We often hear about species under threat and the amazing conservation work that goes on to protect their worldwide survival. But closer to home we have wildlife on our doorstep that also needs a helping hand. And that’s where Dorset Wildlife Trust’s Get Dorset Buzzing campaign is such a fantastic initiative.

The trust is calling on help to fight the decline of bees, butterflies and hoverflies by pledging to do at least one thing for pollinators in your garden. See page 19 to find out how you can get involved.

Managing how much water is used in the garden is also important. Last year’s dry spell saw a huge increase in demand for water with people using more water outdoors than they normally would. So when you’re planning your garden for the summer, as well as thinking about plants that are great for pollinators, it’s also worth bearing in mind that drought resistant varieties are often easier to look after and not as thirsty. Check out our gardening tips on page 13.

We invest in water and sewerage services based on what matters most to customers and in the interests of protecting the environment. During 2020-2025 we’re investing £1.4 billion in areas that customers have told us are most important to them. Meanwhile, under our plans, bills, after allowing for inflation, will be no more in 2025 than they are today.

This year customers, organisations and other interested parties have the opportunity to find out first-hand where we’re investing and how we’re changing the way we do things. Our customer and stakeholder forum will see sessions across our region where our chief executive officer and directors explain more – and we’d love to see you there. See pages 14-18 I hope you enjoy the issue.
Golden flush remains a mystery in Bristol!
There was a Christmas conundrum at our water recycling centre in Bristol, where a set of pOSH dentures ended up after being flushed down someone’s toilet.

We used media and social networks to try to trace the owner of the false teeth, which included a gold tooth reminiscent of Joe Peck’s ‘wet bandits’ character Harry in the classic Christmas film Home Alone.

Sadly no match was found, despite our promise to give the teeth a thorough clean before sending them back.

“People would be amazed what gets flushed out of the sewers, from children’s toys to mobile phones, and this often raises a chuckle among our staff,” director Matt Wheeldon said.

“But there is a more serious message – items like this shouldn’t be flushed and can cause blockages and sewage flooding in people’s homes.”

Are you the owner of the pOSH false teeth? If so, drop us a line.

Investing in Bristol’s future

It’s no secret to Bristolians that their city is growing rapidly. A target is in place to build 25,400 new homes by 2026 and a large portion of these will be popping up across the north of the city.

While this is an exciting phase for Bristol, a growing population comes with a growing demand for services. That’s why we’re investing £55million in a new relief sewer for North Bristol to ensure the sewerage network can cope with ongoing and future development in the area.

Construction is scheduled to begin in September 2019 and will take approximately two and a half years to complete.

The sewer will be 6km long, starting in Lawrence Weston, from our existing Bristol trunk sewer, and finishing in Cribbs Causeway to join our new Frome Valley relief sewer, which we have just built from Frampton Cotterell to Bradley Stoke.

Once connected, these new sewers will direct waste around North Bristol to our water recycling centre in Avonmouth.

Tunnel vision
The majority of the work will be carried out by tunnelling underground, meaning we won’t always be digging trenches in roads and other public spaces.

Andy Palmer, project manager for the work, said: “We’ve taken every step possible to minimise disruption to local communities and tunnelling underground forms a big part of this commitment.

“For most of the scheme, customers who live in the North Bristol area won’t even know we’re there, as we’ll be underneath them! We’re even tunnelling under a section of the M5 motorway.”

The North Bristol relief sewer forms an essential part of our long-term sewerage strategy for the next 100 years. Find out more by visiting wessexwater.co.uk/nbtrs

Grant protects endangered bird species
The Great Bustard Group (GBG), which has reintroduced an endangered species of bird to the UK, received a grant from our Biodiversity Action Plan Partners Programme.

The £4,000 grant will support the planting of an 800m hedgerow along Salisbury Plain, shielding the great bustards who live there from disturbance.

Great bustards are one of the heaviest flying birds alive today and can be found across Europe, but in 1832 the rare bird became extinct in the UK due to hunting and agricultural changes.

The GBG has successfully reintroduced the species over many years and they now require special protection.

Our regulatory scientist Dave Jones said: “We’re really pleased to be able to support the continued reintroduction of such an iconic species located in the heart of our region.”

Partnership increases support for food banks
Helping customers in hard-to-reach areas has long been one of our priorities, and we’ve worked to ensure that a stage further by supporting foodbanks.

One project involved staff at our regional offices and depots organising collections for eight foodbanks and helping to distribute an incredible 100kg of food and toiletries.

We work closely with a range of debt advice partners, who are able to speak to our customers at foodbanks and make them aware of the affordability schemes we have available.

A partnership with Bristol Water enables us to help out at more foodbanks in the city, and dedicated funding will ensure this support spreads even further.

For news as it happens, or if you want to share news with us, follow us on Twitter @wessexwater

In the news
A round-up of how we’ve made the headlines

For news as it happens, or if you want to share news with us, follow us on Twitter @wessexwater

Search bar and live chat.

Visit wessexwater.co.uk

Check out our new-look sections, keeping you better informed than ever about what we do.

With ongoing and future development in the area...
Seeking leaks from the skies

We’ve stepped up the use of drones to spot leaks on the 7,300 miles of underground pipes we look after in the region.

A fleet of 10 unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), fitted with leak-spotting thermal imaging cameras, scoured the region at dawn on cold winter mornings at the beginning of this year.

Led by our in-house drone pilot Corinne Riley (pictured), the team were able to detect leaks which might not be visible to the naked eye and ensure they were repaired quickly.

Corinne, who is fully licensed by the Civil Aviation Authority, explained: “We went out with the drones at sunrise in January and February because it’s easier to spot an underground leak when the ground is at its coldest.

“Potentials leaks showed up as warm coloured patches on our thermal imaging cameras, while the drones have a mapping function which allows for detailed ‘before and after’ photos and helped with our analysis.”

