water)




Water for the North West

**Water. Save it, right now.**

Only use it for the essentials.

Shut off the sprinkler.



Hang up the hosepipe.



Until we get enough rain to top up our reservoirs.



**Water. Save it, don't waste it. Let's all save water.**

Full details about the restrictions currently in place in (region) can be found on our website at (WEB).

For more water and money saving tips, FREE water saving goodies and much more, please go to [unitedutilities.com/cumbria-save-water](http://unitedutilities.com/cumbria-save-water)




Water for the North West

Indoor generic and location targeted ads



Building the knowledge

Showing customers where their water comes from builds an emotional connection and a better understanding about what happens during dry weather to the reservoir where their water comes from. This approach helped because it was raining in some areas, but not where their water was from.

Press ads – weekly ads showing where the reservoir levels were that week

# Save water, help fill the reservoirs

**Current levels**  
The recent rainfall and huge effort by communities to use much less water at home means that our Lake District reservoir levels are now 48% full. Saving water at home really does make a huge difference, so please keep going, we need to get the reservoir levels back up to where they should be, which is over 71% for this time of year.

**It's so easy to save water**  
Autumn is a lovely time of year, as well as the striking change in seasons turning leaves golden brown, this is when we usually see more rain and the reservoirs refilling after summer. This autumn they need a bit more help to fill up again and just by following our simple tips you can make a real difference. Install a water butt to catch around 200 litres of that wonderful rain to use on the garden!

- Save 200 litres**  
Get a water butt and collect rainwater for the garden.
- Save 12 litres**  
Spend one minute less in the shower.
- Save 24 litres**  
Simply turn the tap off when you brush your teeth.
- Save 50 litres**  
Put on one less washing load a week.

**Take the challenge**  
Join over 56,000 customers and register for Get Water Fit. For top tips, fun challenges, free goodies and to help charities too, go to [getwaterfit.co.uk](http://getwaterfit.co.uk) today.

**Water, save on a rainy day!**  
Every drop is precious

**United Utilities**  
Water for the North West

Emails – weekly direct messaging showing where the reservoir levels were that week

**Hello,**

We'd like to say a huge thank you for all your help over the last month. The recent rainfall and huge efforts by your community to use less water at home means that Lake District reservoir levels have gone up by nearly 10% this week. Although this is brilliant news, levels are still much lower than usual for this time of year at 39%, rather than nearer to 70%.

**Reservoir refill**

As we come from the driest 6 months on record, followed by a month's worth of rainfall in just one week in parts of the Lake District, Haweswater and Thirlmere reservoirs will still take some time to refill, so we'd really appreciate your continued support in saving water at home, whatever the weather. Click the link below to check the levels of the reservoirs.

[Reservoir levels](#)

**What can I do?**

It's easy to save water, just follow these simple tips to save at least 12 litres\* every single day:

- Save 12 litres**  
Spend one minute less in the shower.
- Save 24 litres**  
Simply turn the tap off when you brush your teeth.
- Save 50 litres**  
Put on one less washing load a week.
- Save 200 litres**  
Get a water butt and collect rainwater for the garden.

\*12 litres is equivalent to: 48 brews; around 21 pints; or 2 extra toilet flushed

**Take the challenge**

Join over 52,000 customers in your area who have already registered for [Get Water Fit](#). We've received over 80,000 orders for water saving gadgets during September alone.

So don't miss out. Sign up to [Get Water Fit](#) which is quick and simple to use and will help you to learn more about how much water you use at home and how to save it. You can join in with fun challenges, order free goodies and help charities too.

[Get Water Fit](#)

**Do I have to save now it's raining?**

Great question. The rain is helping – a lot, but there is still some way to go to refill these huge reservoirs that supply so many in the North West with their tap water. We've seen just how quickly the weather changes – from months of little rain in some areas to flooding in others.

**It's easy to save water every day**

Saving water is so easy and really does help, reducing the amount we need to take from these beautiful reservoirs, letting them refill, not just for us to use but also to protect the natural environment.

