



Street Works Engagement Events

Thames Water Lane Rental Industry Publication

Introduction

At the beginning of the 19th century, most water works in the UK were built, owned, and operated by private companies. The introduction of various parliamentary regulations led to government assuming control of the industry, with the responsibility for most (but not all) water works and sewerage systems being passed to local government by the beginning of the 20th century.

Following the privatisation of the water industry, investment of nearly £160 billion has seen a strong and steady improvement, with people now enjoying access to world-class drinking water. In addition, leakage is down by a third since the mid-1990s, two thirds of beaches are now classed as excellent compared with 25 years ago, and wildlife has returned to rivers that had been biologically dead since the Industrial Revolution.

Since privatisation, Thames Water have been managed through 5-year Asset Management Plan (AMP) cycles, with 2019 the final year of AMP6. During the final year of the AMP a price review must be undertaken where plans are shared with the regulator OFWAT. These plans are then scrutinised and challenged to ensure they protect customer interests.

In a pioneer step, Thames Water planned engagement events with councillors and technical officers from Highway Authorities (HAs) to share future challenges. With almost 200 potential attendees, these were identified as:

- Population growth
- Changing seasonal climate trends and volatility
- Aging infrastructure
- Higher customer expectations
- Availability and cost of skills
- Macro-economic factors

The events were planned to foster two-way discussion and provide an opportunity to understand the needs of the HAs. Thames Water aimed to work more collaboratively and minimise disruption to customers, residents and the travelling public.



The Project

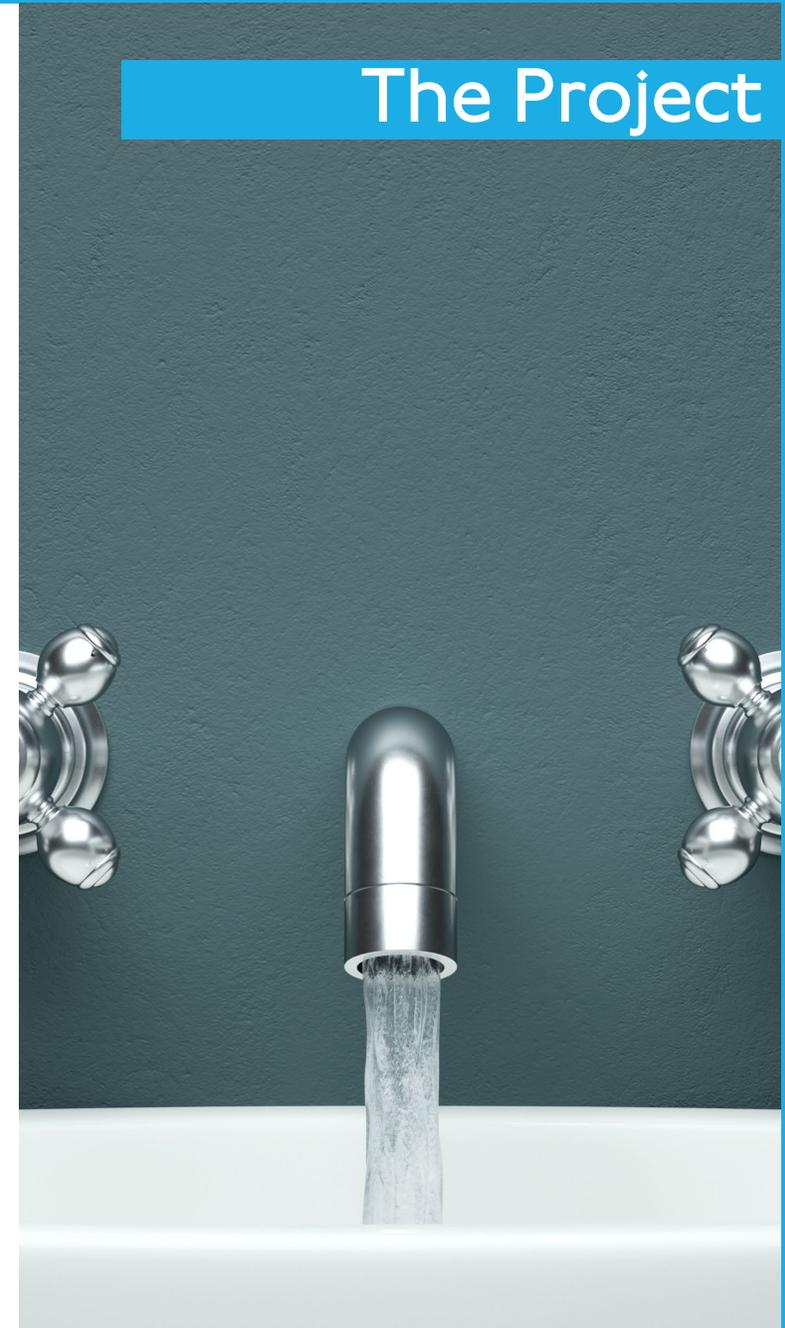
Due to the geography of the Thames Water catchment area, three events were planned at strategically identified locations related to the regional split, to minimise travel for attendees and promote maximum participation. The locations selected had successfully been utilised for Thames Water and Highways Authority and Utility Committee (HAUC (UK)) events previously. Attendees were invited to the event closest to their location, however any event could be attended, if deemed more suitable.

The Thames Water External Affairs and Sustainability Director opened the events, providing a strategic overview of the previous year. This was followed by an update on future challenges, with a focus on population growth, aging infrastructure, higher customer expectations and was concluded with an overview of the pricing review for AMP7.