Reaching new heights to spot leaks from the sky

Over the last decade we have invested almost £100million in renewing supply pipes in the Wessex Water region. While last year’s cold weather blast - “The Beast from the East” - left thousands of people in the UK without water, our customers didn’t suffer the same fate thanks to this programme of pipe renewal, careful planning and investment in a water supply grid that moves water around the region.

Ashlea Lane, director of water supply, said: "We’re always looking to improve the way we do things, and using drones allows us to save time, energy and effort and means we can operate more efficiently.

“We have dedicated teams on the hunt for leaks all year round, and we’ll continue to use land-based detection methods and replace ageing mains on our network. “But advances in technology can only help us, and we’re convinced that drones will play an increasing role this year and beyond.”

Leakage has halved in our region since the mid-1990s and we’re committed to reducing it even further. To report a leak or find out more visit wessexwater.co.uk/leaks

You might be surprised to know that around 30% of water leaks occur on the pipe between customers’ homes and our water mains.

While this pipe is the responsibility of the homeowner, we’ll repair it free of charge provided it’s accessible and is no longer than 12 metres in length. Where we can’t repair for free or the pipe is longer than 12 metres, we’ll still give help and advice.

If you’re on a water meter, it is simple to check for a leak. Just follow our steps opposite. We’ll generally give you a leak allowance if you’re on a water meter and your bill has gone up.

Don’t worry if you’re not on a meter - there are several ways to tell if you might have a leak on your private supply pipe.

You may have a leak if you notice:
• areas of lush vegetation
• a hissing noise at your internal stop tap
• damp patches on the ground during dry weather
• pooling of water in an area when it hasn’t been raining.

W e've step p ed up the use of d rones to sp ot lea ks on the 7,300 m iles of und erground  p ipes w e look a fter in the region.
The water industry is no different. Turning back time to 30 or 40 years ago it would have been considered unusual for a woman to be out in the field fixing leaks, treating water or generally worked in offices, in clerical and administrative roles. Women were not encouraged to explore long-term career options with us in engineering or operations. "Whenever we conduct a visit we make sure it includes a female technician to inspire young women to explore long-term career options with us in engineering or operations". However, our gender balance is still heavily dominated by men. Jo Gordon, head of human resources, said: "We know that we can do more for our customers if we reflect the diversity of the communities we serve. Plus, it’s proven that businesses with diverse workforces outperform those without. We have already taken a number of steps to make the business more accessible and attractive to women. For example, we have enhanced our flexible working policy to make it work for all employees and new recruits. We know there’s a need to hire more women at all levels and in all areas of the business, so enlisting the help of some of our female workforce as role models has proved successful in our recruitment process, particularly among school, college and university leavers. Managing director of engineering and construction, John Thompson, said: "We engage with schools, colleges and other youth groups such as local girlguiding and scouting organisations to raise awareness of our technical apprenticeships. ‘Whenever we conduct a visit we make sure it includes a female technician to inspire young women to explore long-term career options with us in engineering or operations’. ‘We’re really pleased that currently 11 per cent of our technical apprentices are female – considerably higher than the national benchmark – and 17 per cent of apprentices overall are female. But we still have a long way to go, so we’ve embarked on a company-wide project to improve inclusion and diversity for the future sustainability of the business, led by managing director of customer and retail services, Charley Maher.’

It’s safe to say that workplace gender diversity has come a long way in recent years across multiple industries. We’ve seen an international push on the matter, including increased pressure for companies to publish and work towards closing their gender pay gap. But there is still a lot more work to do. The water industry is no different. Turning back time to 30 or 40 years ago it would have been considered unusual for a woman to be out in the field fixing leaks, treating water or generally worked in offices, in clerical and administrative roles. At Wessex Water things look a lot different nowadays. We have women working across all areas of the business, including engineering, construction, customer services, operations and IT, in entry level positions and senior leadership and director roles. However, our gender balance is still heavily dominated by men. Jo Gordon, head of human resources, said: “We know that we can do more for our customers if we reflect the diversity of the communities we serve. Plus, it’s proven that businesses with diverse workforces outperform those without. We have already taken a number of steps to make the business more accessible and attractive to women. For example, we have enhanced our flexible working policy to make it work for all employees and new recruits.

There’s a clear need to hire more women at all levels and in all areas of the business, so enlisting the help of some of our female workforce as role models has proved successful in our recruitment process, particularly among school, college and university leavers. Managing director of engineering and construction, John Thompson, said: “We engage with schools, colleges and other youth groups such as local girlguiding and scouting organisations to raise awareness of our technical apprenticeships. “Whenever we conduct a visit we make sure it includes a female technician to inspire young women to explore long-term career options with us in engineering or operations”. “We’re really pleased that currently 11 per cent of our technical apprentices are female – considerably higher than the national benchmark – and 17 per cent of apprentices overall are female. But we still have a long way to go, so we’ve embarked on a company-wide project to improve inclusion and diversity for the future sustainability of the business, led by managing director of customer and retail services, Charley Maher.”

Ahead of International Women in Engineering Day in June, we want to proudly showcase some of our fantastic female team members in engineering and construction roles, as well as share what we’re doing across our wider business to improve gender diversity.

Lucia – customer inspector

What made you want to pursue a career in engineering and construction?

I originally started my career with Wessex Water in customer services and operations. I was actually the company’s first female sewerage inspector! I then became a customer inspector in engineering and construction to gain more knowledge and understanding of a different department. I wanted to challenge myself and to show my managers and colleagues that women can do this job just as effectively as their male colleagues.

What do you enjoy most about being a customer inspector?

I enjoy helping people, that’s always one thing I have been passionate about. I also enjoy the challenging jobs such as no water and low pressures and understanding how different equipment and technology works. It’s a very rewarding job, you feel like you have achieved something when a job gets completed, or you help a customer who has had an emergency. There is always something to do and every day is varied.

Are there any women in your life who have inspired you to go down this career path?