Saving water, unlike the weather, is something we can control.

Thank you again for all your help. We'll stop our weekly updates for now. Look out for more ways you can save, reuse and conserve water over the coming months.

**United Utilities Water Team**

PS - Just to let you know that we're working around the clock to continue to monitor our pipes for leaks and have increased the number of teams we have out and about finding and fixing them. We're working to respond even faster to the leaks our customers report to us. So if you spot a leak, [please let us know here](#).

**United Utilities**  
Water for the North West  
© United Utilities Group PLC 2022

**Reduce water waste and save money**

Get water fit!  
Click here to save now and get your FREE gadgets to help!

Join nearly 55,000 people in your area who have already registered for Get Water Fit. Simply answer a few quick questions about how you use water and we'll send you FREE gadgets to help you to save water every single day – saving you money too!

[Get water fit](#)

A really easy way to save is to spend just one minute less in the shower – that'll save 12 litres, enough for 48 cups of tea!

If that wasn't enough, did you know that the water we use at home and in the garden comes from the local environment – streams, rivers and some of the most beautiful reservoirs on the planet? If we all try to not to waste even a single drop there will be more left in the natural environment to help preserve the homes of fish, birds and other local wildlife.

We've made it so easy with lots of free water saving gadgets and expert video advice available just for you. Get started by entering your postcode – it's quicker than having one of the cups of tea we talked about earlier.

[Enter postcode](#)

And if you take part in our water saving challenges, we'll make a donation to charity just to say thank you.

Go on, get water fit.

