

Research report

6 Capitals Qualitative Research Report

The logo for djs research, featuring the lowercase letters 'djs' in a dark grey font with a small pink dot above the 'j', and the word 'research' in a smaller, pink font below it. The logo is positioned within a white circular graphic element in the top right corner of the page.

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Methodology, objectives, approach & key take-outs

Context

The following events happened before or during the fieldwork period and may have influenced customers' answers.

Late 2021

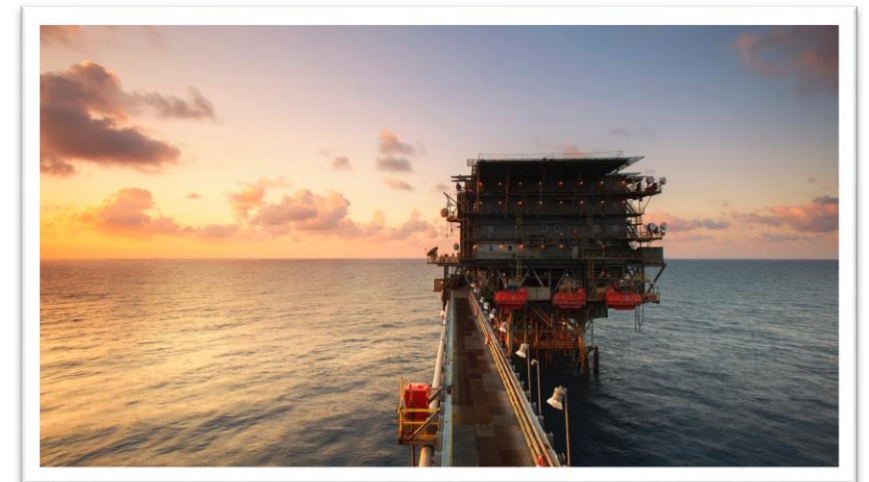
Since late 2021 a large proportion of the UK population have been feeling the effects of the cost-of-living crisis. This has meant that households typically have less disposable income than they did previously and may have influenced customers' answers in the sense that some United Utilities customers may be feeling significantly more squeezed in terms of their finances than normal.

February 2023

In early February 2023, United Utilities announced that 2023/24 bills would see a 6.4% increase on 2022/23 bills. This took place during the fieldwork period and may have influenced customers' answers in the sense that a few customers did mention the fact their bills have risen and the fact they have to pay for water at all.

February 2023

Throughout February 2023, oil and gas companies published record profits. This again took place during the fieldwork period and may have influenced customers' answers in the sense that a handful of customers mentioned the fact United Utilities are yet to publish their profits and this may not have been mentioned had oil and gas companies not published their profits.



Methodology

Focus groups

- 6 online focus groups conducted with customers and future customers across the United Utilities regions
- Groups varied in terms of their demographic makeup i.e., by age, socioeconomic status and customer type (Household and Future Bill Payer)

Depth interviews

- A mix of online and telephone depth interviews conducted with 9 customers with vulnerabilities from across the United Utilities region
- Vulnerabilities included: those struggling financially, those with disabilities and those who may be digitally excluded

Sample details

- A total of 39 United Utilities customers made up the sample for this research, for a full breakdown of the sample please see Appendix 1.



Ofwat standards for high-quality research

Ofwat have set out requirements for High Quality Research in their Customer Engagement Policy. All water company research and engagement should follow best practice and lead to a meaningful understanding of what is important to customers and wider stakeholders.

Useful and contextualised

This research was conducted in order to test United Utilities' six capitals framework with customers and future bill payers and assess whether any changes need to be made to the framework.

Fit for purpose

Cognitive testing was carried out during the design phase of this research to ensure the complex subject matter was presented in a way which was as understandable and engaging as possible for respondents. Visual stimulus was created in order to aid participant understanding, using images and real-life scenarios to show customers the decision-making framework in action.

Ethical

This research was conducted by DJS Research who are a member of the Market Research Society. Participants were regularly reminded that they could be open and honest in their views due to anonymity and DJS and United Utilities were subject to strict data protection protocols.

Continual

Customer views will be directly fed into the final plans for the six capitals framework.

Inclusive

A mix of online and telephone depth interviews were conducted to ensure that customers classed as digitally vulnerable and hard-to-reach customers were included in the research.

Neutrally designed

Every effort has been made to ensure that the research is neutral and free from bias. Where there is the potential for bias, this has been acknowledged in the report. Participants were encouraged to give their open and honest views and reassurances were given throughout the research that United Utilities were open to hearing their honest opinions and experiences

Independently assured

All research was conducted by DJS, an independent market research agency. United Utilities collaborated with Your Voice, the Independent Challenge Group, who reviewed all research materials and provided a check and challenge approach on the method and findings.

Shared in full with others

The full final report and research materials will be shared on the United Utilities' research library webpage.

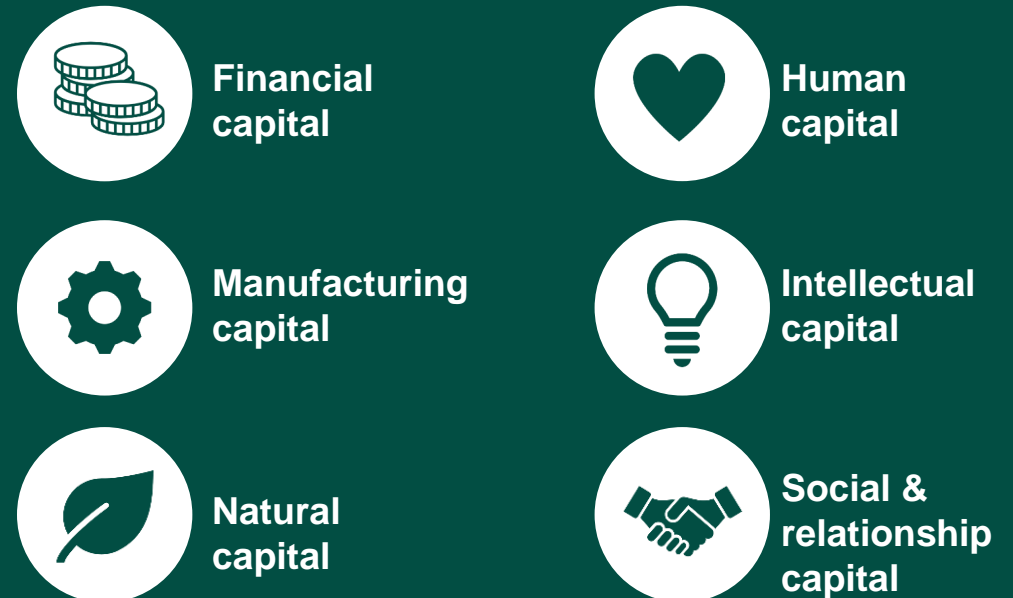
Objectives

The overall purpose of the research is to understand if customers support United Utilities' shift towards a more value-based decision-making approach...

United Utilities objectives included:

1. What does value mean to customers?
2. What types of factors would customers take into account if they were making important decisions?
3. Do customers agree that United Utilities should be considering broader impacts, such as on the environment and society?
4. Do customers support United Utilities in trying to grow and mature this over time?
5. What factors would they like United Utilities to bring into their decisions?

United Utilities believe a six capitals approach is the best way to approach business decisions:



Approach (I)

Prior to fieldwork commencing :

- All materials were cognitively tested by our in-house CATI unit to gauge understanding

Uncovering what customers think about United Utilities:

- Customers were firstly asked what they thought United Utilities do, as well as their views of them as a company in terms of satisfaction, trust and value for money

Understanding customer decision making:

- Next, the sessions explored how customers make certain decisions via an imaginary lottery win. Customers were first given the freedom to decide how to spend their lottery winnings and this allowed us to see what factors influenced their initial decision-making process
- Then customers were reined in slightly and told they could only spend their winnings on certain things (categories displayed around the house image). This provided insight into why customers were choosing to spend their winnings the way they did

Here's what we do...

- Provide safe drinking water
- Provide new jobs
- Work on a variety of environmental projects
- Reduce disruptions to water supply
- Encourage customers to use water wisely around the home
- Ensure there's enough water for now, and in the future
- Return cleaned wastewater safely back to rivers, lakes and the sea
- Reduce sewer flooding affecting homes or gardens and local areas
- Ensure sufficient wastewater treatment and drainage for now and in the future

Imagine you have won £10,000 on the lottery... but there are certain conditions as to how you can spend your winnings!

- Travel
- Adding value to your property e.g., extension, solar panels
- Giving back to your community/charity
- DIY e.g., decorating, repairs etc
- Investing in learning e.g., a course
- Improvements to outdoor space e.g., landscaping
- Throw a party – invest in relationships
- Savings

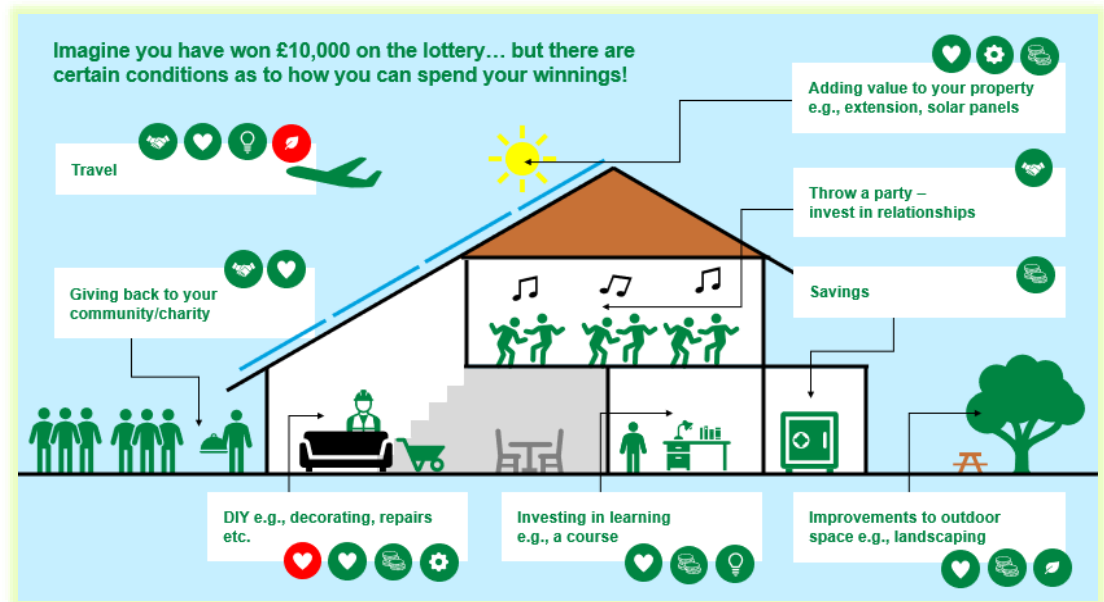
Approach (II)

Introducing the six capitals framework:

- The six capitals were made more customer friendly to ensure that the customers fully understood what each element of the framework meant
- Here customers were asked what their initial thoughts of the framework were and if they had any questions that needed clarifying

Linking the framework to customer decision-making:

- In the next part of the session, customers were shown how the six capitals framework United Utilities use can be applied to decisions that they may make
- For example, if a customer decides to spend their lottery winnings on a holiday this may have social benefits because it gives them the experience of new places/cultures. It may also improve their knowledge as they are learning about another country. Their holiday will also hopefully make them feel good – improving their wellbeing. However, depending how they travel, there may be negative impacts on the environment



Approach (III)

Application to United Utilities examples:


- Customers were then shown two real life examples of decisions United Utilities have to make, and each example has two potential solutions, these included:
 - Repairing vs replacing a cracked sewer pipe
 - Storage tank vs SuDS to tackle localised flooding
- For each scenario customers were guided through how the six capitals framework applied to each potential solution. They were then asked if they had any initial thoughts or if anything needed further clarifying

Becoming a United Utilities board member:

- After customers had been talked through each scenario and the potential accompanying solutions, they were asked to imagine that they had been promoted to sit on the board of United Utilities. Here we were able to understand how important customers felt each of the six capitals was in informing their decision making

**Option 1:
Repair the sewer**

This will stop the leak and will require less construction work but there is no guarantee how long the repair will last.



<p>Cost Potential costs associated with installation and maintenance.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">LOW</p> <p>The cost associated with this option is minimal. Workers will repair the leaking pipe. This would involve patching up the damaged part of the pipe.</p>	<p>Benefit to nature The benefits that the option could bring to the local environment in terms of biodiversity, carbon and recreation.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">MEDIUM</p> <p>The works will have some negative impacts on the natural environment when they are taking place, but this will be short lived.</p>	<p>Benefit to society Potential benefits that the solution could bring to the local community i.e., quality of place.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">HIGH</p> <p>This option has high benefits to society. The pipe will be fixed relatively quickly which will stop the leak with minimal disruption to roads etc.</p>
<p>Benefit to safety & wellbeing The safety of United Utilities workforce as well as the safety of customers.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">MEDIUM</p> <p>Workers will have to fix the pipework which creates a certain level of safety risk to staff and customers.</p>	<p>Benefit to skills & knowledge The skills, knowledge and technology that come together to provide a solution</p> <p style="text-align: center;">LOW</p> <p>This is a fix on an existing pipe so there is no opportunity to upgrade pipes with the latest technology e.g., smart technology</p>	<p>Benefit to manufacturing processes & efficiency The level of service reliability that the suggested solution provides.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">LOW</p> <p>It is a temporary fix but not a long-term solution and will need to be repeated down the line.</p>

Sewer Board Report

Repairing the sewer

Replacing the sewer

Cost	LOW	HIGH
Benefit to Nature	MEDIUM	LOW
Benefit to Society	HIGH	MEDIUM
Benefit to safety & wellbeing	MEDIUM	LOW
Benefit to skills & knowledge	LOW	HIGH
Benefit to manufacturing processes & efficiency	LOW	HIGH

Key take-outs

Customer views on value

- Value means different things to different customers.
- Customers from higher socioeconomic groups mention how value can relate to the quality of a service as well as the monetary value of what you pay. Whereas those from lower socioeconomic groups find it a bit more difficult to distinguish between the two.
- Customers are generally in agreement about how United Utilities provide value, with many commenting on the work United Utilities do as well as the quality of the water they provide.

Customer decision making

- Customers reasoning for making decisions changes depending on the problem at hand, with customers recognising that factors can differ depending on the issue being addressed i.e., benefits to society and cost are perceived as most important for the cracked sewer pipe scenario whereas benefits to society and nature are deemed as most important for sustainable drainage solutions scenario

Support of the six capitals approach

- Customers largely support United Utilities move to the six capitals approach to decision making as they feel it covers a lot of different bases and they like the idea that United Utilities is considering communities and the environment when making important decisions.
- Some customers were also quite impressed and appreciative that there is a physical framework in place which guides United Utilities decision making, a few mentioned how they didn't realise so much goes on behind the scenes that customers are unaware of.
- A small number of customers, whilst thinking the approach is good, feel like in certain ways they would expect United Utilities to consider the six capitals anyway when making business decisions.







Current perceptions of United Utilities

Knowledge of what United Utilities do

What type of things do you think United Utilities do?

Customers tend to have a very surface level understanding of what it is that United Utilities do, many mention how they provide water and take wastewater away from homes...

