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Social Research Institute

involve

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Consumer Participation in Water Policy

Research project

Ipsos MORI and Involve

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Executive summary

Background and methodology

The Consumer Futures Unit (CFU) of Citizens Advice Scotland is committed to taking an evidence-based approach to ensuring that policy and decision making within the regulated industries – energy, post and water – is responsive to the needs and aspirations of consumers. Accordingly, the organisation embarked on a programme of research to trial different deliberative methods for engaging consumers in these policy areas. Ipsos MORI and Involve were commissioned to undertake the trial.

In relation to water policy specifically, the purpose of the research was twofold: to explore which deliberative methods were most effective, and why, at understanding what matters most to Scottish water consumers; and establish:

- 1) how engaged consumers were in matters related to water and the environment and what was required to increase their engagement in these matters;
- 2) whether consumers thought there should be similar service standards across urban and rural areas and if so, to what degree.

Based on previous scoping work, three different methodologies were selected for trial in the research: focus groups – to act as a control method against which the added benefits of more deliberative approaches could be assessed – structured dialogues and a citizens assembly.

Topic findings

Thematic question 1: How engaged consumers were in matters related to water and the environment and what was required to increase their engagement in these matters?

Participants placed a high value on, and were reasonably engaged with, water in the environment. They displayed a clear sense of pride in what they saw as the high quality and abundance of Scotland's water resource compared with that elsewhere in both the UK and internationally. At the same time, and somewhat paradoxically, they commonly said that water in the environment was something they tended to take for granted on a day-to-day basis, albeit attending the fora had brought the matter to the fore for them.

Participants were able to cite numerous benefits of water in the environment for Scotland, including benefits for the population's health and wellbeing, for recreation and tourism, and for industry and the economy. Economic benefits received particular attention, not least as pertaining to Scotland's renewable energy industry. Participants were aware of, as well as enthusiastic about, the potential for the continued growth of the industry and the economic benefits this could deliver.

Despite placing a high value on water in the environment, participants tended to say that the water system and water and waste water services were not something to which they gave a great deal, if any, thought. Still, most displayed a reasonable awareness and understanding of the 'nuts and bolts' of the system and services. Across the fora, there was spontaneous reference to the fact that water in Scotland was a publically owned utility, and also some mention of Scottish Water – though, as the discussions progressed, it became clear that many participants did not conceive of the

organisation as public facing or responsible for overseeing the entire water system and services. Several volunteered that that they would not know how to get in touch with Scottish Water and/or that they would be more likely to contact their local council if they had an issue with the water system or services.

Almost all participants were satisfied with the quality of their drinking water. They generally appeared impressed by the rigour of the water treatment process though there was some discussion around ph. adjustment and chloramination processes, with some participants expressing concern about the addition of chemicals to the water supply.

A range of other possible threats to water quality were spontaneously cited. These ranged from household sources of contamination, such as the disposal of non-soluble items down toilets and sinks; to wider and varied commercial sources, including cosmetic products containing micro beads, different forms of pollution and fracking. With regard to household contamination, participants were generally unsurprised to learn that 80% of blockages were caused by inappropriate items being put down the toilet or sink. Indeed, it was not unusual for them to confess to having themselves disposed of items inappropriately because they had not known any better.

In terms of other measures of how participants' related to the water environment on a day-to-day basis, there was considerable variation in the extent to which they reflected on their level of water consumption. Whereas some appeared hyper vigilant– describing, for example, how they consciously turned off the tap when brushing their teeth – others professed to not giving the matter any thought at all.

Variation was also evident in awareness and understanding of water charging mechanisms. While most participants knew they paid for their water supply and waste water collection via their Council Tax bill, a sizable minority – including 20% of those who took part in the focus groups and dialogues – did not. Similarly, whereas almost a half (49%) correctly identified that water charge levels are linked to Council Tax band or property value, just over a fifth (21%) thought that geographical location was a factor, 13% mentioned water use, and an equal proportion mentioned household size¹. Around one in five were unable to specify how much they paid for their water supply and waste water services, and many more confessed to simply guessing the amount when asked. When they were informed as to the average amount paid per household (£351), they tended to comment that this was lower than they had expected and “good value” in relation the standard of service provided.

Participants commonly expressed a view that individuals should be more engaged in, and take greater responsibility for, protecting the water environment. At the same time, they commonly suggested that the Scottish Government and Scottish Water must take the lead in encouraging more responsible behaviour; in particular, through the provision of consumer information on household sources of contamination and the importance of conserving water. There was also an emphasis on partnership working between the Scottish Government/ Scottish Water and local communities. In particular, there was support for local lay representation in decision making fora relating to water in the environment and use of local knowledge to plan public engagement activities, to ensure the consumer perspective is appropriately represented. Participants were also keen that the onus for organising community-based projects, such as clean up days or ‘citizen science’ type programmes, should lie not with local people but rather with Scottish Water and/or environmental regulatory bodies.

¹ These figures are unweighted and derived from a combination of online polling and paper questionnaires used in the events.

The final stage of addressing the first thematic research question involved gaining an understanding of consumers' priorities, and preferred approaches, to achieving a sustainable balance between maintaining the quality of Scotland's water environment and the parallel need to deliver a high quality water service for consumers. Participants were presented with a list of potential areas of focus and asked which they felt should be prioritised and why. At the focus groups and structured dialogues, the highest priority was attached to educating consumers about how their household behaviours can damage the water environment. There was little discrimination between the other potential areas of investment, though it was notable that educating consumers about responsible use of water environments emerged at the bottom of the list. To some extent, this may have reflected evident scepticism among participants as to whether the public could be relied upon to use water in the environment responsibly, educational campaigns notwithstanding.

In the citizens' assembly, participants were given the opportunity to vote on their spending priorities both before and after hearing fellow participants advocate for particular areas of investment. In the first vote, the rank ordering of the options was similar to that which emerged in the focus group and dialogues. In the second vote there was something of a shift, however, with greater importance attached to developing new, more environmentally friendly ways of processing water and to alternative forms of energy production. To some extent this shift may have reflected the argument advanced by some at the assembly that Scotland could not rely on old systems and infrastructure, and that more sustainable approaches were required.

Thematic question 2: Do consumers think there should be similar service standards across urban and rural areas and if so, to what degree?

To provide context for findings on this second thematic question, the research first considered overall levels of satisfaction with water and waste water collection services, and perceptions of Scottish Water's service standards, examples of which were shown to participants across the fora.

Participants consistently expressed high levels of satisfaction with water and waste collection services. Indeed, almost half (49%) of the focus group and structured dialogue participants said they were 'very satisfied' with provision, with the remainder saying they were 'satisfied'.

Scottish Water's service standards and guarantees were similarly well regarded, with more than four in five participants at the focus groups and structured dialogues rating them as 'good'. It was common for participants to say the standards and guarantees were in line with or better than they would have expected, and to compare them favourably with those of other utilities companies. They were particularly positive about the timescales within which Scottish Water aimed to respond to and resolve issues; the availability of compensation on occasions where targets were missed; and the focus on keeping customers informed, both prior to and during works.

At the same time, there were recurring, cross-cutting suggestions for ways in which the standards and guarantees might be refined. In particular, participants argued for: reduced "ambiguity" or "vagueness" in some of the wording and language; greater clarity in respect of the types of incidents that would be considered the fault or responsibility of Scottish Water, rather than the consumer, and *vice versa*, greater clarity in the definition of vulnerable people; greater consistency across the standards; particularly in terms of the level of compensation available for different types of incident; and automatic rather than claims-based compensation. More generally, participants commonly expressed a view that Scottish Water should do more to publicise the standards and guarantees so that the public are aware of their entitlements. No participants had known about the standards and guarantees prior to taking part in the research

There was a high level of support for having similar services standards and guarantees across urban and rural settings. Participants often commented that people in different areas paid the same amount for their water and waste water services and thus should be provided with the same standard of service in return. Significantly, this perspective was as common among those who lived in large towns and cities as among those from more rural areas such as Inverness-shire.

Nevertheless, as the discussions progressed, views became more refined, with participants distinguishing to a degree between different service standards in relation to consistency. In general terms, there was broad agreement that aspects delivered centrally by Scottish Water, such as customer service (appointment setting, complaints handling etc.) and *notification* about planned cuts, ought to be the same across urban and rural areas as there was no logical reason why this should not be the case. In contrast, questions were raised as to the practicalities of achieving uniform *response times* across different areas, particularly very remote rural and island locations. Such questions prompted division and often heated exchanges across the fora. On the one hand there were participants who felt that it was perfectly possible to organise services to ensure uniform response times, either through the establishment of locally-based response units or by working with local subcontractors, as breakdown cover services do. Others, however, were keen to point out that adverse weather conditions and other circumstances outwith Scottish Water's control may on occasion prevent it from reaching remote rural communities as quickly as it might wish.

Participants were presented with possible options for future investment in water and waste water services and infrastructure, which included ensuring there was no difference in service standards between urban and rural areas, and asked which of these they felt should be prioritised. At the focus groups and structured dialogues, the highest priority was attached to improving infrastructure and protecting catchment areas and natural water quality, and the lowest to improving the quality of tap water and improving Scottish Water's customer service. Ensuring there were no differences in service standards between urban and rural areas was accorded middling priority. A similar ranking emerged in the first vote at the citizens assembly. The perceived importance of protecting catchment areas often reflected a view that, as Scotland's water was one of its key assets, the focus should be on protecting it at source rather than on dealing with the effects of contamination and pollution after the event. The high ranking of improving infrastructure, meanwhile may have reflected an argument advanced strongly at the citizens assembly that, if the system was not kept in top condition, it would likely deteriorate, not least in the face of population growth.

Methodological findings

The CFU's dual purpose in commissioning this research project was to establish the merits of deliberative research for revealing the preferences, motivations and priorities of Scottish water consumers. Thus, in order to identify what, if any, added value was delivered by taking a specifically deliberative approach (compared to more traditional qualitative research methods)² three different methodological approaches were applied to the same policy questions.

In the methodology report each of the methods used is discussed in detail: including its key characteristics, the rationale for choosing it for this project, and a full description of how it was planned and delivered in this case. The success of each type of fora is then analysed in relation to how effectively it was able to deliver outputs that addressed the policy research

² For the purposes of this research, 'deliberative' methods have been defined as qualitative research methods in which participants are supported to develop informed opinions about a topic through a process of learning, discussion and public reasoning (i.e. deliberation). Deliberative engagements events are therefore those designed to give sufficient time and space to enable participants to gain new information, discuss the implications of this new knowledge in relation to their existing attitudes, values and experiences and in light of the opinions of others, and form a considered view or conclusion, which may (or may not) be different from their original view.

question, drawing upon the data generated within each forum, participant evaluations, feedback from facilitators and observers and the research team's professional expertise and understanding of the method.

This analysis showed that:

- 1) The **focus groups** addressed all of the elements required to form a response to the research questions. The outputs from the focus groups were also generally consistent with the findings that emerged from the other fora, providing a strong body of baseline evidence for the research. The depth of discussion, and therefore the deeper understanding of consumers reasoning, achieved through the focus groups however was limited.
- 2) The **structured dialogues** provided the greatest level of insight into consumers' levels of satisfaction with the water industry and provided clear outputs regarding consumers' expectation of Scottish Water and priorities for investment and improvement. One of the key strengths of this method which enabled this result was the flexibility of the general deliberative format. This allowed a wide range of techniques to be used throughout a session to build up the participant's knowledge and gradually increase the demands being placed on them for deliberation towards conclusions.
- 3) The **citizens assembly** produced the clearest collective outputs and robust evidence regarding consumers awareness of and engagement with 'water', as well as their preferred approaches for ensuring a sustainable future for the water industry and the wider water environment. It also demonstrated that, as a methodological approach, a citizens assembly is one that can effectively engage a large number of people simultaneously in a meaningful process of learning, opinion forming and deliberation, even on an unfamiliar subject.

Comparative analysis of methods

A comparative analysis was then undertaken, designed to determine which of the different deliberative research methods was most effective. To facilitate this evaluative assessment the CFU established a range of criteria for 'effectiveness' at the outset of the project against which the value of each method could be compared and conclusions drawn. These were:

- a) the suitability of the method to the topic area and the specific policy question;
- b) the accessibility of the consultation to participants;
- c) the method's ability to provide information in accessible and relevant ways regarding the complexities of the sector;
- d) its ability to engage participants with the topic;
- e) its capacity to draw out meaningful dialogue and deliberation;
- f) the quality, depth and complexity of qualitative and, to the extent possible, quantitative data gathered;
- g) delivering outputs that capture consumer insight in ways that are relevant and useful to policy making;
- h) being replicable and affordable.

As evidenced in the findings section of this report all of the methods used to consult with consumers were able to effectively address the policy research question and provide the CFU with clear insight into consumers' priorities, concerns and expectations of service from the water sector and in relation to the wider water environment.

The focus groups, structured dialogues and citizens assembly also all proved to be accessible to participants, as attested to by the demographically diverse participants (in terms of age, gender and working status) that took part and their overall levels of satisfaction with their experience. Participants in all of the different fora also generally found the topic itself engaging, accessible and relevant and thus were able to use their own experiences as consumers to contribute effectively to the discussion.

In order to involve participants in an informed conversation, able to yield useful outputs for the CFU and policy makers, however participants also needed to have an understanding of the wider water industry and to be able to situate that knowledge within considerations of the wider water environment. Time was therefore allocated in each of the fora to ensure that participants had the contextual information needed to be able to confidently, and comfortably participate in the discussions. Although for each method this task was approached quite differently: the focus groups by providing only that information strictly necessary to contribute to the discussion; the structured dialogues by encouraging participants to build a shared knowledge around the topic in response to stimulus and information handouts; and the citizens assembly by drip feeding information in different formats throughout the day to build a cumulative understanding of the wider issues.

There was however limits to what was able to be achieved by using a focus group format, and not simply due to the limited time available for the discussion. Traditional focus groups are primarily an extractive form of consultation, where participants take part as individuals, albeit in a group context. The discussion structures used in a focus group will therefore generally concentrate on the collation of individual responses and the reactions to the opinions of others. Although an explicitly deliberative component was included in the discussion guide for these focus groups to enable fairer comparison, the outputs produced in the sessions lacked the negotiated quality and purposeful consideration of the views of others that was evident in the outputs produced in the other fora.

The outputs produced through the structured dialogues provided the greatest level of insight into the reasons behind consumers' priorities, due to the emphasis given in the discussion guide to developing dialogue and creating the conditions for deliberation and public reasoning. The complexity of the subjects under discussion also enabled one of the key strengths of this method to be highlighted, i.e. the ability to incorporate a wide range of methods throughout a session to build up the participant's engagement with the topic and gradually increase the demands placed on them to collaborate on drawing conclusions.

The citizens assembly produced the clearest collective outputs of all of the fora and most explicitly answered the research questions within the context of the event itself. One of the further strengths of the citizens assembly method demonstrated during this research is its ability to effectively engage a relatively large number of demographically and geographically diverse participants in the same deliberative process. This not only has a bearing on increasing the representativeness of the outputs from the consultation event, but also has the potential to positively contribute to the quality of the dialogue that takes place during the process, as participants are exposed to a wider range of opinions and experiences than would be the case in smaller workshops.

Deliberative methods are, on a whole, usually more expensive to deliver than more traditional qualitative consultations. This is not simply because they will usually involve participants in longer discussions, but also because they will usually require more planning and higher levels of facilitation. Further the skills needed to plan and facilitated effective deliberative engagement events are more specialised, and therefore contractors will tend to charge more for these services.

When well designed and delivered however deliberative format will usually deliver a greater depth of insight into consumer preferences and priorities, and give deliver a fuller understanding of the reasons underpinning participants' opinions. This can be particularly valuable when the research question calls for consideration of wider public benefits or an assessment of priorities for service provision on behalf of communities. Thus, while a full day structured dialogue or a citizens assembly, demand significantly more resources to deliver than a focus group, this is arguably balanced by the additional insight and understanding they are able to provide.

As demonstrated from the discussions above however, while the structured dialogue and citizens assembly methodologies clearly provided added depth and quality to the outputs able to be produced by a focus group, each did so in different ways. Determining which method has been most effective, and therefore of most value for future engagement with consumers, will therefore come down to which aspects of the findings the CFU find most useful for influencing the development of policy and practice in relation to the water industry in Scotland.

1. Introduction

The Consumer Futures Unit (CFU) of Citizens Advice Scotland is committed to taking an evidence-based approach to ensuring that policy and decision making within the regulated industries – energy, post and water – is responsive to the needs and aspirations of consumers. Over recent years the organisation has undertaken a considerable amount of primary research to capture consumers' opinions on key matters of interest. To date, much of this research has been undertaken using 'traditional' methods such as polling, surveys, focus groups and in depth interviewing. The CFU is now interested in expanding this repertoire of methods in order to gain a deeper understanding of consumers' preferences, motivations and priorities. In particular, it wishes to establish the merits of deliberative research for its key areas of work.

Given there are a range of deliberative methods that could be used to understand what consumers think – and that these tend to be more costly than more traditional quantitative and qualitative approaches – the CFU has identified a need to understand in the first instance:

1. which deliberative methods are most appropriate to engage the public in their policy context?
2. what additional benefits deliberative research brings over and above a standard focus group?

As a first step towards addressing these questions, the organisation commissioned Involve and Ipsos MORI to undertake a meta-analysis and scoping exercise into deliberative public engagement in the regulated industries. The specific objectives of this work were to identify what deliberative research had hitherto been conducted in the UK and further afield in the regulated industries; and what, if any, lessons could be drawn for the CFU's own work.

The report of the meta-analysis and scoping exercise³ concluded that, while there were examples of various deliberative methods being used effectively, very often the success of these came down to careful planning, focused objectives, creative process design and nuanced targeting, as well as how well the process was integrated into decision making structures, rather than the specific method chosen. That said, the report also presented some general observations about the relative suitability of different methods for different purposes; and also identified a number of cross-cutting practical considerations that are key to the success of any deliberative research study; for example, the importance of securing the participation of a representative sample of consumers.

Based on the findings of the report, the CFU embarked on programme of research to trial different deliberative methods for engaging consumers in energy, post and water policy. It commissioned Involve and Ipsos MORI to undertake the research. This report covers the findings from the water strand of the research only. More information on, and findings from, the energy and post strands can be found in separate, dedicated reports.

Water policy background

Scotland's water environment is one of the country's most important assets. It is essential for our health and well-being, supports a rich diversity of wildlife, attracts visitors, and provides for the sustainable growth of our economy. The Scottish Government, water companies and regulators are working together to try and take a 'source-to-sea' approach to the management of the water environment. The aim is to achieve an effective balance between the protection of Scotland's water environment and the interests of those who depend upon it for their prosperity and quality of life. This is part of the

³ INCLUDE REFERENCE WHEN REPORT IS PUBLISHED

Scottish Government's stated intention to develop Scotland as a Hydro nation – that is, 'a nation that manages its water environment to the best advantage'.

The water industry in Scotland is regulated by a number of organisations responsible for policy development, enforcement and service delivery, helping to ensure adequate protection of water and its environment. Scottish Water is responsible for delivering public drinking water and sewerage services. The organisation operates within a regulatory framework established by the Scottish Parliament in which Scottish Ministers, acting on behalf of the people of Scotland, set the objectives for the industry to be delivered at the lowest possible cost to customers. The range of services that Scottish Water delivers to its customers and the environmental and drinking water quality standards to which they operate, are currently the same across urban and rural areas. However, other service standards, such as the reliability of supply, or how quickly they can respond to customer issues, may vary between urban and rural areas. There will be instances, for example, where delivering service standards to rural customers may take longer than to urban customers, depending on the geography of the customer and their proximity to Scottish Water's network.

When the Scottish Government and the water industry are planning policies and making investment decisions, they may have to make choices between different priorities, as they may not have the funding or capacity to deliver all of these. Stakeholders working across the water sector wish to elicit insights from water consumers to help inform these strategic decisions, ensuring that they meet the needs of consumers and increasing the likelihood of their public acceptance. It was against this policy backdrop that this research was commissioned.

Purpose and objective of the research

The purpose of the research was:

- 1) to explore which deliberative methods were most effective, and why, at understanding what matters most to Scottish water consumers
- 2) through the use of deliberative methods, establish:
 - a) how engaged consumers were in matters related to water and the environment and what was required to increase their engagement in these matters; and
 - b) whether consumers thought there should be similar service standards across urban and rural areas and if so, to what degree

The objective of the research was to improve the way in which water consumers were engaged in policy and strategy decisions.

Trial process design

Based on the findings of the meta analysis and scoping exercise, described earlier in this chapter, the CFU identified a shortlist of methods that it deemed most suitable to provide consumer insights into water policy. Subsequently, the CFU invited Ipsos MORI and Involve to select which methods to trial, based on the two organisations' own judgements about which were most appropriate in the context of water policy research questions and objectives; and what was achievable within the available study budget without compromising quality. The methods chosen were: focus groups (for control purposes); structured dialogues; and a citizens' assembly.