The Head of Water Networks provided an update addressing the current challenge of leakage, the increase in work volumes needed in 2019/2020 and the need to access the networks. A new approach was then introduced, centring around new leakage detection and reinstatement contracts, further investment in mains replacement and trunk mains, enhanced end to end capacity planning, innovation and increased engagement.

The key theme being collaboration to expedite repairs to visible and non-visible leaks. HA's representatives and councillors were asked to provide feedback on the new approach and suggested improvements to the currently process for accessing road space.

To maximise the impact of the events, three stands were utilised documenting key customer messages /campaigns: 'bin it don't block it', 'water efficiency' and 'support to vulnerable customers'.



Outcomes



The engagement events were successfully held as planned with feedback unanimously positive with a request for more events in the future.

Analysis of the feedback sessions identified key actions across six key themes:

Communications: Deliver knowledge sharing sessions on 'how our networks operate' for HA representatives at the regional Thames Water Education Centres in autumn 2019.

Emergency works: Work carried out in the Thames Valley region to address concerns raised had delivered significant improvement, and are committed to sharing their best practice for out-of-hours works with other teams.

Management of works Review to be undertaken on process for managing the works life cycle

Use of Temporary Portable Lighting Systems (PLS): trial the use of Advanced Radar Vehicle Actuation (ARVA) PLS with a view to roll these out if trials were successful.

Quality of work: New reinstatement contract to deliver improvements in the south to remedy, with a reinstatement quality certificate required for all works and expected to commence late 2019.

Need to improve collaboration: Develop a HA working group, with Lambeth's offer to host with the aim of trialling 'proof of concepts' to enhance collaboration.

Lessons Learnt



The event was originally planned as an engagement event for the street works community, however the audience was broadened to include local councillors.

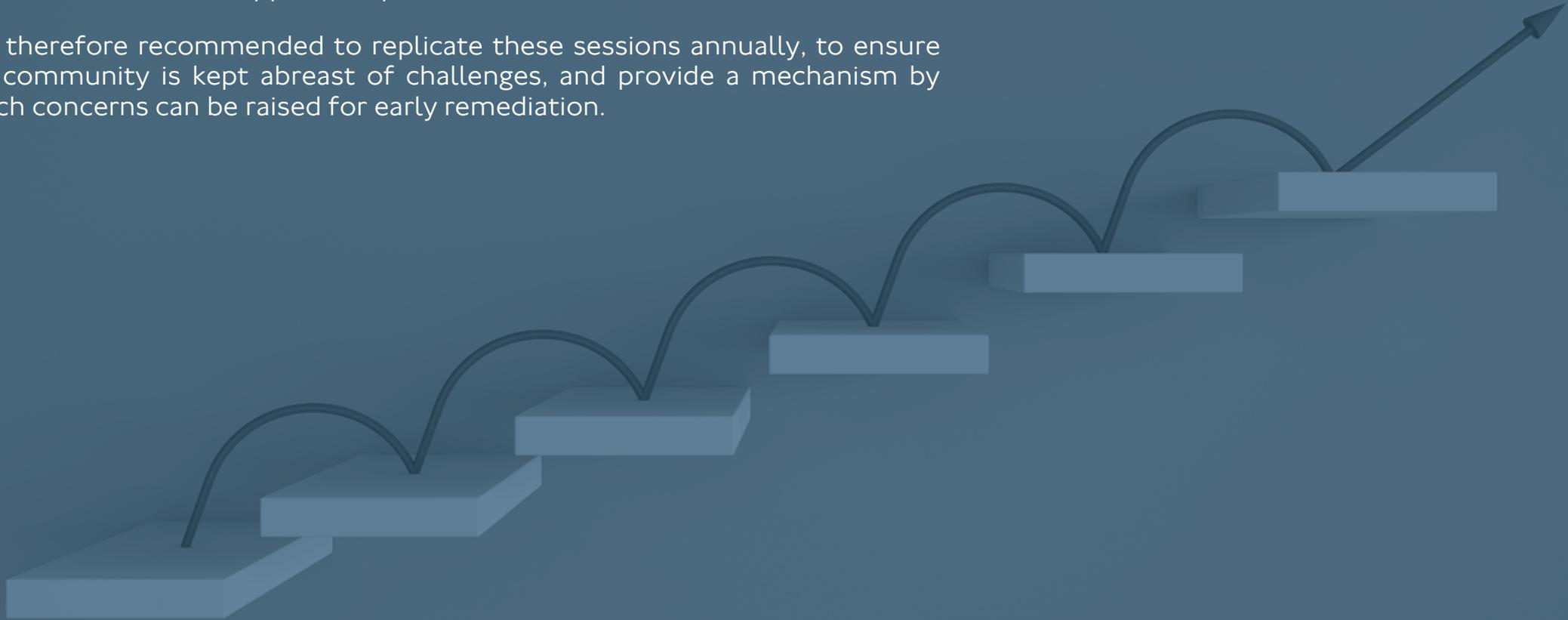
Clashes with local elections and subsequent change in elected seats resulted in insufficient time to identify and invite newly elected councillors.

This will be taken into account for any future events.

Conclusion

Thames Water and the attendees considered the street works engagement events a success, with appetite expressed for more sessions.

It is therefore recommended to replicate these sessions annually, to ensure the community is kept abreast of challenges, and provide a mechanism by which concerns can be raised for early remediation.



TfL Lane Rental Scheme

Optimising customer journeys through the delivery of safer, innovative and sustainable roadworks



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