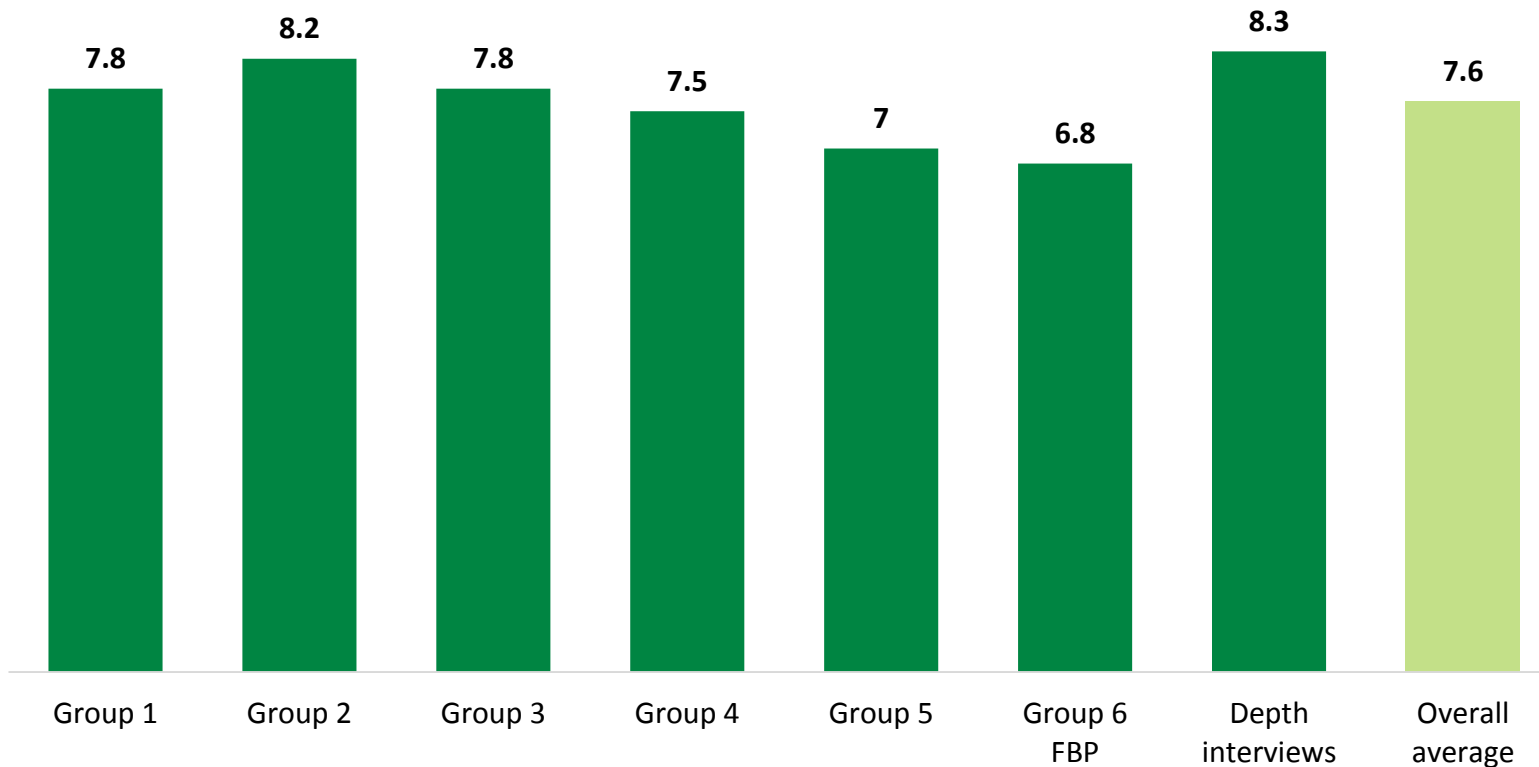
<p>“Bring the water into our houses and take it away to treat it, make sure it goes to the right locations that it should do.”</p> <p>Female, 35-44, Lancashire, SEG B</p>	<p>“They did all the stuff with the dam in Whaley Bridge, they did the fixing of that when they had the big flooding a few years ago.”</p> <p>Female, 45-54, Cumbria, SEG C1</p>	<p>“We have quite a lot of flooding in our area they're constantly out to us dealing with the flooding and look at the drainage.”</p> <p>Female, 25-34, Lancashire, SEG C2</p>
<p>“They look after reservoirs, supply everyone with fresh water depending where you live and carry it away.”</p> <p>Male, 55-64, Greater Manchester, SEG C2</p>	<p>“They clean the water out of the reservoirs before it gets to you tap, it gets filtered and cleaned before we get it.”</p> <p>Male, 25-34, Lancashire, SEG D, FBP</p>	<p>“They supply your water, and they take the sewerage away, they also actually maintain the grids and drains as well.”</p> <p>Female, 55-64, Merseyside, SEG C2</p>
<p>“They provide us with water, sort the water bills out and they send leaflets; I had one the other day about what not to do.”</p> <p>Female, 45-54, Lancashire, SEG C2</p>	<p>“They give water to our homes, and I know they do something with a support scheme for people who are struggling.”</p> <p>Male, 35-44, Greater Manchester, SEG C2</p>	<p>KEY:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">  Provide water  Take away wastewater  Work with reservoirs  Fix/maintain assets
<p>“Provide water, fix pipes. There was a bit burst by me and they were there fixing it.”</p> <p>Female, 45-54, Merseyside, SEG E</p>	<p>“They look after the pipes, equipment and drainage.”</p> <p>Female, 45-54, Merseyside, SEG A</p>	

Satisfaction with United Utilities

How satisfied would you say you are with United Utilities using a scale of 0-10?

Future bill payers and those from lower socioeconomic groups tend to be less satisfied with United Utilities compared to those in higher socioeconomic groups and those who are vulnerable.

Often, those in higher socioeconomic groups are more appreciative of the work United Utilities does whilst those who are vulnerable are appreciative of support they have received from United Utilities.



Base: All respondents from the qualitative phase (39)

	Age	Gender	SEG
Group 1	46-70	3 (f), 2 (m)	C2D
Group 2	25-45	3 (f), 2 (m)	ABC1
Group 3	46-70	4 (f), 1 (m)	ABC1
Group 4	25-45	2 (f), 2 (m)	C2D
Group 5	46-70	3 (f), 2 (m)	E
Group 6	16-29	2 (f), 2 (m), 1 (PNS)	Mix
Depths	Interviews were carried out with customers with vulnerabilities and were demographically mixed		

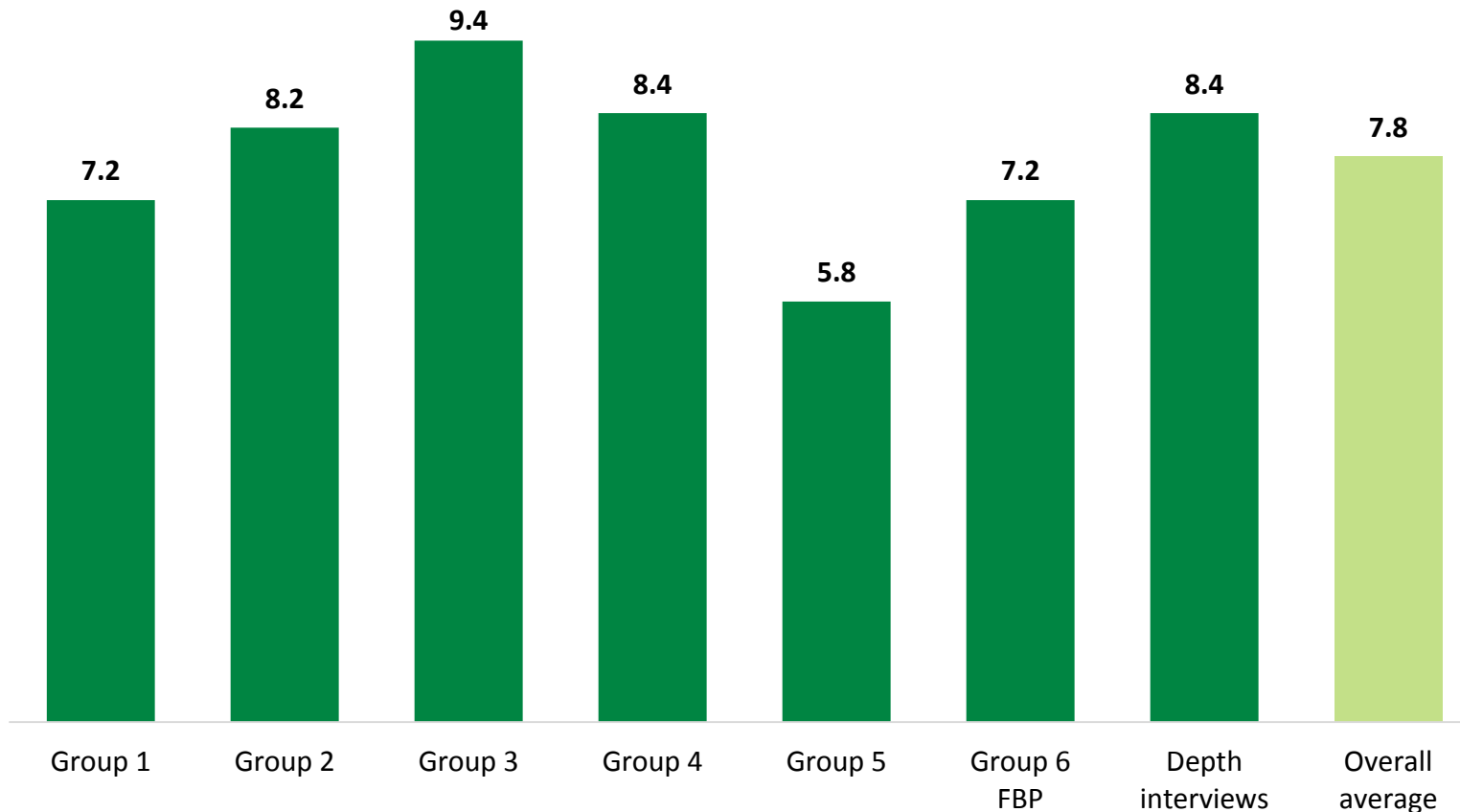
“8 – service is good to our house; I don’t have any problems with the service or pressure anything like that. It is just the cost of the water that gets it down to an 8 rather than a 10.”
Female, 55-64, Greater Manchester, SEG A, Group 3

“10 - I couldn’t keep up with my water bill so now I get help paying it which has been a big help.”
Female, 45-54, Merseyside, SEG E, Depth 1

Trustworthiness of United Utilities

How trustworthy do you perceive United Utilities to be using a scale of 0-10?

Trust is also lowest amongst customers who fall into lower socioeconomic groups, with reasons centering around not knowing a lot about United Utilities as a company and a lack of transparency surrounding their profits. Again, those in higher socioeconomic groups and vulnerable customers appear to have the highest levels of trust in United Utilities.



Base: All respondents from the qualitative phase (39)

	Age	Gender	SEG
Group 1	46-70	3 (f), 2 (m)	C2D
Group 2	25-45	3 (f), 2 (m)	ABC1
Group 3	46-70	4 (f), 1 (m)	ABC1
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Group 5	46-70	3 (f), 2 (m)	E
Group 6	16-29	2 (f), 2 (m), 1 (PNS)	Mix
Depths	Interviews were carried out with customers with vulnerabilities and were demographically mixed		

“5 - I don't know a great deal about them. It's not something, you know, that I've researched, and as I say, you can't pick and choose your water company like you can other things.”

Female, 55-64, Cheshire, SEG D, Group 5

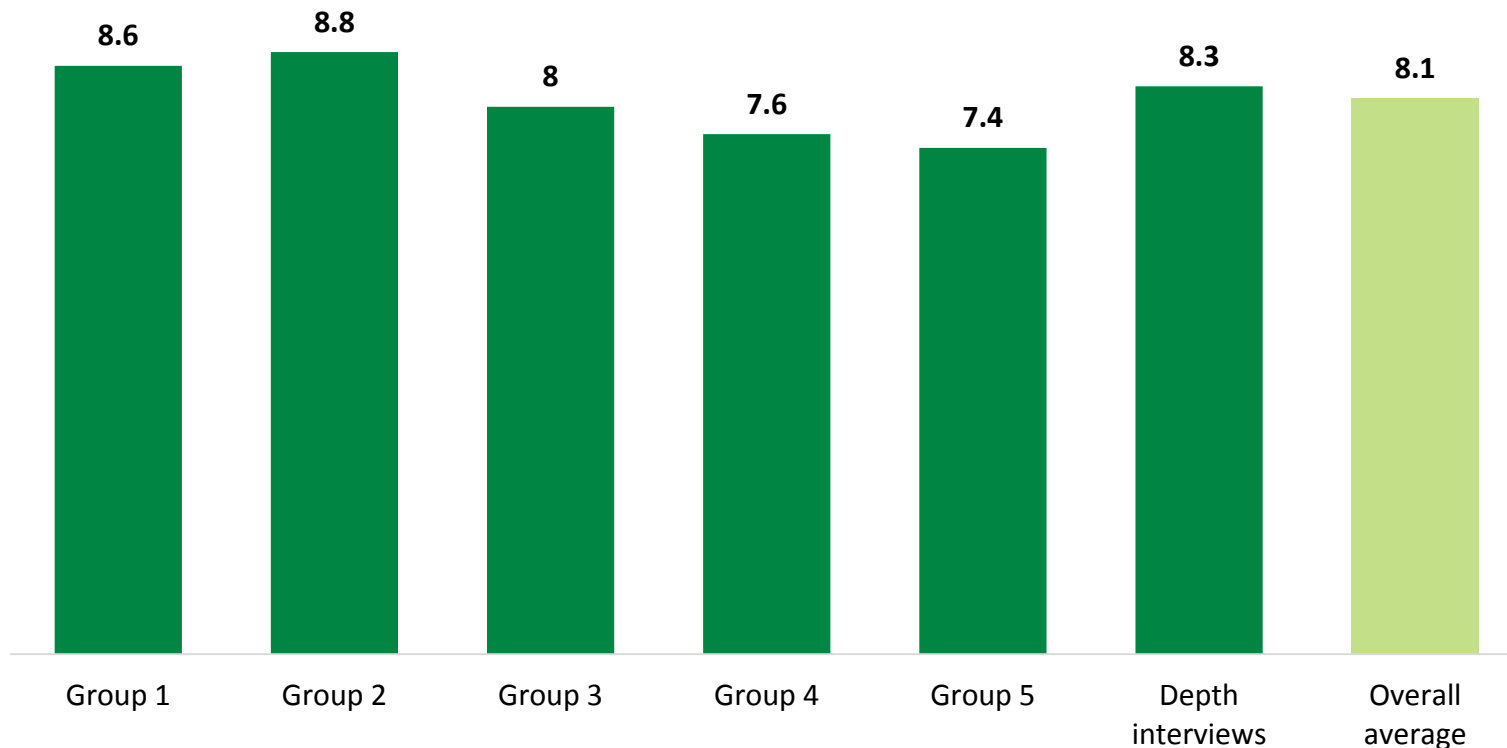
“5 - We don't see anything published as to what they make... the don't publish their profits.”

Female, 55-64, Merseyside, SEG E, Group 5

Value for money of United Utilities services

To what extent would you say that your water and sewerage bill is good value for money using a scale of 0-10?

Again, those from lower socioeconomic groups are less likely to feel as though their water and sewerage bill is good value for money, common reasons for this centered around water being a natural resource and the fact that you cannot shop around for a water supplier, so in that sense there is a lack of awareness as to whether their bill is good value for money...



Base: All respondents excluding future bill payers (34)

	Age	Gender	SEG
Group 1	46-70	3 (f), 2 (m)	C2D
Group 2	25-45	3 (f), 2 (m)	ABC1
Group 3	46-70	4 (f), 1 (m)	ABC1
Group 4	25-45	2 (f), 2 (m)	C2D
Group 5	46-70	3 (f), 2 (m)	E
Group 6	16-29	2 (f), 2 (m), 1 (PNS)	Mix
Depths	Interviews were carried out with customers with vulnerabilities and were demographically mixed		

“8 - It feels quite reasonable, I know in the grand scheme of things money is... but it feels to me quite reasonable in comparison with a lot of your other bills.”