Two control focus groups, two structured dialogues and one citizens' assembly were conducted. Table 1.1 below summarises the timings, scale and duration of each forum.

Table 1.1: summary of trial components

Forum	Date	Location	Duration	Target attendees	Actual attendees
Focus group A	21 February 2017	Glasgow	c2 hours	10	10
Focus group B	24 February 2017	Inverness	c2 hours	10	9
Structured dialogue A	25 February 2017	Glasgow	c6.5 hours	25	20
Structured dialogue B	25 February 2017	Inverness	c6.5 hours	25	16
Citizens' assembly	18 March 2017	Edinburgh	c6.5 hours	80	77

Recruitment of participants

Recruitment of participants was undertaken by Ipsos MORI's experienced in house team of recruiters, using a face-to-face (door-to-door and in street) free-find approach. The team was provided with a specially designed screener questionnaire to help them identify eligible participants. Quotas were set to ensure a representative pool of consumers in terms of sex, age, working status, social grade, ethnicity (structure dialogue and citizens' assembly only) and interest in the water environment.

Individuals who worked in market research, media, advertising, journalism, the water sector or for Citizens Advice Scotland, and those who had attended a group discussion or event in the previous 12 months, were excluded from the research.

To allow for the possibility of some drop out in advance of the fora, an over-recruitment margin of c25% was set. In practice, this meant 10 people were recruited to each focus group, 30 to the structured dialogue and 80 to the citizens' jury.

All participants received a monetary incentive for taking part in the trial, the level of which was set to reflect the time commitment involved. Focus group participants were given £30, structured dialogue participants £60 and citizens' assembly participants between £80 and £120, depending on the distance they had travelled.

Discussion guides and facilitation

The fora were structured around discussion guides designed by Involve in conjunction with relevant CFU specialists. The guides were designed to address a common set of themes and questions as far as possible, whilst being tailored to reflect the varying length and methodological characteristics of the different deliberative fora being trialled. All facilitation of the fora was undertaken by staff from Ipsos MORI and Involve.

Evaluative framework

To assist with the assessment and comparative analysis of the different methodologies, an evaluative framework was established for the project before fieldwork began. It drew on evidence from participant evaluations, feedback from observers and facilitators and an interpretive analysis of the effectiveness of the specific process designs in practice. The

framework offered an appraisal of the strengths and limitations of each method and provided a comparative analysis of their deliberative value and usefulness in addressing the research question. A separate assessment of the relative value of each method in relation to the additional consumer preference and reasoning information they provided was also undertaken. This was led by an arms-length evaluator.

Interpreting qualitative data

Unlike survey research, qualitative social research does not aim to produce a quantifiable or generalisable summary of population attitudes, but to identify and explore the different issues and themes relating to the subject being researched. The assumption is that issues and themes affecting participants are a reflection of issues and themes in the wider population concerned. Although the extent to which they apply to the wider population, or specific sub-groups, cannot be quantified, the value of qualitative research is in identifying the range of different issues involved and the way in which these impact on people.

Deliberative approaches in particular add value because of their ability to gain greater insight into what may lie behind people's opinions. They can also reveal how people's views can develop and change as they are given new information or through discussions with others on an issue. It should be noted, however, that as participant's views are developed through deliberation, the outcomes cannot necessarily be taken to be representative of the views of the wider public who have not experienced the deliberative process.

Throughout the report, we have included verbatim comments from the focus groups and structured dialogues to illustrate key perspectives presented. It was not possible to do this for the citizens assembly as, owing to the scale and format of the event, it was not digitally recorded. Rather, participants' views were recorded primarily via online polling software and on flip chart sheets by the table facilitators.

Acknowledgements

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Structure of the report

The next two chapters of the report set out the thematic findings of the research; namely those aimed at addressing the questions: *'How engaged are consumers in matters related to water and the environment and what is required to increase their engagement in these matters?'* and *'Do consumers think there should be similar service standards across urban and rural areas and if so, to what degree?'* Chapter three considers the methodological learnings and specifically, which deliberative methods were most effective at understanding what matters most to Scottish water consumers.

2. Topic Findings – consumer engagement with water and the environment

This chapter explores consumer perspectives on the first thematic research question: *‘How engaged are consumer in matters related to water and the environment, and what is required to increase their engagement?’* It begins by considering the level of value attached to water in the environment generally and how participants relate to and engage with it, before considering awareness of and engagement with water systems and services – including potential pressure points, water quality issues, consumption and conservation, and how water charges are determined. The chapter then moves to consider what might increase consumer engagement in matters relating to water and the environment, before setting out participants’ priorities for future investment in relevant protection and conservation measures.

Level of value attached to, and engagement with, water in the environment

Participants placed a high value on, and were reasonably engaged with, water in the environment. Indeed, they displayed a clear sense of pride in what they saw as the high quality and abundance of Scotland’s water resource (Figure 2.1).

There was spontaneous comment that Scotland’s water was better than that in other parts of the UK and elsewhere, and also in plentiful supply owing to the country’s inclement weather. As the following quotations from the focus groups illustrate, these points were often discussed with reference to water scarcity or droughts in the wider international context, thereby prompting reflection on how “lucky” we are in Scotland.

“They do say that we have the best water don’t they, in the north of Scotland?”

(Male focus group participant, Inverness)

“Go to Spain and they have periods of prolonged drought. We were using bottled water for things that we would normally just turn the tap on here.”

(Male focus group participant, Glasgow)

“There is less pressure on the water in Scotland, we’ve five million as opposed to 65 million, so when we make a cup of tea it comes straight out of the hill, if your down in London it’s been through two folks before you.”

(Male focus group participant, Glasgow)

At the same time, and somewhat paradoxically, participants commonly said that water in the environment was something they tended to take for granted on a day-to-day basis, albeit attending the fora had brought the matter to the fore for them. Still, they commonly expressed a strong appreciation of the aesthetic dimension of water in the environment, often describing the positive impact this had on their quality of life.

“It’s all positive, the beautiful scenery and lochs and rivers and stuff that we have here.”

(Male focus group participant, Inverness)

"Leisure activities like fishing and swimming in the canals and rivers; that's what you want for your kids growing up round here."

(Male focus group participant, Inverness)

"Skimming stones, that's what its all about!"

(Male citizens' assembly participant, Edinburgh)

Spontaneous associations with water in the environment were not only human-centred, however. Across the fora, there was reference to the importance of water for the health of Scotland's natural environment and specifically its ecosystem, and biodiversity. Further, there was concern about negative impacts of human activity – from farming and manufacturing, to littering and fly tipping – on water in the environment, which prompted suggestions that people needed to take greater responsibility for protecting natural resources.

"Just by being industrialised, we've increased the acidity of water, by having agriculture. We have pesticides run off, we have chemicals run off that causes growths and algae in the water and kills all the wildlife underneath."

(Male dialogue participant, Inverness)

Figure 2.1: Spontaneous associations with water in the environment (among table groups at citizen's assembly)



Across the fora, participants were able to cite numerous benefits of water in the environment for Scotland as a country, over and above those mentioned in the foregoing discussion. These included benefits for the population's health and wellbeing, for recreation and tourism, and for industry and the economy (Figure 2.2). Economic benefits received particular attention, not least as pertaining to Scotland's renewable energy industry. Participants were aware of, as well as enthusiastic about, the potential for the continued growth of the industry and the economic benefits this could deliver.

"Loch Lomond has a hydro scheme that runs from the back of, is it Loch Sloy, it's a pumped water station so they generate electricity on Loch Lomond."

(Male focus group participant, Glasgow)

"I'm not a hippy but the whole renewable energy and greener ways of doing things is really important."

(Male focus group participant, Inverness)

"Obviously there are different ways to make energy so we should, and it's good for the environment as well."

(Female dialogue participant, Glasgow)

Figure 2.2. Perceived benefits of water to Scotland and its people (structured dialogues).

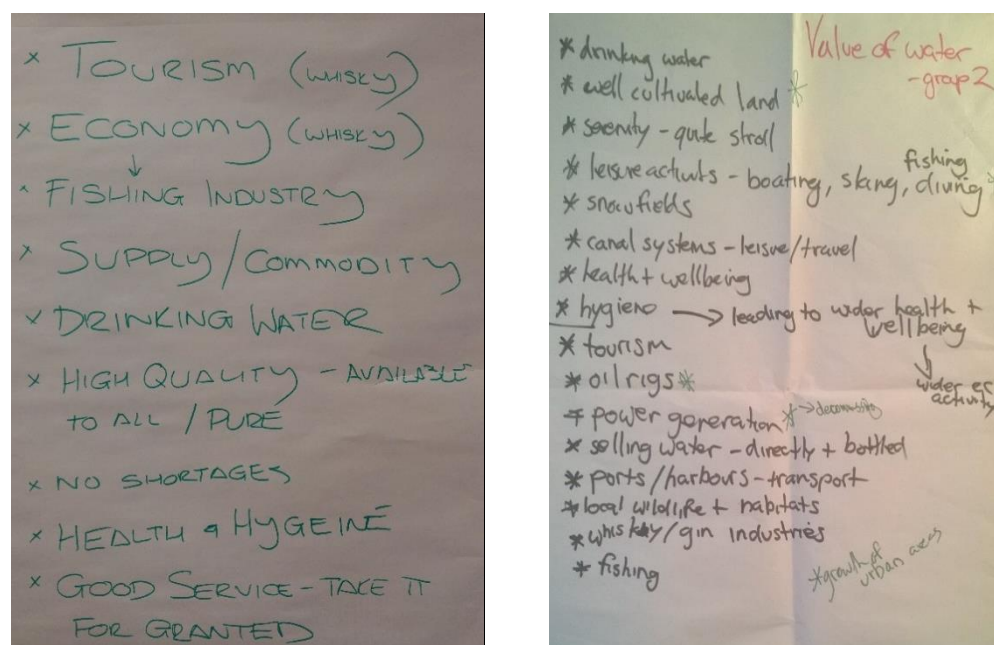


Table 2.1. Perceived benefits of water to Scotland and its people (citizens' assembly).

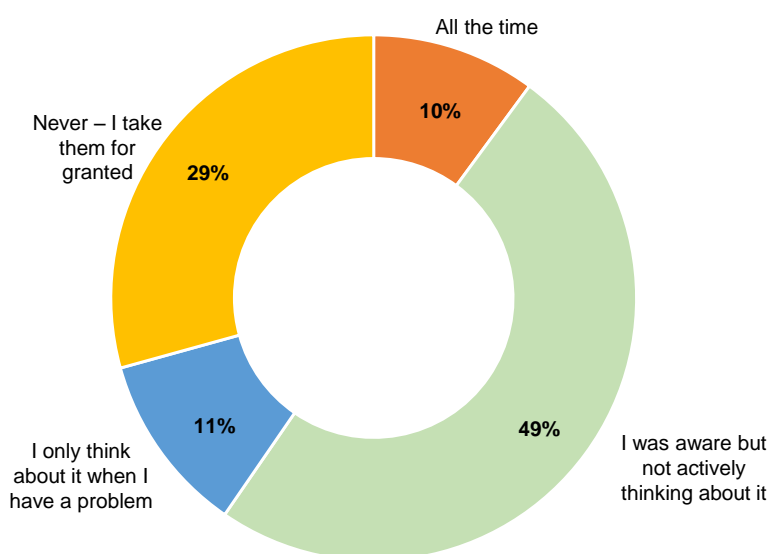
Social Sports Horticulture Drinking Water Relaxation Tourism Washing Family Time	Emotional Skimming Stones Memories Clear Head General Health Peacefulness Life
Economic Reputation Farming Whisky Exports Wave Power Hydro Energy Micro-Breweries and Distilleries Employment	Environmental Wildlife Biodiversity in Eco-system Renewables No droughts

Awareness of and engagement with water and waste water services

Participants tended to say that the water system and water and waste water services were not something to which they gave a great deal, if any, thought (Figure 2.3). Indeed, many reiterated that having unlimited and consistently high quality water on tap was something they very much took for granted –because Scotland had an abundant supply of water and also because problems with the system were rare.

Figure 2.3: Salience of water and waste water services

Q: Before coming along to the session today, how much did you think about how your water and waste water services were supplied?



Base: All citizens' assembly participants who gave an answer (73)

"You take it for granted. It works every time and all of the time and even when you do have a problem, it's not really that much of a problem."

(Male focus group participant, Glasgow)

Still, most participants displayed a reasonable awareness and understanding of the 'nuts and bolts' of the water system and services. Across the fora, there was spontaneous reference to the fact that water in Scotland was a publically owned utility; an arrangement that was seen as better for consumers than the system of private ownership operating in England.

"See England is all meters isn't it? I think we're better off up here with Scottish Water."

(Male dialogue participant, Glasgow)

There was also some spontaneous mention of Scottish Water – though, as the discussions progressed, it became clear that many participants did not conceive of the organisation as public facing or responsible for overseeing the entire water system and services. Several volunteered that that they would not know how to get in touch with Scottish Water and/or that they would be more likely to contact their local council if they had a concern with the water system or services.

"When you get your Council Tax bill, the number of Scottish Water [should be] on it. Nobody really knew what the Scottish Water number was".

(Female dialogue participant, Inverness)

Participants were generally aware of the key stages of the 'water cycle' and able to deduce in broad terms the different elements of the water system (Figure 2.4). They were similarly able to identify a range of potential pressure points or problems in the system – including contamination, blockages, leaks and flooding. To some extent, this reflected past personal or proxy experiences of problems with water supply or waste services. For example, participants in the Glasgow dialogue referred spontaneously to a past outbreak of cryptosporidium in the city's water supply, while Edinburgh residents at the citizens' assembly referred to sewerage contamination in Forth Quarter Park in Granton. In Inverness, the issue of poor quality infrastructure and burst pipes emerged prominently.

Awareness of potential pressure points also appeared to be a product of media reporting of blockages caused by the inappropriate disposal of items or substances via toilets, sinks and drains; and of campaigns aimed at addressing such behaviour.

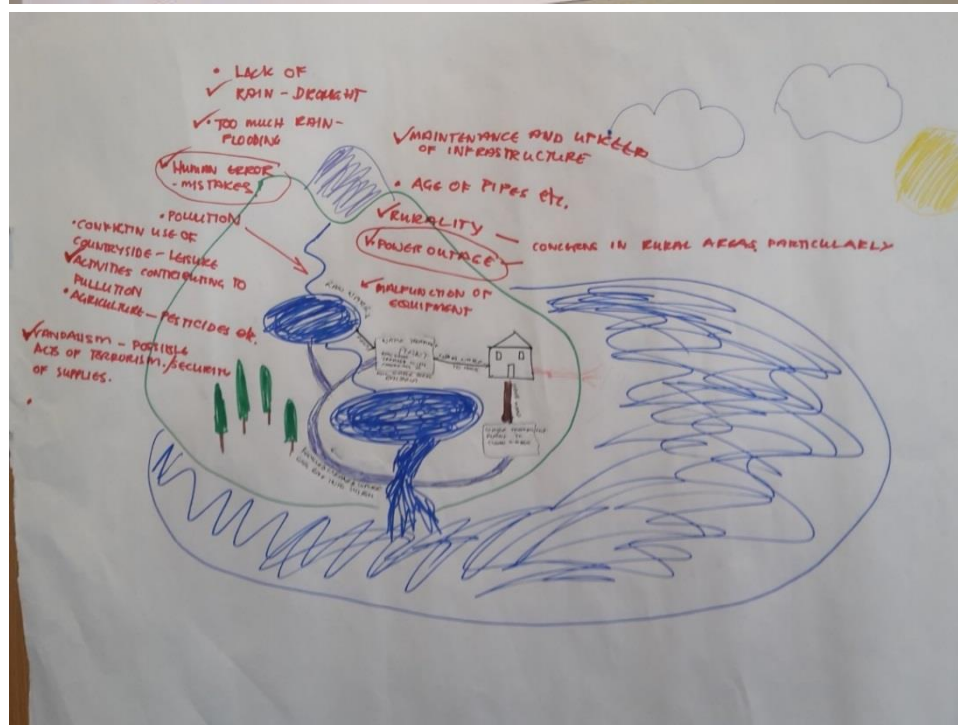
"There is an advert on the television just now with the woman with the nappies and things like that and 'don't put nappies down the toilet'. It runs quite regular."

(Male dialogue participant, Glasgow)

"There is always adverts on the telly about this... 'don't put your baby wipes down, and your oil.'"

(Male focus group participant, Inverness)

Figure 2.4: Participant depictions of the water cycle and water system (produced during the structured dialogues)

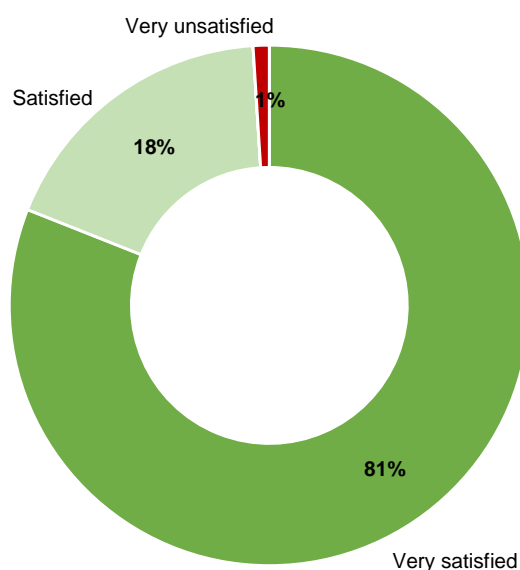


Water quality and contamination

Almost all participants – including 99% of those at the citizens' assembly – were satisfied with the quality of their drinking water (Figure 2.5).

Figure 2.5: Satisfaction with the quality of drinking water

Q: Overall, how satisfied are you with the quality of your drinking water?



Base: All citizens' assembly participants who gave an answer (72)

Source: Ipsos MORI

That said, they commonly expressed a view that the taste of water varied across the country due to a range of factors, including the source of water and local geology; the proximity of treatment works; and the age or quality of water infrastructure - participants in Inverness reiterated their view that rusty pipes were common in rural locations and affected the quality and taste of drinking water.

A minority of participants cited examples of occasions when they felt the quality of their drinking water had been compromised in other ways; for example, there was reference to discolouration caused by heavy rain or work being undertaken on pipes, build-up of lime scale, and low water pressure. However, such issues were seen as infrequent and therefore unproblematic.

Participants generally appeared impressed by the rigour of the water treatment process and the fact that 99% of samples passed all of the quality tests. Nevertheless, there was some discussion around ph. adjustment and chloramination processes, with some participants expressing concern about the addition of chemicals to the water supply.

"When you look at the statistics, like you're saying there, 99 per cent of the samples pass all quality tests, that's some statistic."

(Male focus group participant, Glasgow)

"The chloramination also adds ammonia to the water, which is why people have been complaining about the chloramination process, because you can taste the difference in it. So it might be safer, it might not."

(Male dialogue participant, Inverness)

On a related issue, there was spontaneous mention of, and concern about, the possible addition of fluoride to the water supply, and the perceived unknown impacts of this on water quality and ultimately, human health.

"There are lots of arguments about the chemicals that go in water, like the fluoride. We know that fluoride in a high enough concentration is a carcinogen and yet it's added to water to protect our teeth."

(Male dialogue participant, Inverness)

Participants spontaneously cited a range of other possible threats to water quality, apart from those they saw as arising from the treatment process. These ranged from household sources of contamination, such as the disposal of non-soluble items down toilets and sinks; to wider and varied industrial sources, including cosmetic products containing micro beads, different forms of pollution and fracking.

With regard to household contamination, participants were generally unsurprised to learn that 80% of blockages that clogged up the water cycle were caused by inappropriate items being put down the toilet or sink. There was a sense in which they held a pessimistic view of the average consumer's propensity to 'do the right thing' and behave in a responsible way. That said, and as the below quotations from the dialogues illustrate, it was not unusual for participants to confess to having themselves disposed of items inappropriately – for example, putting cotton buds, medicines and baby wipes down the toilet – because they had not known any better.

"I don't know how many people I know that have dropped a lot of tablets down their toilet."

(Female dialogue participant, Glasgow)

"There's a lot of people that don't actually know, like they can't flush anything that's harmful, like any chemicals, like bleach or oil."

(Female dialogue participant, Inverness)

"I do use those wipes constantly, flush wipes and all that, it says flushable for my toilet and now you can't."

(Female dialogue participant, Glasgow)

In terms of commercial contamination, there was a particular emphasis on inappropriate behaviour on the part of smaller fast food outlets. Participants cited examples of kebab, and fish and chips shops pouring oil and fat down sinks and drains. It was commonly felt that the scale of industrial contamination outweighed that caused by individuals and warranted tighter regulations.