There are many women in my life, my grandparents and my mum have encouraged me to go beyond my comfort zone and inspired me to achieve what I am capable of. I have been brought up to do my best. I’ve always wanted to make a point and put myself out there. So, I can encourage and maybe inspire other women to go for these jobs. I want to prove to others that there is no need to have this barrier, or stigma that still follows these job roles around. The women in my family are confident, outgoing and hard-working, which has made me who I am today. I am still very young and still have a long way to go in my career, but doing this job and getting the experience gives me a massive advantage.

What would your advice be to other women looking to get into engineering and construction roles?

If you’re passionate about something or want to try something new, just go for it. Make sure you do research and if possible try and speak to people who are doing the job. Don’t be scared about applying for something that you want to do because it’s male dominated, there are more and more women out there now doing these jobs. Even if you don’t get it first time don’t let that put you off, apply again and always think positive. I am currently the only female in the company doing this job and I would love to see more women applying and joining different teams within Wessex Water.

Helen – critical sewers engineer

What made you want to pursue a career in engineering and construction?

I like to fix problems, and there’s such a diverse range of challenges in engineering that if you enjoy trying to fix problems, it’s a really satisfying place to work!

How have your team supported you throughout your career at Wessex Water?

My team are brilliant, and we are all supportive of each other, ready to help out or assist when problems crop up. My manager has always encouraged me to take ownership of more challenging projects and provided training opportunities for further development.

Tell us about your recent trip to Sydney, what was it for, what did you get out of it?

I won the United Kingdom Society of Trenchless Technology (UKSTT) Young Professional award last September and was awarded a travel bursary to further my knowledge of the industry. With Wessex Water’s support I travelled to Australia for a visit to Sydney Water, which was an incredible trip. As an industry we have similar problems around the world, and it was very interesting to see the different approaches Sydney Water uses, while sharing our own experiences and expertise.

What would your advice be to other women looking to get into engineering and construction roles?

It’s a great industry to work in. Don’t be scared of making mistakes or asking for help while you’re gaining experience. It’s a process everyone goes through when starting out in a new industry, regardless of gender!

For more information on the career opportunities available with us visit wessexwater.co.uk/careers

Wessex Water Magazine

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Wessex Water Magazine
Capturing the great outdoors

Stop, look and celebrate our beautiful region and take a moment to explore new places and admire wildlife right on your doorstep. It’s time to grab your camera and capture some of the West Country’s most picturesque sites.

Sutton Bingham
Something for everyone!
Located near Yeovil, Sutton Bingham has everything you need for a great day out. Facilities include sailing and canoeing clubs, a nature trail, children’s play area, a picnic area and more. It’s also a popular water for fly fishing with regular tutorial and family fun fishing events taking place throughout the season.
#SuttonBingham #LoveYeovil #EnjoyTheView

Durleigh
A coarse angling mecca
Durleigh reservoir, near Bridgwater, is dedicated to day ticket coarse fishing - ideal for anglers seeking to catch carp, pike, bream and roach.

Hawkridge
Variety is the spice of life at Hawkridge.
Hawkridge, near Spaxton in Somerset, is the place to be if you are a fan of fishing. Rainbows, blues, tigers and golden trout can be fished and if you ever need any advice or tips, speak to ranger Gary Howe, who has many years of experience.
#Hawkridge #FlyFishing #FishingLife

Clatworthy
Take in the beauty of Clatworthy reservoir
Located on the edge of Exmoor National Park. It’s the perfect setting for both fly fishing and walking. Take a stroll around the Clatworthy Round, it offers fantastic views of the water and surrounding countryside. Follow the short nature trail or walk the entire five-mile perimeter, to discover woodland wildlife.
#Clatworthy #LoveForSomerset #NatureWalks

Meet the team...
We’re here to help
Our social policy team aims to help any customers who may be struggling to pay their bill. They are a friendly voice on the end of the phone, ready to offer help and support through any financial difficulties.

We sat down for a chat with team leader Shannon and team member Aaron to find out how the team helps our customers.

Describe a typical day?
Aaron: We work through the postal and online applications that are allocated to us. We also take calls from customers and respond in real time on live chat. Customers contact us directly or sometimes they are transferred to us from our customer contact centre.

What can customers expect?
Shannon: We try to make it as easy as possible to pay your water bill and any outstanding debts. We can help with payment plans, reduced rates, the Pension Credit discount and our priority services (see page 24).

What’s the best part of your job?
Aaron: I know that every day I make a difference to someone. It’s a nice feeling. We also really get to know and understand our customers; often a call can start off with a customer sounding understandably stressed, but by the end they are much more relaxed and happy.

Shannon: We also get to tell people the good news that they’ve completed repayment plans. It’s nice to see the whole process and getting someone back on track is a really nice feeling.

What advice can you give customers?
Shannon: Talk to us as soon as you think you might be in trouble, whatever the circumstances. We are a really friendly team and we’re here to help. The sooner you contact us, the more we can help.

Aaron: You might want to bury your head in the sand about your bill, but call us instead. Don’t struggle, we want to help.

Follow us on Instagram: @wessexwater_ Follow our page to see the latest behind the scenes snaps of the sites we work to protect and look after.
Plus! Don’t forget if you are visiting one of our sites, tag #WessexWater for the chance to be featured on our page.
Holiday season means many of us are hoping for a repeat of last summer's glorious weather, which was the joint hottest on record in the UK. Demand for water soared by 20% in our region when temperatures were at their highest in 2018, but we were able to manage our reservoir and groundwater levels to ensure that enough water was available for everyone.

Rain eventually returned in the form of short, sharp showers, which was good news for topping up our reservoirs but less than ideal for re-stocking groundwater.

Water resources data analyst Emma Wey explained: “Around 70% of the water we abstract is from groundwater sources, which take much longer to recover from dry conditions than reservoirs. One of the consequences of the heatwave last year was sun-baked ground, which meant any heavy rainfall ran off the surface rather than seeping into the ground.

“Light, persistent rain is actually preferable to intense showers when it comes to groundwater, as it allows for the ground to recover more gradually and soils to become saturated.