Female, 35-44, Lancashire, SEG B, Group 2

“6 – it comes from the sky; I don’t think you should have to pay for it.”

Male, 35-44, Greater Manchester, SEG C2, Depth 8

Customer perceptions of value

What does value mean to United Utilities customers?

Value means different things for different people, some customers attribute value to services whilst others perceive value as stemming directly from a product or a services cost. Customers perceive a wide range of things to provide them with value, from breakdown cover to insulated mugs to Chinese takeaways, but the consensus when it comes to how United Utilities provide value tends to centre around the quality of the water customers receive.

If something is good value – what does this mean?

“I would say the service as well that comes with it; you have got the value of the product itself, but you have got the value of customer service.”

Female, 35-44, Lancashire, SEG B

“I think value is when the price you are paying is worth it like if something is worth the money that you have spent on it really in my eyes.”

Female, 45-54, Merseyside, SEG E

Examples of things that have given you value

Local independent shops

Home insurance

Sainsburys

Breakdown cover

Electric clothes dryer

Apple

Amazon

Netflix

Insulated mug

Local Chinese

Mobile company

Value and value for money – are they the same?



Some customers struggle to distinguish value from value for money, this is particularly the case for customers from lower socioeconomic backgrounds who often mention how they factor cost into everything



Other customers feel the two are different and attribute value to other things such as customer service

How do United Utilities provide value?

“I think there is a lot that they do behind the scenes that we don’t really notice. There is a lot going on that people aren’t aware of the company themselves, but you get a lot better with this company than you do other ones that are not in more of a soft water area for instance.”

Female, 25-34, Greater Manchester, SEG B

Bill payers' money

What do customers think about the way United Utilities spend money?

Customers generally feel United Utilities are distributing their money well, but they do have some suggestions in terms of how additional value can be added* i.e., greater transparency, working with housing developers to minimise flooding and the launch of a customer rewards scheme to name a few...

In what ways do you think United Utilities provide you value?

"I've got a constant supply of water; I've never had any issues and they always provide updates when they do stuff."

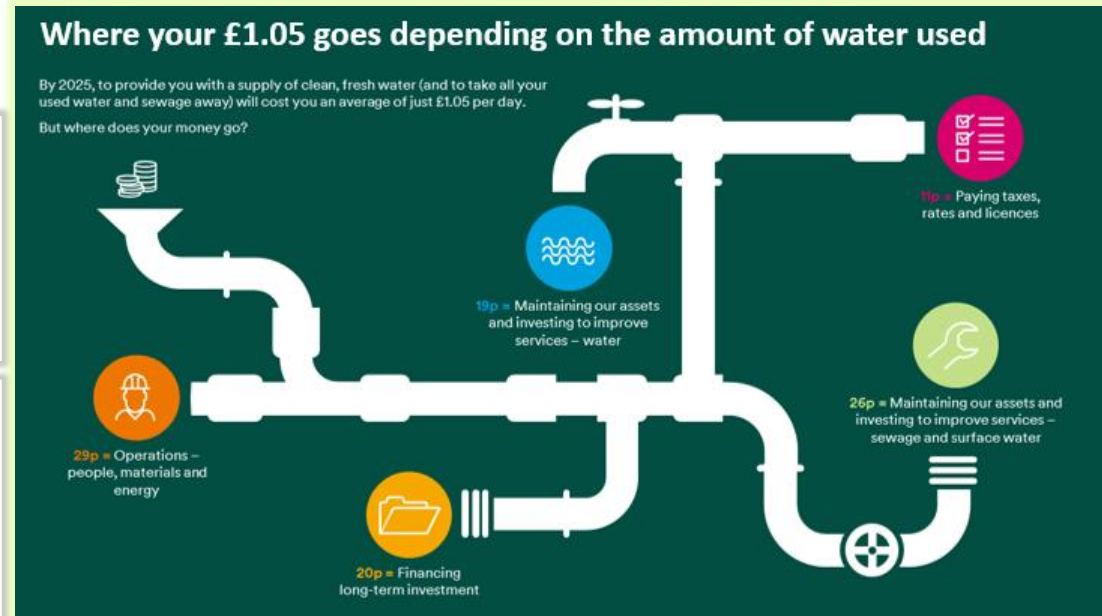
Female, 35-44, Greater Manchester, SEG D

"They've cut the cost, because we have 2 children with disabilities, and we know that we will never be cut off from water supply."

Male, 35-44, Greater Manchester, SEG C2

"Better quality water is a definite big one for us; when we travel anywhere, down south my daughter gets rashes, and she can taste the differences in the water."

Female, 35-44, Lancashire, SEG B



What things should United Utilities consider when making decisions?

"So, I'd probably say the impact on the local community and impact on the environment."

Male, 35-44, Greater Manchester, SEG C2

"Impact on the local environment, then obviously the pros and cons, you know is it going to give anything to the local area."

Female, 35-44, Greater Manchester, SEG C2

"I would like to think that they were considering environmental issues, and less disturbance to wildlife and reducing your carbon footprint."

Female, 55-64, Greater Manchester, SEG A

How could United Utilities provide better value?

Give to charity

Transparency

Work with housing developers

Publish profits

Give a specific breakdown

Loyalty scheme

Rewards

Gadgets

*For more information on value, see DJS Research's Price perceptions and value research 2001

Customers' decision making process

Customer decision making (I)

Health and well-being plays a key role in customers investment decisions...

Travel, doing some DIY and putting money into savings are common suggestions customers give as to how they would spend their hypothetical lottery winnings. For many, the reasoning behind these decisions centre around health and well-being, whether that is improving their own health and well-being or that of their families, perhaps symbolising which elements of the six capitals approach, they find most important...

Travel:

“Yes, exactly, invest in mental well being, I missed with Covid not being able to travel so now we’re able to, I’d embrace that again.”

Male, 35-44, Greater Manchester, SEG C2

“Probably a holiday, I could do with a holiday to just relax, I work 3 jobs so it would do me good to look after myself for once and have a break.”

Male, 45-54, Greater Manchester, SEG C2

Savings:

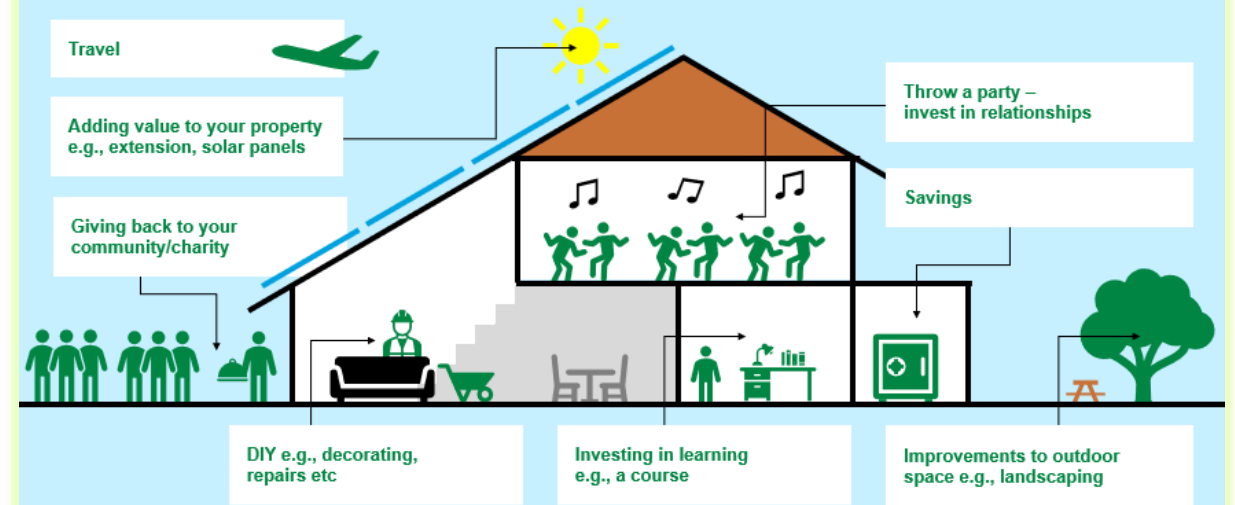
“I would make sure that I have some left over to save some of it for my children's’ futures so they can have greater opportunities when they are older.”

Female, 35-44, Greater Manchester, SEG C2

“I think I would probably spend a small part of it towards travelling but mostly I’d put it into a savings account for my daughter’s future really.”

Female, 35-44, Lancashire, SEG B

Imagine you have won £10,000 on the lottery... but there are certain conditions as to how you can spend your winnings!



DIY:

“I’d want an extension, so my family has more space at home really.”

Female, 35-44, Lancashire, SEG C2

KEY:

- Safety & wellbeing
- Society
- Cost
- Skills & knowledge
- Manufacturing & efficiency
- Nature

Customer decision making (II)

Social and environmental benefits are also mentioned frequently but to a lesser extent than health and wellbeing...

The social benefits that can come from travelling are also appealing to some customers who are keen to explore new places, whilst helping children out, whether that be with education or getting onto the housing ladder appeals to others. Additionally, customers who suggest investing in green home improvements are often from rural areas. Customers rarely mention improving their skills and knowledge as a reason for their investment decisions.

Travel:

“Holiday for me, I’d go to the Galapagos or Africa. It has been somewhere I’ve always wanted to go. I was meant to go but it got cancelled due to Covid.”

Female, 55-64, Greater Manchester, SEG A

“I’ve always liked the idea of a cruise because you get to see lots of different places, but they cost a lot, so I’ve never been able to afford it, so I’d do that.”

Female, 35-44, Greater Manchester, SEG D

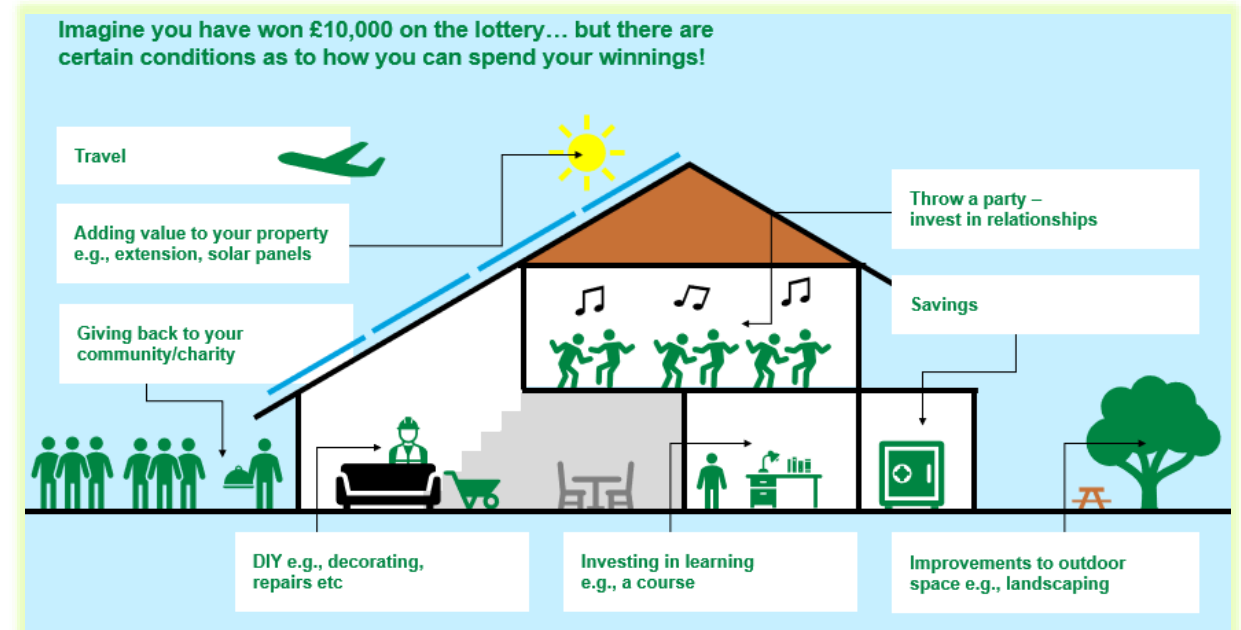
Savings:

“My children are doing their A levels, so I think I would save it to help them out if they decide to go to uni. I’d want to help them, rather than the house.”

Female, 45-54, Cumbria, SEG C1

“I would help my daughter out with saving for a deposit. She’s in a flat at the moment but I know she doesn’t really like the area, so I’d save some for that.”

Female, 45-54, Merseyside, SEG E



Add value to your property:

“I like the idea of solar panels, generating your own energy in a green way.”

Female, 25-34, Lancashire, SEG C2, Rural

KEY:

- Safety & wellbeing
- Society
- Cost
- Skills & knowledge
- Manufacturing & efficiency
- Nature

United Utilities decision making framework (I)

Customers are generally impressed with United Utilities 6 capitals approach...

The majority of customers feel that whilst United Utilities have always considered the factors below, it is a good thing that they are moving towards a more established framework of decision making. Customers generally think the framework is sensible and valid, and the framework appears to be most popular among bill payers in higher socioeconomic groups, with those in SEG groups AB and C1 often openly praising the model.

“I would say they are all valid points, sensible things that we would have to consider, and it is nice to know that they are consider those kinds of things.”

Male, 45-54, Greater Manchester, SEG B

“I think the six icons they are quite like a mission statement for them, and it is the key values in terms of how they decide to make investments.”

Female, 45-54, Merseyside, SEG A

“To be honest I’ve never seen anything like this for other companies, I think there’s much more on there that they are considering than I ever thought.”

Female, 45-54, Cumbria, SEG C1

“They seem very sensible and quite broad. Cost and health, safety, and wellbeing have to be taken into account in any industry.”

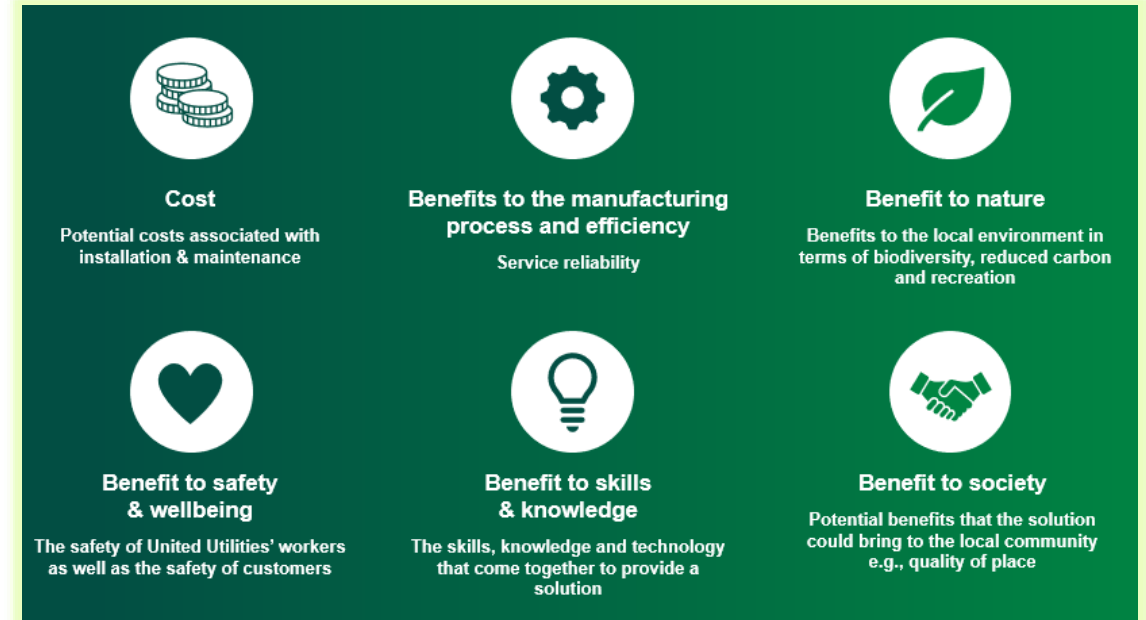
Female, 35-44, Lancashire, SEG B

“There are things on there that I would expect them to consider, but they are also thinking a lot more about other things.”