Pesticides and fertiliser as potential sources of contamination were mentioned to varying degrees across the fora and there were mixed views regarding the degree of risk posed by these. While some participants felt that the risks were likely high and that farmers were not sufficiently accountable for the manner in which they used and disposed of pesticides and fertiliser, others argued that farming was in fact tightly regulated, and fertiliser was a "controlled substance", so there was little cause to be concerned about this potential source of contamination.

Water consumption

Perhaps reflecting participants' generally low self-reported engagement with water and waste water services, there was considerable variation in the extent to which they had reflected on the amount of water they consumed on a day-to-day basis. Whereas some individuals appeared hyper vigilant – describing, for example, how they consciously turned off the tap when brushing their teeth – others professed to not giving the matter any thought at all. There was repeated, spontaneous reference to generational differences in attitudes towards conserving water, with younger people often seen to be more wasteful than older people.

"The younger generation, they put a load of washing on and there's about two items in it, where we wouldn't put it on unless there's a load. There's a difference."

(Female dialogue participant, Inverness)

Information provided in the fora on average daily water consumption per person and how this broke down in terms of specific behaviours was unanimously met with surprise – particularly in terms of the amount of water used in flushing a toilet. This prompted some participants to question whether it might be possible to use untreated or "recycled" water for such activities, both as a means of conserving purified water and to reduce the amount of energy used in processing it.

"I think every single drop of water that is accounted for there has been chlorinated and Ph. level adjusted. We just flush it down the lavvy?"

(Male dialogue participant, Glasgow)

"It does matter [how much you use] because they are still going through a process to treat the water, it's still energy consumed, and if you're just pouring it down [the toilet] it's not environmentally friendly at all."

(Male, focus group participant, Inverness)

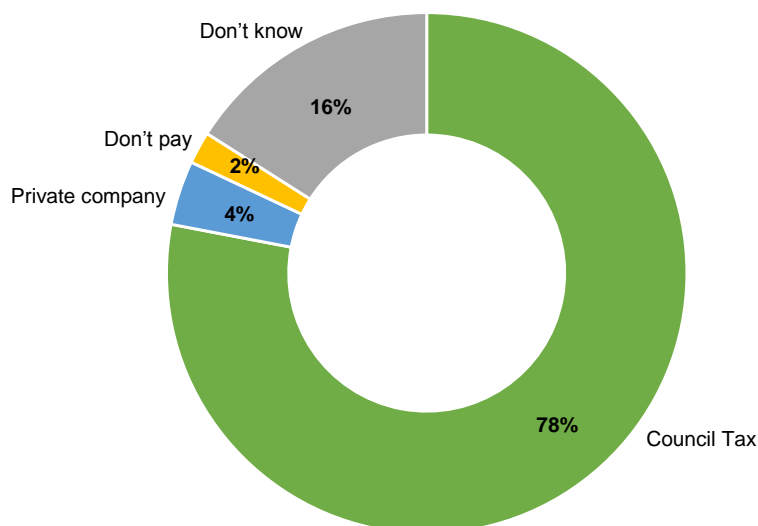
Paying for water

To further elucidate the manner in which participants related to and valued water on a day to day basis, they were invited to consider how they paid for associated services, and how charged as determined.

While most participants knew they paid for their water supply and waste water collection via their Council Tax bill, a sizable minority – including 20% of those who took part in the focus groups and dialogues – did not (Figure 2.6). A similar pattern of awareness was evident in relation to how water charges were determined: whereas around two-thirds (63%) of participants across the fora correctly identified the link to Council Tax band or property value, just over a quarter (27%) thought that geographical location was a factor, 16% mentioned water use, and an equal proportion mentioned household size (Figure 2.7).

Figure 2.6: Perceived means of paying for water supply and waste water collection

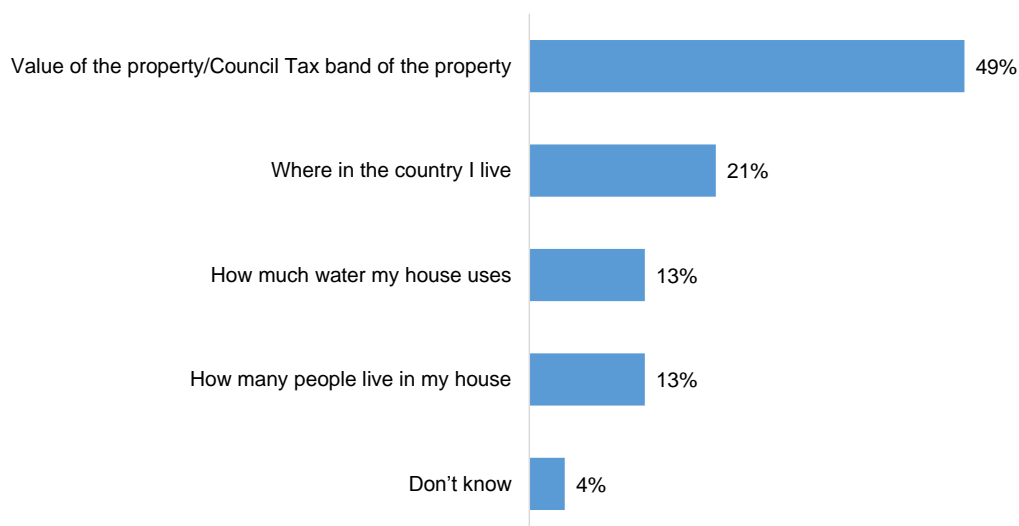
Q: How does your household pay for water supply and waste water collection (i.e. sewerage and drainage) services?



Base: All focus group and structured dialogue participants who gave an answer (45)

Figure 2.7: Factors thought to influence amount paid for water supply and waste services

Q: What do you think affects the amount that your household pays for water supply and waste water collection services each year?



Base: All focus group, structured dialogue and citizens' assembly participants who gave an answer (128)

To some extent, these results reflected differing perspectives on how water charges *should* be calculated. As the following quotations from the dialogues serve to illustrate, whereas some participants appeared content with the link to Council Tax

band, others questioned how appropriate this was and argued that metering would be both fairer and help to incentivise water conservation.

"If you live in a house yourself and you're paying £351 a year and you use a 100 litres a day say, and someone is in a house with five people using 500 litres a day paying the same as you, is that fair?"

(Male dialogue participant, Glasgow)

"The way it's set up in Scotland that you pay for your water without having a meter, most people don't consider how much water they use."

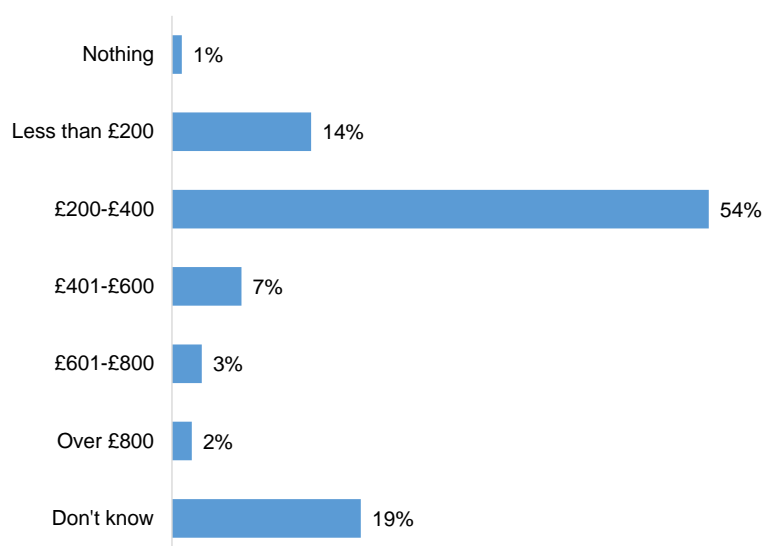
(Male dialogue participant, Inverness)

This discussion prompted other suggestions for ways in which consumers might be encouraged to conserve water. A common view was that there should be more focus among manufacturers on the production of water efficient products, such as dual flushing toilets, sensor taps, and triple A washing machines; and on raising awareness and incentivising use of such products.

Around one in five participants across the fora were unable to specify how much they paid for their water supply and waste water services, and many more confessed to simply guessing the amount when asked (Figure 2.8). When they were informed as to the average amount paid per household (£351), they tended to comment that this was lower than they had expected and "good value" in relation the standard of service provided.

Figure 2.8: Estimated amount paid for water supply and waste services

Q: How much do you think your household pays for water supply and waste water collection services each year?



Base: All focus group, structured dialogue and citizens' assembly participants who gave an answer (128)

"It's cheap as chips man...any politician that turned round and said, 'I'll campaign to get you your water rates taken down...' You would be like, 'are you for real mate', it's really cheap anyway."

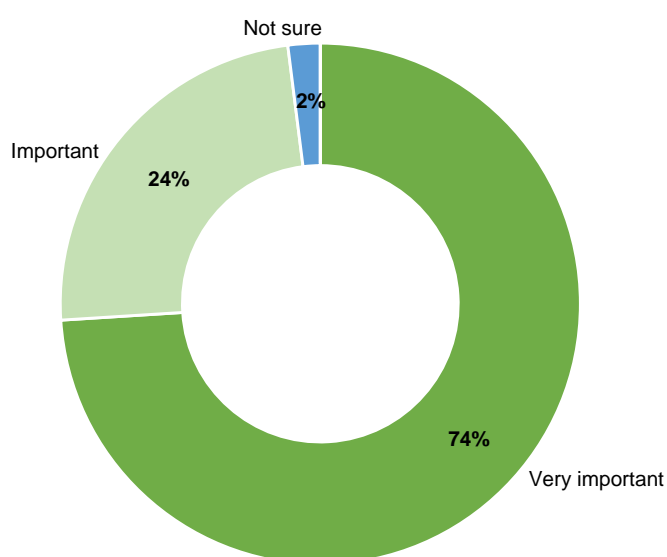
(Male focus group participant, Inverness)

Increasing consumer engagement in water service and the water environment

Participants commonly expressed a view that individuals should be more engaged in, and take greater responsibility for, protecting water in the environment. Indeed, three-quarters of those at the focus groups and dialogues said this was 'very important', with most of the remainder saying it was 'important' (Figure 2.9). These views appeared very much the product of reflection over the course of the fora on the myriad ways in which consumers contributed to problems; for example, by incorrectly disposing of items down toilets and sinks; fly tipping and littering, and unconscious consumption.

Figure 2.9. Perceived importance of taking action to protect the water environment

Q: How important do you think it is for individuals to take action to protect the water environment?



Base: All focus group and structured dialogue participants who gave an answer (54)

At the same time, participants took the view that the Scottish Government and Scottish Water must take the lead in encouraging more responsible behaviour; in particular, through the provision of consumer information on household sources of contamination and the importance of conserving water – there was a clear sense in which it had never occurred to most participants that conservation was an issue for Scotland.

"If there is a problem with how much water there is, they need to make us aware of that."

(Male focus group participant, Inverness)

At the citizens' assembly, participants were invited to consider principles and practice that might encourage greater consumer involvement in water issues, taking as their starting point a series of real world examples of initiatives from across the UK. Education once again emerged as a dominant theme. It was suggested that education should be particularly focused in schools – in order to instil positive behaviours in respect of water in the environment from an early age – but supplemented with adult education, so that relevant messages were reinforced throughout the life course.

There was a view that, in addition to adverts and infomercials, education could be provided by visits to treatment facilities or trips to reservoirs for example, to see the impact of littering. Further, it was suggested that any school-based education programmes should be made “fun” in order to engage young people effectively.

Less commonly, there was some suggestion that farmers should be offered education and training, perhaps delivered by local colleges, on appropriate use of fertilised and other chemical agents. However, it was pointed out that any such programmes would need to be mindful of farmers' reliance on using fertiliser and pesticides as part of their business. One of the examples that seemed to generate particular support was a course that emphasised to farmers the economic benefits of managing and preventing run-off contamination.

Beyond discussion of education, there was an emphasis on partnership working between the Scottish Government/ Scottish Water and local communities. Three separate suggestions were put forward in this regard. First, there was support for local lay representation in decision making fora relating to water in the environment, to ensure the consumer perspective is appropriately represented. Second, there was the view that local knowledge should be used to plan public engagement activities, thereby helping to ensure a collaborative approach and ascribe legitimacy and buy in to such activities. It was suggested that using local knowledge would also ensure that interventions in relation to flooding, pollution, and ecology damage for example, were informed by the people who lived in these area and who are aware of the real problems affecting the local water environment. Third, some participants were keen that the onus for organising community-based projects, such as clean up days or 'citizen science' type programmes, should lie not with local people but rather with Scottish Water and/or environmental regulatory bodies. It was noted that this would serve the dual purpose of raising Scottish Water's profile among consumers.

More generally, there was a view that direct public engagement with the water environment would be increased if Scottish Water did more to publicise examples of previous consumer involvement that had had real tangible impacts.

Figure 2.10. Suggestions for engaging people in the local water environment (citizen's assembly)



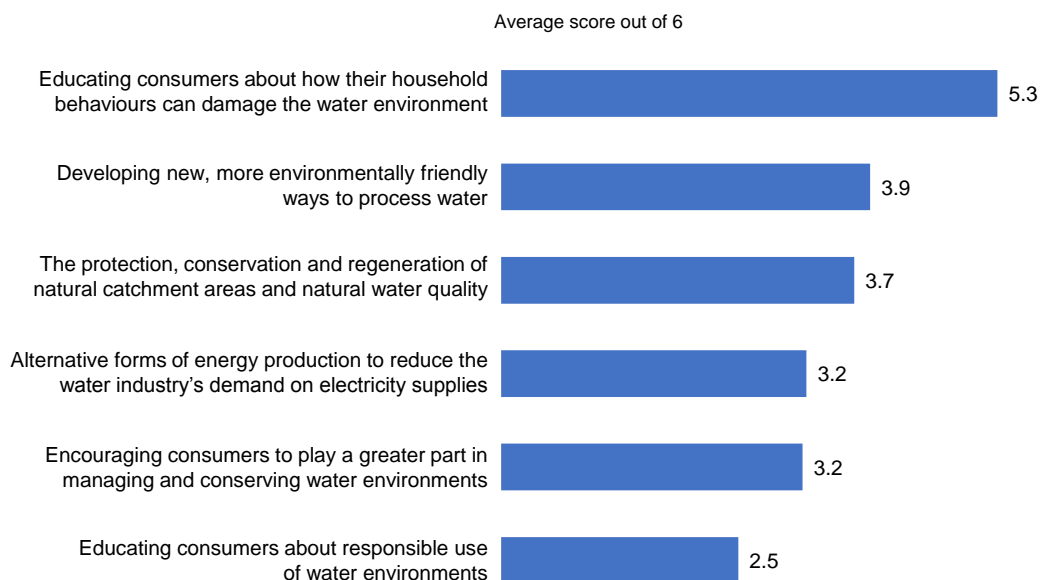
Priorities for future improvement

It is the Scottish Government's intention to develop Scotland as a Hydro Nation – 'a nation that manages its water environment to the best advantage'. The final stage of addressing the first thematic research question therefore involved gaining an understanding of consumers' priorities, and preferred approaches, to achieving a sustainable balance between maintaining the quality of Scotland's water environment and the parallel need to deliver a high quality water service for consumers. To help ground what could easily have become a quite abstract discussion within a real world context, the question was framed around how Scottish Water should use the c.3% discretionary spending available to the industry from consumer charges (Appendix D). A list of potential areas of focus for ensuring a sustainable future for the water industry within the wider water environment was compiled, using information about Scottish Water's existing investment programmes, alongside ideas and possible areas of attention raised by water industry stakeholders during the project planning stage. Participants in the fora were presented with the list and asked which areas they felt should be prioritised, and why.

At the focus groups and structured dialogues, the exercise was undertaken both as a group-based task and individually as part of the survey questionnaire issued at the close of the fora. The findings in each case were broadly similar, with the highest priority attached to educating consumers about how their household behaviours can damage the water environment. There was little discrimination between the other potential areas of investment, though it was notable that educating consumers about responsible use of water environments emerged at the bottom of the list. To some extent, this may have reflected evident scepticism among participants as to whether the public could be relied upon to use water in the environment responsibly, educational campaigns notwithstanding (Figure 2.11).

Figure 2.11: Priorities for investment in the water environment – focus groups and dialogues (post-fora questionnaires)

Q: To protect and conserve the water environment in Scotland, the focus of investment should be....?

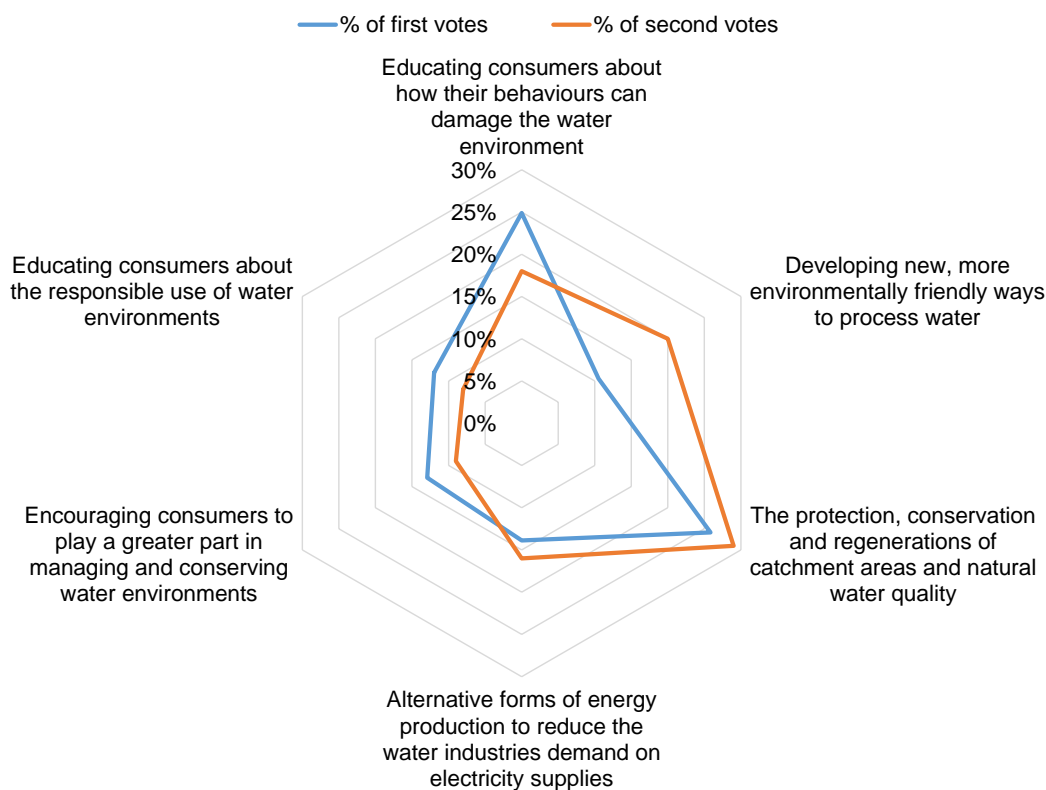


Base: All focus group and structured dialogue participants who gave an answer

In the citizens' assembly, participants were given the opportunity to vote on their spending priorities both before and after hearing fellow participants advocate for particular areas of investment. In the first vote, the rank ordering of the options was similar to that which emerged in the focus group and dialogues. In the second vote there was something of a shift, however, with greater importance attached to developing new, more environmentally friendly ways of processing water and to alternative forms of energy production (Figure 2.12). To some extent this shift may have reflected the argument advanced by some tables that Scotland could not rely on old systems and infrastructure, and that more sustainable approaches were required. Again, it may also have reflected the view, advanced strongly by other tables, that public education campaigns would not in and of themselves be sufficient to ensure the protection of water in the environment.

Figure 2.12: Priorities for investment in the water environment – citizens' assembly

Q: To protect and conserve the water environment in Scotland the focus of investment should be...?



Base: All citizens' assembly participants who gave an answer (71)

Conclusions and recommendations

Participants clearly placed a high value on water in the environment, as evidenced by the myriad benefits they felt it brought to their own quality of life, as well as to the health and wellbeing of the population as a whole, and to the economy. Significantly, economic benefits were commonly discussed with reference to Scotland's growing renewable energy sector: There was a clear sense that participants were in step with the broad principles and goals of the Scottish Government's Hydro Nation agenda, suggesting potentially strong support for associated legislation and policy.

Participants were much less engaged in matters relating to the water system and services, however. They generally took their water supply for granted, paid little attention to the amount of water they used and rarely, if ever, thought about trying to reduce this. Further, there were varying conceptions of what constituted responsible behaviour in respect of the water system, with numerous people having inappropriately disposed of items down their toilet or sink.