“Soils reached record levels of dryness last July, so it is possible to have the wrong kind of rain”

November was the first month after the 2018 heatwave that saw significant rainfall - 122mm, or 113% of the monthly average. The six months prior to this (May to October) saw only 60% of what would be expected for the time of year. Meanwhile, total reservoir storage in our region was 37% at the beginning of November - the lowest it has been since 2003 - and it was not until February this year that they were restored to full capacity.

There has been plenty of talk in the national media about future water shortages if scorching summers become the norm, but customers who use water sensibly need not panic.

Like all water companies, we plan for periods of dry weather to make sure there is enough for all homes and businesses and that our local rivers and wildlife are protected.

Aimee Shaw, head of water resources, said: “We’re confident we have sufficient resources to meet demand for the next 25 years and beyond.

“We’ve halved leakage on our network since the mid-1990s and invested £230million in a water supply grid, enabling water to be moved around to where it’s needed most.”

“That said, we always encourage our customers to use water responsibly for the benefit of everyone and the environment.”

The wrong kind of rain?

It’s not as bizarre as it sounds. Pete Orchard explores how reservoirs and groundwater levels replenish very differently after spells of dry weather.

Think your garden needs lots of water to flourish? Think again...

It is possible to have a water efficient garden that is awash with beautiful plants and a haven for wildlife. Don’t worry, we’re not about to impose a hosepipe ban. There hasn’t been one in our supply region since 1976. But saving water makes sense for everyone, whether you’re a metered customer looking to save money or thinking about the future for your family and the environment.

Follow our tips below and your garden will reward you.

• Give the tap a rest and save rainwater in a water butt. Plants and pond life prefer it.
• Always water in the early mornings or evenings when it’s cooler so less is lost to evaporation.
• Cover your soil with bark or stone chip mulches to retain moisture so you need to water less often.
• Use water retaining granules in pots and hanging baskets to reduce the need for watering.
• Cultivate trees, shrubs and hedges to attract wildlife and give plants extra shade.
• Put saucers under containers to catch run-off.
• Let your lawn turn brown - it will soon recover when the rain returns.
• Using less water can also be achieved by choosing plants that thrive in dry conditions. Common sage, geraniums, lavender, lemon thyme, perovskia ‘blue spire’, rosemary and verbena are all suited to heat and light watering. The same applies to house plants - cacti and succulents need less water too.

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Our Community Commitment...

Over the last few months we’ve been working hard to connect with your community and our people at Wessex Water have got involved. These are some of the ways we’re making sure we make your community our priority.

Community Champions
A community champion is a member of our staff who represents their local area. Our staff are proud of where they live and their communities, so get in touch if there is a local group you think we can help.

Community champions may take part in our charity funding panels, support local volunteering or helping with the speaker service for community groups in the area.

Wessex Water Community Fund
We are delighted that the first awards from the Wessex Water Community Fund have helped more than 45 community groups and charities across our region to build stronger communities and share the importance of access to water as an essential part of community life.

Get Water Smart
Our education advisers have been out and about across the region providing free education services, supporting science fairs, giving workshops at local schools and helping school groups visit our sites. Get in touch to discover the amazing world of how water reaches your taps and how water is dealt with safely.

Hydrate Feel Great
Stay healthy and hydrated! We’ve supported local youth sports teams and provided water for local runs and challenges taking place in your area. We’re also working with local councils and community groups to help provide public access to tap water refill points.

Water Force Volunteering
Our teams of volunteers love to get out and help in the local community. If you know a local charity that could do with some team help, get in touch at community@wessexwater.co.uk or contact your local community champion.

Wild About Wessex
Get out and about to enjoy our reservoirs and reserves. Visiting green spaces can help improve your health and wellbeing and there are so many ways you can take part – fishing, walking, birdwatching or sailing to name a few. We’re working to improve facilities and accessibility for all.

Watermark Awards
Our environmental Watermark awards have also supported many small community projects to promote conservation and get communities of all ages engaging with their local wildlife and green spaces.

Don’t Forget to Say Hello!
Come along and meet us in person at events we’ll be at this summer season in your area and pick up a refill bottle or some water saving kit.

Kirsty Scarlett, Head of Community Engagement

Customer and stakeholder forums
To register for our customer and stakeholder meetings take a look on our website or social media channels for further information.

We look forward to meeting you!

Community Champions
Kirsty

MEET YOUR COMMUNITY CHAMPIONS

James Lovell – Divisional waste manager south
“I want the local residents to recognise me as a person they can rely on to learn about what’s going on in the area and to offer an insight into what we do. Being an active community member, I helped to assess the applications for our community fund last year to support the local organisations.”

Richard Mullins – Engineerin

technician

“With a long history of volunteering for local charities, I want to share my knowledge about the county with the community. I plan to visit the local charities we’ve supported to see the impact we’ve made.”

Events 2019 – Come and Meet Us

16 July Customer and stakeholder forum - Hamworthy Club, Magna Road, Poole, BH21 3AP
14 August Gillingham and Shaftesbury Show
7 – 8 September Dorset County Show, Dorchester

Providing Multicultural Lunches in Basscombe

Our Wessex Water Community Fund is helping to cover the costs of the Unity International Lunch introduced by the Training and Learning Company. The lunch gives new ethnic minority residents and long-term residents a chance to meet over food to build an appreciation of different cultures.

A New Pond for Marshwood CE Primary School in Dorchester

Marshwood CE Primary School needed help to repair and expand its pond which had fallen into disrepair. So that they could rebuild the facilities often used as a learning tool for the schoolchildren, we chose to give the school a Watermark award.

Pine Pulling at Tadnoll Heath Nature Reserve in Dorchester

Despite the wintry weather, a team of 12 Water Force volunteers headed out in November to help the Dorset Wildlife Trust carry out some essential pine pulling at Tadnoll Heath Nature Reserve, to help maintain the heathland.

Known for it’s impressive Jurassic Coast and popular beaches, Dorset contains not only many fossils and millions of years of geological history, but also a passionate sense of community. With plenty of activities and sights to see, you’re never far away from something to do, and with your support we’ve been able to enhance your area by working on some great local projects.