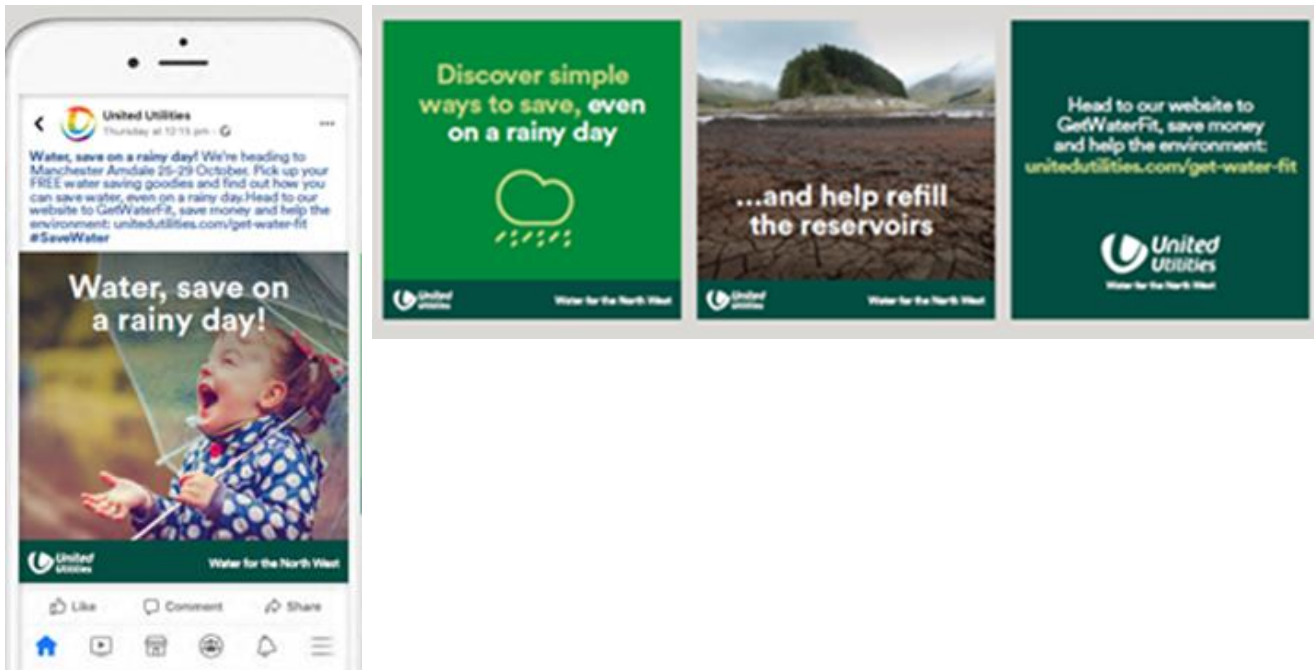
**Save water team**

PS - If you've already registered, log on to continue to save water, save money on your water and energy bills and raise money for your favourite charity too.

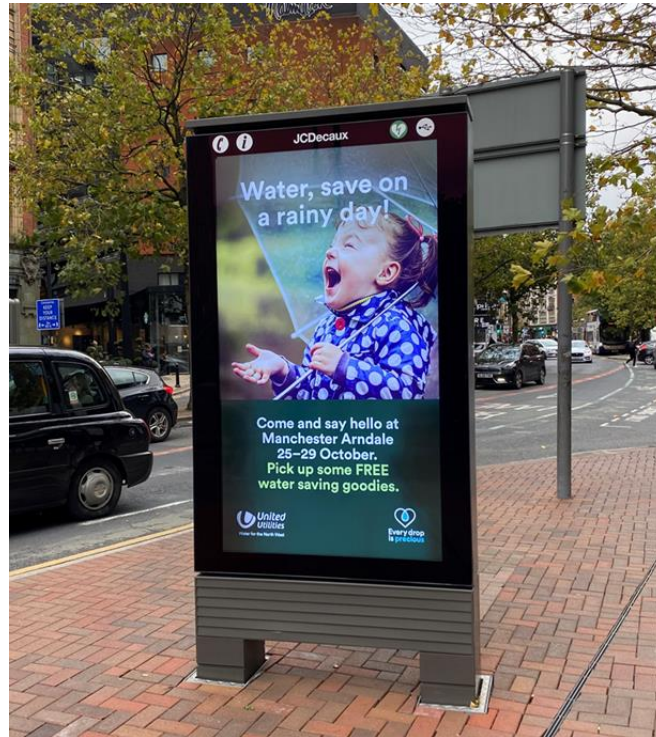
Events – face to face with customers – explaining that the reservoirs in Cumbria where their water was from were low, even though it was raining in Manchester.



Targeted social and digital campaign aimed at customers who received water from a reservoir that was low, even though it was raining where they live



### Outdoor ads



### Community engagement



### Charity ad



**Water, only use for essentials and raise money for a good cause.**

**Save 15 litres a day until the end of July...**

**...and we'll donate £25,000 to Hospice at Home.**

**It's really easy, hang up the hosepipe and shut off the sprinklers.**

**Find out more top tips to save water at [unitedutilities.com/cumbria-save-water](http://unitedutilities.com/cumbria-save-water)**

Full details about the restrictions currently in place in [region] can be found on our website at [WEB].

For more water and money saving tips, FREE water saving goodies and much more, please go to [unitedutilities.com/cumbria-save-water](http://unitedutilities.com/cumbria-save-water)

United Utilities Love water Water for the North West

Social media and display ads

Water. Save it, right now. Only use it for the essentials.

Save it, right now. Only use it for the essentials.

Shut off the tap.

Hang up the hosepipe.

Use a washing up bowl.

Use your washing machine on full load.

Take one minute less in the shower.

Until we get enough rain to top up Ennerdale Water.

Water. Save it, don't waste it. Let's all save water.

Full details about the restrictions currently in place in [region] can be found on our website at [WEB].

For more water and money saving tips, FREE water saving goodies and much more, please go to [unitedutilities.com/cumbria-save-water](http://unitedutilities.com/cumbria-save-water)

United Utilities Love water Water for the North West

**Water. Save it, right now. Cumbria, only use it for the essentials.**

**Always turn off the tap.**

**Use a washing up bowl.**

**Use your washing machine on full load.**

**Take one minute less in the shower.**

**Until we get enough rain to top up Ennerdale Water.**

**Water. Save it, don't waste it. Let's all save water.**

Full details about the restrictions currently in place in [region] can be found on our website at [WEB].