This apparent paradox – between, on the one hand, high engagement with the water environment and, on the other, low engagement with the water system – points to a role for Scottish Water in making explicit for consumers the link between these two dimensions – and specifically, the potential for water in the environment to suffer in the face of unconscious behaviours and consumption. An effective strategy in this regard may be to play on the strong sense of national pride or Scottish exceptionalism that appears so central to public conceptualisations of water in the environment and water quality.

In terms of other strategies that might serve to increase consumer engagement with water matters, the research provides testimony of the extent to which media-based campaigns can penetrate the public consciousness and impact on awareness and behaviour. It also suggests potential supplements to such campaigns; most notably, the potential to 'piggy back' on relevant existing public information material – most notably Council Tax statements – in order to disseminate key messages; and to reflect the importance of water in the environment in the school curriculum

Whatever the nature of any strategy pursued by the Government and Scottish Water, it will be important these are not seen as abdicating responsibility for protecting the water environment and placing too much onus on consumers. Participants were clear on the important role that the Scottish Government, Scottish Water, business and industry should play in these matters, and it was this that underpinned their strong support for partnership working at the local level as another means of fostering increased public engagement – and, in the process, raising awareness of Scottish Water and its role.

3. Topic findings: Service standards

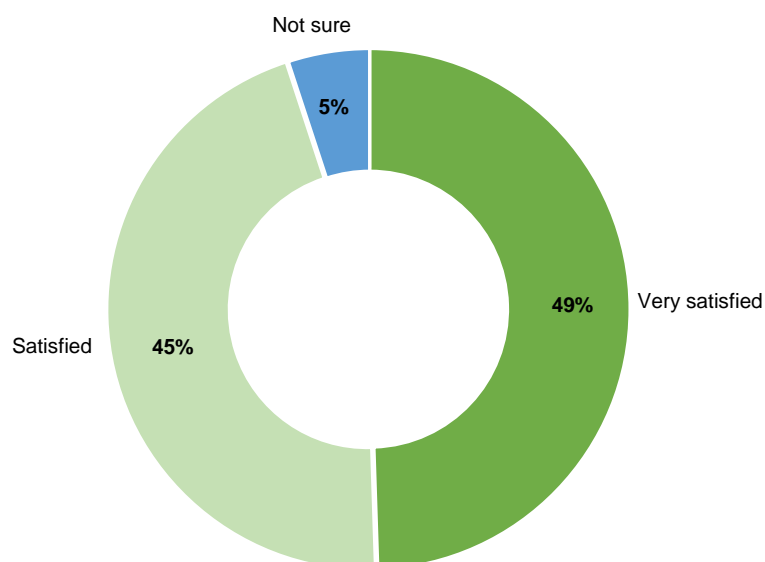
This chapter sets out findings relating to the second thematic research question: *'Do consumers think there should be similar service standards across urban and rural areas and, if so, to what degree?'* To provide context for these findings, the chapter first considers overall levels of satisfaction with water and waste water collection services, and perceptions of Scottish Water's service standards. Consideration of the urban-rural dimension follows, before an analysis of participants' priorities for improving water and waste water services – including the relative importance attached to ensuring consistency of provision across different geographical settings.

Overall satisfaction with water and waste collection services

Participants consistently expressed high levels of satisfaction with water and waste collection services. Indeed, almost half (49%) of the focus group and structured dialogue participants said they were *'very satisfied'* with provision, with the remainder saying they were *'satisfied'* (Figure 3.1). In accounting for their high levels of satisfaction, they reiterated their view that problems with the system were rare and that, when something did go wrong, it tended to be resolved in a timely and appropriate fashion, with due consideration to customer needs in the interim.

Figure 3.1: Satisfaction with the quality of water supply and waste water collection services

Q: Overall, how satisfied are you with the quality of water supply and waste water collection services you receive?



Base: All focus group and structured dialogue participants who gave an answer (55)

"We've always got plenty of notice [about works] ...they definitely try to do it at times when people are out at their work so it's not affecting them too much... Then at five o'clock you don't have any problem, probably haven't noticed."

(Female, focus group participant, Glasgow)

"We're very lucky. If there's a burst [pipe] it's seen to straight away. You don't see the burst and water lying around; they're quite on top of it."

(Female focus group participant, Inverness)

Views of Scottish Water's service standards and guarantees to customers

Scottish Water's service standards and guarantees to customers were introduced to participants to provide background and contextual information for deliberations around the acceptability of differences in standards and response times between urban and rural areas. While not an inherent focus of the research, perceptions of the standards (set out in detail below) help illuminate key considerations underpinning views in respect of the urban-rural dimension.

General reaction to Scottish Water's service standards and guarantees – cross-cutting themes

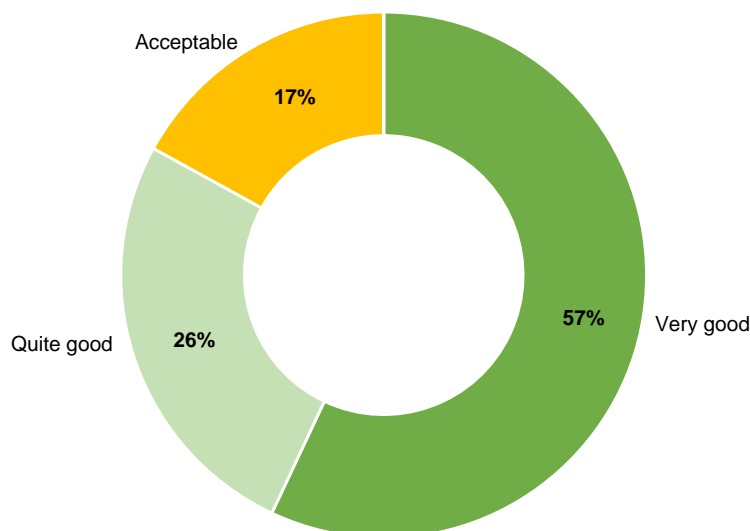
The specific standards and guarantees introduced to participants related to:

- Planned maintenance and improvement work that requires Scottish Water to turn off water supplies temporarily
- An unexpected interruption to water supplies
- A major incident affecting supplies
- Properties flooding, or being at risk of, wastewater flooding
- Customer service

Reaction to the standards and guarantees was generally positive. Indeed, more than four in five participants at the focus groups and structured dialogues rated them as 'good', with 57% rating them as 'very good.' Nobody rated them as poor (Figure 3.2). Similarly positive reactions were noted by the facilitators during the table discussions at the citizens' assembly.

Figure 3.2: Overall perceptions of Scottish Water's service standards and guarantees to customers

Q: Overall, how acceptable are Scottish Water's current service standards and guarantees to customers?



Base: All focus group and structured dialogue participants who gave an answer (54)

"Every document seems to be precise and clear and [Scottish Water] are like, 'this is definitely what we will do if this happens'."

(Male focus group participant, Inverness)

Across the fora, it was common for participants to say the standards and guarantees were in line with or better than they would have expected, and to compare them favourably with those of other utilities companies. They were particularly positive about the timescales within which Scottish Water aimed to respond to and resolve issues; the availability of compensation on occasions where targets were missed; and the focus on keeping customers informed, both prior to and during works, through a variety of media.

At the same time, there were recurring, cross-cutting suggestions for ways in which the standards and guarantees might be refined. In particular, participants argued for:

- reduced "ambiguity" or "vagueness" in some of the wording and language (for example, "promptly", "regular updates" "you may receive...") There was suggestion that ambiguous or vague language "benefitted the supplier rather than the consumer."
- greater clarity in respect of the types of incidents that would be considered the fault or responsibility of Scottish Water, rather than the consumer, and vice versa (this point is discussed in greater detail below)
- greater clarity in the definition of vulnerable people. There was also suggestion that vulnerable people should not be required to proactively register as such, and that the onus should be on Scottish Water to identify these customers and ensure that nobody 'slips through the net'.

- greater consistency across the standards; particularly in terms of the level of compensation available for different types of incident
- automatic rather than claims-based compensation

"If you were entitled to compensation, then Scottish Water should be responsible entirely for that, and give it to the customer...For them it's a cop out, because some people might not want to apply or they might not know how to apply or feel embarrassed by applying etcetera. there's all kinds of reasons why people won't ask for money, and for the money they're rightly owed."

(Male dialogue participant, Inverness)

More generally, participants commonly expressed a view that Scottish Water should do more to publicise the standards and guarantees so that the public are aware of their entitlements. No participants had known about the standards and guarantees prior to taking part in the research, as the following quotations from the dialogues serve to illustrate.

"I think this [information] should have been out a long, long time ago...through the post or on posters somewhere, because I wouldn't say a big majority of us sitting here had any knowledge of a lot of that."

"We're paying for our water though our Council Tax, surely they numbers should be on the Council Tax bills?"

(Female dialogue participants, Glasgow)

"They should let you know you're entitled to [compensation]. You shouldn't have to go trawling through their policies online to find out that you're entitled to compensation."

(Male dialogue participant, Inverness)

In addition to the cross-cutting themes set out above, participants offered more specific comment on the standard and guarantees for the different issues types listed above.

Interruptions to supplies as a result of planned maintenance, unexpected issues or a major incident

There was general acceptance that occasional interruptions to supply, whether as a consequence of planned work, an unexpected problem or a major incident, were inevitable. Among Scottish Water's standards and guarantees relating to such interruptions are a committed to giving customers at least 48 hours' notice of planned work that will affect supplies for more than four hours, and to restoring supplies following unexpected problems within the same timeframe. Participants generally regarded these timescales as fair and reasonable, and were pleased to see Scottish Water's commitment to ensuring customers had access to alternative supplies during longer interruptions. They were also pleased, and in many cases surprised, that customers could claim compensation if the organisation failed to restore supplies within its promised deadlines.

"They're doing all they can, what else can they do?"

(Female focus group participant, Perth)

At the same time, some of the standards and guarantees relating to major incidents prompted concerns and debate. Participants in Inverness questioned the definition of a major incident – and specifically the focus on “incidents affecting more than 13,500 households” – commenting that this was only really appropriate in an urban context.

“We live in the Highlands, a major incident up here is 500 houses, not 13 and a half thousand houses. I mean, it would be fair enough to have that kind of figure for a large area like Glasgow, but for the Highlands, that’s appalling.”

(Male dialogue participant, Inverness)

Across the fora, there was also repeated suggestion that 24 hours seemed a long time to wait for alternative supplies during a major incident, and that 10 litres of provision per person per day may not be adequate, particularly when viewed against the fact (as highlighted in the fora presentations) that the average person uses 150 litres a day.

“I think giving you less than ten per cent of the water that you use in an average day is just not enough.”

(Male dialogue participant, Inverness)

Properties flooding or being at risk of flooding

Participants were generally surprised to learn that Scottish Water would assist in the event of waste water flooding inside their homes (albeit they recognised they may be charged for this service if they were found to be responsible for the flooding). Indeed, most said their natural inclination in the event of such an incident would be to call their local council, their insurance provider or a plumber instead. They appeared pleased and reassured to know that in future they would be able to contact Scottish Water.

“I’m just amazed with that. I would probably phone my home insurance and start claiming from them.”

(Female, focus group participant, Glasgow)

Still, there was some suggestion that the four-hour response time for internal flooding was too long, not least give the potential health risks associated with such an incident, and also the fact that considerable damage could be done to a home in the interim.

“Your house could be destroyed [within four hours].”

(Male dialogue participant, Inverness)

In terms of the standards and guarantees relating to waste water flooding outside the home, these prompted perhaps the greatest level of discussion and debate of all those introduced at the fora. Participants commonly felt there was a need for awareness raising around the ‘ownership’ of pipework – in terms of which sections are the responsibility of the property owner and which are the responsibility of Scottish Water – and thus who is liable for resolving different types of issues.

They also suggested that the timeframe specified for attending the scene of an incident of this type (24 hours) was too long. At one forum, participants suggested that an eight to twelve-hour target would be more appropriate.

Apart from these issues, participant often commented on what they perceived as vague language in the standard and guarantees on external flooding. Specific examples cited include the statement that Scottish Water will “sometimes”

support a customer in finding temporary accommodation, and that where responsibility for a fault could be proven to lie with a private homeowner or landlord, they “*may* be charged” for this – with the level of charge not specified.

Customer service

Participants were generally positive about Scottish Water’s Code of Practice around customer service. They particularly liked the fact that morning or afternoon appointments and two-hour time slots were available; something they commented was not always the case when dealing with utilities providers.

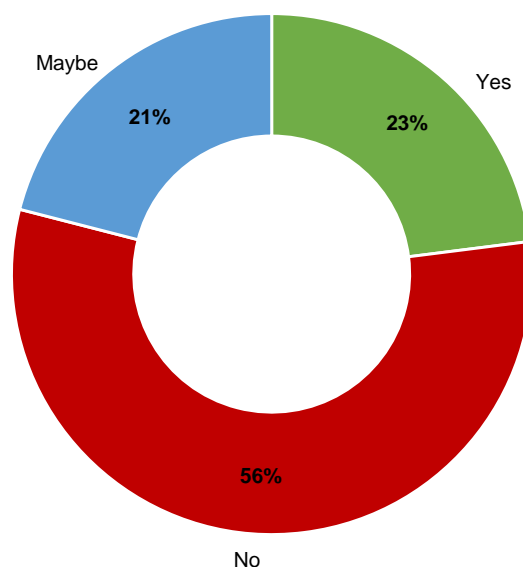
Again, the availability of compensation in the case of missed targets came as a something of a surprise to many participants, with several people suggesting that it was not entirely necessary.

Service standards across urban and rural areas

There was a high level of support for having similar services standards and guarantees across urban and rural settings, as Figures 3.3 illustrates. Participants often commented that people in different areas paid the same amount for their water and waste water services and thus should be provided with the same standard of service in return. Significantly, this perspective was as common among those who lived in large towns and cities as among those from more rural areas such as Inverness-shire.

Figure 3.3: Overall attitudes towards service standards across urban and rural settings (citizens’ assembly)

Q: *Should service standards be different in different parts of the country?*



Base: All citizens’ assembly participants who gave an answer (71)

“Why shouldn’t they get the same level of service? It doesn’t matter where you stay, everyone is paying their taxes, everyone is using the water, so everyone should get the same level of service.”

(Male dialogue participant, Glasgow)

"If you're going to start having two tiers of service for rural and urban, then charge people appropriately."

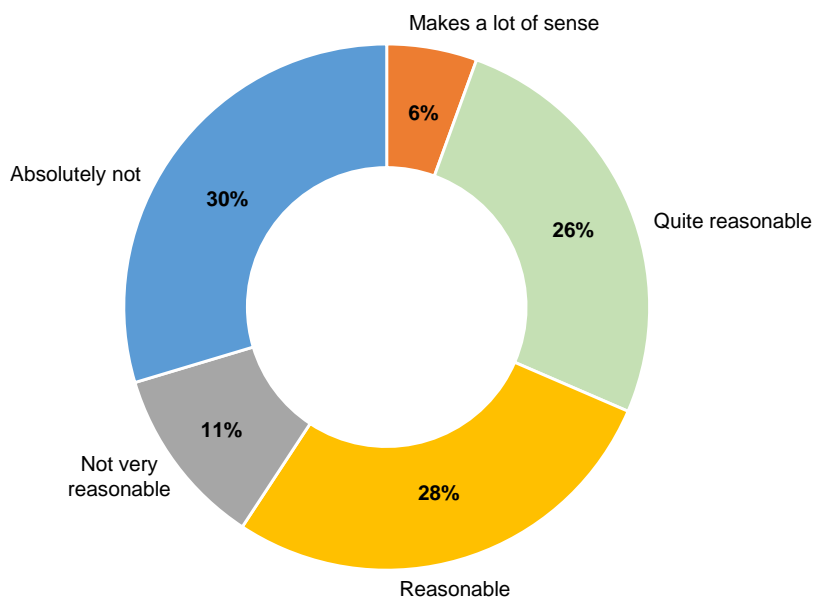
(Male dialogue participant Inverness)

Nevertheless, as the discussions progressed, views became more refined, with participants distinguishing to a degree between different service standards in relation to consistency. In general terms, there was broad agreement that aspects delivered centrally by Scottish Water, such as customer service (appointment setting, complaints handling etc.) and *notification* about planned cuts, ought to be the same across urban and rural areas as there was no logical reason why this should not be the case. In contrast, questions were raised as to the practicalities of achieving uniform *response times* across different areas, particularly very remote rural and island locations. Such questions prompted division and often heated exchanges across the fora (Figure 3.4).

On the one hand there were participants who felt that it was perfectly possible to organise services to ensure uniform response times, either through the establishment of locally-based response units or by working with local subcontractors, as breakdown cover services do. Others, however, were keen to point out that adverse weather conditions and other circumstances out with Scottish Water's control (for example, the scheduling of ferry crossings to islands) may on occasion prevent it from reaching remote rural communities as quickly as it might wish.

Figure 3.4: Attitudes towards varying response times across urban and rural areas (focus groups and structured dialogues)

Q: Do you think it would be reasonable for Scottish Water to have different service standards and guarantees to customers for response times in different areas of the country (e.g. urban, rural, remote rural)?



Base: All focus group and structured dialogue participants who gave an answer (54)

"I don't think it's technically feasible. Some of the places out in the back of beyond...they are no' likely to get to you in four hours, 12 hours is probably more realistic."

(Male focus group participant, Glasgow)

"We can't ask a miracle of someone if it's difficult to get to or if it's so rural. We know just by living in Inverness and the surrounding areas that things don't happen like that, like they do in the central belt or in England."

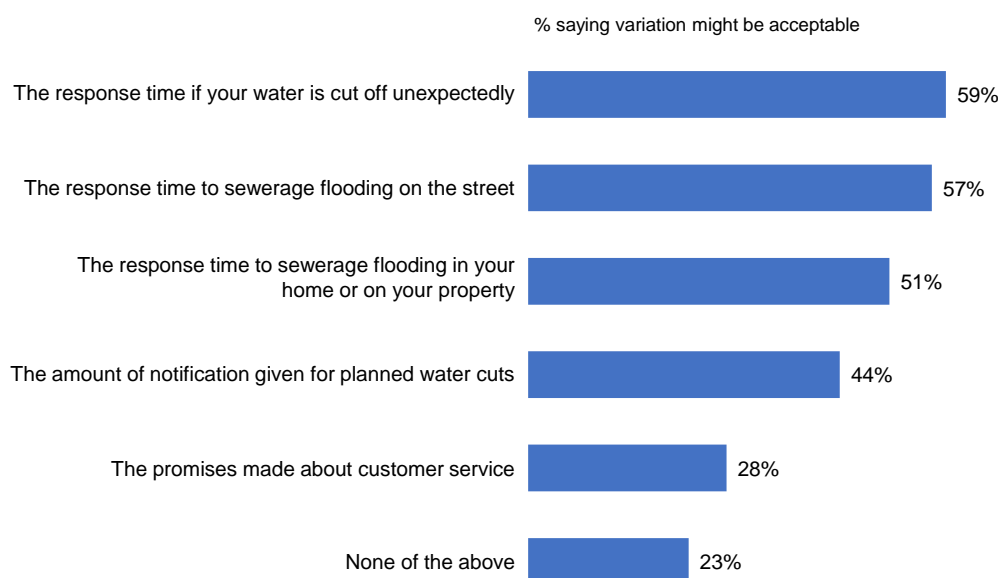
(Male focus group participant, Inverness)

"There must be people who can work with Scottish Water who can solve the problem, that work everywhere in Scotland, so I don't think it's unreasonable."

(Male dialogue participant, Glasgow)

Further distinctions between different aspects of service were drawn with reference to perceived risks to public health and safety. Specifically, there was suggestion that uniformity in response times to sewerage flooding was more important than in response times to water supply-related issues, particularly where the flooding was being experienced in the home (Figure 3.5).

Figure 3.5: Attitudes towards varying service standards (citizens' assembly)



Base: All citizens' assembly participants who gave an answer (75)

A less common perspective was that response times for any aspect of service should perhaps be determined by the scale of issues or problems and/or the size of area affected, rather than by geography *per se*. In a similar vein, a participant at the Glasgow dialogue suggested a system that was more focused around level of risk – for example, flood risk; a suggestion that met with approval among others in her group.

"All these places they know will flood... they need to have a plan that, 'this is what we're going to do; we evacuate the people', you know, they can move at the drop of a hat."

(Female dialogue participant, Glasgow)

Notwithstanding these differing perspectives, across the fora, participants were unanimous that Scottish Water's *aims* in respect of service standards, as well as the quality of work it ultimately delivers, should be the same across urban and rural areas.