Find out more about what’s happening in your area at wessexwater.co.uk/community

Find out more about what’s happening in your area at wessexwater.co.uk/community
Somerset

Somerset is home to a variety of landscapes and culture. From coastal cliffs to moorland, agricultural shows to festivals, there’s something to be found for everyone in the UK’s seventh biggest county. With plenty to do in Somerset we like to get out and about with the locals to enjoy the community environment we share.

PROVIDING A COMMUNITY SUNDAY LUNCH IN STREET, SOMERSET

Crispin Hall and Crispin Community Centre run events, workshops, groups and classes to enrich the lives of all people. Our Wessex Water Community Fund has helped the centre provide a Sunday lunch project which includes free transport to the hall, lunch or afternoon tea and entertainment provided by local clubs.

SUPPORTING RIVER RESTORATION IN YEVAL

We gave Yeovil Rivers Community Trust a Watermark award to go towards their restoration project to help improve the watercourses and adjoining green spaces found at Preston and Dodham Brook. By doing so, a water vole has returned to its former habitat.

DECORATING AT DITCHEAT PRIMARY SCHOOL

One of our dedicated staff members organised a Water Force volunteer day for nine of our employees to decorate Ditcheat Primary School during the February half-term holiday. They managed to give the schools’ classrooms and hallways a fresh new look and the children were very grateful for the changes we had made.

MEET YOUR COMMUNITY CHAMPIONS

Rebecca Hind - Divisional waste manager west

"With a long career in water and waste water treatment, I know how important the water industry is to both our local communities and the environment. After recently joining the company, I was keen to become a community champion to support my local neighbourhoods to promote the great work that the business enables."

Lauren East - Social media manager

"Like many other employees at Wessex Water, I’m very lucky to call Somerset my home. I love the community spirit there is here, and by becoming a champion, I was able to join the Somerset Community Fund panel and help give back to the communities we serve."

EVENTS 2019 – COME AND MEET US

15 July Customer and stakeholder forum - Taunton Cricket Club, Taunton, TA1 1JT
16 August Dunster Show, Minehead
21 - 22 September Somerset County Show, Taunton Racecourse

Wiltshire

Through our community programme, we’ve been supporting projects in the picturesque county of Wiltshire to preserve its nature and wildlife and support the people who live here.

MEET YOUR COMMUNITY CHAMPIONS

Prince Scott - Key account manager

“When I was asked if I was interested in becoming a community champion for the Wiltshire area, I was keen to be involved as I wanted to make a difference by helping less fortunate people living in my local area.”

Gillian Sanders - Planning liaison manager

“I’ve been a town councillor for Corsham since December 2017 which has helped me understand the priorities of local government and the communities they serve. I felt I could use what I had learned in this role to benefit Wiltshire further by becoming a Wessex Water community champion.”

SUPPORTING VULNERABLE ADULTS IN DEVIZES

One of the charities we’re supporting through our Wessex Water Community fund is Devizes OpenDoors, a charity combating homelessness in the town. The organisation offers one-to-one support to vulnerable adults as well as preparing and serving food. Our funding will help them run their laundry and shower services, helping to benefit more people in the area.

REDUCING SINGLE-USE PLASTICS IN BRADFORD ON AVON

To mark the 25th anniversary of our Wessex Watermark, we provided £1,500 to Bradford on Avon Preservation Trust to help them install three drinking and water bottle refill fountains. These fountains will help people in the area to stay hydrated and reduce their plastic use.

VOLUNTEERING WITH THE WOODLAND TRUST IN CHIPPENHAM

To commemorate soldiers from Wiltshire who lost their lives in the First World War, our staff volunteers joined the Woodland Trust, Chippenham Borough Lands Charity and Wiltshire Council to plant 1,000 trees in their memory.

EVENTS 2019 – COME AND MEET US

1 July Customer and stakeholder forum - The Guildhall, Salisbury, SP1 1JH
21 September Country Comes to the City, Salisbury
5 October Wiltshire Bee & Honey Day, Devizes

find out more about what’s happening in your area at wessexwater.co.uk/community
Our region encompasses some of England’s most enchanting spots. Whether it be the Dorset coastlines, the rural hills of Somerset, the liveliness and historical sites of Bath and Bristol or the World Heritage Sites found in Wiltshire.

With such an environmentally rich region, we believe it is part of our duty to maintain and enhance community spaces alongside local charities and organisations, to protect the environment and improve the lifestyles we have.

We’re calling on you to join the campaign and make small differences in your garden to encourage wildlife. You could plant water efficient pollinator friendly flowers, build habitats or just leave a third of your garden to grow ‘wild’.

Dr George McGavin, TV presenter, entomologist and president of Dorset Wildlife Trust, says: “Whenever I see a neat garden with a striped lawn and trimmed borders I think, ‘Oh dear, that’s not great for insects.’

He recommends taking a step back on the preened perennials and letting your garden grow a wild patch.

“We have to accept that not everyone has the space or inclination to grow a fully wild patch, but even a small area that provides a haven for pollinators and other wildlife can make a huge difference to our wildlife,” says George.

Get involved
Take the pledge and sign up to help Dorset get buzzing again. To help you along the way, you’ll receive a free guide and a free pack of wildflower seeds.

The information provided in your free pack will help you learn how to record the growth of your garden wildlife and take action including how to build a pond, use less plastic, and attract pollinators and other wildlife to your garden.

For more information and to take the pledge go to: www.dorsetwildlifetrust.org.uk/gdb-signup

Events 2019 – Come and meet us
1 June Bath Festival of Nature
8 – 9 June Bristol Festival of Nature
2 July Customer and stakeholder forum – Bath Racecourse, Lansdown, Bath, BA1 9BU

Meet your community champions
Tom Reynolds – Conservation, access and recreation manager
“I’ve lived in north-west Bristol for over 10 years. It is a vibrant, exciting city with fantastic green spaces for recreation – something which I’m passionate about. In my role as a community champion, I hope I can have a positive impact on both the people and wildlife of Bristol.”