For more water and money saving tips, FREE water saving goodies and much more, please go to [unitedutilities.com/cumbria-save-water](http://unitedutilities.com/cumbria-save-water)

United Utilities Love water Water for the North West

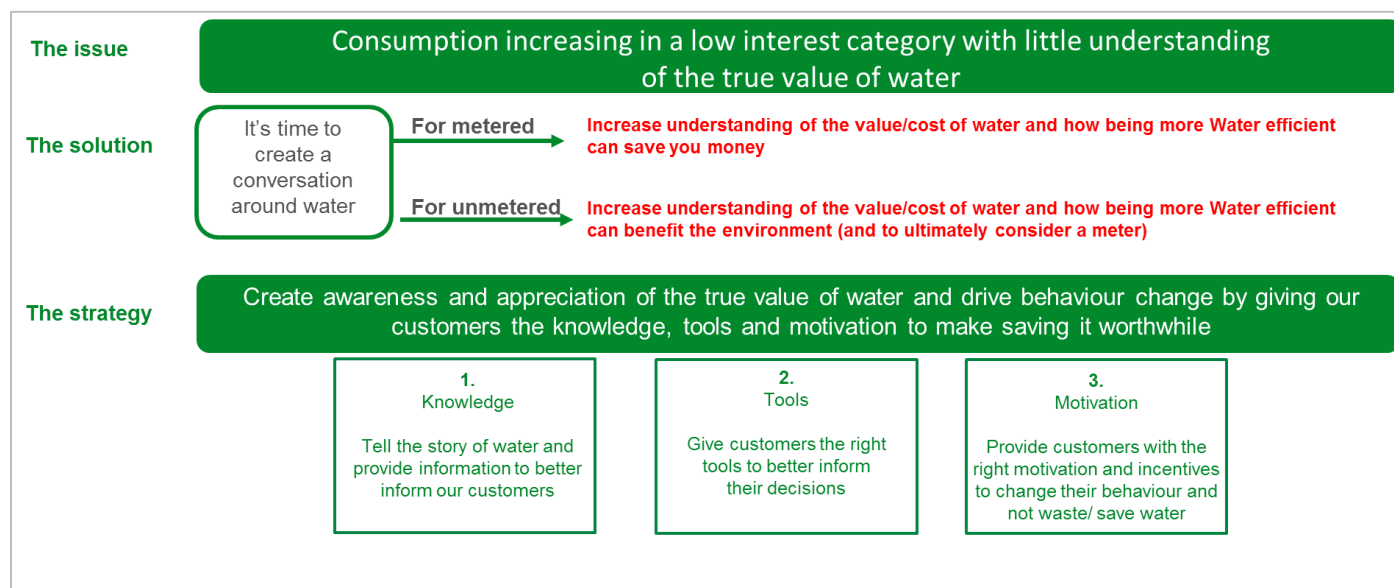
## Annex B – Research Approach and Insights

### Strategy

Our most recent research – Semiotics, diaries etc – and communications testing have shown that we need to drive more awareness to achieve cut through and give customers a reason to care about water, paint a full picture of water efficiency, and use integrated approaches to ensure we impact the issue at scale.