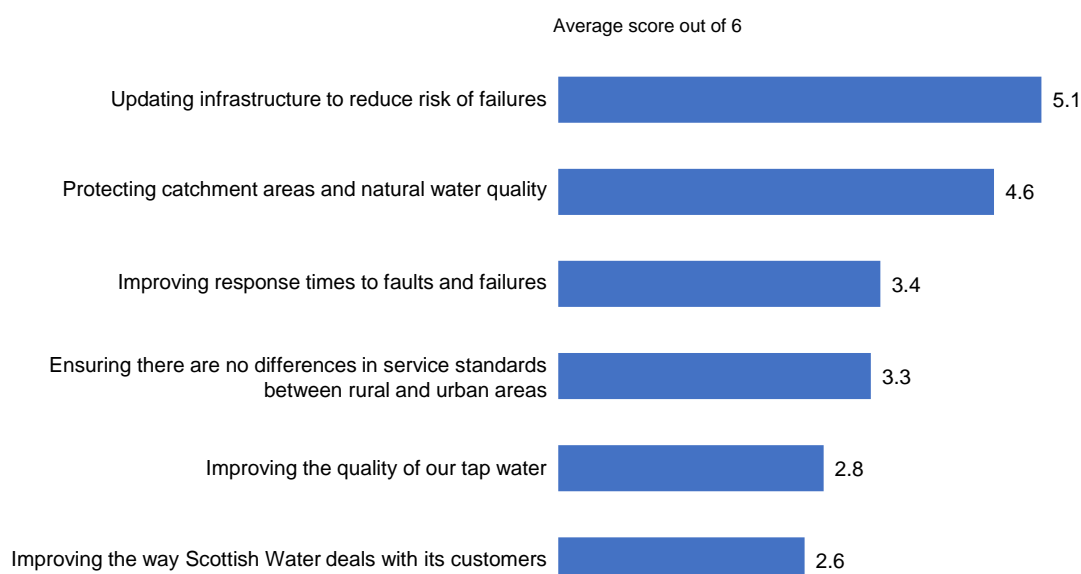
Priorities for improving water and waste water services

Participants were presented with possible areas for future investment in water and waste water services and infrastructure, and asked which of these they felt should be prioritised. At the focus groups and structured dialogues, the highest priority was attached to improving infrastructure and protecting catchment areas and natural water quality, and the lowest to improving the quality of tap water and improving Scottish Water's customer service (Figure 3.6). Ensuring there were no differences in service standards between urban and rural areas was accorded middling priority, along with improving response times to faults and failures.

Infrastructure and natural water quality were seen as the 'nuts and bolts' of the system, hence the reason they were accorded the highest priority. Further, there was a view that Scotland's infrastructure was both ageing and under increasing pressure due to proliferation of new housing developments. The quality of tap water and customer service, in contrast, were deemed as relatively unproblematic aspects of provision, hence their lower ranking.

Figure 3.6: Priorities for investment in water services – focus groups and dialogues (post-fora questionnaires)

Q: To improve water and waste water services in Scotland, the focus of investment should be....?



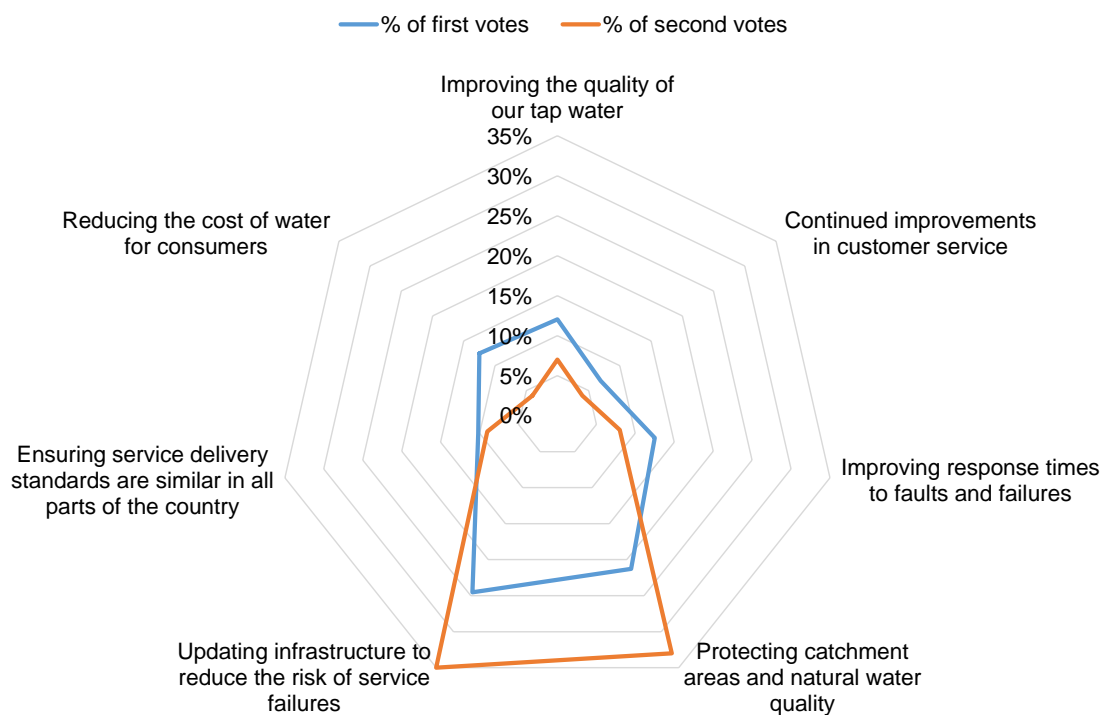
Base: All focus group and structured dialogue participants who gave an answer

A similar ranking emerged in the first vote at the citizens' assembly, with infrastructural improvements and the protection of catchment areas emerging prominently. In the second vote, both of these options became more popular still (Figure 3.7). In the case of infrastructural improvements, this may have reflected an argument advanced strongly by several tables that, if the system was not kept in top condition, it would likely deteriorate, not least in the face of population growth. The increased support for protecting catchment areas was consistent with a view advanced by other tables that, as Scotland's water was one of its key assets, the focus should be on protecting it at source rather than on dealing with the effects of contamination and pollution after the event.

Another table at the citizens' assembly was keen to highlight that the low ranking of customer service should perhaps not be taken as a measure of satisfaction with this aspect of provision but rather of participants' limited exposure to the service.

Figure 3.7: Priorities for investment in water services – citizens' assembly

Q: To improve water and waste water services in Scotland the focus of investment should be ...?



Base: All citizens' assembly participants who gave an answer (73)

Conclusions

Across the fora participants were extremely positive about the quality of service they receive from Scottish Water and the generally prompt and efficient way that faults and losses of service were dealt with. They were also mainly positive about the organisation's service standards and guarantees to customers, including the timescales within which the organisation aimed to respond to and resolve issues; the availability of compensation in the event of targets being missed; and the focus on keeping customers informed.

When asked about the reasonableness of standards of service varying across urban and rural areas they were clear that, wherever feasible, customers should be able to expect a similar standard of service across the country. Ultimately this consensus was founded upon discussion of how water charges were determined and, more specifically, the fact that people in urban and rural setting were subject to the same regime. There was no perceptible difference in how consumers from urban and rural locations responded to this question, with most opinions being based on ideas of 'fairness' and equity overall.

Participants did differentiate to a degree between different aspects of service in relation to consistency, however, and were often willing to countenance variation in response times across urban or rural settings caused by unforeseen or difficult to control factors, such as weather or extremely remoteness of location. They also differentiated on the basis of potential risks to public health and safety, placing slightly more emphasis on the importance of uniform response times for sewerage flooding than for water supply-related issues. It is important to note, however, that this differentiation was not a reflection of any significant level of support for a formal or institutionalised system of varying response times or other service standards. Participants were clear that Scottish Water should always *aim* for uniformity of standards, and delivery of a consistently high quality service.

The emotive manner in which many participants engaged with the question of service standards for urban and rural settings suggests a need for careful communication around this issues, whatever future decisions are taken. This will mean being very clear with consumers as to the standards they can expect where they live, and the specific rationale or reasons for any variation where this is instituted or occurs. More fundamentally, given that participants perceived the need for a clear link between the amount people are charged for water and waste water collection services, and the standard of service they receive, any future move towards varying standards across urban and rural settings may need to be reflected in some form of financial recompense or other 'equaliser' for areas facing reduced standards.

4. Methodological Findings

The CFU's dual aim in undertaking this research project was to trial the effectiveness of different deliberative research methods in addressing the same policy question. In order to do this three different methodological approaches were used to explore with consumers what incentives and new regulation would be most likely to drive more consumer focused regulation and service provision in the water industry in Scotland by focussing on two related policy questions:

1. How engaged are consumers in matters related to water and the environment? What is required to increase their engagement in these matters?
2. Do consumers think there should be similar service standards across urban and rural areas and if so, to what degree?

This methodology report sets out to assess the relative effectiveness of these 3 approaches in order to draw conclusions about:

- their suitability for addressing these types of policy questions;
- how well they were able to deal with the complex subject matter related to the policy area;
- how effectively they engaged consumers with the subject and were able to identify consumer concerns and priorities for this sector;
- what, if any, added value was delivered by taking a specifically deliberative approach (compared to more traditional qualitative research methods);
- how well each method was able to deliver outputs that are useful to, and usable by, policy makers; and
- whether they offer a cost effective and replicable way of engaging consumers with water sector issues in the future.

The report begins by providing an overview of the rationale behind the choice of methods, and the approach to recruitment and delivery, before discussing each method in detail: describing the method's key characteristics and how this manifested in practice during the specific workshops on water in the environment and its relationship to the water industry. The report draws upon the discussion guides prepared for the workshops, participant evaluations⁴, facilitator and observer feedback, data generated within the fora and the team's professional expertise to assess the effectiveness of each method.

⁴ While the report presents quantitative results from the participant evaluations in graph form, these should be taken as illustrative only and, due to the small number involved not accorded any statistical significance.

Overview of the Methods and why they were chosen

At the outset of the project the team from Ipsos MORI and Involve agreed 3 methodological approaches with the CFU that would be used to undertake the consumer research, and which would each be applied to the same policy research questions: *How engaged are consumers in matters related to water and the environment?* and *Do consumers think there should there be similar service standards across urban and rural areas and if so, to what degree?*

- a. Focus group** – to act as a control method providing evidence of consumers' opinions on the water industry and water in the environment which would function as a baseline against which the added benefits of using a more deliberative approach can be compared;
- b. Structured dialogue** – a flexible deliberative format that, when well designed, prioritises dialogue between participants and is able to deliver evidence of consumer values, preferences and priorities.
- c. Citizens assembly** – a large scale event, with a dedicated learning element, which allows participants to develop and test opinions on issues that are new to them through the process of public reasoning and establish clear, collective outputs in relation to consumer priorities, areas of concern and appetites for change.

Not only are all of these methods effective and proven ways of engaging with consumers but they are also significantly different enough from each other to allow for critical comparison in a way that will address the CFU's primary research question: Which methods are most suited to understanding consumers' preferences, motivations and priorities in relation to the water industry and water in the environment?

Although the research was designed to address 2 distinct (but inter-related) policy questions, in the workshops themselves the different topics were integrated together, with the findings relating to each question separated during the process of analysis and reporting. Thus each fora was planned to take participants through a process that:

- Explored the value consumers place on water and water in in the environment;
- Situated the water industry within the wider water environment to understand how consumers relate the water environment to their water bills;
- Assessed the level of consumer engagement / non-engagement with matters related to the water industry and the water environment;
- Tested the extent of consumers' understanding of how urban and rural water and wastewater services are delivered and by whom;
- Provided information about Scottish Water's role, responsibilities and the service standards they aim to uphold for consumers;
- Explored consumer expectations in relation to service standards from the water industry;
- Identified what aspects of service are prioritised for consistency in standards in both urban and rural areas;
- Encouraged participants to think about priorities for investment and improvement within the water industry and for the management of the wider water environment;

- Allowed conclusions to be drawn about what is needed to increase consumer engagement in matters related to the water services and the water environment.

Across the different types of fora however the order topics were introduced, the way the questions were approached and the degree of focus given to each element varied in response to the characteristics and strengths of each method.

Implementation

The fora were all designed to involve a representative sample of consumers from a range of geographical locations across Scotland. The specific locations were chosen to ensure contributions from people living in a mix of rural and urban areas were represented across the research project as a whole.

The fora were all scheduled outside standard 'office hours' (i.e. during the evenings and weekends) to make them as open as possible to working participants. The venues chosen for the focus groups and structured dialogues were selected to ensure they would be easy to get to for participants: in a central location in each area, with parking available and close to public transport where possible.⁵

Recruitment

Recruitment for the fora was undertaken using a face-to-face (door-to-door and in street) free-find approach by Ipsos MORI's in house team of recruiters. Quotas were set to ensure a representative pool of consumers in terms of sex, age, working status, social grade. To allow for the possibility of some drop out in advance of the fora, an over-recruitment margin of at least 25% was set. In practice, this meant 10 people were recruited to each focus group, 25 to each structured dialogue and 80 for the citizens assembly.

Table 4.1: summary of recruitment and attendance numbers at the fora

Forum	Location	Number Recruited	Target attendees	Actual attendees
Focus group A	Glasgow	10	8	10
Focus group B	Inverness	10	8	9
Structured dialogue A	Glasgow	25	20	18
Structured dialogue B	Inverness	25	20	18
Citizens assembly	Edinburgh	80	65	77

Design and Delivery

A discussion guide for each fora was designed by Involve, in discussion with relevant CFU officers and with support from Scottish Water staff.

While each guide was designed to address a common set of themes and questions (as noted above), they were not necessarily approached in the same way, or in the same order, for the different fora. Further, to enable a fair comparison between methods, particular attention was paid in each process design to using techniques and formats that would

⁵ Across these fora 96% of participants agreed that the venue was easy to get to and 88% agreed the venue was suitable for their needs on their post-event evaluation forms.

capitalise on the unique qualities and strengths of the specific method (rather than simply repeating the same exercise with different groups and for different amounts of time).

All of the fora were facilitated by a team of staff from Ipsos MORI and Involve.

Focus groups

Key characteristics of a focus group

Focus groups are, in essence, guided discussions with a small group of people selected to be a demographic cross section of the population being consulted. They are normally one-off sessions (lasting 1-2 hours) although often several will be run in different locations on the same topic.

Focus groups originated in Market Research to test responses to new products or packaging, but are increasingly being used in Social Research to explore public reactions to policy proposals or public services. The principle behind a focus group is that the responses from the small sample can be used to predict the reactions/response that could be expected from the wider population.

In practice, a group of people (usually between 6 and 15, but typically 8) are brought together with a facilitator who uses a discussion plan to guide the conversation through a number of steps; in most cases beginning with general impression on the topic and becoming more specific as the discussion progresses. When the topic under discussion is unfamiliar to people, or there are complex options to be explored, the facilitator may also introduce written or visual stimuli to inform the discussion.

Throughout a focus group questions will usually be asked to the group as a whole, with the purpose being to stimulate discussion rather than simply collect individual responses. In this way focus groups are able to produce data and insights that would be less available without the interaction found in a group setting: where listening to others' talk about their experiences can stimulate memories, ideas, and opinions from other participants. This is sometimes described as the 'group effect' where group members engage in 'a kind of 'chaining' or 'cascading' effect; [where] talk links to, or tumbles out of, the topics and expressions preceding it"⁶

Participants

19 participants took part in the focus groups – 9 in Inverness and 10 in Glasgow. These locations were chosen to provide a balance between urban and rural environments, with participants in the Inverness forum recruited not just from the city itself but also from the surrounding small towns, villages and rural areas. Table 4.2 shows the demographic breakdown of those attending the focus groups.

⁶ Lindlof, T. R., & Taylor, B. C. (2002). *Qualitative Communication Research Methods, 2nd Edition*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage

Table 4.2: Demographic profile of focus group participants

	Target	Glasgow	Inverness	Total
Gender				
Male	50%	5	5	10
Female	50%	5	4	9
Age				
18-24	20%	2	1	3
25 - 54	50%	5	5	10
55+	30%	3	3	6
Working status				
Working (full or part time)	c. 75%	8	9	17
Not Working	c. 25%	2	1	3

As part of the recruitment screening prospective participants were asked about their general interest, and level of engagement with a variety of environmental matters. This was designed to ensure there was a mix of views present at the outset of the discussion, and reports from the facilitator suggests this was achieved.

Overview of the focus groups

Two focus groups were held as part of this research project, each delivered using a quite traditional focus group format. A variety of methods were used to record participants' views throughout the focus group including flipchart notes, individual written surveys and a group ranking exercise. The discussions were also digitally recorded and transcribed.

To address the wider research question each focus group began with a general discussion about the water environment and its value to participants, before moving on to look at the water industry more specifically. At this stage, participants were presented with contextual information about Scottish Water's services and infrastructure and responses were sought regarding their satisfaction with these services and any issues with service they may have experienced. A second round of information was then provided to introduce consumer's to the service standards promised by Scottish Water, in order to explore whether it was reasonable for there to be differences in what should be expected between rural and urban areas. In the final section of the session, a group task was introduced to identify participants' priorities for the future of the water industry and the management of the wider water environment.

Each focus group ran for 2 hours on a weekday evening (6:30-8:30pm) and a detailed outline of the session is provided below.

Table 4.3: Session Plan for the focus groups

Time	Title	Type of Activity	Purpose
10 mins	Welcome	Introduction from Facilitator	To: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introduce the topic and the purpose of the discussion; Allow participants to introduce themselves; Establish how the evening will work.
15 mins	Water in the Environment	Facilitated discussion: <i>Thinking about the environments that you use where</i>	To: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage participants to think about the wider water environment as a context for the water industry; Explore the value they place on water in the environment – both individually and as a resource for Scotland.

		<i>there is water (beaches, rivers, lochs, streams etc.) what do you gain from them?</i>	
5 mins	Awareness of the Water Industry	Individual Written Survey	To: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Record participant's awareness of water industry charges and how payments are made; Provide a baseline for assessments of awareness prior to information provision and discussions.
5 mins	Paying for Water	Information presentation (by facilitator)	To: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explain about what is covered by water charges; Provide information about average household charges; Highlight the extent of the infrastructure maintained by Scottish Water; Provide information about what Scottish Water uses the money paid in charges for.
10 mins	Satisfaction with Services	Facilitated discussion	To: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assess general levels of satisfaction with services – including water quality, reliability and responses to problems.
20 mins	Service Standards	Group Exercise (using prompt cards about Scottish Water Service Standards)	Working in pairs participants looked at a set of 5 'promises to customers' that summarised the ways Scottish Water aims to respond to different types of issues (e.g. water cuts, flooding caused by blocked drains) to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide information about Service Standards and what customers can expect from Scottish Water; Discuss whether the published standards are reasonable and/or what could improve them; Determine whether participants thought there should be similar service standards across urban and rural areas, and why.
10 mins		Comfort break	
5 mins	Water Processing	Information presentation (by facilitator)	To: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explain what is involved in processing water from source to tap.
10 mins	Water Quality	Facilitated discussion: <i>What do you think are the biggest threats to water quality?</i>	To: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish how satisfied consumers were with the quality of their water; To identify threats / perceived threats to the quality of water in Scotland Explore where responsibility should lie for protecting the water quality in Scotland.
20 mins	Priorities for Spending	Prioritisation / Card sorting exercise (using a list potential spending areas developed)	To: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explore what aspects of service provision and wider environmental management participants thought were most important for future expenditure ; Identify why some options were prioritised higher than others were.

		from the project brief Appendix A)	
5 mins	Final Thoughts	Individual Written Survey	To: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Allow participants an opportunity to respond individually to some of the questions raised throughout the discussions; Provide additional evidence of opinions for analysis.
5 mins	Closing	Concluding remarks from Facilitator	To: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clarify how the information gathered during the session will be used; Give participants the option of requesting a copy of the summary report; Ask participants to complete an evaluation of the event to support this section of the report.

As shown in the outline above, over the course of the 2 hours, approximately 20% of the time was needed for practical matters, including introductions and setting the context of the session. Of the remaining time approximately 15% was used for providing information to participants about Scottish Water and the services it provides, and 65% used for discussion and evidence gathering.

The design of the session followed a quite traditional focus group structure: moving from how people intuitively respond to and interact with water in the environment, into providing specific information on the water industry in Scotland as prompts for focussed discussion. This worked well overall as participants were quickly able to appreciate the scope of the topic. Further, as they were initially asked for their own experiences, both as individuals within the wider environment and water consumers, all were able to contribute to this part of the discussion in a meaningful way. The discussion relating to service standards was, however, more difficult for participants as for many it was quite abstract, having never experienced these types of problems themselves. While all were able to comment on the standards as presented, there was general agreement in both focus groups that the standards were all quite reasonable, and little was added at this stage.

An explicitly deliberative component was included towards the end of the fora when participants were asked to rank the relative priority of different investment options as a whole group. It is evident from comments from the facilitator and the participant evaluation forms that *'everyone agreeing on where the cards were placed in order'* was the part of the evening participants found most challenging, although both groups ultimately managed to agree an order. Further, the discussions recorded at this stage provided useful evidence of the reasoning processes undertaken here which has informed the analysis report.