Ian Drury – Head of communications
“Last year I assessed the applications for our community fund, which saw a number of organisations put forward projects that desperately needed financial support. I wanted to be involved to support the organisations which provide services and activities that my local community relies on.”

Helping people with learning difficulties find a career in North Somerset
A project we’re supporting through our Wessex Water Community Fund is Strawberry Line Café in Yatton which aims to provide real paid jobs and industry standard training to adults with learning disabilities who want to work in the catering and hospitality industry.

Supporting the mental health of adults in Bristol
We gave the Lawrence Weston Community Farm in Bristol a Watermark award for their ‘Woodland Wellbeing’ project. This provided the opportunity for adults who are struggling with depression and anxiety to take part in conserving a wildlife habitat.

Collecting and recycling Christmas trees in Bath
At the start of the year, we helped Dorothy House Hospice collect and recycle more than 250 Christmas trees in the Bath area. A team of 12 staff volunteers spent their Saturday collecting trees and dropping them off for mulching to help the hospice raise £26,000.

While all these areas are closely interlinked, each region has its own individual merit. Here’s how we have been supporting these areas and what we’ll be doing in the future.
Hydrated workforce is a happy workforce

It’s not only important to us that our customers stay hydrated, we also encourage all staff members to drink plenty of tap water so that they can also reap the benefits.

To promote a healthy lifestyle in our company, we offered all members of staff taking part in a running/sporting event this year a free refillable water bottle. Lots of staff took us up on this offer, including business systems and change team leader Mariusz Hoszko who recently took part in the 2019 Bath Half Marathon.

“I will be able to use this refillable water bottle in any future running events that I take part in. It will help me stay hydrated during races while also helping me to use fewer single-use plastics,” he said.

Kicking dehydration out of sport

To support local sports teams, we have been sponsoring their kit and providing them with refillable water bottles. The bottles will help the teams stay hydrated on matchdays while also reducing the amount of single-use plastic.

These are some of the sports teams who have made hydration their goal this year.

Wells City FC under 11s

“We requested that the children not bring single-use plastic bottles to training and matches some time ago,” said coach Mark Baggelaar. “Therefore, having the reusable water bottles helps our players remain hydrated, while showing responsibility for the environment.”

AFC Corsham Under-12s

Coach Chris Sparey said: “We’re really grateful to Wessex Water for sponsoring our kit, which looks fantastic. The boys know all about the importance of staying hydrated, especially when playing or training, so the water bottles are very welcome.”

Bath City Youth Under-9s

“We’re delighted to support Bath City Youth Under-9s and wish them a successful and enjoyable season,” said staff member Ruth Jefferson who presented the team with their new kit and bottles.

If you’re the coach of an under-16s sports team or younger in our water supply region and are looking for sponsorship, get in touch at community@wessexwater.co.uk

Refill not landfill

We want to make sure everyone in our region taps into a healthier lifestyle by staying hydrated all year round. Tom Thomson looks back at what we have been doing to ensure our region stays refreshed and what we have in store for the future.

Hydrate feel great in 2019

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fine to flush?

Our director Matt Wheeldon explains how the war on wet wipes has not yet been won.

At the start of this year our industry body Water UK announced the first Fine to Flush standard for most tissue wipes, with a new logo to help avoid confusion and reassure customers.

Products must meet water companies’ own stringent tests to be deemed Fine to Flush, but so far these wipes are not widely available at major retailers and supermarkets. Instead, many leading brands still adhere to old and inappropriate standards set by the European industry body EDANA, which represents the wet wipe manufacturers.

Back in 2016 we initiated a campaign against the misleading branding and marketing of so-called “flushable” wet wipes, compiling an evidence report that was sent to the Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) and co-signed by environmental groups like City to Sea and Marine Conservation Society.

Our report, which highlighted how wipes often contain plastic and don’t break down like regular toilet paper after flushing, ended up with the government after the ASA and Trading Standards told us it wasn’t in their remit to ban the word ‘flushable’ on products that will physically pass around a toilet U-bend.

Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for the Environment Therese Coffey urged water companies and EDANA to come up with a joint ‘flushability’ standard, but this reached an impasse last autumn when EDANA refused to meet the standards of dispersibility we require.

Quite simply, we would never endorse a product that might cause blockages and consequential misery for our customers.

That’s why we are supporting the Fine to Flush standard, which makes it easier for customers to buy environmentally friendly and plastic-free products which are of no greater risk to causing blockages than normal toilet paper.

Fine to Flush means free from plastic and rigorously tested, meaning the wipe will break down in the sewer system. Anything else should be marked Do Not Flush, with nothing in between.

Now we’re calling on supermarkets to only stock wet wipes which are clearly labelled with one of two logos advising the correct disposal route: Do Not Flush or Fine to Flush. Only then, when customers have clear and unequivocal disposal guidance, can we hope to end the scourge of wipe-related blockages.

We deal with around 13,000 blockages a year costing £5m to resolve

DO YOU KNOW YOUR #TOILETETIQUETTE?

It’s the bathroom code of conduct designed to help you remember your pees and poos in the bathroom.

A blockage caused by the wrong items being flushed down the toilet can be bad for the environment, costly to remove and can result in sewage backing up into your home. But there’s no need to worry - just remember the rules of Toiletiquette.

- Only flush paper, poo and pee to keep your pipes blockage free.
- Respect your loo by making sure items such as nappies, sanitary products, condoms and wet wipes are disposed of safely in the bin.
- Place a hair trap over your bathroom plughole to avoid a hairy situation - hair that goes down your drain can build up and block your pipework. Use a hair trap to collect it and place it in the bin.

THE WEIRD AND WONDERFUL TRUTH ABOUT POO

The ancient Egyptians used dried animal poo as fuel for their fires – nowadays human waste can be converted into biomethane, a fuel which can be used to power homes and vehicles.

The white sand beaches in Hawaii are primarily made from parrot fish poop.

We deal with around 13,000 blockages a year costing £5m to resolve.
We want to make sure water bills are affordable for all and to provide customers with a tailored solution that meets individual financial circumstances.