Male, 35-44, Greater Manchester, SEG C1

“I think it’s quite impressive, things like nature they have to consider, but they consider a lot more than I thought.”

Female, 55-64, Greater Manchester, SEG A



United Utilities decision making framework (II)

Customers are generally impressed with United Utilities 6 capitals approach...

But some customers hold less informed views on the framework, with customers in lower socioeconomic groups and future bill payers being less expressive in their views. Those in lower socioeconomic groups are satisfied with the framework but tend not to hold particularly strong views on the approach, this is also the case for future bill payers who appear to be less concerned about the decision-making framework – perhaps due to their lack of bill paying responsibility...

“I suppose it’s good that they make decisions based on nature. I like the countryside so it’s nice they think about that when making decisions.”

Female, 16-25, Lancashire, SEG C2, FBP

“Good. I thought they mainly considered cost and how things benefit their company but looking at this, they consider much more than I thought.”

Female, 55-64, Cheshire, SEG D

“No, I would say I’m pretty happy with all of those, erm, especially with the local environment as well, that’s really important at the minute isn’t it.”

Female, 25-34, Lancashire, SEG C2

“They’re always going to think about cost and getting their money back on their investments so that’s not a shock to me it’s a no brainer.”

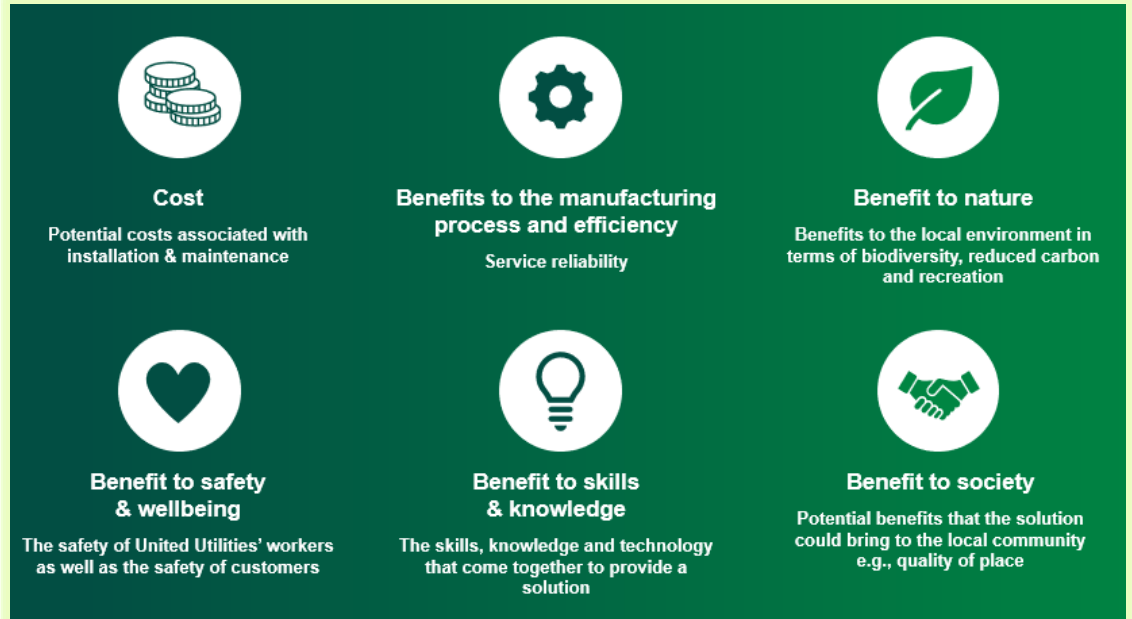
Male, 24-35, Lancashire, SEG D, FBP

“Yeah, I think it’s a pretty good thing, think it covers a lot of things which is good when making decisions.”

Male, 35-44, Greater Manchester, SEG C2

“These are things that they should be considering anyway. I’d expect them to consider all these when making decisions.”

Female, 65-74, Lancashire, SEG C2



United Utilities decision making framework (III)

Customers are generally impressed with United Utilities 6 capitals approach...

Additionally, differences can be seen amongst customers who live in rural areas compared to urban areas. For example, those living in rural areas appear to be much more appreciative that United Utilities are considering environmental implications when they are making decisions and stress how considering the environment is an important aspect to them...

“I suppose it’s good that they make decisions based on nature. I like the countryside so it’s nice they think about that when making decisions.”

Female, 16-25, Lancashire, SEG C2, FBP, Rural

“Cost is always key because they are running a business, but the nature and the ESG side of things in terms of the environment and governance that is key for me.”

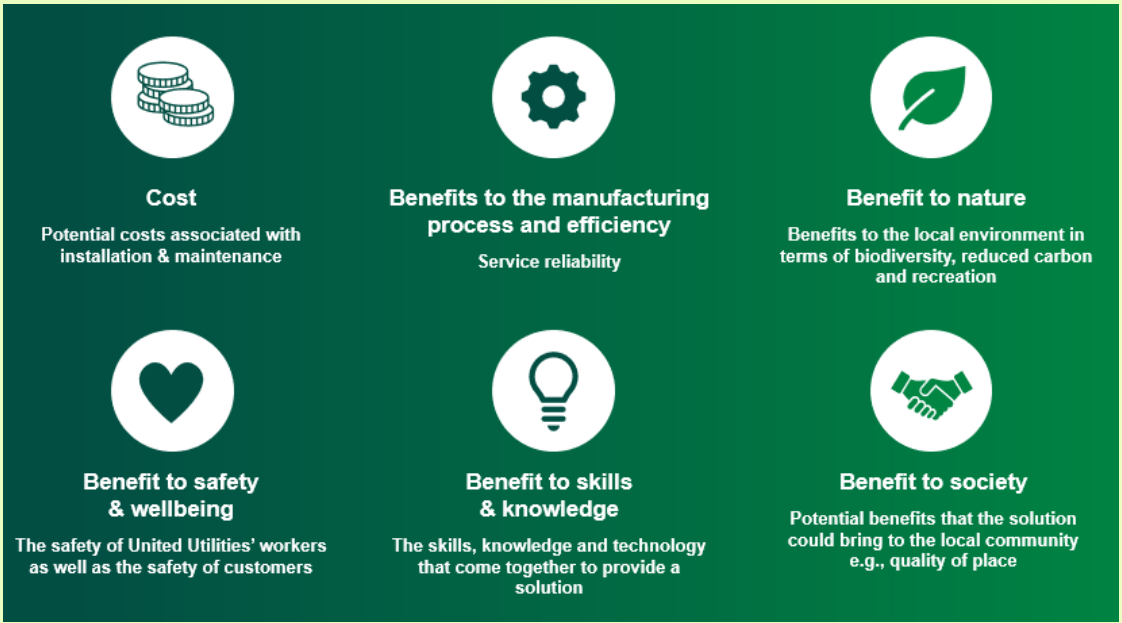
Female, 55-64, Greater Manchester, SEG B, Rural

“No, I would say I’m pretty happy with that, especially with the benefits to nature as well, that’s really good because that important.”

Female, 25-34, Lancashire, SEG C2, Rural

“Yeah, there’s quite a bit that they take into consideration, especially the environment it’s good that they are being mindful of that.”

Female, 54-65, Cheshire, SEG D, Rural



Customer decision making United Utilities examples


Decision making using United Utilities real life examples

Customers were asked to make decisions using real examples of investment decisions United Utilities face...

- Customers were asked to imagine that a sewer pipe in their local area is cracked and looks like it might break soon...
- They were guided through each possible solution to the problem and were told of the implications of each solution in terms of:
 - **Cost**
 - **Benefits to nature**
 - **Benefits to society**
 - **Benefits to safety & wellbeing**
 - **Benefits to skills & knowledge**
 - **Benefits to manufacturing processes & efficiency**
- Customers were then asked if they had any questions and what their general thoughts were on each of the possible solutions
- They were then presented with a board report and asked to consider the most and least important factors when making this type of decision

Option 1:
Repair the sewer

This will stop the leak and will require less construction work but there is no guarantee how long the repair will last.



Cost
Potential costs associated with installation and maintenance.

LOW

The cost associated with this option is minimal. Workers will repair the leaking pipe. This would involve patching up the damaged part of the pipe.

Benefit to nature
The benefits that the option could bring to the local environment in terms of biodiversity, carbon and recreation.

MEDIUM

The works will have some negative impacts on the natural environment when they are taking place, but this will be short lived.

Benefit to society
Potential benefits that the solution could bring to the local community i.e., quality of place.

HIGH

This option has high benefits to society. The pipe will be fixed relatively quickly which will stop the leak with minimal disruption to roads etc.

Benefit to safety & wellbeing
The safety of United Utilities workforce as well as the safety of customers.

MEDIUM

Workers will have to fix the pipework which creates a certain level of safety risk to staff and customers.

Benefit to skills & knowledge
The skills, knowledge and technology that come together to provide a solution

LOW

This is a fix on an existing pipe so there is no opportunity to upgrade pipes with the latest technology e.g., smart technology

Benefit to manufacturing processes & efficiency
The level of service reliability that the suggested solution provides.

LOW

It is a temporary fix but not a long-term solution and will need to be repeated down the line.

Sewer Board Report

Repairing the sewer

Replacing the sewer

Cost	LOW	HIGH
Benefit to Nature	MEDIUM	LOW
Benefit to Society	HIGH	MEDIUM
Benefit to safety & wellbeing	MEDIUM	LOW
Benefit to skills & knowledge	LOW	HIGH
Benefit to manufacturing processes & efficiency	LOW	HIGH

Decision making using United Utilities real life examples (I)

The majority of customers are in favour of replacing the sewer rather than simply repairing it...

Reasons for this centre around the long-term benefits that the solution brings to society and well-being as well as the benefits it brings to manufacturing processes and efficiency i.e., many mention how there would be a single period of disruption and it would make the system more reliable for customers and generations in the future.

Option 1: Repair the sewer

This will stop the leak and will require less construction work but there is no guarantee how long the repair will last.



Cost Potential costs associated with installation and maintenance. LOW The cost associated with this option is minimal. Workers will repair the leaking pipe. This would involve patching up the damaged part of the pipe.	Benefit to nature The benefits that the option could bring to the local environment in terms of biodiversity, carbon and recreation. MEDIUM The works will have some negative impacts on the natural environment when they are taking place, but this will be short lived.	Benefit to society Potential benefits that the solution could bring to the local community i.e., quality of place. HIGH This option has high benefits to society. The pipe will be fixed relatively quickly which will stop the leak with minimal disruption to roads etc.
Benefit to safety & wellbeing The safety of United Utilities workforce as well as the safety of customers. MEDIUM Workers will have to fix the pipework which creates a certain level of safety risk to staff and customers.	Benefit to skills & knowledge The skills, knowledge and technology that come together to provide a solution. LOW This is a fix on an existing pipe so there is no opportunity to upgrade pipes with the latest technology e.g., smart technology	Benefit to manufacturing processes & efficiency The level of service reliability that the suggested solution provides. LOW It is a temporary fix but not a long-term solution and will need to be repeated down the line.

“I think with option one it’s just a temporary fix, it says there that it might need to be done again further down the line which will be more disruption for people again, so I’d just replace it and have the disruption once.”

Male, 35-44, Greater Manchester, SEG C2

“I think you would need to consider if that pipe has been rotting away, if it is something that has happened several times then you would be better replacing the pipe and then you are getting a bit more long-term benefit.”

Female, 55-64, Greater Manchester, SEG A

“I agree, just replace it now rather than later. Yeah, it causes disruption doesn’t it, but it will be over in one go rather than if they have to keep coming out and causing disruption every few months, I would just replace it.”


Female, 25-34, Lancashire, SEG C2

“I’d say option two, just replace it, always replace. Just because it’s going to then last longer, and you can see on the picture they’re made of plastic, so they’d last way longer. Yeah, I’d definitely vote to replace them.”

Male, 25-34, Lancashire, SEG D, FBP

Option 2: Replace the sewer

The second option is to replace the whole sewer. This would involve installing new pipework. This will stop the current leak but will incur additional costs and time as well as potentially causing disruption to customers.



Cost Potential costs associated with installation and maintenance. HIGH The cost associated with replacing the sewer is high due to the materials required and the amount of work.	Benefit to nature The benefits that the option could bring to the local environment in terms of biodiversity, carbon and recreation. LOW The construction work will impact the local environment. There will be noise and carbon disruption as well as digging disrupting foliage and wildlife.	Benefit to society Potential benefits that the solution could bring to the local community i.e., quality of place. MEDIUM This solution will impact the local community in terms of noise, roadworks and disruptions to service but will make the service more reliable in the future.
Benefit to safety & wellbeing The safety of United Utilities workforce as well as the safety of customers. LOW This work will take longer and is larger scale than Option 1, thus increasing the safety risk for workers and customers. The disruption may impact on customers' wellbeing too.	Benefit to skills & knowledge The skills, knowledge and technology that come together to provide a solution. HIGH Replacing the sewer means that United Utilities can use the latest smart technology which will inform United Utilities of any blockages remotely.	Benefit to manufacturing processes & efficiency The level of service reliability that the suggested solution provides. HIGH Replacing rather than repairing the sewer increases its reliability and efficiency and means that there is a lower likelihood of problems in the short term.

Decision making using United Utilities real life examples (I)

A proportion of customers are also mindful of the cost associated with the two options...

Customers look at cost from the perspective of United Utilities making business decisions but also from the perspective of how it can impact their bills. The consensus from customers is that continuing to repair the sewer pipe multiple times in the future will potentially incur higher costs than to just replace the sewer pipe in the beginning...

Option 1: Repair the sewer

This will stop the leak and will require less construction work but there is no guarantee how long the repair will last.



Cost Potential costs associated with installation and maintenance. LOW The cost associated with this option is minimal. Workers will repair the leaking pipe. This would involve patching up the damaged part of the pipe.	Benefit to nature The benefits that the option could bring to the local environment in terms of biodiversity, carbon and recreation. MEDIUM The works will have some negative impacts on the natural environment when they are taking place, but this will be short lived.	Benefit to society Potential benefits that the solution could bring to the local community i.e., quality of place. HIGH This option has high benefits to society. The pipe will be fixed relatively quickly which will stop the leak with minimal disruption to roads etc.
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“I think if they have the money to replace it then do that, surely if they keep having to go back and fix the leak in the future it will cost about the same as to have just fixed it in the beginning.”

Male, 25-34, Merseyside, SEG E, FBP

“Probably option two, with option one if you keep going back to repeat the same work that might have a higher cost than if they just replaced the leaking pipe in the first place, so there would be no added costs.”

Female, 25-34, Greater Manchester, SEG C2

“I think they would be better off replacing it even if it meant spending more money, because long term it would be more reliable, and they wouldn't have to keep spending money on repairing it when it broke.”

Female, 45-54, Merseyside, SEG A

“The cost is high to replace it, but I think if they just repair it, it's still open and may need fixing again which obviously has more costs if they have to go back and fix it again and again.”

Male, 45-54, Greater Manchester, SEG C2

Option 2: Replace the sewer

The second option is to replace the whole sewer. This would involve installing new pipework. This will stop the current leak but will incur additional costs and time as well as potentially causing disruption to customers.