The inclusion of an individual survey at the beginning and end of the focus group not only provided the analysts with quantitative data to inform the report, but also enabled the apparent *view-of-the-group* to be compared with participants' individual responses. This form of quality assurance can help to ensure that, particularly when there is limited time for discussions, the outputs from the consultation have not been unduly influenced by a single voice or tainted by group norming (wherein participants will publically agree with a popular opinion rather than risk conflict).

Participants' evaluation of the fora

Overall participants evaluated their experience of taking part in the focus groups very positively – with 100% agreeing, and 79% strongly agreeing that they would take part in something like this again (Figure 4.1).

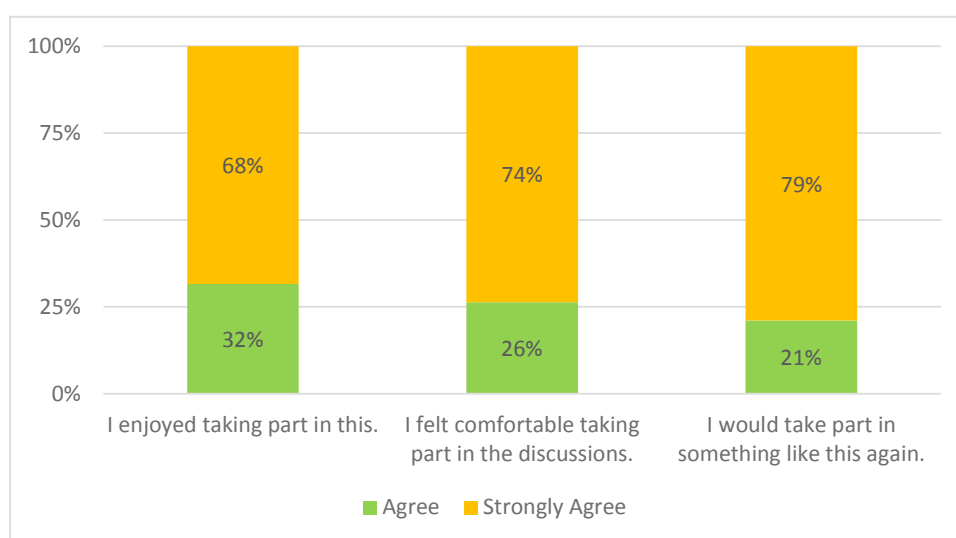
It is also worth noting that all of the participants agreed that they enjoyed taking part in this, suggesting that the experience of the event, rather than strictly the financial incentive, was a motivating factor in willingness to be involved in discussions like this in the future. When asked what was the best thing about the session, comments from the evaluation forms included:

"Meeting new people and learning about new things"

"Relaxed and good information and having a say in the matter"

"Well presented and interesting discussion"

Figure 4.1 Participant evaluation of the overall experience of taking part in a focus group



Source: combined focus group participant evaluation forms (19)

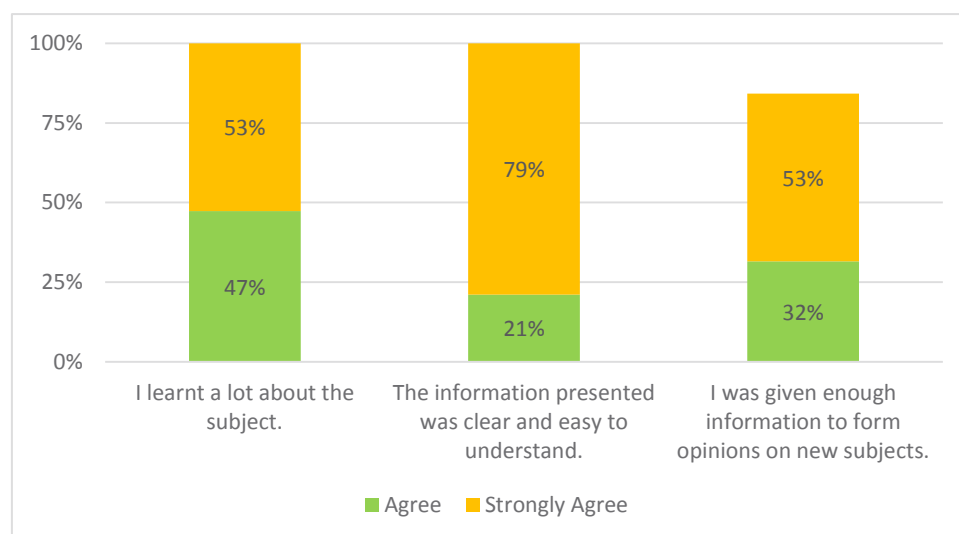
Despite only 15% of the time in the session being used to directly provide participants with information about the water industry in Scotland, the majority of the comments relating to what participants liked about the fora referred to what they had learnt from taking part:

"This discussion has vastly improved my Scottish Water knowledge 😊"

"Improvement on Scottish Water knowledge. I've left much more informed."

"Learning a lot of new things about Scottish Water, its customer service and the way it operates."

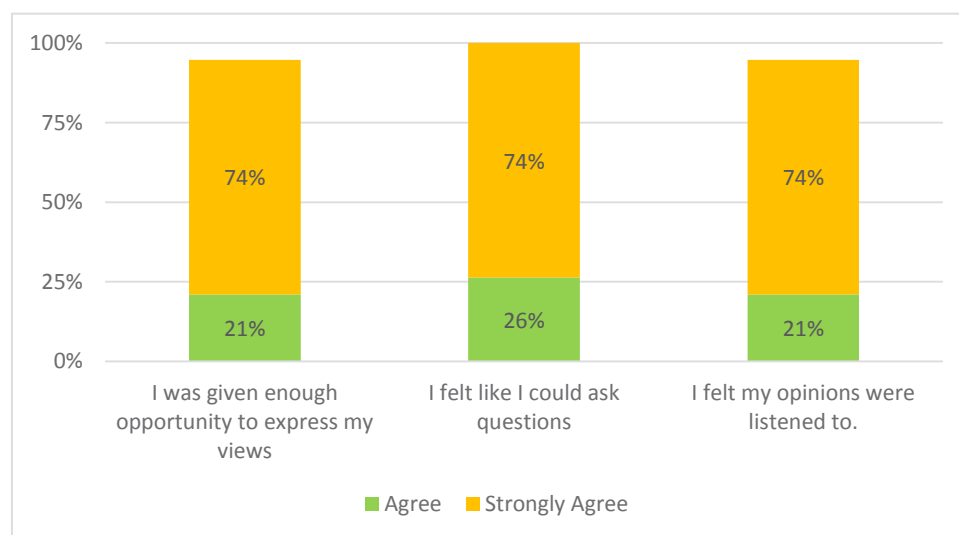
Figure 4.2: Participant evaluation of the information provided in the focus group



Source: combined focus group participant evaluation forms (19)

Several comments in the evaluation forms also illustrated the positive response people had to how the information was presented during the focus group, for example, there was a *“very relaxed, calm and friendly presenter who explained everything throughout”*, *“Clear information given”* and *“the presenter was knowledgeable and delivered a good focus group”*. Participants overall also responded positively when asked if they had been given ‘enough information to form opinions on new subjects’. This suggests that, even if some of the details of the topic were unfamiliar to them at the outset, they felt sufficiently well informed to participate effectively in the discussions.

Figure 4.3: Participant evaluation of the experience of participating in the focus group



Source: combined focus group participant evaluation forms (19)

As the graph above shows, almost three quarters of all participants also strongly agreed that the focus group had provided a forum in which they were able to express their views, ask questions and have their opinions listened to. Further, in the comments from the evaluation forms, the staff were complimented for having delivered:

"A friendly environment where you were able to contribute effectively"

"An interesting focus group; presenter was friendly and very professional and encouraged everyone in the group to participate"

"A nice environment [where] I felt I could express my opinions openly"

Effectiveness of this method in answering the research question

Focus groups are a proven method for gaining insight into consumer preferences and priorities. When well designed and facilitated they can give the client a clear overview of how participants think about an issue and any changes to those opinions that emerge through discussion with others or in response to new information or stimulus material.

In the case of this specific consultation, the focus groups addressed all of the elements required to form a response to the two key research questions – *How engaged are consumers in matters related to water and the environment?* and *Do consumers think there should be similar service standards across urban and rural areas and if so, to what degree* – however the depth of discussion possible on each of these topics was restricted. This was not simply due to the time available for the discussion but also to the fact that a focus group methodology is primarily an extractive form of consultation. The discussion structures used in a focus group will generally concentrate on the collection of opinions and responses, and will not typically challenge participants to question or reflect on their own positions in light of the responses from others.

The outputs from the focus groups were however generally consistent with those emerging from the other fora, although in some cases specific answers to the research questions have had to be inferred by the research team from the analysis of the body of the discussions and the quantitative outputs. The focus groups therefore have successfully provided baseline evidence that can be analysed alongside the results from the dialogues and citizens assembly to contribute to the CFU's understanding of what would encourage greater consumer engagement with water and the water industry, and where consumers interests and priorities lie.

Structured dialogue

Key characteristics of a structured dialogue

A structured dialogue is a specific type of deliberative workshop. Deliberative workshops can best be defined as organised group discussions that give participants an opportunity to consider an issue in depth, challenge each other's opinions, develop views/arguments through a process of public reasoning and reach an informed conclusion (either individually or collectively). Structured dialogues, as the term is used here, are distinct because the activities and techniques used to facilitate the workshop are very strongly structured and designed to deliver clear outputs at each stage. This means they can be repeated, and the results analysed cumulatively, as part of a single engagement process.

Another characteristic of these types of workshops is that they tend to focus explicitly on creating a forum for *dialogue*⁷ among a diverse group of people in order to better understand different views and perspectives. Workshops are therefore designed to use a range of techniques that help people communicate with each other, and explore their differences, in productive and constructive ways.

While a dialogue on a complex or technical subject will usually require some level of information provision, and a process of learning for participants as they process and digest this information, the majority of time in a dialogue should be allocated to discussion, negotiation between participants and the evaluation of alternatives as a public act (i.e. deliberation).

Participants

34 participants took part in a structured dialogue as part of this process – 16 from Inverness and the surrounding area and 18 from Glasgow. These locations were chosen to allow a mixed group of urban and rural residents to participate. Table 4.4 shows the demographic breakdown of those attending the structured dialogues.

⁷ While many will use the term 'dialogue' to refer to any kind of spoken interaction, dialogue is, from the perspective taken here, 'a special type of communicative relationship: the kind of relationship which broadens worldviews, reshapes perspectives and speaks to both our cognitive and mental capacities for mutual engagement'. In this context dialogue can best be understood as a particular type of communication that is orientated towards building understanding. Effective dialogue is therefore characterised as being collaborative (wherein participants work towards achieving a shared understanding of issues and perspectives), focussed on finding and exploring common ground, and as having the capacity to enlarge, and possibly change, a participant's point of view. Escobar, O. *Public Dialogue and Deliberation*, Edinburgh Beltane, 2011

Table 4.4: Demographic profile of structured dialogue participants

	Target	Glasgow	Inverness	Total
Gender				
Male	50%	8	5	13
Female	50%	10	11	21
Age				
18-24	20%	4	3	7
25 - 54	50%	9	8	17
55+	30%	5	5	10
Working status				
Working (full or part time)	c. 75%	15	11	26
Not Working	c. 25%	3	5	8

As part of the recruitment screening prospective participants were asked about their general interest, and level of engagement, with a variety of environmental matters. This was to ensure there was a mix of views present at the outset of the discussion, and reports from the facilitators suggests this was achieved.

Overview of the structured dialogues

The dialogues exploring consumer's engagement with, and expectations of, the water industry and water in the environment, took place simultaneously in Glasgow and Inverness from 10am – 4pm on a Saturday in March.

The discussion guide for these workshops focused on creating opportunities for dialogue between participants. The day therefore began with 2 non-facilitated group tasks designed to allow participants to begin exploring the topic on their own terms and encourage collaborative learning in relation to situating the water industry within the wider environment. Information about Scottish Water was then presented to reinforce what participants had discovered, but the focus of the activities throughout the morning remained on enabling participants to work together to co-create an understanding of how water and wastewater services are delivered and managed within the environment.

In the afternoon, the focus turned more directly to Scottish Water's role, responsibilities and the service standards they aim to uphold for consumers, as a starting point for deliberating about which aspects of service should be prioritised for consistency across urban and rural areas. A final full group discussion gave participants the chance to reflect on all of the previous discussions, and revise earlier conclusions about priorities for investment and improvement within the water industry and for the management of the wider water environment.

The outline plan for the workshop in the table below demonstrates that, of the 5 ¼ hours allowed for the workshop (excluding breaks), approximately:

- 8% of time was used for practical and administrative matters;
- 16% of time was used for providing information about the water industry;
- 8% of the time was used to gather and record individual responses;

- 52% of the time was given over to group discussions exploring attitudes to water in the environment and experiences of using services; and
- 16% of the time was allocated for active deliberation and consensus building.

Table 4.5: Session Plan for the structured dialogue

Time	Title	Type of Activity	Purpose
5 mins	Welcome	Introduction from Facilitator	To: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce the topic and the purpose of the discussion; • Explain a little about how the day would work and what would be expected of participants. <p>As participants arrived and took their seats they were asked to complete a short written survey to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Record participant's awareness of water industry charges and how payments are made; • Provide a baseline for assessments of awareness prior to information provision and discussions.
15 mins	1st responses	Icebreaker / Table Activity: As a table agree up to 3 statements that summarise your initial responses to the topic of water?	To: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allow participants to introduce themselves at tables; • Collect initial responses to the idea of spending the day talking about water; • Allow facilitators a chance to observe the dynamic in the room and participant's response to working in un-facilitated groups on a task.
10 mins	How we want to work today	Input from Facilitator	To: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explain further how the day would work and what would be expected of participants; • Agree a set of groundrules to help manage the discussions.
15 mins	Mapping the water environment and the water industry	Table Exercise (self-facilitated)	To: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Map the elements of the water industry necessary to provide clean drinking water and remove waste water; • Engage participants in creating their own 'information' based on shared knowledge and reasoning.
10 mins	Overview of Scottish water infrastructure and assets	Information presentation (by facilitator, using Powerpoint)	To: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide information about the scale of the industry and the assets maintained by Scottish Water to provide water and remove waste water; • Reinforce the learning from the previous activity.
15 mins	Pressure points in the system	Table Exercise (self-facilitated with feedback in plenary)	Using the 'maps' made in the earlier activity to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore points in the system where things could go wrong; • Embed understanding of the industry infrastructure, risks and pressure points to inform the next stages of the discussion.
25 mins	The water environment as a resource	Facilitated small group discussion:	To: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage participants to think about the wider water environment as a context for the water industry;

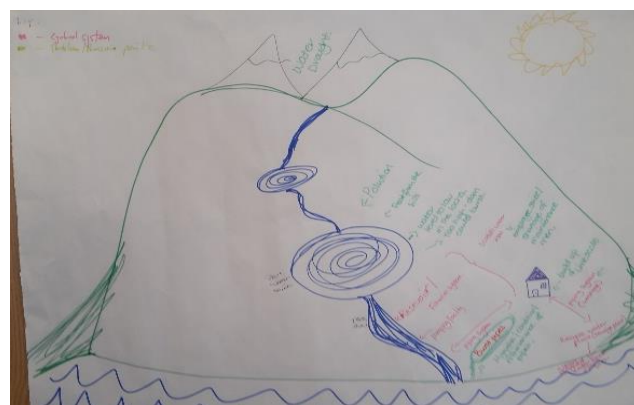
		<i>Thinking about the environments that you use where there is water (beaches, rivers, lochs, streams etc. What do you gain from them?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explore the value they place on water in the environment – both individually and as a resource for Scotland.
10 mins		Comfort break	
10 mins	Paying for Water	Information presentation (by facilitator)	To: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide information about average household charges and how water bills are paid; Explain about what is covered by water charges; Provide information about what Scottish Water uses the money paid in charges for.
40 mins	Water quality and use	Facilitated small group discussion (using a variety of stimuli to inform and prompt discussion)	To: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide information about the water purification process; Seek responses about water quality and levels of satisfaction; Provide information about threats to water quality and discuss where the responsibility for this lies; Look at average household water consumption and discuss whether water conservation is a priority for participants; Explore where participants feel the responsibility for 'water' lies.
10 mins	Priorities for spending	Voting exercise (in Plenary)	To: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prioritise options for discretionary spending using a simple voting exercise. (Appendix A)
45 mins		Lunch	
30 mins	Satisfaction with Scottish Water services	Facilitated small group discussion: <i>Overall, how satisfied are you with Scottish Water services?</i>	To: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explore overall levels of satisfaction with Scottish Water services; Establish expectations about 'What would count as a good standard of service?'
40 mins	Scottish Water Service Standards	Carousel Exercise: (using 6 examples of Scottish Water's Service Standards and its 'promise to customers' Appendix B)	Each small group of 3-4 people rotates around the 6 stations (spending approximately 5-8 minutes at each) reading through the Service Standard summary and adding to the notes made by the previous group to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assess the reasonableness of the expected response from Scottish Water in each situation; Identify areas for improvement or concern.
30 mins	Variation of standards	Facilitated small group discussion: <i>is it reasonable to expect the same service standards in all areas of the country?</i>	To: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explore whether participants thought it was reasonable for standards to vary in different areas of the country i.e. urban / rural; Identify which, if any, standards it would be acceptable to vary between urban and rural areas through an anonymous vote.
10 mins		Comfort break	

20 mins	Variations in Service Standards	Facilitated Discussion (<i>in Plenary</i>)	To: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review the outcome of the voting exercise; Discuss the reasons why it might be acceptable to vary some standards and not others; Identify what would be acceptable service standards for different areas if it was felt variation would be appropriate.
10 mins	Final Thoughts	Individual Written Survey	To: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Allow participants an opportunity to respond individually to some of the questions raised throughout the discussions; Give participants time to reflect and collect their thoughts before the final plenary; Provide additional evidence of opinions for analysis.
20 mins	Trade-offs and priorities	Full Group Plenary:	To: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review the voting exercise that established priorities for expenditure before lunch and discuss, whether in light of the subsequent discussions, priorities had changed; Assess participants view about increased water charges if they could deliver on some of the priorities identified; Allow participants to make any final comments on the issues raised throughout the day.
10 mins	Closing	Concluding remarks from Facilitator	To: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clarify how the information gathered during the session will be used; Give participants the option of requesting a copy of the summary report; Ask participants to complete an evaluation of the event to support this section of the report.

As noted above, the process design for the structured dialogues explicitly focused on creating the conditions for dialogue, by encouraging the sharing of ideas and collaborative working from the outset. This is exemplified by the graphic learning approach taken to developing a shared understanding of the water industry where, rather than being presented with information, participants were asked to work together, using their own knowledge and reasoning, to identify the infrastructure elements required to provide clean water and remove wastewater. This emphasis on learning from each other was maintained throughout the day as, for approximately ½ of the discussion time, participants worked in small self-facilitated groups to achieve set tasks (with the facilitators moving between groups to offer prompts or re-focus the group as necessary).

One risk with this approach, as noted by an observer at one of the events, is that more confident or out-spoken participants may take on leader role within groups and end up dominating the discussion or, in a worst-case scenario, 'dictating' others' opinions'. To counteract that effecting the overall workshop outputs self-facilitated group work was complemented throughout the day by directly facilitated discussions, wherein quieter participants could be encouraged and supported to participate, and groups were mixed up for different activities.

Figure 4.4 – Mapping the Water System



One element of this workshop structure that seemed to have worked particularly well was the time spent after lunch exploring responses to Scottish Water's service standards. Before being given information on the standards, participants worked in small groups to identify what they thought would count as a *'good standard of service'* from Scottish Water. This meant that, when they then worked in self-facilitating groups during the carousel exercise to appraise Scottish Water's promises to customers in different problem situations, they had criteria against which to collectively judge them and make suggestions. This resulted in a much more nuanced and detailed appraisal of the standards and enabled a far more considered discussion of the acceptability of variations in standards between urban and rural areas.

In addition to time spent in discussion a range of other output generating techniques were used throughout the day including brainstorming, interactive voting (using sticky dots), anonymous voting, surveys and plenary feedback and reflection. This variety not only helped to keep people engaged with the topic, but provided a range of materials (both participant and facilitator generated and from the transcripts of the facilitated discussions) than have been used to inform the analysis and reporting.

