

Working in the public interest

Delivering more value for the public

We are proud to have played an important part in people's daily lives for well over 150 years – but we don't just supply water.

We take an active part in improving the areas we are privileged to serve, including playing a full role in tackling wider social and environmental challenges.

Industry reflection

Last year Ofwat published a discussion paper providing its latest thinking on public value, following a range of conversations with water companies, and insights from annual reports and wider engagement with stakeholders.

Ofwat supports the work already being done across the industry to create greater public value and its strategy sets out that water companies will need to be run with a clear purpose, adding wider public value for customers and communities, as well as for shareholders. It is also keen that culture within water companies ensures every part of the business and every business decision is seen as an opportunity to add value to society.

The industry wants to do more to meet the high expectations which rightly come with running a vital public service for the public good. This is why we are all working collaboratively to achieve the industry Public Interest Commitments which includes five challenging goals to:

- Triple the rate of sector-wide leakage reduction by 2030
- Make bills affordable as a minimum for all households with water and sewerage bills no more than 5% of their disposable income by 2030 and develop a strategy to end water poverty
- Achieve net zero carbon emissions for the sector by 2030
- Prevent the equivalent of 4 billion plastic bottles ending up as waste by 2030
- Be the first sector to achieve 100% commitment to the Social Mobility Pledge

Defining our purpose



Kate Thornton
Chief Customer Officer

Kate Thornton was appointed as our Chief Customer Officer in October last year and has been leading the development of our enhanced social purpose to help drive real change in the communities in which we operate.

In your view, why is it important the Company develops its purpose?

SES Water, and the organisations from which it springs, have been providing a vital service to our local community ever since water was first piped to people's homes in the 1800s and we're all really proud of the work we do. However, it's important we continue to evolve to meet the changing needs of our customers, communities and environment, and never has the topic of purpose been more relevant than today, as society looks to 'build back better' in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic.

As a public utility, it's particularly important we show leadership as a purposeful company and so we've embarked on a journey with our employees, our customers, our community partners and wider stakeholders to recreate our purpose for today and tomorrow. This work is about much more than creating a story or a marketing strapline. It's about committing to an idea that will drive real change and deliver value for our business, our customers and the world around us.

Can you give a brief overview of the work undertaken so far to develop our purpose?

The approach we're taking centres on co-creation and genuine engagement. In addition to expert interviews and desk research, we've run a series of workshops with a cross section of employees, customers, community-based organisations and charities, our Board and members of our Customer and Environmental Scrutiny Panels to build and refine our thinking.

It's important to us to gather the input of customers and citizens in the widest sense, including younger people who will be tomorrow's bill payers, as our purpose will drive thinking and action over the long term. And it's just as critical that teams from across our business are involved in the process so it feels authentic and can be owned by all of our organisation long into the future.

What would you like the Company's refreshed purpose to convey to customers?

We'll know we've been successful if our customers recognise our purpose is genuinely addressing issues that matter to them, and believe that we are taking real action to make a positive difference and make the world we all share a better place. We hope they'll be as enthusiastic about it as we are, and maybe even want to collaborate with us on initiatives related to our purpose, because partnerships are one of the most important ways we can bring our purpose to life.

Doing more for our communities

In the past year we have awarded more than £27,000 to six local organisations through our charitable giving fund with the Community Foundation for Surrey, which is expected to have benefitted more than 800 people. The partnership forms part of our commitment to supporting worthy causes in the community and giving something back to those groups providing vital services for local people and disadvantaged individuals.

Separate to our community fund we donated more than £9,000 received in fines and legal costs after successfully prosecuting a company for illegally taking water from a fire hydrant. The monies were donated to the Wallington Community Wellbeing Charity so that local people affected by the offence will enjoy some benefit.



We are enormously grateful to SES Water for this generous donation. As a small, local charity, every penny will be used to help relieve loneliness and isolation in older people and those with disabilities in our area. With the current COVID-19 restrictions, people are far more isolated than ever before and this is affecting their mental health and wellbeing so this gesture is very welcome. Thank you, SES!

Christine Lindsay, Wallington Community Wellbeing Charity



Thanks to SES Water for donating two brand new Chromebooks to help Transform clients. Due to COVID-19 one of our clients had lost her job, and without a phone or laptop, was finding it difficult to look for work. Her search for employment can now continue.

David Annand, Transform Housing & Support



We have some new additions to The Food Club! We now have some aprons for our volunteers and a contactless card machine. Thank you to SES Water for donating towards The Food Club. A contactless machine means people don't have to risk using cash or spend time searching for the coppers!

Alice Oswald, Merstham Community Facility Trust



You're never too young to learn about water

As part of our education programme we produced 'Every Drop Counts', a hand illustrated children's story book, and donated more than 600 copies to several foodbanks, charities and children's centres across our supply area.

The book is aimed at a pre-school audience and explains the journey of 'Drop' the water droplet as she flows through the water cycle. The book also contains simple water saving messages to help younger children learn about the importance of using water more carefully.

For World Book Day we turned the book into an online animation, narrated by our customer Louise Redknapp, so even more people can enjoy the story and learn about the water cycle.



This is such a cute story and one which has helped bring a smile to the faces of my children during what has been a tough year for us as a family. Every time I've come home after work this week my daughter asks me to read the book to her, she really loves it. Thank you, SES Water.



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Continued

A spotlight on...

Inspiring everyone to value our most precious resource

Last year we opened 'Flow Zone', our brand new, state-of-the-art education centre at Bough Beech Reservoir and Water Treatment Works, near Edenbridge in Kent.

A sensory experience involving light and sound, the new centre provides a number of interactive activities and experiences for students and adults to immerse themselves in learning about the water cycle, water usage and the importance of saving water.

The centre is a key part of our community engagement, and will allow us to continue inspiring future generations with our established education programme, which has been running for more than 20 years.

While the pandemic meant we were not able to host visits for most of the last year, we are very pleased to now be welcoming back groups to the centre, and seeing the success of such an important investment.





We have been visiting Bough Beech for many years. Not only do the children find it fascinating to see the water treatment process and the equipment that is used, us teachers also take away lots from the visit too! We were all surprised to learn about how much water we waste each day in this country. It was a real eye-opener and something that will definitely influence my approach to saving water in the future.