Cost Potential costs associated with installation and maintenance. HIGH The cost associated with replacing the sewer is high due to the materials required and the amount of work.	Benefit to nature The benefits that the option could bring to the local environment in terms of biodiversity, carbon and recreation. LOW The construction work will impact the local environment. There will be noise and carbon disruption as well as digging disrupting foliage and wildlife.	Benefit to society Potential benefits that the solution could bring to the local community i.e., quality of place. MEDIUM This solution will impact the local community in terms of noise, roadworks and disruptions to service but will make the service more reliable in the future.
Benefit to safety & wellbeing The safety of United Utilities workforce as well as the safety of customers. LOW This work will take longer and is larger scale than Option 1, thus increasing the safety risk for workers and customers. The disruption may impact on customers' wellbeing too.	Benefit to skills & knowledge The skills, knowledge and technology that come together to provide a solution. HIGH Replacing the sewer means that United Utilities can use the latest smart technology which will inform United Utilities of any blockages remotely.	Benefit to manufacturing processes & efficiency The level of service reliability that the suggested solution provides. HIGH Replacing rather than repairing the sewer increases its reliability and efficiency and means that there is a lower likelihood of problems in the short term.

Decision making using United Utilities real life examples (I)

But a minority of customers can see the benefits of repairing the sewer...

The reasons behind why customers may prefer the sewer pipe to be repaired rather than replaced are often based upon the short-term rewards that can be gained, relating to cost and benefits to society i.e., they would rather have cheaper bills and as minimal disruption as possible in the present.

Option 1: Repair the sewer

This will stop the leak and will require less construction work but there is no guarantee how long the repair will last.



<p>Cost Potential costs associated with installation and maintenance.</p> <p>LOW</p> <p>The cost associated with this option is minimal. Workers will repair the leaking pipe. This would involve patching up the damaged part of the pipe.</p>	<p>Benefit to nature The benefits that the option could bring to the local environment in terms of biodiversity, carbon and recreation.</p> <p>MEDIUM</p> <p>The works will have some negative impacts on the natural environment when they are taking place, but this will be short lived.</p>	<p>Benefit to society Potential benefits that the solution could bring to the local community i.e., quality of place.</p> <p>HIGH</p> <p>This option has high benefits to society. The pipe will be fixed relatively quickly which will stop the leak with minimal disruption to roads etc.</p>
<p>Benefit to safety & wellbeing The safety of United Utilities workforce as well as the safety of customers.</p> <p>MEDIUM</p> <p>Workers will have to fix the pipework which creates a certain level of safety risk to staff and customers.</p>	<p>Benefit to skills & knowledge The skills, knowledge and technology that come together to provide a solution</p> <p>LOW</p> <p>This is a fix on an existing pipe so there is no opportunity to upgrade pipes with the latest technology e.g., smart technology</p>	<p>Benefit to manufacturing processes & efficiency The level of service reliability that the suggested solution provides.</p> <p>LOW</p> <p>It is a temporary fix but not a long-term solution and will need to be repeated down the line.</p>

“I would go with option one. I could understand the business model and thought behind it, I’m not saying paper over all cracks, but I think only in extreme circumstances using option two because of the cost.”

Male, 35-44, Greater Manchester, SEG C2

“I think option one makes sense; the cost for that is low so you know it’s not going to impact customers in terms of their bill going up and I suppose repairing it won't take as long to sort out as replacing it.”

Male, 25-34, Greater Manchester, SEG C2

“Yeah, option one would be much more beneficial to a lot of people, I think. Get it done, get it fixed and flag it that it will need doing properly at a later date, but by just repairing it causes minimal disruption to people.”

Female, 25-34, Cheshire, SEG C2

Option 2: Replace the sewer

The second option is to replace the whole sewer. This would involve installing new pipework. This will stop the current leak but will incur additional costs and time as well as potentially causing disruption to customers.

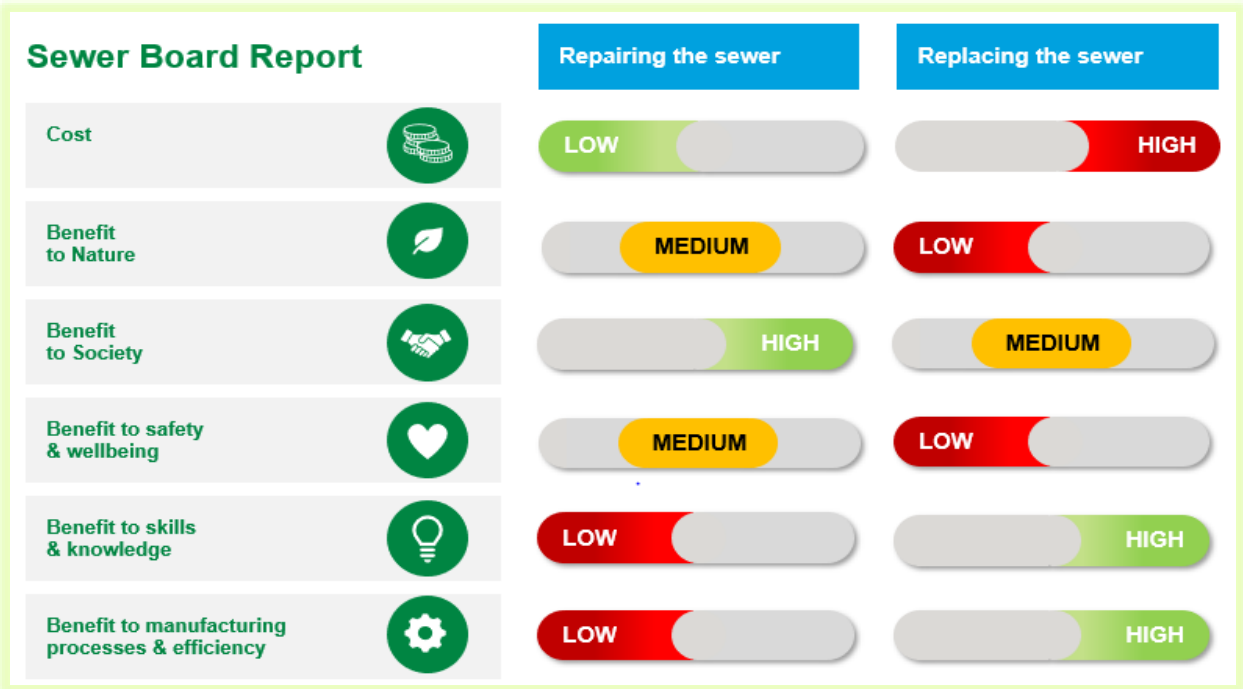


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<p>Benefit to safety & wellbeing The safety of United Utilities workforce as well as the safety of customers.</p> <p>LOW</p> <p>This work will take longer and is larger scale than Option 1, thus increasing the safety risk for workers and customers. The disruption may impact on customers' wellbeing too.</p>	<p>Benefit to skills & knowledge The skills, knowledge and technology that come together to provide a solution</p> <p>HIGH</p> <p>Replacing the sewer means that United Utilities can use the latest smart technology which will inform United Utilities of any blockages remotely.</p>	<p>Benefit to manufacturing processes & efficiency The level of service reliability that the suggested solution provides.</p> <p>HIGH</p> <p>Replacing rather than repairing the sewer increases its reliability and efficiency and means that there is a lower likelihood of problems in the short term</p>

Decision making using United Utilities real life examples (I)

Benefits to society, benefits to manufacturing and cost are perceived as the most important factors in decision making when it comes to repairing or replacing the sewer pipe...

Whilst customers acknowledge that all factors of the six capitals are important when making decisions, a few were deemed as more important. The value a solution brings to the local community is frequently mentioned by customers, but when putting themselves in United Utilities’ shoes, customers also feel that cost is inevitably an important factor to consider. Whilst the cost of replacing the sewer is high, customers feel the long-term costs of repairing the sewer may equate to the same amount if not more. Customers perceive benefits to skills and knowledge as less important due to the fact that United Utilities workers already have skills and knowledge to an extent.



“People have always got to come first and making it better for the future people who live in the area where the work is being carried out.”

Female, 45-54, Merseyside, SEG E

“I think cost has always got to be there, that is the first thing people look at. This year’s budget, next year’s budget, three-year budget timescale.”

Female, 35-44, Lancashire, SEG B

“To be honest, I don’t think skills and knowledge is important, if you want to work with UU for example, you should get some proper training and start off .”

Male, 35-44, Greater Manchester, SEG C1

“Unfortunately for me it is probably skills and knowledge. It’s not that I don’t think it’s important but compared to other things it’s less of a priority.”

Female, 35-44, Cheshire, SEG D

Decision making using United Utilities real life examples (II)

Sustainable drainage solutions (SuDS) popular amongst United Utilities customers...

The majority of customers prefer sustainable drainage solutions over storage tanks. Whilst they feel storage tanks do serve a purpose and can be useful, the consensus is that SuDS are a more natural and visually appealing way of addressing localised flooding. Explanations for preferring SuDS often focus on the benefits it can bring to nature and society as well as health and well-being.

Option 1: Storage Tanks

There is an option to build a concrete tank, usually underground, to increase storage capacity of rainwater and wastewater. This will then be treated following environmental regulations before being returned to the local waterway.

This will be covered up following installation



Cost Potential costs associated with installation and maintenance. MEDIUM There is a medium level of cost associated with building a storage tank e.g., the building materials, workforce etc.	Benefit to nature The benefits that the option could bring to the local environment in terms of biodiversity, carbon and recreation. LOW Installing storage tank means digging an area of land to install it. This will cause disturbance to local wildlife and habitats. The carbon levels will be quite high as it's concrete.	Benefit to society Potential benefits that the solution could bring to the local community i.e., quality of place. MEDIUM Storage tanks provide some benefits to society i.e., provide a place for rainwater to collect to avoid local flooding. But there will also be some disruption to customers from digging up the area.
Benefit to safety & wellbeing The safety of United Utilities workforce as well as the safety of customers. MEDIUM During the work to install the storage tank, there may be safety risks to workers and customers and this may impact wellbeing. This solution will require ongoing maintenance.	Benefit to skills & knowledge The skills, knowledge and technology that come together to provide a solution LOW This is the traditional way water companies have dealt with this type of problem, so United Utilities doesn't develop new skills or knowledge.	Benefit to manufacturing processes & efficiency The level of service reliability that the suggested solution provides. MEDIUM This type of solution is very reliable, but is not very flexible. For example, future rainfall may be greater or less than initially predicted leading to the storage tank being too big or too small.

“I think with this example it is kind of a no brainer for me...Particularly the benefits to nature because the concrete being one of the largest contributors to carbon emissions, rather than other concrete solutions that are still a while away.”

Male, 25-34, Greater Manchester, SEG C1

“Option two is fantastic... I think I’ve made it fairly obvious that this is a much more preferred option, just because the benefits to nature and society, that’s much nicer than just a concrete tank and obviously it’s good for the environment too.”

Male, 35-44, Greater Manchester, SEG C2

“I thought option one was good, but I think this is better it looks nice, and you know something like that it's going to help the environment. It's going to attract nature. I wouldn't mind that by my house, I think it looks really nice.”


Male, 35-44, Lancashire, SEG C2

“I thought the tank was a good solution but seeing the SuDS scenario, I think that is probably a lot kinder and better on the benefit to nature and also the benefit to society because it's thinking of nature, and it looks nice too.”

Female, 35-44, Lancashire, SEG B

Option 2: Sustainable Drainage Solutions

Sustainable drainage solutions allow areas to store water in natural grooves in the land and can be used to allow water to soak away. They slow the speed at which water travels and the vegetation traps and removes pollutants, meaning less water arrives at the wastewater treatment works during heavy rainfall.



Cost Potential costs associated with installation and maintenance. MEDIUM There is a medium level of cost associated with building SuDS e.g., the building materials, workforce etc.	Benefit to nature The benefits that the option could bring to the local environment in terms of biodiversity, carbon and recreation. HIGH This solution has a high level of benefits to the natural environment i.e. vegetation and the creation of green spaces	Benefit to society Potential benefits that the solution could bring to the local community i.e., quality of place. HIGH This solution has high benefits to society i.e., reducing localised flooding and visually appealing by adding natural beauty to the area.
Benefit to safety & wellbeing The safety of United Utilities workforce as well as the safety of customers. MEDIUM This solution will need building in the first instance but will bring wellbeing benefits.	Benefit to skills & knowledge The skills, knowledge and technology that come together to provide a solution. HIGH SuDS are less familiar to the water sector, by building them, United Utilities will learn how to make them more effective and cheaper, therefore improve their skills and knowledge of this type of solution.	Benefit to manufacturing processes & efficiency The level of service reliability that the suggested solution provides. MEDIUM This solution is reliable and doesn't require much maintenance. It is likely to be adaptable to future demand.

Decision making using United Utilities real life examples (II)

However, some customers do have reservations about sustainable drainage solutions...

A handful of customers express concerns over the safety and practicality of sustainable drainage solutions; this often related to children potentially falling down the ditch whilst playing as well as safety amongst adults. Whilst only a minority of customers raise these concerns, it may be important for United Utilities to consider these grievances and reassure customers about the safety of the approach.

Option 1: Storage Tanks

There is an option to build a concrete tank, usually underground, to increase storage capacity of rainwater and wastewater. This will then be treated following environmental regulations before being returned to the local waterway.

This will be covered up following installation



Cost Potential costs associated with installation and maintenance. MEDIUM There is a medium level of cost associated with building a storage tank e.g., the building materials, workforce etc.	Benefit to nature The benefits that the option could bring to the local environment in terms of biodiversity, carbon and recreation. LOW Installing storage tank means digging an area of land to install it. This will cause disturbance to local wildlife and habitats. The carbon levels will be quite high as it's concrete.	Benefit to society Potential benefits that the solution could bring to the local community i.e., quality of place. MEDIUM Storage tanks provide some benefits to society i.e., provide a place for rainwater to collect to avoid local flooding. But there will also be some disruption to customers from digging up the area.
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“I was just thinking, wouldn't that be a bit of a safety risk, with kids I mean?... Because they are going to be drawn to it aren't they? Kids will be drawn to something like that and might go down into it.”

Female, 55-64, Merseyside, SEG C2

“I love the idea, but it could be a bit of a safety issue couldn't it. Like you hear of people falling into canals in Manchester when they've had a drink, I suppose people could fall into that.”


Female, 45-54, Merseyside, SEG E

“I like the idea of option two, but I don't think it would work in every area because some areas just don't have the space, like if you live in a terraced house, they can't put something like that in can they? It's better by new build houses where they can plan to put this in.”

Female, 45-54, Cumbria, SEG C1

Option 2: Sustainable Drainage Solutions

Sustainable drainage solutions allow areas to store water in natural grooves in the land and can be used to allow water to soak away. They slow the speed at which water travels and the vegetation traps and removes pollutants, meaning less water arrives at the wastewater treatment works during heavy rainfall.