Participants' evaluation of the fora

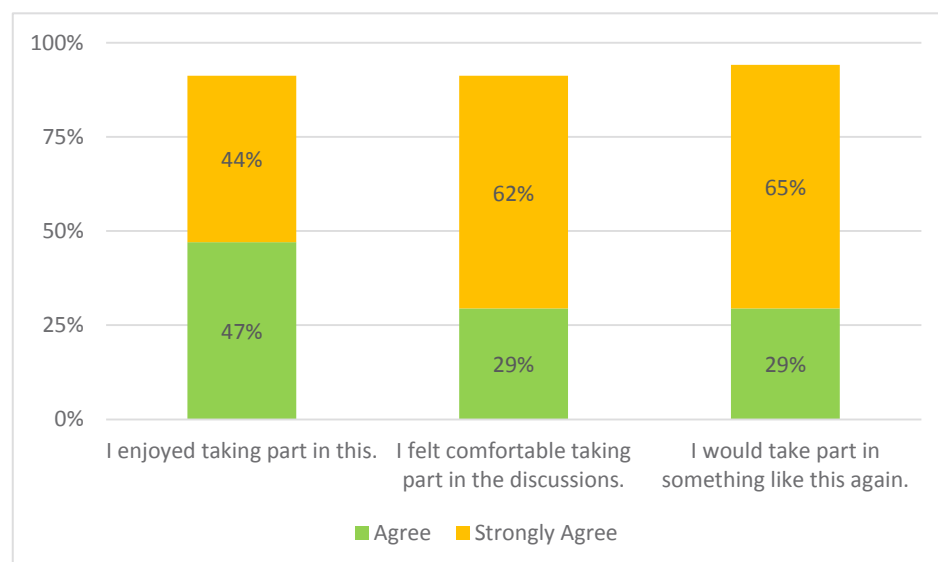
Overall participants responded positively to the sessions in their evaluation forms – with almost all participants agreeing that they enjoyed the session, and 65% strongly agreeing that they would 'take part in something like this again'.

"An enjoyable and informative day"

"Was easy to speak to the group and the advisors"

"Interesting and relevant topic [that] I was not informed about beforehand"

Figure 4.5: Participant evaluation of the overall experience of taking part in the structured dialogue



Source: Participant evaluation forms from the structured dialogues (36)

When asked what was the best thing about the session, most of the comments relate to their fellow participants and the dynamic that emerged within the room:

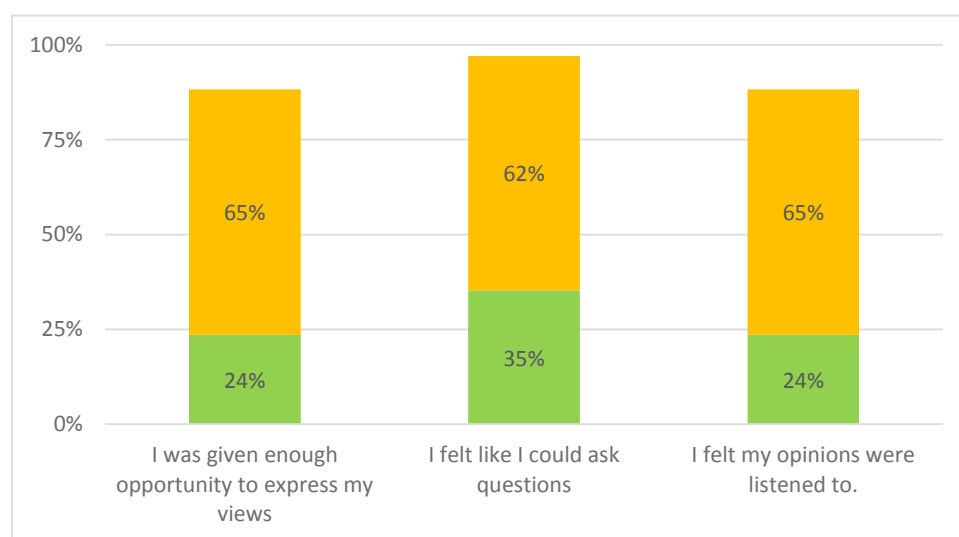
"Meeting new people and hearing their views and opinions"

"Getting into groups and having the discussion"

"Relaxed and easy to express views"

Participants were also very positive about how the day was facilitated with 97% of participants agreeing that the staff encouraged everyone to contribute to the discussions. This is also reflected in the responses people gave to the evaluation questions relating to how well they thought the discussions had been managed to allow them to express their views and participate effectively.

Figure 4.6: Participant evaluation of the experience of participating in the structured dialogues



Source: Participant evaluation forms from the structured dialogues (36)

It is however interesting to note that dealing with other participants and differing viewpoints also proved to be a notable challenge for several of the participants, as the comments below demonstrate. When asked what was 'the most challenging or difficult thing about the session' comments included:

"Sharing opposing views"

"Listening to people I disagree with"

"Everybody's opinion was different and when I spoke out I felt everyone was disagreeing and not letting me explain why I had that opinion"

This may also help explain why, despite enjoying the discussions, feeling comfortable to participate and believing that their views were listened to, a comparatively lower percentage of participants reported that their 'views changed or developed through listening to others'.

Further, while Figure 4.5 above shows high levels of agreement from participants about enjoying the day and willingness to be involved in something similar again, it is interesting to note from the evaluation forms (from one site in particular) the number of comments that refer to the day being too long and the 'thankyou' payment insufficient for the time.

"It shouldn't last as long"

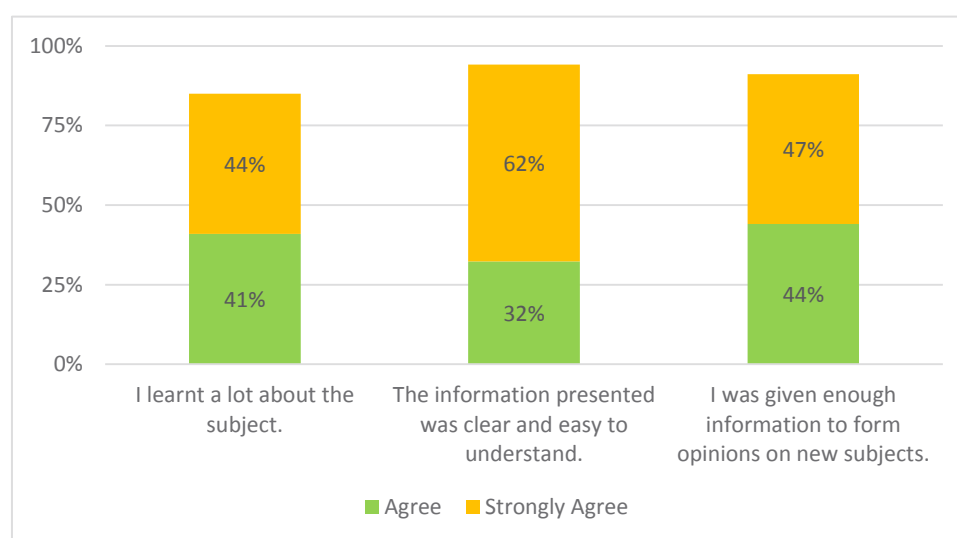
"This was too long and became boring"

"The payment was not substantial for the length of time"

It was also the only time that comments in the evaluation form referred to a willingness to be part of something like this again specifically for the financial reward: *[I'd do it] "5 days a week (£££)"*.

Although the direct provision of expert information about the water industry was not a substantive element of the process design (accounting for less than 1 hour of the day) 85% of participants in the dialogues agreed that they 'learnt a lot about the subject' through taking part. Additionally 94% agreed that the information presented was clear and easy to understand and 91% agreed they had been given enough information to form opinions on new subjects.

Figure 4.7: Participant evaluation of the information provided in the structured dialogues



Source: Participant evaluation forms from the structured dialogues (36)

Further, when asked to nominate the best thing about the session, approximately half of the comments received referred to the session's *"educational value"* or the *"information [they] gained"*.

"I learnt a lot that I didn't know about before"

"I felt I came away much better informed than I was at the start of the day"

"I did become more aware of a wide range of issues throughout"

Effectiveness of this method in answering the research question

The structured dialogues provided the greatest level of insight into consumers' levels of satisfaction with the water industry and provided clear outputs regarding consumers' expectation of Scottish Water and priorities for investment and improvement.

One of the key benefits of using this method is the flexibility of the general deliberative format, which allows a wide range of techniques to be used throughout a session to build up the participant's level of involvement in the discussion and gradually increase the demands being placed on them for deliberation towards conclusions. While a lot of the discussions throughout the day took place in small groups, when the workshop design builds in regular opportunities for key points to be fed-back in plenary (as the discussion guide did in this case), participants still tend to feel that they are part of a wider process and have collective ownership of the outputs.

Overall the outputs from this forum have added significant levels of detail to the general conclusions drawn from the focus groups and compliment well the wider quantitative and qualitative outputs from the citizens assembly.

Citizens assembly

Key characteristics of a citizens assembly

A citizens assembly (sometimes also known as a citizens summit) involves bringing together a fairly large group of citizens, selected to be broadly representative of the demographics of the area, to deliberate on an issue.

A central feature of a citizens assembly process is the learning component wherein participants are able to develop an understanding of the issue based on unbiased information. Information is usually presented through a combination of presentations from experts, written information and facilitated discussions. Because of the focus given to learning about an issue citizens assemblies are able to address quite complicated and technical issues.

Following the learning phase, participants then engage in dialogue about a topic (usually in small groups with the help of facilitators). This encourages participants to explore their own opinions on what they have heard and develop a wider understanding of the opinions of others. Experts will often be on hand during this phase to provide additional information and clarification, but not opinions.

The deliberation phase of the assembly involves participants coming to some conclusions on what they have learnt through the assembly process. Sometimes at this stage, because of the numbers involved voting systems are used to reach conclusions or prioritise options. Smaller Assemblies might also use consensus based decision-making processes, or a combination of both, to establish collective outputs and/or make recommendations to inform policy-making.

Increasingly Citizens Assemblies are being convened to run over a longer period (several days or months) and given direct responsibility for producing specific policy recommendations for decision makers, or in some cases empowered to set a course of policy action. That said, they also remain an effective consultative method for enabling deliberation about consumer priorities and preferences.

Participants

77 participants attended the citizens assembly in Edinburgh, recruited from a range of areas within a 1 ½ hour travel time to Edinburgh to ensure views of people living in a cross-section of rural, urban and semi-urban areas were represented. Table 4.6 below provides further information about the range of participants at the forum.

Table 4.6: Demographic profile of citizens assembly participants

	Target	Total
Gender		
Male	50%	37
Female	50%	40
Age		
18-24	20%	11
25 - 54	50%	48
55+	30%	18
Working status		
Working (full or part time)	c. 75%	62
Not Working	c. 25%	15
Residential Location		
Dundee	25%	19
Edinburgh and East Lothian	25%	21
Stirling	25%	18
Dumfries and Galloway	25%	19

Overview of the citizens assembly

The citizens assembly took place in Edinburgh from 10am – 4:30pm on a Saturday in March. The event was designed to have participants working in 7 table groups, all in the same room, throughout the day. After recruiting 80 participants, on the expectation of 65 attending, the very high attendance rate meant that this became a very full and busy room.

The principle design feature of the citizens assembly was to hold a series of short, facilitated discussions on key aspects of the topic at each table, each of which was structured to produce a specific output. These discussions were interspersed with information presentations, feedback and advocacy from individual tables and participant polling. This format was chosen to ensure that, while participants may only have been directly discussing the issues with the relatively small number of people at their table, that they did not feel like they were participating in separate workshops, but rather felt part of a larger group event.

The morning discussions began by focusing on water in the environment and what value this has for people, both individually and as a natural resource for the country. Participant polling was then used to assess the extent of consumers' understanding of how urban and rural water and wastewater services are delivered before an introduction to the industry was presented by a representative from Scottish Water. This informed the next rounds of discussion, which focussed on consumer satisfaction with, and expectations for, service and whether it was acceptable for service standards to vary between urban and rural areas.

After lunch the focus on the assembly turned to exploring how consumers relate the water environment to their water services and water bills, and what (if any) responsibility consumers should have in relation to its sustainable management. This allowed conclusions to be drawn about consumer priorities for investment and improvement within the water sector and consideration given to what might be needed to increase consumer engagement in matters related to water services and the water environment.

Table 4.7: Session Plan for the citizens assembly

Time	Title	Type of Activity	Purpose
5 mins	Welcome	Introduction from lead Facilitator	To: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introduce the topic and the purpose of the discussion; Explain a little about how the day would work and what would be expected of participants.
15 mins	Participant Introductions	Introductions	To: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Allow table participants to introduce and talk with each other; Provide a gentle introduction to the topic by asking people to identify water environments that mean something to them.
10 mins	How we want to work today	Input from lead Facilitator	To: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explain further how the day would work and what would be expected of participants; Test polling equipment with participants; Agree a set of groundrules to help manage the discussions.
20 mins	Relationships with water in the environment	Table Exercise (Go-round using story cards Appendix C)	To: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enable participants to find their own way into the discussion by choosing 'a relationship' with water that resonates with them individually; Identify and agree common themes from around the table; Identify common themes across the room through plenary feedback.
20 mins	The water environment as a resource	Brainstorming at tables: <i>Thinking about the environments that you use where there is water (beaches, rivers, lochs, streams etc. What do you gain from them?</i>	To: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify what Scotland, and people living in Scotland, gain from our water and water in the environment; Map responses across the room in plenary across 4 categories: socially, economically, environmentally, emotionally.
10 mins	Water Services	Real-time Digital Polling	To: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish the range of people in the room; To record baseline information about awareness and attitudes to the water industry in Scotland.
10 mins	Scottish Water	Information Presentation: (by Scottish Water representative)	To: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide information about Scottish Water and it's role and responsibilities; Provide information about the scope of infrastructure managed and maintained by Scottish Water in order to provide water and remove waste water safely and effectively.

10 mins	Pressure Points in the System	Facilitated Table Discussion: <i>Where are the points that problems can arise?</i>	To: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve participants awareness of the points within the system that faults can occur; Prepare for later discussions.
15 mins		Comfort break	
5 mins	Paying for Water	Real-time Digital Polling	To: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish baseline awareness of how consumers pay for water and average household expenditure; Provide information on how consumers pay for water and average household expenditure.
20 mins	Water Quality and satisfaction with Services	Facilitated Table Discussion (using handout on water processing to inform discussion)	To: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide information on how waste water is processed; Assess satisfaction with water quality and water service provision; Explore experiences where water quality has been compromised or water cut to households; Provide information on Scottish Water's Service Standards for dealing with cuts to water supplies and discuss whether the 'promises to customers' are reasonable and/or how they could be improved.
25 mins	Waste Water Management	Facilitated Table Discussion (with introduction in Plenary)	To: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide information on how water is processed; Explore experiences with waste water flooding and satisfaction with how these issues were resolved; Provide information on Scottish Water's Service Standards for dealing with waste water flooding caused by blocked drains and discuss whether the 'promises to customers' are reasonable and/or how they could be improved
10 mins	Wider Service Standards	Input from lead Facilitator with Real-time Digital Polling	To: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide information about other Scottish Water Service Standards; Poll participants about whether it is reasonable for some Standards e.g. response times to vary in different parts of the country; Poll participants about which, if any, Standards / Promises to Consumers it might be reasonable to vary.
10 mins	Variations in Service Standards	Facilitated Table Discussion: <i>Are differences in standards between about urban and rural areas acceptable, and why?</i>	To: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explore the reasons why participants might feel some variation is acceptable; Explore that, if variation was acceptable, what would be reasonable in each case.
45 mins		Lunch	
10 mins	Water Usage	Real-time Digital Polling	To:

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Record baseline information about awareness of average water usage; Provide information about average water use.
15 mins	Water Consumption	Facilitated Table Discussion: (<i>using the Waterwise infographic on average household water use to stimulate discussion</i>)	To: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explore awareness of water consumption Explore levels of concern / personal responsibility for conserving water;
10 mins	Investments in infrastructure and wider improvements	Information Presentation: (by Scottish Water representative)	To: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide information on Scottish Water's programme of investments in improving infrastructure and developing more sustainable services.
5 mins	Priorities for Scottish Water improvements	Real-time Digital Polling	To: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prioritise options for investment (each participant was given 3 votes across 7 options).
10 mins	Priorities for Scottish Water improvements	Facilitated Table Discussion	To: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explore whether the polling results 'feel right' to participants; Identify any options they feel should be ranked higher or lower.
10 mins	Priorities for Scottish Water improvements	Participant Advocacy	To provide time for a representative from each table to speak to the whole group to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advocate for an option their table thinks should be given a higher or lower priority.
5 mins	Priorities for Scottish Water improvements	Real-time Digital Polling	A second poll on the same list of options to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Re-prioritise options for investment (each participant was given £100 to spread across the 7 options); Establish if there were any changes in priority after discussion and advocacy.
15 mins		Comfort break	
20 mins	Wider Engagement	Facilitated Table Activity (using case studies to stimulate discussion)	To: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide information about different types of approaches used throughout the UK to engage people with the water environment and encourage them to take a more active responsibility for its protection and conservation; Identify elements of good practice in these activities; Establish principles for encouraging wider engagement.
5 mins	Priorities for investment to protect the water environment	Real-time Digital Polling	To: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prioritise options for investment (each participant was given 3 votes across 6 options).
10 mins	Priorities for investment to protect the	Facilitated Table Discussion	To: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explore whether the polling results 'feel right' to participants; Identify any options they feel should be ranked higher or lower.

	water environment		
10 mins	Priorities for investment to protect the water environment	Participant Advocacy	To provide time for a representative from each table to speak to the whole group to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advocate for an option their table thinks should be given a higher or lower priority.
5 mins	Priorities for Scottish Water improvements	Real-time Digital Polling	A second poll on the same list of options to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Re-prioritise options for investment (each participant was given £100 to spread across the 6 options); Establish if there were any changes in priority after discussion and advocacy.
15 mins	Trade-offs and priorities	Full Group Plenary:	To: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review the results of the polling exercise; Assess participants view about increased water charges if they could deliver on some of the priorities identified; Allow participants to make any final comments on the issues raised throughout the day.
10 mins	Closing	Concluding remarks from Facilitator	To: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clarify how the information gathered during the session will be used; Give participants the option of requesting a copy of the summary report; Ask participants to complete an evaluation of the event to support this section of the report.

The principle design feature of the citizens assembly was to hold a series of short, facilitated discussions on key aspects of the topic at each table, each of which was structured to produce a specific output. These discussions were interspersed with information presentations, feedback and advocacy from individual tables and participant polling. This format was chosen to ensure that, while participants may only have been directly discussing the issues with the relatively small number of people at their table, that they did not feel like they were participating in separate workshops, but rather felt part of a larger group event.

Over the course of the day, of the approximately 5 hours that was available for the workshops (excluding breaks), 35 minutes was taken up by practical matters – including introductions, establishing groundrules, ensuring everyone had access to a polling device and thanking participants. Of the remaining time:

- 15% was used for direct information provision about the water industry in Scotland;
- 60% was used for table discussions and deliberations;
- 13% was used to record individual preferences through the online polling system.

Despite the noise in the room at times, this structure seemed to work well overall and kept the discussions focussed and on task. Some participants and facilitators however did note that, given that all tables were full to capacity, it was sometimes difficult to ensure all participants had a chance to contribute to each round of discussion. One of the facilitators summed this up well when they wrote:

"I thought the day worked really well overall. The participants were very engaged and the discussions around my tables, both before and after lunch, were on topic and very useful. The discussion guide and materials... kept things moving fast and was beneficial for facilitators as it meant things didn't get dry when discussing a topic where participants had nothing much to say... on the flip side there were definitely points where there could have been more time for discussion and at points it felt rushed."

Across the 11 distinct discussion sections included within the assembly plan there was an opportunity to build in a number of different and creative mechanisms for stimulating engagement, something that helped keep the process interesting for participants. One technique that proved particularly successful was the use of short statement cards during the first discussion to allow participants to find their own way into the topic. Each card had a picture and a short quote summarising a different relationship with water and the water environment and participants were asked to each select one that resonated with them ([Appendix C](#)). Taking turns to explain to their table why they had chosen their card allowed participants to share experiences and stories and led them easily into identifying shared concerns and themes at the tables, which were fed back and collated in plenary.

One of the other tools used throughout the assembly was an on-line polling tool called Mentimeter. This enabled participants to respond directly to questions posed by the lead facilitator using their mobile phone, or any other device capable of accessing the internet. While participants had not been notified in advance that we were going to be using this software most seemed happy to use their own devices to participate, (given that there was Wi-Fi available and they were not required to download any software). For participants who did not have a suitable device with them, or one they were prepared to use, the table facilitators provided access to a laptop for use during the polling.

In addition to collecting quantitative material for analysis (as the surveys had in the other fora) this polling tool also served a variety of other functions during the day, including:

- Bringing collective information into the room as stimuli for discussions e.g. overall satisfaction with water services, awareness of how water bills are calculated;
- Providing a context for information provision e.g. about average water consumption;
- Summarising the outcomes from the table discussions e.g. in relation to variations in service standards;
- Directly prompting further dialogue e.g. through reflecting on priorities;
- Demonstrating how attitudes had changed through advocacy and deliberation e.g. when priorities were voted on for a second time.