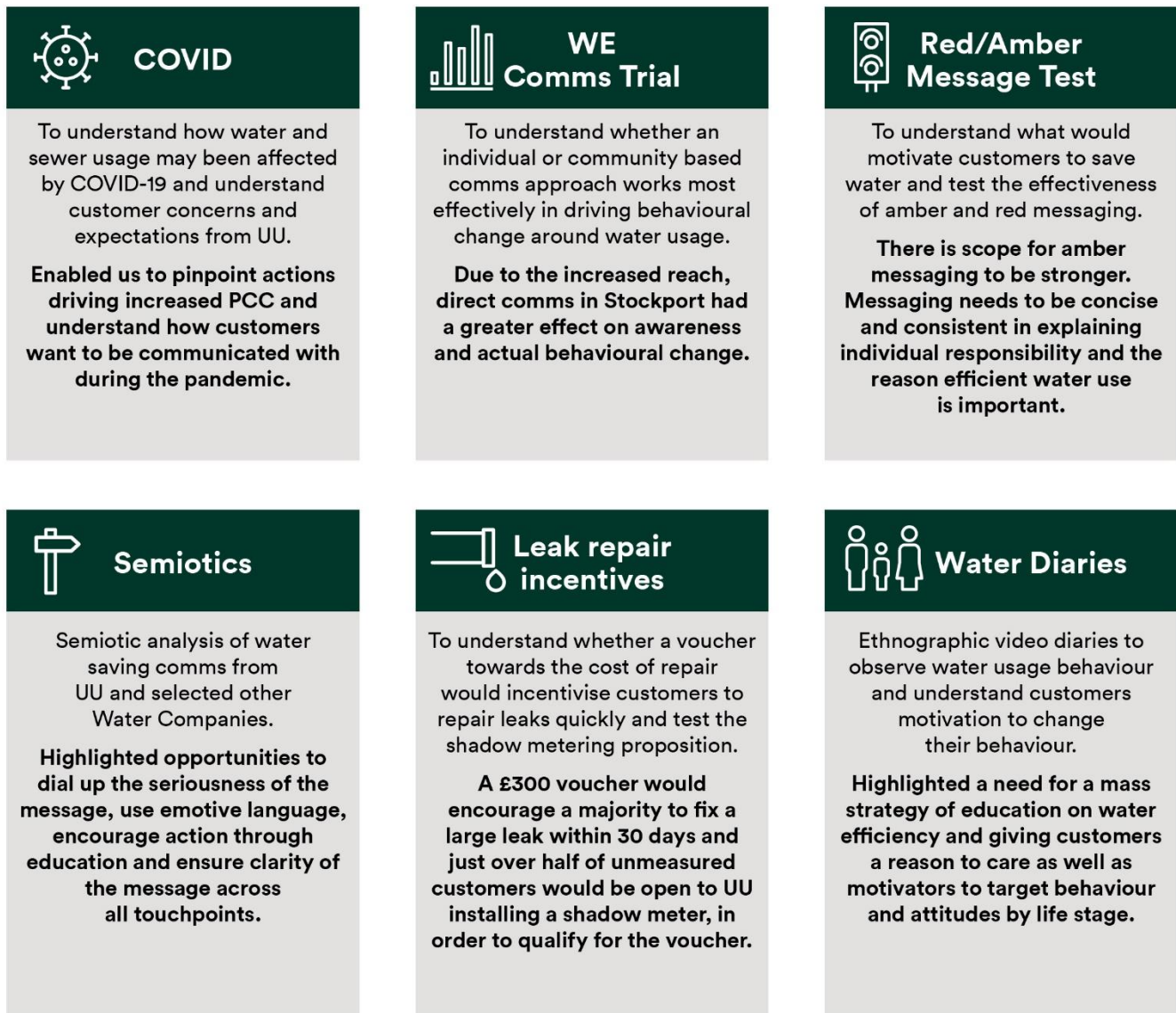
Figure 8 shows the insight strategy showing the issue that the water industry faces, the solution that has been chosen and a strategy that creates awareness and appreciation of the true value of water.

Figure 8: Water Efficiency insights strategy



Following on from the development of the water efficiency strategy, a number of research topics were identified to inform our messaging. These are shown in Figure 9 below.

Figure 9: Water efficiency research messaging



Based on this strategy, a suite of insights has been commissioned with the summary of results shown in Figure 10 below.

Figure 10: Communicating water efficiency (WE): key insights and implications