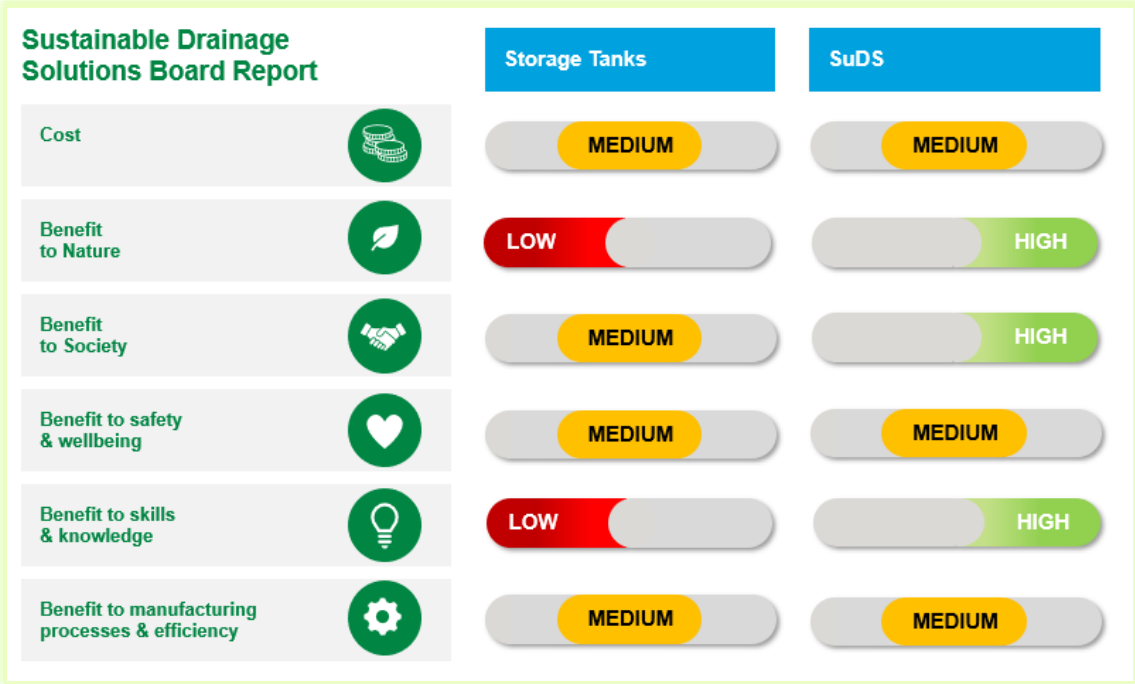
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Decision making using United Utilities real life examples (II)

When customers put themselves in United Utilities’ shoes for this board report, we see a different story emerging...

Again, whilst customers acknowledge how all of the factors of the six capitals are of importance, certain factors are perceived as slightly more important. Some customers still consider the cost as important, but the majority of customers are much more likely to report that the benefits to nature and society are of greater importance here than with the previous sewer pipe scenario. Customers continue to regard benefits to skills and knowledge as least important which coincides with very few customers choosing to spend their lottery winnings on development in this area. Interestingly with this scenario, we see customers also reporting cost as a least important factor in their decision-making process.

 <p>“I think for me it would be a combination wouldn’t it, safety and wellbeing, benefit to society and benefit to nature and I think option two is best for that.”</p> <p>Male, 45-54, Greater Manchester, SEG B</p>	 <p>“My parents have just moved into a new build and have one of these... quite a few mornings they see herons. It makes it make the estate look nice.”</p> <p>Female, 25-34, Greater Manchester, SEG D</p>
 <p>“Yeah, I’d have to say benefits to skills and knowledge is the least important thing out of them all, just because I think the others are more important.”</p> <p>Female, 55-64, Merseyside, SEG C2</p>	 <p>“I think the cost is least important, investing in something like this can bring so many more long-term benefits to people.”</p> <p>Male, 35-44, Greater Manchester, SEG C2</p>



Views on United Utilities moving to this framework

Customer views on the six capitals approach (I)

Views on the six capitals framework are positive...

All United Utilities customers included in this research express support for the six capitals framework with customers who fall into the socioeconomic groups AB, C1 & E being most supportive of the framework...

Customers reporting high levels of support (5/5)

"5 - It gives me a bit or reassurance to keep trusting them with the work that they do. And it shows how much they think about things showing it like this, so it gives me that trust. They are working behind the scenes to make things good for us."

Female, 35-44, Lancashire, SEG B



"5 - I think it is very positive way of looking, it is very systematic in its process, it is also reproduceable, so it allows you as a company to be open and transparent about how you do your business which is a plus for the customer as you can have faith in that company then."

Female, 25-34, Greater Manchester, SEG B



"5 - I'd say it is quite transparent, I'm not business minded at all so there are a lot of things I wouldn't necessarily think about, but I can see they have already thought about it. They are not trying to hide anything; they have covered all bases."

Male, 35-44, Greater Manchester, SEG C1



"5 - I support it, I think for me it is because it shows that they are caring, not just for the business and themselves but also for us and the wider community and how impacts everything across the country really, the UU area."

Female, 45-54, Merseyside, SEG A



"5 - I support it, I think they've covered a lot of factors with the model, and I would give it a 5 based on all the different things that they consider in that model when they are making decisions."

Male, 55-64, Greater Manchester, SEG E



"I think it's got to be a 5, I think it's good that they are considering all these different things and I probably wouldn't have said before tonight that they do consider all this when making important decisions so it's nice to know they do."

Male, 45-54, Cheshire, SEG E



KEY:



Provides reassurance



Caring for customers



Systematic process



Enlightening for customers

Customer views on the six capitals approach (II)

Views on the six capitals framework are positive...

But those who fall into the socioeconomic group C2 and D along with future bill payers, appear to be nonchalant towards the model overall; reasoning for this centres around wanting to see this approach in action, a general feeling that United Utilities as a business can do more, as well as perceptions that United Utilities should be considering these things anyway. In addition, some future bill payers are more non plussed about this than customers.

Customers reporting lower levels of support (4/5)

“4 - I think it’s a good model don’t get me wrong; I think it covers everything you’d want it to, but I just think some of it are things that I think any business should consider so the environment, people, health and safety. They should consider those anyway.”

Female, 55-64, Lancashire, SEG C2



“4 - I think it’s fantastic and I can't think of anything that they have missed, but just with some things I’m not too bothered say about the environment, but other people are, and as a business they’d be in trouble if they didn’t consider the environment.”

Male, 35-44, Greater Manchester, SEG C2



“4.5 - I think that they are doing well, but at the same time I think that they can make more improvements. They could take even more things into account. But on the whole yeah, I would say that I think they are doing really well.”

Female, 55-64, Cheshire, SEG D



“I support them but not fully, I would want to see it in practice then I would fully.”

PNS, 16-25, Cheshire, SEG C2, FBP



“Looking at those six things I support them I agree with all of it, but they could do more.”

Male, 25-34, Merseyside, SEG E, FBP



KEY:



Comes as standard



Could do more



Systematic process



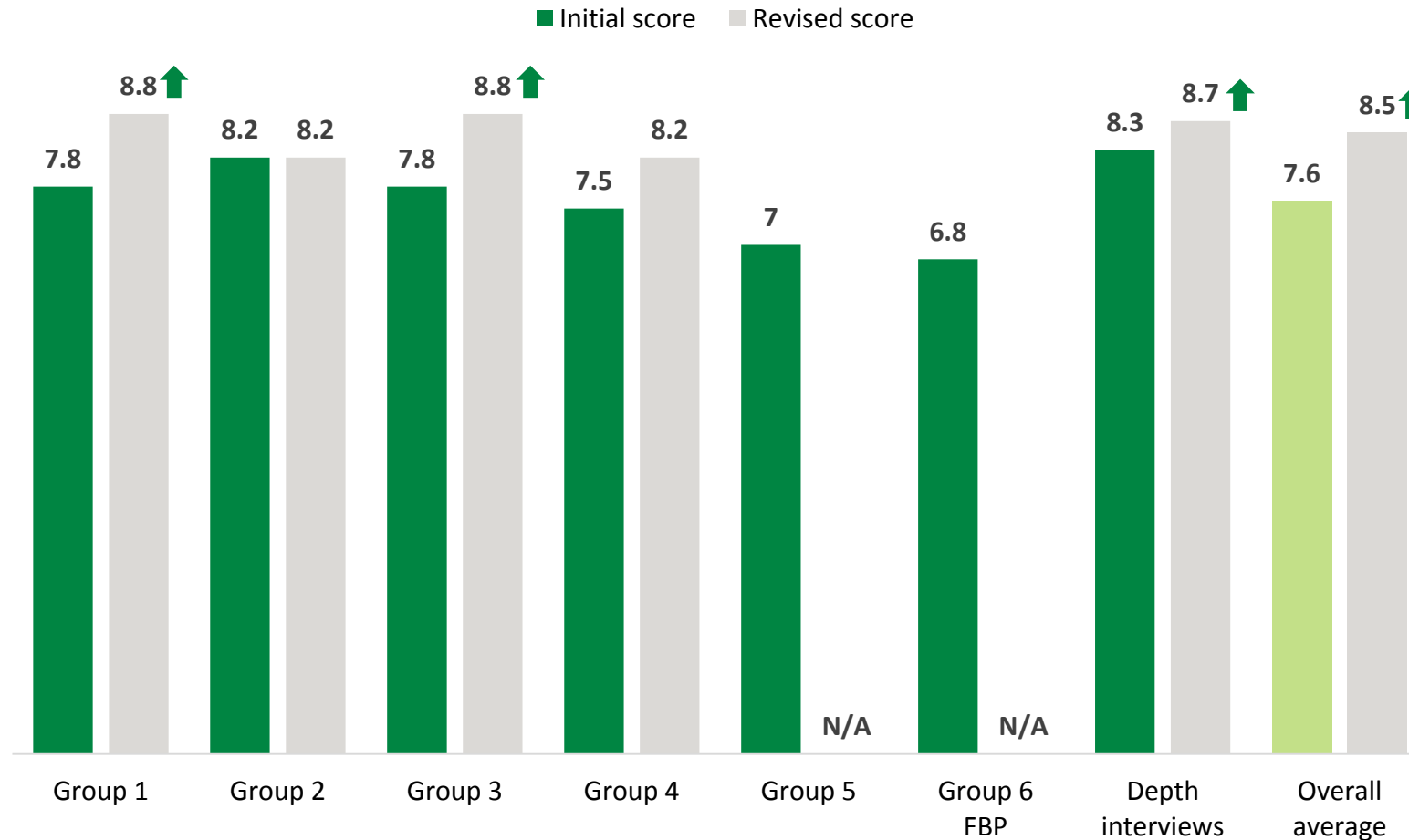
See things in action

Perceptions of United Utilities - revisited

Satisfaction with United Utilities - revisited

How satisfied would you say you are with United Utilities using a scale of 0-10?

After hearing a bit more about what United Utilities do and how they make decisions, satisfaction increases across a few groups and overall satisfaction rises by +0.9.



Base: All respondents excluding groups 5 & 6 (28)

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	Age	Gender	SEG
Group 1	46-70	3 (f), 2 (m)	C2D
Group 2	25-45	3 (f), 2 (m)	ABC1
Group 3	46-70	4 (f), 1 (m)	ABC1
Group 4	25-45	2 (f), 2 (m)	C2D
Group 5	46-70	3 (f), 2 (m)	E
Group 6	16-29	2 (f), 2 (m), 1 (PNS)	Mix
Depths	Interviews were carried out with customers with vulnerabilities and were demographically mixed		

“Yeah, I’d say my score has gone from an 8 to a 9 now I know a bit more about what they are doing and considering behind the scenes.”

Female, 35-44, Greater Manchester, SEG C2, Depth 4

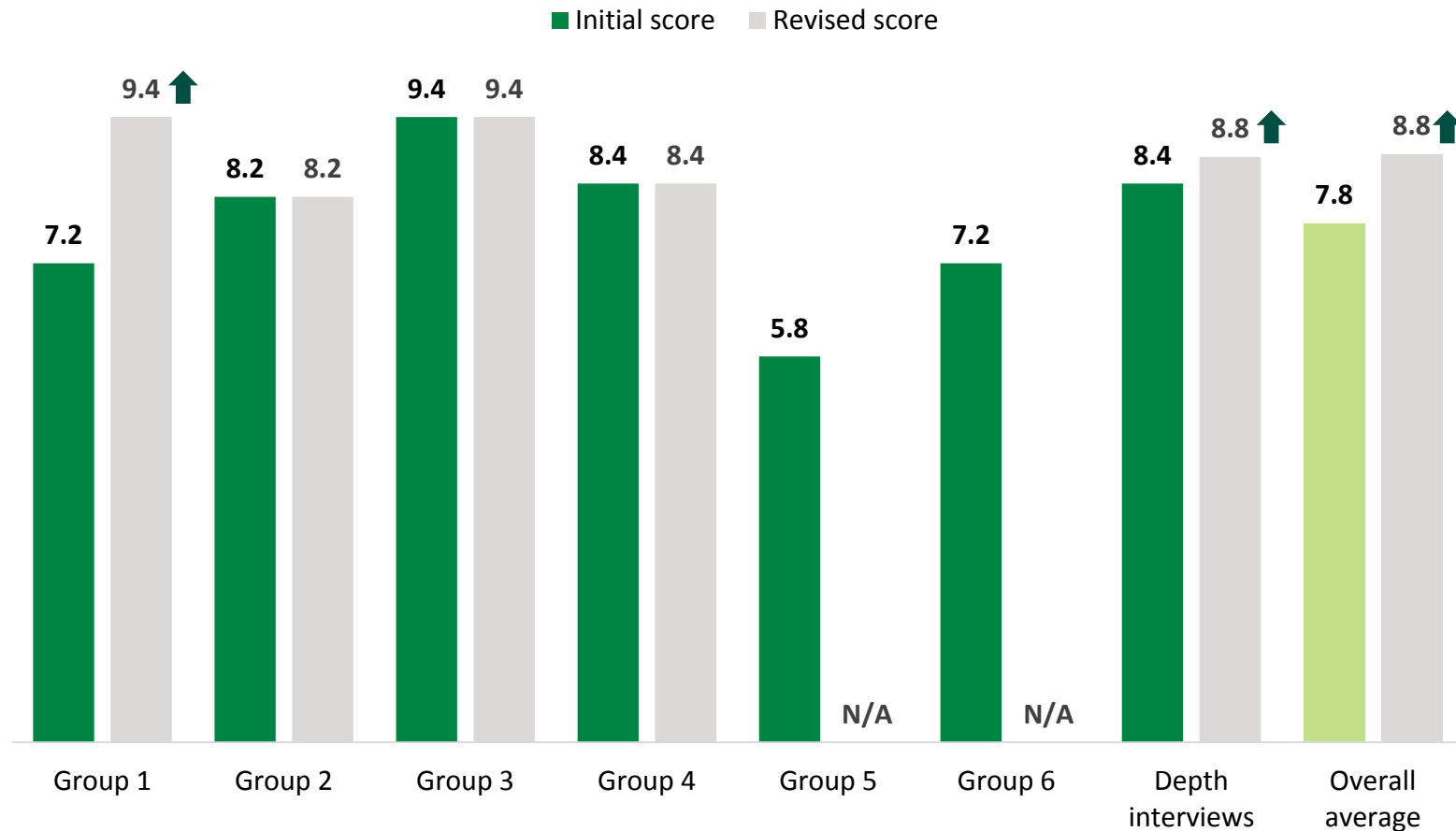
“I’d say it’s gone up, from an 8 to a 9 knowing all this and learning a bit more about them.”

Female, 25-34, Lancashire, SEG C2, Group 3

Trustworthiness of United Utilities - revisited

How trustworthy do you perceive United Utilities to be using a scale of 0-10?

United Utilities score highly amongst customers in terms of trust to begin with, but further increases can be seen for Group 1 and for the depth interviews, with overall trust increasing by +1.



Base: All respondents excluding groups 5 & 6 (28)

	Age	Gender	SEG
Group 1	46-70	3 (f), 2 (m)	C2D
Group 2	25-45	3 (f), 2 (m)	ABC1
Group 3	46-70	4 (f), 1 (m)	ABC1
Group 4	25-45	2 (f), 2 (m)	C2D
Group 5	46-70	3 (f), 2 (m)	E
Group 6	16-29	2 (f), 2 (m), 1 (PNS)	Mix
Depths	Interviews were carried out with customers with vulnerabilities and were demographically mixed		

“Yeah, a little bit higher with the trustworthy one I think, because they have been open and honest... So, I do feel as if I have more trust in them and that I know them a bit better.”