We have a range of schemes and low rate tariffs that can really make a difference.

One of these is a discount of around 20% on your bill if you receive Pension Credit or your sole income is state pension. More than 15,000 customers are already claiming this discount.

You may be eligible for this if we provide you with water and/or sewerage services, and if everyone in your household who is over 18 years old receives Pension Credit, or the state pension is their only income.

To apply you’ll need to complete a quick form and return it to us together with a copy of your Pension Credit entitlement statement or notification, or you can provide a bank statement covering a month’s period which shows the state pension is your only form of income.

These must be dated within the last 12 months and show your name and address.

You can apply online by visiting wessexwater.co.uk/pensioncredit or you can call 0345 600 6 600 (automated service, 24 hours).

Every customer matters, so whatever your circumstances, we want to help.

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PENSION CREDIT HELP

If you’re not sure whether you receive Pension Credit or you need a letter as proof of your entitlement, contact the Pension Service on 0345 606 0 265.

Or visit www.gov.uk/find-pension-centre to look up your nearest branch.

Your local Age UK may also be able to check whether you’re entitled.

PRIORITY SERVICES

We know that everyone has different needs, so we aim to give you extra support when you need it through Priority Services.

If you or anyone you know could do with a little extra help, we can offer:

• additional assistance in the event of water supply interruptions
• bills and leaflets in braille and large print
• a security password system to protect against bogus callers

It’s free and easy to register – you can either go to wessexwater.co.uk/prioritysqlvices or call 0345 600 3 600 (Monday to Friday, 8am to 8pm; Saturday, 8am to 2pm).

And you’ll find that energy companies offer a similar service as well.

With customer expectation ever increasing, it’s important we don’t rest on our laurels and instead look at ways of improving further.

We do this by listening to what improvements you’d like to see and gathering your views through surveys, customer focus groups and using feedback forms once we’ve completed work. We’ve also reached out to our young people’s panel to understand what future customers would like to see and how we can engage with younger people on matters such as sewer blockages.

This information is really important to us and we use it to make improvements to the service we provide. In fact, your feedback has also been used to develop our business plan for 2020-2025, ensuring we’re investing in areas that matter most to you.

We also consult with customers through our Have your say online panel – and you could get involved too by signing up today.

Each new member is entered into a £200 prize draw for every Wessex Water ‘have your say’ survey completed.

Here’s just a few improvements we’ve recently made.

Water usage information on metered bills
Fixing visible customer leaks the same day
Home check visits to install water saving devices
Employees given mental health awareness training
You can now choose a direct debit date that suits you
Trialled weekend customer appointments
Introduced text message updates for work we’re doing
Provided more online self-serve options
Top tips customer videos to prepare for cold weather
Dementia Friends training to further support customers
Online service to track your job
Made customer letters easier to understand

Find out more about our online panel at wessexwater.co.uk/haveyoursay

A better service

We provide among the highest levels of customer service in the water industry - and have done so for many years.
UK’S BEST BEACH

Bournemouth Beach, in the south of our region, was named the UK’s best beach for 2019 in the TripAdvisor Travellers’ Choice awards.

Not only that, thanks to its golden sands and swimmer-friendly water, travellers also rated the beach the sixth best in Europe, and 20th in the world.

But Bournemouth is not alone – many other beaches along the 560km coastline we serve are of exceptional quality and among the best in Europe.

It’s our responsibility to manage waste water and stormwater discharges from our coastal sewerage network and water recycling centres to help protect bathing water quality and ensure high standards.

And staff from our Wessex Water Force volunteer scheme join thousands of passionate residents in litter picking and plastic clearing at beautiful beaches like Chesil Beach and Kimmeridge Bay in Dorset, and Minehead in Somerset.

Between 2015 and 2020 we’re spending £155m on improving bathing water quality, increasing treatment and stormwater storage – to make sure the beaches in our region remain some of the best in the country.

Coastwatch
If you’re heading out to a beach in our region, you can use Coastwatch, our online overflow notification system, to find reports on overflows potentially affecting designated bathing waters. Visit wessexwater.co.uk/coastwatch

TRAVELLERS ALSO RATED BOURNEMOUTH BEACH THE SIXTH BEST IN EUROPE, AND 20TH IN THE WORLD.
Flipping easy energy switching

Energy prices went up significantly in 2018. There were 57 price rises – more than one a week – and some tariffs increased by 20 per cent.

Prices have continued to rise this year and the whopping 10 per cent increase to Ofgem’s ‘price cap’ on 1 April 2018 added £118 per year to the energy bills of millions of households.

Switching yourself to a better tariff could save you hundreds of pounds, but finding the best deal and switching supplier can be a real hassle and confusing too, as there are more than 350 tariffs from 70 suppliers to choose from.

However, you can now save huge amounts of money on your energy bills, without having to do any of the work yourself, by signing up to an auto-switching service called Flipper.

Luke Boxall is one of the thousands of people in the Wessex Water region who have already done this. He saved a massive £843.46 on his annual bill when he first signed up, which helped pay for a family trip to South Africa to visit his son.

As a Flipper member he, along with more than 17,000 other savvy households, now benefits from monthly checks of the energy market and is automatically ‘flipped’ to a new supplier when the service finds him a better deal.

‘He’s confident that he’ll never need to worry about overpaying for his energy again.

“There’s no way I could have switched myself to all those different tariffs all the time to make sure that I got the best deal, I now have the reassurance that I’m getting the best deal,” said Luke.

“I would definitely recommend Flipper to family and friends without hesitation.”

Flipper is different to the price comparison websites. It does all the hard work for you, removing the hassle and admin, while providing you with the reassurance that you’re on the cheapest tariff.

It checks the market for better deals every month across all Ofgem-approved energy providers and automatically ‘flips’ you when a saving of more than £50 per year can be made.

The best part is that it’s free to sign up and you only pay its £30 annual membership fee once you’ve accepted your first flip. This fee enables Flipper to be truly independent, so it can move you to the best deal as soon as possible and maximise your savings.