Female, 55-64, Merseyside, SEG C2, Group 1

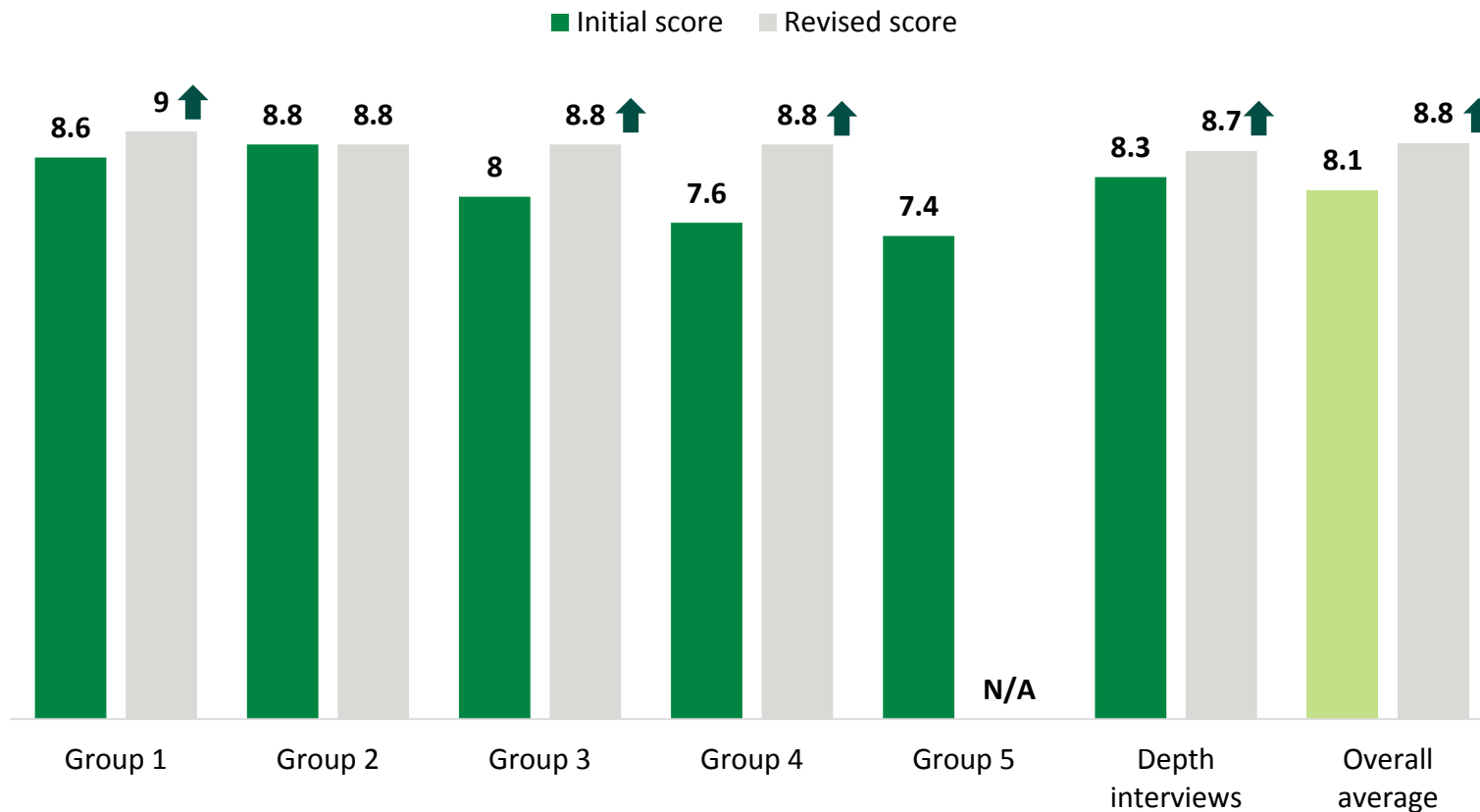
“I’d go up to a 9.5 based on what I’ve heard, I like that they are considering the environment.”

Female, 35-44, Cheshire, SEG C2, Depth 6

Value for money of United Utilities services - revisited

To what extent would you say that your water and sewerage bill is good value for money using a scale of 0-10?

Value for money scores increased across all groups of customers aside from Group 2 which remained the same, with overall perceptions of value for money increasing by +0.7.



Base: All respondents excluding groups 5 & 6 (28)

	Age	Gender	SEG
Group 1	46-70	3 (f), 2 (m)	C2D
Group 2	25-45	3 (f), 2 (m)	ABC1
Group 3	46-70	4 (f), 1 (m)	ABC1
Group 4	25-45	2 (f), 2 (m)	C2D
Group 5	46-70	3 (f), 2 (m)	E
Group 6	16-29	2 (f), 2 (m), 1 (PNS)	Mix
Depths	Interviews were carried out with customers with vulnerabilities and were demographically mixed		

"I think, I already kind of gave them quite high ratings but this has made me sort of think even more highly of them that they're investing in better technology and better systems."

Male, 35-44, Greater Manchester, SEG C2, Group 3

"I'd go up to an 8 because they do a lot more than I initially thought."

Male, 35-44, Greater Manchester, SEG C2, Depth 8

Summary and conclusions

Summary and conclusions

To summarise...

When it comes to satisfaction, trust and value for money:

- Customers hold **positive views** about United Utilities which only **improve** with increased **knowledge of what it is that United Utilities do** and their **approach to making decisions** which may impact customers.
- United Utilities are frequently commended for their level of **communication** with customers and therefore it is important that this continues to keep customer **satisfaction and trust high**.
- Some customers do express an **eagerness to understand even more** about United Utilities and would like further **transparency surrounding their profits**. However, it is important to consider that the focus groups and depth interviews did take place at a time when the profitability of big businesses featured in the media frequently e.g., the published profits of oil and energy companies.
- **Value** can be a **tricky concept for customers to define**, particularly amongst customers from lower socioeconomic backgrounds. Despite this, customers are in **agreement that United Utilities provide them with value**.

When it comes to decision making and the six capitals:

- Customers recognise that the **factors/capitals** that are most important **differ by the problem or issue** you are trying to solve.
- During the decision-making process customers often **weigh up the different elements of the six capitals framework**, for SuDS several customers felt the benefits to society and the environment that the solution brings outweighed the cost implications.
- When asked to consider investment decisions United Utilities have to make, customers deem **benefits to society** and **cost** important when choosing whether to replace or repair a sewer pipe and **societal and environmental benefits** important when considering sustainable drainage solutions or concrete storage tanks.
- Customers even went as far as to ask **additional and more detailed questions about the framework** and the different solutions e.g., customers asked for further detail about the difference in carbon levels between the solutions as well as United Utilities' net zero plans.
- Customer **support of a six capitals** approach to decision making is **high**, with customers feeling as though the framework considers a **variety of important areas** including the implications a solution may have on **communities** and the **environment**.

Appendix 1

Sample breakdown

Methodology breakdown

	n	Age	Gender	SEG
Group 1 (HH)	5	46-70	3 (f), 2 (m)	C2D
Group 2 (HH)	5	25-45	3 (f), 2 (m)	ABC1
Group 3 (HH)	5	46-70	4 (f), 1 (m)	ABC1
Group 4 (HH)	4	25-45	2 (f), 2 (m)	C2D
Group 5 (HH)	6	46-70	3 (f), 2 (m)	E
Group 6* (FBP)	5	16-29	2 (f), 2 (m), 1 (PNS)	Mix
Depths** (HH)	9	Mix	7 (f), 2 (m)	Mix

*Future bill payers included respondents aged 16-29 who do not currently contribute financially towards their water bill

**9 depth interviews were carried out with customers with vulnerabilities, this included: those struggling financially, those with disabilities and those who may be digitally excluded



Appendix 2

Stimulus

Here's what we do...



Provide safe drinking water



Provide new jobs



Work on a variety of environmental projects



Reduce disruptions to water supply



Encourage customers to use water wisely around the home



Ensure there's enough water for now, and in the future



Return cleaned wastewater safely back to rivers, lakes and the sea



Reduce sewer flooding affecting homes or gardens and local areas

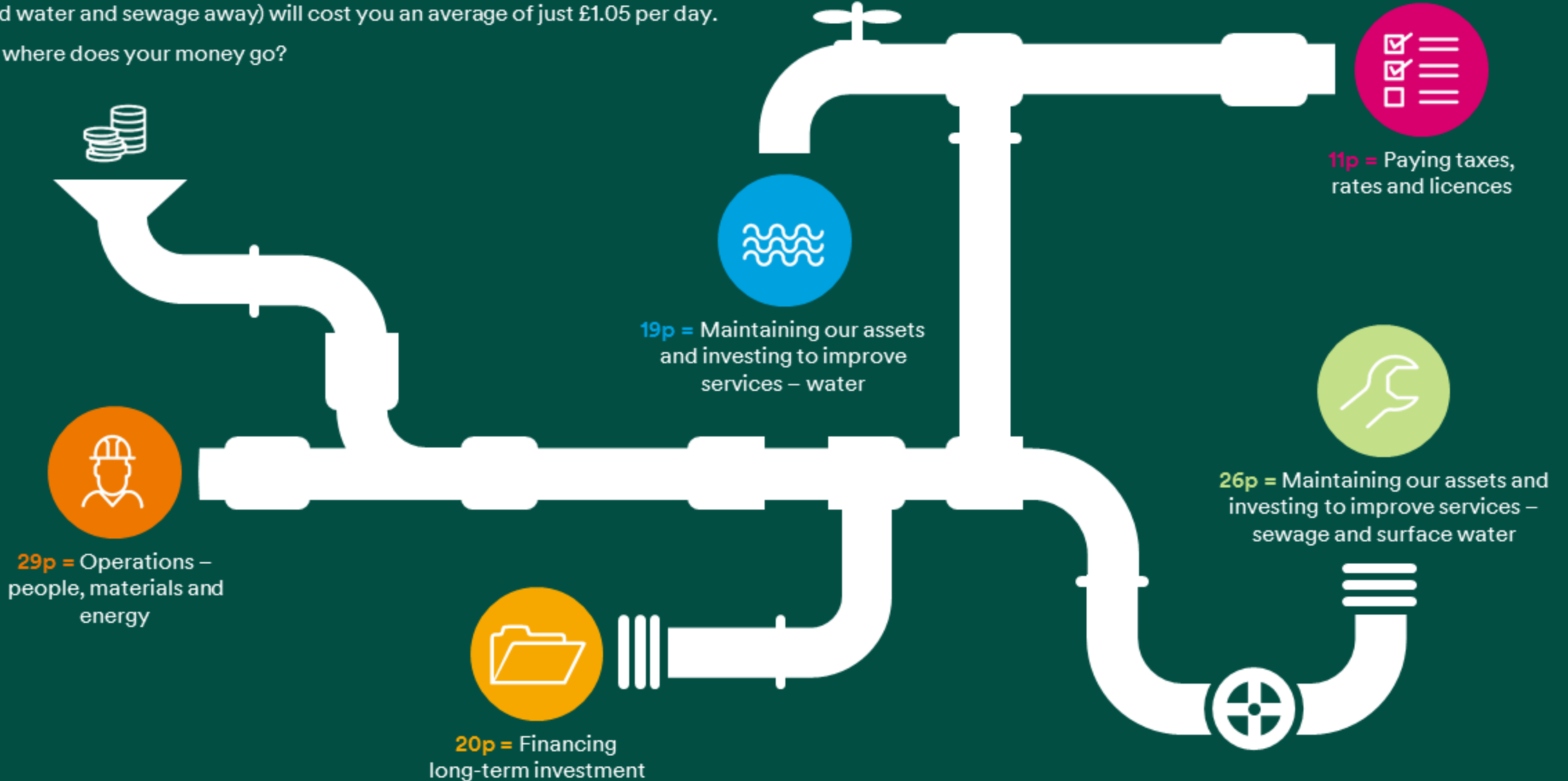


Ensure sufficient wastewater treatment and drainage for now and in the future

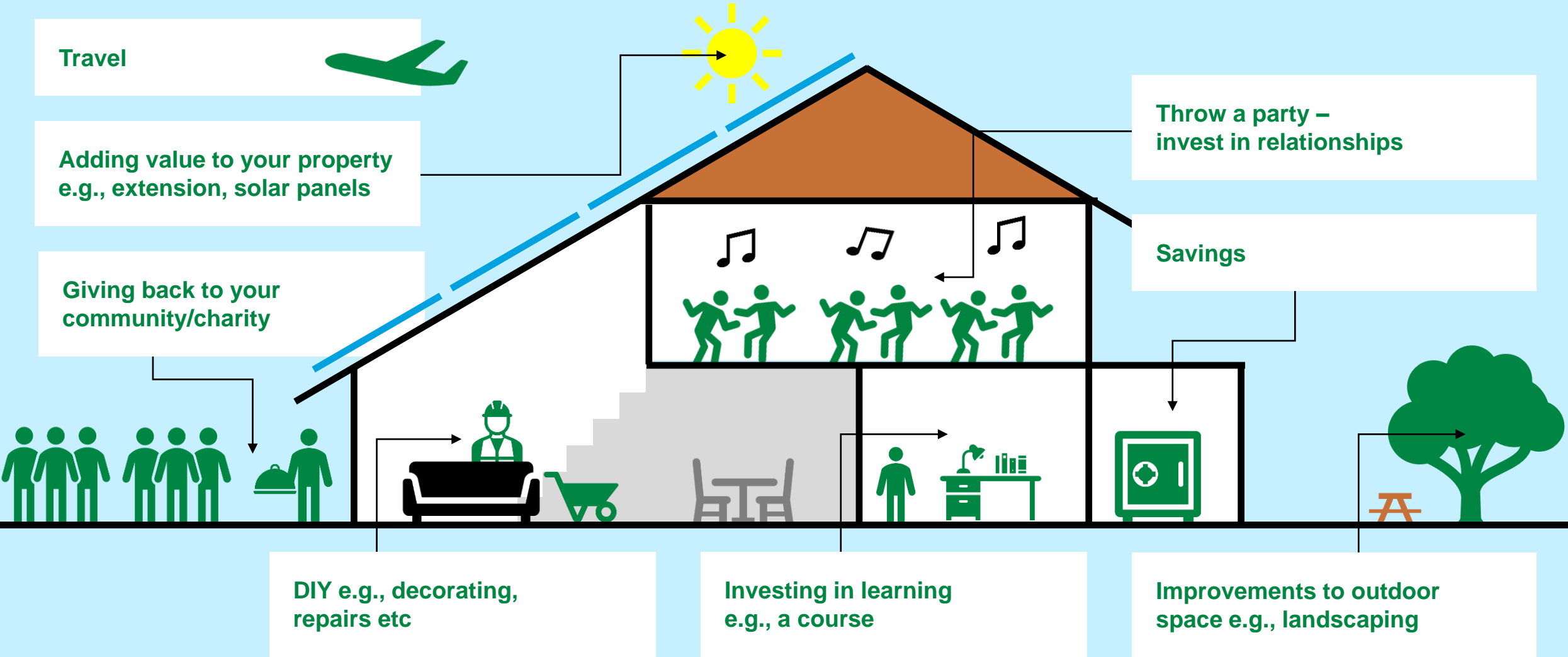
Where your £1.05 goes depending on the amount of water used

By 2025, to provide you with a supply of clean, fresh water (and to take all your used water and sewage away) will cost you an average of just £1.05 per day.