Find out more and start saving today by visiting flipper.co.uk

‘Why people love Flipper’

- £385/year average saving.
- FREE until we find your first saving of at least £50/year.
- We manage your switch from start to finish – you sit back and relax!
- We look for cheaper deals for you every month.

‘Happy Staff = Happy Customers’

For years we have trained our customer-facing staff on how to identify customers who may be experiencing mental health challenges or just going through a difficult time, so we can do more to help them.

Identifying this across our workforce is equally as important. George Keast caught up with one of our new health and wellbeing champions, Lauriance Gerthoffer-Ham.

Describe the role of the health and wellbeing champions

“...as a key point of contact for staff to provide advice and help them get the support they need if they are going through a difficult time. We also promote campaigns on health and wellbeing topics internally and raise awareness of the fact that it’s okay to talk about mental health issues in the workplace.

“I wanted to become a champion because I feel that improved mental health and wellbeing can make people realise their full potential and become the best versions of themselves. By ensuring that our workforce embrace it, everything else in the workplace will work in unison and who knows, we may even live longer!”

Is there a knock-on benefit for our customers if our staff have improved health and wellbeing?

“Absolutely. Having a healthy and happy workforce will not only help us to retain our valuable employees, but will also give them the confidence, motivation and positive outlook to continue providing the best possible service to our customers.

“Also, by raising awareness of health and wellbeing to staff, it will further improve their ability to identify customers who might be going through a rough patch and provide them with any extra help or support they might need.”

What are some basic steps we can all take to improve our general wellbeing?

“Be aware of yourself and your ‘inner voice’. We are all our own worst critics, so be mindful of how this can have an impact on you. Take the time to have a chat, however short, with those around you, particularly at work. You never know what’s going on in someone else’s world. They may be absolutely fine, but on the other hand, you may be the only person they’ve talked to all day.

“And finally, breathe! It’s one of the most fundamental things in life that we all take for granted. You are always only one deep breath away from changing your outlook on the world.”

Lauriance Gerthoffer-Ham and Lucy Lowe.

Our health and wellbeing champions with their Royal Society for Public Health Level 2 awards in Understanding Health Improvement. From left to right: Alice Drury, Lauriance Gerthoffer-Ham and Lucy Lowe.

Wessex Water Magazine 29
Your letters...

I very much like the “Need for Change” article by Colin Skellett (Wessex Water CED) about the performance of the water industry as a whole. Many water companies have not endeared themselves to their customers as prices have risen. They have failed to act responsibly in terms of performance whilst at the same time stripping out millions of pounds in dividends, which should in my opinion have been going into capital investment. It’s interesting to read his comments about “regulation” becoming an industry in itself. It’s hardly any wonder it’s getting tighter with so much corner cutting going on.

However, I don’t agree with his comment about the benefits of privatisation as being the best way of providing funding for extensive capital investment schemes. There are other equally financially viable ways of doing it, for instance through bonds. But it’s a good and realistic view of what’s happening in the water industry at the moment whilst at the same time setting out the stepping stones for Wessex Water to avoid getting drawn into a mire of accusations and finger pointing in the years ahead.

C Reeve
By email

I’ve just finished reading your excellent Winter edition of Wessex Water’s Magazine. I love the idea of having a water refill point as mentioned in the article to avoid buying unnecessary bottled water and buying more plastic. I wonder if this would work in my village of Yetminster.

D Stedeford
By email

Editor: We might be able to help support your refill project through our Watermark 25 fund. Find out more at: wessexwater.co.uk/watermark

Contact us

Billing enquiries
• Payment arrangements • Metering • Moving house • Problems paying • High water use • Priority Services 0345 600 3 600 (Monday to Friday, 8am to 8pm; Saturday, 8am to 2pm)
Submit an online enquiry via our website wessexwater.co.uk/contactus
Write to: Wessex Water, 1 Clevedon Walk, Nailsea, Bristol BS48 1WA

Water supply or sewerage enquiries
• Loss of supply • Leaks • Water quality problem • Sewage flooding • Blocked sewer 0345 600 4 600 (Monday to Friday, 8am to 6pm, emergencies only at other times)
Submit an online enquiry via our website wessexwater.co.uk/contactus
Write to: Operational enquiries, Wessex Water, Claverton Down, Bath BA2 7WV

We welcome calls via the Next Generation Text service. Calls to 0345 numbers usually cost the same as standard UK landline numbers. Please check with your telephone service provider. We may record telephone calls into our contact centres for quality, security and training purposes.

Tell us what you think of our service and share your experience with others.
Search Wessex Water on trustpilot.com

Building the right thing

YTL - the owner of Wessex Water - is investing in the south west, generating thousands of jobs and boosting the local economy.

The family-run Malaysian company, which has demonstrated a long-term commitment to Wessex Water after acquiring the company in 2002, has begun work on a bold new vision for the historic former Filton Airfield.

The 380-acre site is set to be transformed into Brabazon, a thriving new neighbourhood for Bristol. This new urban community will deliver over 2,600 new homes, designed by Stirling Prize-winning architects FCBStudios. Creative workplaces and a vibrant town centre will be set among landscaped public squares and parkland. A new rail station will connect to Bristol Temple Meads in less than 15 minutes, and a new MetroBus route will link Brabazon directly to the city centre.

YTL is also proposing to build the third largest UK arena by turning the former Brabazon hangars next to the Airfield site into an entertainment destination. It will include a 17,000 capacity arena, attracting international artists, family entertainment and sporting events.

Both projects will see the company creating jobs, sourcing local products and services and investing back into the economy.
SAVE 25% ON DAY TICKETS

What's New at Wookey Hole
Wells ★ Somerset

GREAT DAY OUT
Famous Caves & Over 20 Fantastic Attractions

Weddings, Functions & Corporate Events at
Wookey Hole Resort
Somerset's Newest Venue
FREE ROOM HIRE

HOT TUB HOLIDAYS on your doorstep
HOLIDAYS FROM £39.99

www.wookey.co.uk ★ 01749 672243 ★