But where does your money go?



Imagine you have won £10,000 on the lottery... but there are certain conditions as to how you can spend your winnings!





Cost

Potential costs associated with installation & maintenance



Benefits to the manufacturing process and efficiency

Service reliability



Benefit to nature

Benefits to the local environment in terms of biodiversity, reduced carbon and recreation



Benefit to safety & wellbeing

The safety of United Utilities' workers as well as the safety of customers



Benefit to skills & knowledge

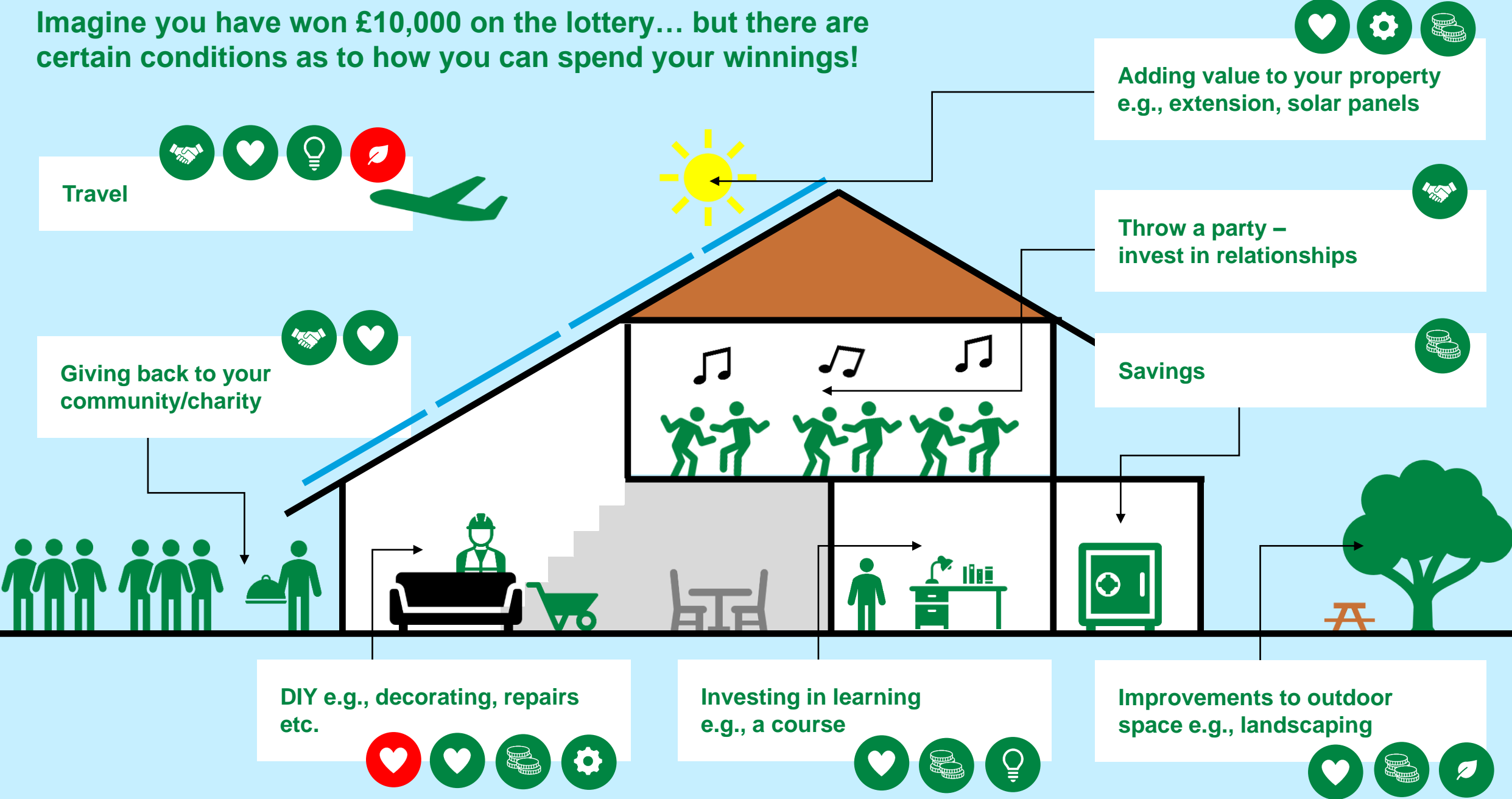
The skills, knowledge and technology that come together to provide a solution



Benefit to society

Potential benefits that the solution could bring to the local community e.g., quality of place

Imagine you have won £10,000 on the lottery... but there are certain conditions as to how you can spend your winnings!



Travel

Giving back to your community/charity

DIY e.g., decorating, repairs etc.

Investing in learning e.g., a course

Improvements to outdoor space e.g., landscaping

Adding value to your property e.g., extension, solar panels

Throw a party – invest in relationships

Savings

Option 1: Repair the sewer

This will stop the leak and will require less construction work but there is no guarantee how long the repair will last.



Cost

Potential costs associated with installation and maintenance.



LOW

The cost associated with this option is minimal. Workers will repair the leaking pipe. This would involve patching up the damaged part of the pipe.

Benefit to nature

The benefits that the option could bring to the local environment in terms of biodiversity, carbon and recreation.



MEDIUM

The works will have some negative impacts on the natural environment when they are taking place, but this will be short lived.

Benefit to society

Potential benefits that the solution could bring to the local community i.e., quality of place.



HIGH

This option has high benefits to society. The pipe will be fixed relatively quickly which will stop the leak with minimal disruption to roads etc.

Benefit to safety & wellbeing

The safety of United Utilities workforce as well as the safety of customers.



MEDIUM

Workers will have to fix the pipework which creates a certain level of safety risk to staff and customers.

Benefit to skills & knowledge

The skills, knowledge and technology that come together to provide a solution



LOW

This is a fix on an existing pipe so there is no opportunity to upgrade pipes with the latest technology e.g., smart technology

Benefit to manufacturing processes & efficiency

The level of service reliability that the suggested solution provides.



LOW

It is a temporary fix but not a long-term solution and will need to be repeated down the line.

Option 2: Replace the sewer

The second option is to replace the whole sewer. This would involve installing new pipework. This will stop the current leak but will incur additional costs and time as well as potentially causing disruption to customers.



Cost

Potential costs associated with installation and maintenance.



HIGH

The cost associated with replacing the sewer is high due to the materials required and the amount of work.

Benefit to nature

The benefits that the option could bring to the local environment in terms of biodiversity, carbon and recreation.



LOW

The construction work will impact the local environment. There will be noise and carbon disruption as well as digging disrupting foliage and wildlife.

Benefit to society

Potential benefits that the solution could bring to the local community i.e. quality of place.



MEDIUM

This solution will impact the local community in terms of noise, roadworks and disruptions to service but will make the service more reliable in the future.

Benefit to safety & wellbeing

The safety of United Utilities workforce as well as the safety of customers.



LOW

This work will take longer and is larger scale than Option 1, thus increasing the safety risk for workers and customers. The disruption may impact on customers' wellbeing too.

Benefit to skills & knowledge

The skills, knowledge and technology that come together to provide a solution



HIGH

Replacing the sewer means that United Utilities can use the latest smart technology which will inform United Utilities of any blockages remotely.

Benefit to manufacturing processes & efficiency







The level of service reliability that the suggested solution provides.



HIGH

Replacing rather than repairing the sewer increases its reliability and efficiency and means that there is a lower likelihood of problems in the short term

Sewer Board Report

Cost	
Benefit to Nature	
Benefit to Society	
Benefit to safety & wellbeing	
Benefit to skills & knowledge	
Benefit to manufacturing processes & efficiency	

Repairing the sewer



Replacing the sewer



Sustainable drainage solutions

Sometimes, due to storms or intense rainfall, United Utilities' wastewater treatment works receive more rainwater and wastewater than they're able to process or store.

When this happens the network can back up which can cause flooding via manholes, drains and toilets. To prevent this, the mix of rainwater and wastewater passes into rivers and the sea – this is called a spill. Sewer spills are legally permitted (by the Environment Agency) to discharge when sewers are full because of heavy rainfall. This protects properties and streets from flooding but can have a negative impact on river water quality including areas such as biodiversity and recreation.

Legal requirements mean there is the need to reduce the number of spills to 10 spills or less per year to reduce harm to local waterways. There are different ways United Utilities can address this target.



Option 1: Storage Tanks

There is an option to build a concrete tank, usually underground, to increase storage capacity of rainwater and wastewater. This will then be treated following environmental regulations before being returned to the local waterway.

This will be covered up following installation

Cost

Potential costs associated with installation and maintenance.



MEDIUM

There is a medium level of cost associated with building a storage tank e.g., the building materials, workforce etc.

Benefit to nature

The benefits that the option could bring to the local environment in terms of biodiversity, carbon and recreation.



LOW

Installing storage tank means digging an area of land to install it This will cause disturbance to local wildlife and habitats. The carbon levels will be quite high as it's concrete.

Benefit to society

Potential benefits that the solution could bring to the local community i.e., quality of place.



MEDIUM

Storage tanks provide some benefits to society i.e., provide a place for rainwater to collect to avoid local flooding. But there will also be some disruption to customers from digging up the area.

Benefit to safety & wellbeing

The safety of United Utilities workforce as well as the safety of customers.



MEDIUM

During the work to install the storage tank, there may be safety risks to workers and customers and this may impact wellbeing. This solution will require ongoing maintenance.

Benefit to skills & knowledge

The skills, knowledge and technology that come together to provide a solution



LOW

This is the traditional way water companies have dealt with this type of problem, so United Utilities doesn't develop new skills or knowledge.

Benefit to manufacturing processes & efficiency

The level of service reliability that the suggested solution provides.



MEDIUM

This type of solution is very reliable, but is not very flexible. For example, future rainfall may be greater or less than initially predicted leading to the storage tank being too big or too small.

Option 2: Sustainable Drainage Solutions

Sustainable drainage solutions allow areas to store water in natural grooves in the land and can be used to allow water to soak away. They slow the speed at which water travels and the vegetation traps and removes pollutants, meaning less water arrives at the wastewater treatment works during heavy rainfall.



Cost

Potential costs associated with installation and maintenance.



MEDIUM

There is a medium level of cost associated with building SuDS e.g., the building materials, workforce etc.

Benefit to nature

The benefits that the option could bring to the local environment in terms of biodiversity, carbon and recreation.



HIGH

This solution has a high level of benefits to the natural environment i.e. vegetation and the creation of green spaces

Benefit to society

Potential benefits that the solution could bring to the local community i.e., quality of place.



HIGH

This solution has high benefits to society i.e., reducing localised flooding and visually appealing by adding natural beauty to the area.

Benefit to safety & wellbeing

The safety of United Utilities workforce as well as the safety of customers.



MEDIUM

This solution will need building in the first instance but will bring wellbeing benefits.

Benefit to skills & knowledge

The skills, knowledge and technology that come together to provide a solution.



HIGH

SuDS are less familiar to the water sector, by building them, United Utilities will learn how to make them more effective and cheaper, therefore improve their skills and knowledge of this type of solution.

Benefit to manufacturing processes & efficiency



The level of service reliability that the suggested solution provides.



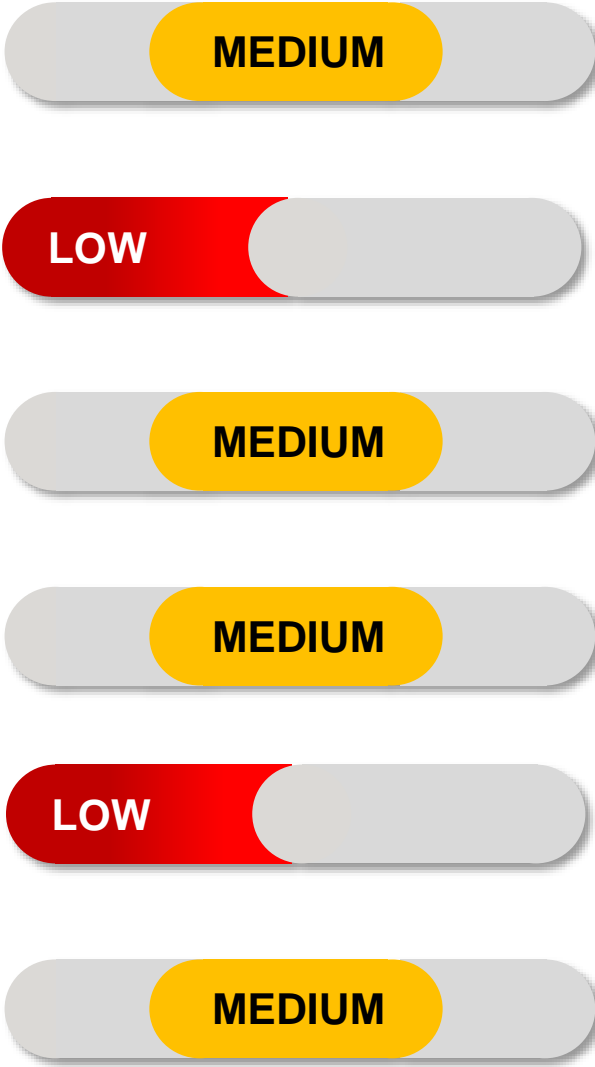
MEDIUM

This solution is reliable and doesn't require much maintenance. It is likely to be adaptable to future demand.

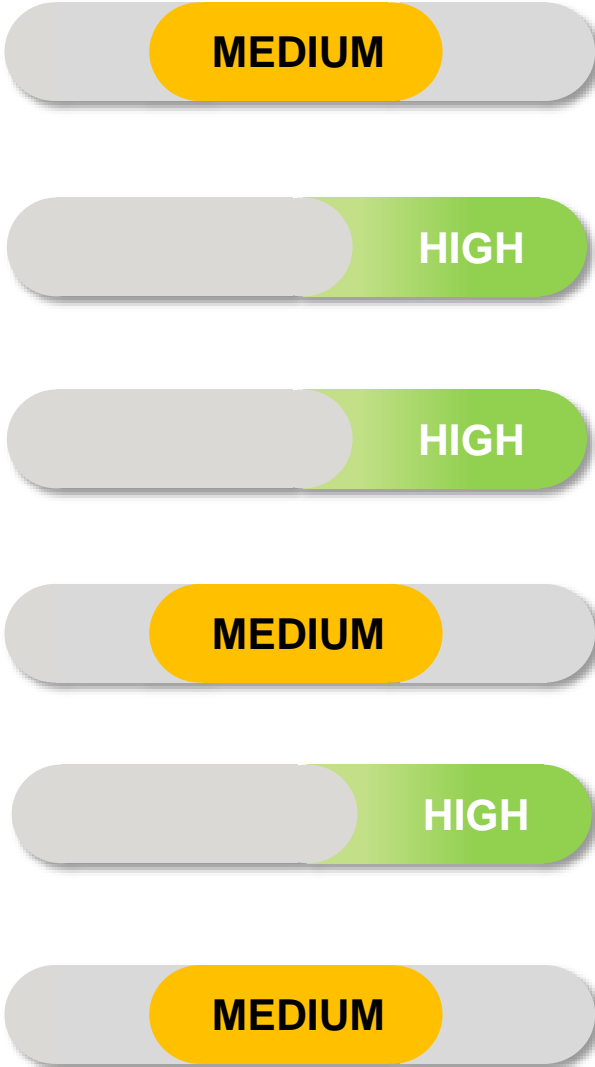
Sustainable Drainage Solutions Board Report

Cost	
Benefit to Nature	
Benefit to Society	
Benefit to safety & wellbeing	
Benefit to skills & knowledge	
Benefit to manufacturing processes & efficiency	

Storage Tanks



SuDS



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