Overall, this worked very well and participants clearly enjoyed both the polling process and watching the results build up on the screen as people submitted their responses. This is attested to by the high response rate to the polls, with each

Figure 4.8: Participant Polling



question receiving between 77 and 71 responses throughout the day as, just like a standard written survey, some participants skipped questions they preferred not to answer.

When they returned from the lunchbreak participants were asked to find a seat at a new table to mix up the groups. While this did succeed in breaking up the negative dynamic that had emerged at 1 or 2 tables (due to individual personality clashes or the presence of a dominant voice) overall it was somewhat disruptive to the process, as noted in comments from facilitators:

"I don't think moving tables after lunch worked. Participants had built up a rapport with the facilitator and their fellow participants."

"There were a number that were not happy to have to move and this seemed to affect the mood in the afternoon."

After sending most of the morning exploring ideas and building up awareness of the scope of the topic the afternoon had a distinctly more deliberative focus. In these sessions, participants were asked to prioritise areas for investment and improvement. Here the polling tool was also used to good effect to record initial responses and prompt reflection at tables about whether the results 'seemed right' or whether some things would be ranked higher or lower. Following deliberation at the tables each group was asked to nominate an advocate to speak to the whole room about what they had concluded. This proved a very engaging and enjoyable part of the session as participants advocated passionately, and with humour, for their table's position, before a second round of polling.

Overall, the assembly went very well, although by the final sessions it was evident that energy was flagging. The variety of activities however did manage to keep people engaged and focussed, and produced a wide range of both quantitative and qualitative outputs for analysis.

Participants' evaluation of the forum

Overall 90% of participants reported in their evaluations that they enjoyed taking part in this event and 96% agreed that they would take part in something like this again.

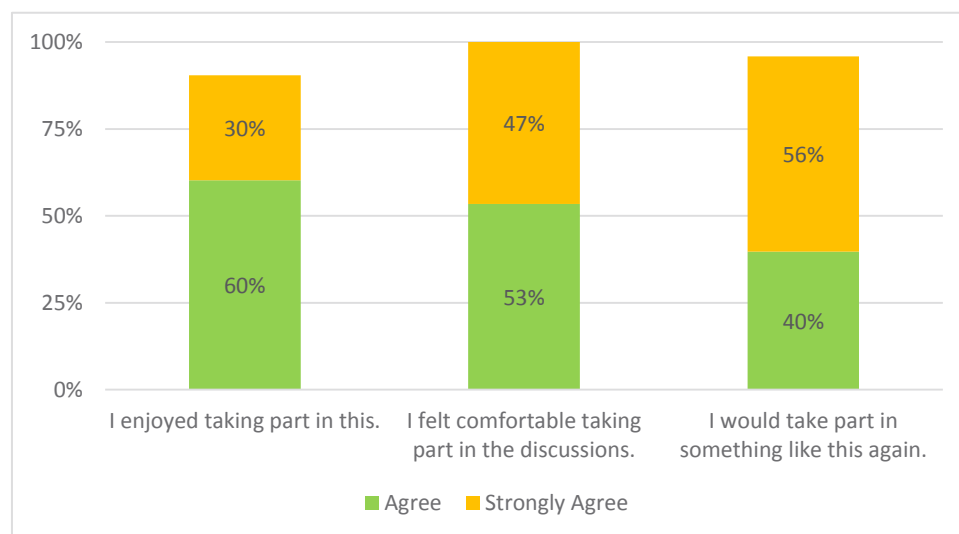
"Enjoyed the nature of the day very much."

"Excellent day. Thankyou."

"Good variety of people and quite interesting"

"All good – discussions, facilitation, venue, food, topic."

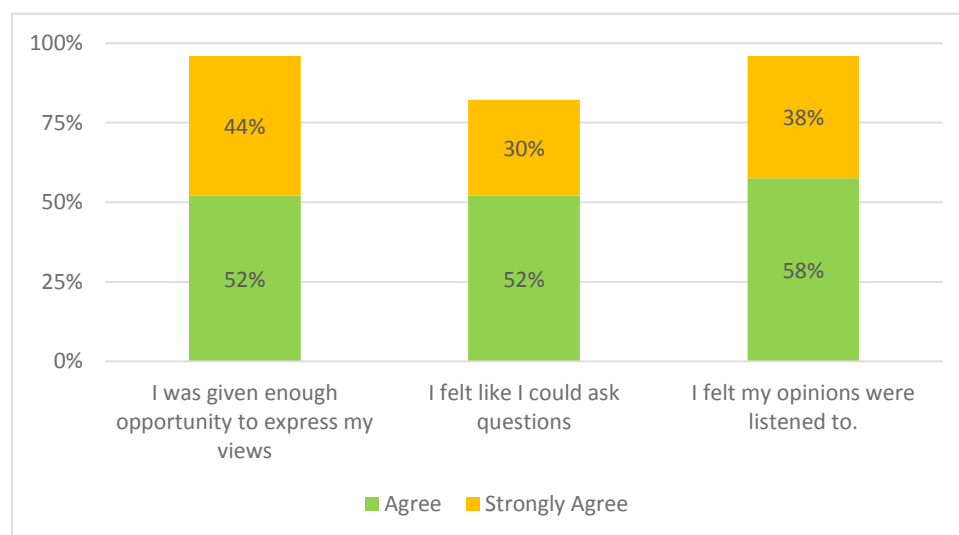
Figure 4.8: Participant evaluation of the overall experience of taking part in the citizens assembly



Source: Participant evaluation forms (73)

While some participants expressed reservations about taking part in something similar again, all participants, as illustrated in Figure 4.8 above, reported that they felt comfortable taking part in the discussions. This is further reflected in their responses to additional questions in the evaluation form about their ability to contribute to the discussions on the day. As figure 4.9 illustrates over $\frac{3}{4}$ of all participants felt they had enough opportunity to express their views, could ask questions and that their opinions were listened to.

Figure 4.9: Participant evaluation of the experience of participating in the citizens assembly



Source: Participant evaluation forms (73)

One thing that may account for the proportionally lower levels of 'strongly agree' demonstrated here is that some participants felt the table groups were too large, the individual discussions too short and/or struggled with the noise in the room caused by being part of such a large forum. When asked about the most challenging or difficult aspect of the day a number of participants referred to these issues:

"Large number of respondents made time difficult to manage"

"Group work in a busy room – too loud"

"Less topics – more discussion time"

"Hearing what other people at table were saying – sometimes noisy in the room."

"Perhaps need smaller groups – or split the large groups."

Again, a key feature commented on in the evaluation forms was the amount participants had learnt by taking part in the fora, with 90% agreeing that they had learnt a lot through taking part:

"It was interesting and I learnt a lot of new aspects about Scottish Water"

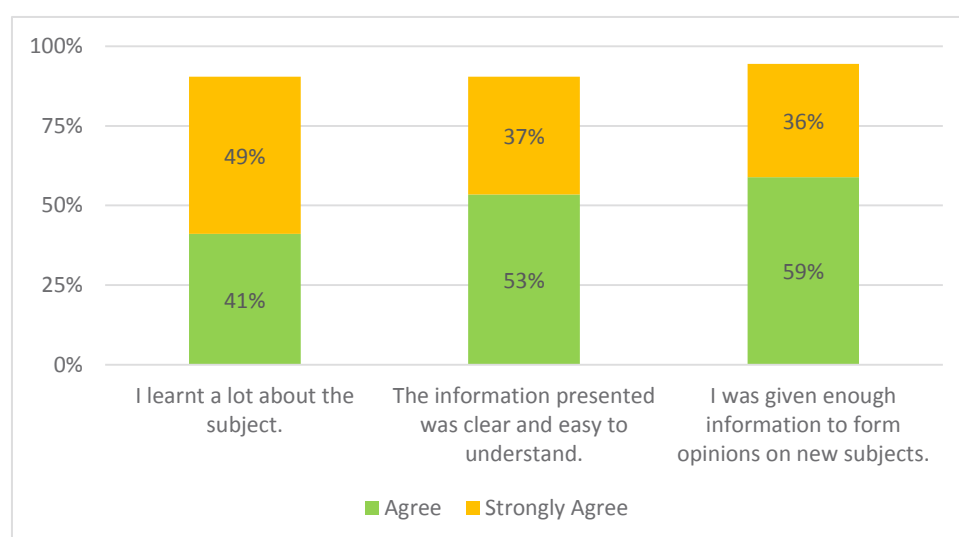
"I'd never thought a lot about this before, I learnt new things and formed new opinions"

"Informative experience, challenging"

[the best thing was] "the amount of information I have taken away from this event"

Despite receiving information in a variety of formats throughout the fora (presentations, handouts, polling results and infographics), 90% of participants reported that the information received was easy to understand. 95% of participants also reported that they were given enough information to form opinions on new topics, which could reflect the success of the way that information was *drip-fed* to participants throughout the day to directly inform the next topic of discussion.

Figure 4.10: Participant evaluation of the information provided during the citizens assembly



Source: Participant evaluation forms from the citizens assembly (73)

For some however the amount of information needed to participate fully in the discussions was also a challenge, as the following comment reveals in response to being asked about the most difficult thing throughout the day: *"Digesting the information quickly then voting"*.

Effectiveness of this method in answering the research question

The citizens assembly on water demonstrated that, as a method, it is one that can effectively engage a large number of people simultaneously in a process of learning, opinion forming and deliberation, even on an unfamiliar subject. This is summed up by a comment from one of the observers who described their experience of the assembly as *“witnessing education, understanding and the shaping of informed views in action”*.

The learning phase effectively introduced participants to the range of complex considerations and policy drivers surrounding the water industry in ways that were both accessible and informative. Prompts throughout the event encouraged people to question their initial assumptions and explore the foundations of their opinions through dialogue with others. By gradually building up the amount of knowledge participants had at their disposal the process was also able to progressively increase the demands placed on participants to deliberate in pursuit of collective positions, even on controversial issues.

The wide range of methods used kept participants engaged and focussed throughout the day. The range of qualitative and quantitative collective outputs generated during the forum deliver clear conclusions in relation to consumer priorities, areas of concern and appetites for change. Further, the discussions that took place at tables provided evidence of the context and processes of public reasoning which informed these conclusions, and was able to be drawn upon in the reporting and analysis stage of this project.

Comparative analysis of methods

This section of the report brings together some of the findings and observations from the earlier discussions in order to draw some conclusions about the relative effectiveness of the different methods in:

- Providing information in accessible and relevant ways, as part of a consultative process;
- Engaging participants with unfamiliar and complicated subjects in a meaningful way;
- Developing dialogue between participants that allowed for mutual learning and sharing of experiences in order to produce a better understanding of what really matters to them, and why;
- Facilitating deliberation and the negotiation of collective responses;
- Producing outputs that are relevant and useful to policy makers; and
- Achieving these goals in a cost effective and replicable manner.

Role of information

It was recognised from the planning stage of this project that, while the research questions did not require participants to consider specific policy options in detail, in order to have an informed conversation able to yield useful outputs the participants would need to have an understanding of the wider water industry. This contextual and background information included the role of Scottish Water, the infrastructure needed to provide, remove and purify water, how consumers pay for water (and how much) and specifically, the service standards Scottish Water aims to meet. Although all of this information is readily available to consumers, it was assumed during the planning of the workshops that most participants would be largely unfamiliar with it. For this reason, a key element of the design of each workshop was providing information to establish a shared understanding of these aspects of the water sector as the foundation for the discussion.

Each of the workshop designs however approached the task of providing information in different ways, using techniques that reflect the characteristics of the specific method:

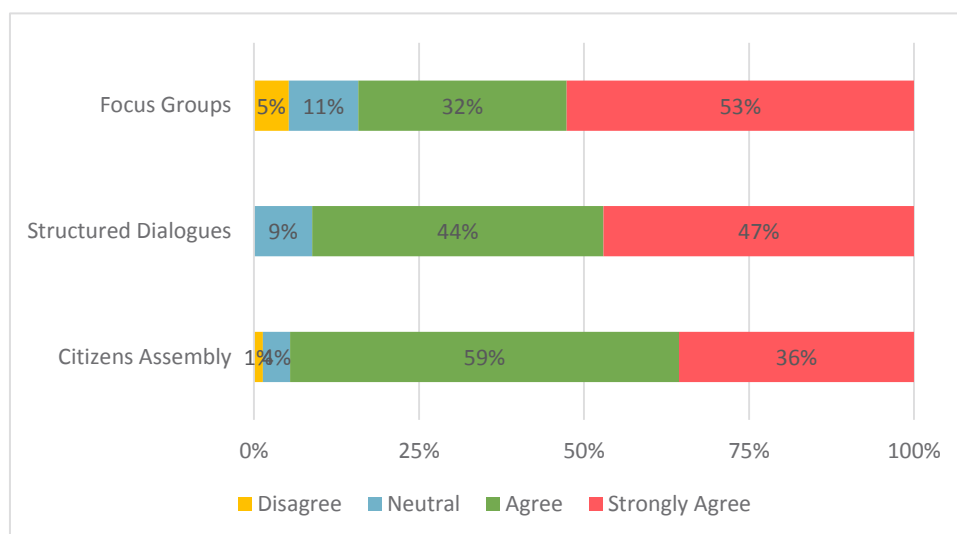
- In the focus groups, due to the limited time available, the information presented to participants was restricted to that considered strictly necessary to engage in a considered discussion. Information was presented at three stages throughout the workshop, each followed by a facilitated discussion directly based on the stimuli. There was no direct expert input during the sessions so pre-prepared written/scripted information was presented by the facilitator covering the role of Scottish Water and consumer billing in the first instance, and water processing later in the session. Information on Scottish Water's Service Standards (presented as 5 promised responses to different types of incidences) was distributed as handouts. In this case people were encouraged to work in pairs to read one of the standards, summarise it for the rest of the group and provide an initial appraisal, before each was discussed in isolation to elicit focused responses. Overall, approximately 15% of the available time (20 minutes) was devoted to the direct provision of information.

- In the structured dialogues a different approach to providing information was taken. In these workshops, particularly in the early stages, participants were encouraged to build their own information through a collaborative process that drew on participants' individual knowledge and the group's reasoning. The exercise which asked small table groups to map the water infrastructure onto a poster exemplifies this approach. Short presentations and handouts were also used by the facilitators throughout the day to provide additional information, however at each stage it was up to participants to work together to interpret the information and use it to progress the discussions. In this way, participants were encouraged to take a shared responsibility for their own learning, something that is key to encouraging dialogue and collective reasoning.
- In the citizens assembly information was presented in short, focused blocks designed to inform the next round of discussion. A range of different presentation techniques were used including expert presentations, case studies, short scripted inputs from the facilitators (at tables or in plenary), commentary on some of the polling results and written options for appraisal. Throughout the fora therefore the information participants had to draw on built up cumulatively, enabling greater depth of discussion as the day progressed. In total just under 1 hour was spent providing information to participants.

Despite these different approaches, the facilitators at all of the fora commented that they were surprised at how quickly, and completely, participants engaged with the subject matter. Comments from observers at the different fora also suggest that, in each case, participants seemed to have had access to enough information to contribute to the discussions in an informed way: as noted by an observer at the citizens assembly *'When people are given enough new information on a subject, then asked a question, they quickly form opinions – certainly enough to begin a discussion.'*

As discussed in the earlier section of this report, participants also felt that they had learnt a lot about the subject by taking part in the fora. Figure 4.11 demonstrates that participants also generally agreed that they had been given enough information throughout the fora to form opinions on the subjects under discussion. It is interesting to note that the highest level of strong agreement with this statement is recorded by participants at the focus group, where the least time was spent providing information. As described above however, the information that participants in the focus group did receive was very focused on the specific questions they were being asked to consider, and evidently felt sufficient to enable them to complete the task.

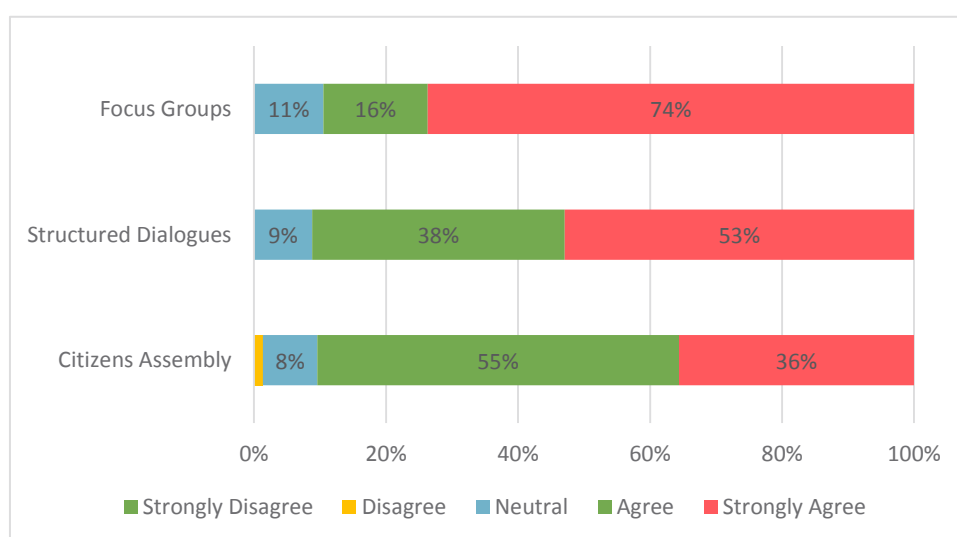
Figure 4.11: Participant response to the statement 'I was given enough information to form opinions on new subjects'



Source: All participant evaluation forms (126)

The focus groups and the dialogues were all delivered by facilitators from Ipsos Mori and Involve without the input of an industry expert, while in the citizens assembly a representative from Scottish Water provided information to participants in plenary and was available to answer specific questions throughout the day. In the feedback from an observer at one of the structured dialogues concerns were raised that the facilitators' *'limited knowledge about the water industry'* may impact on the quality of the discussions and the outputs. Feedback from the facilitators themselves however indicate that they generally felt the information in the discussion guides, alongside the background briefing material they had been given, was sufficient to enable them to lead the discussions and encourage dialogue among participants, despite having no specialised knowledge of the topic. Participants themselves were also generally very pleased with the quality of the information they were given, as shown in Figure 4.12, and at least 90% of participants in each fora also agreed that the 'information presented was clear and easy to understand'.

Figure 4.12: Participant response to the statement 'The presenters demonstrated good knowledge of the topic.'



Source: All participant evaluation forms (126)

Role played by participants

All of the fora were all introduced to participants using the same simple statement about the purpose of the workshop and how the information gathered would be used.

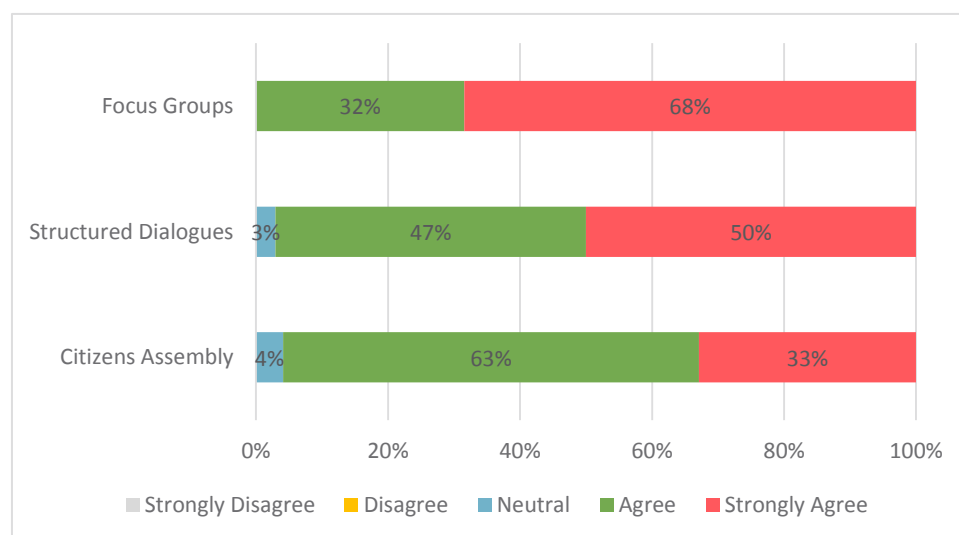
The topic for discussion today is water and its environment. We want to explore your views about water's wider role in Scotland as well as the water services you receive, which includes the supply of drinking water and the removal of wastewater from homes, businesses and public areas.

This workshop has been commissioned by Citizens Advice Scotland, who are an organisation that represents customers' and consumers' interests to Government and service providers.

They are involved in discussions with government about the water industry, so they want to have a better understanding of consumers' views about this topic.

This appears to have been enough, for most participants to feel comfortable that they understood the purpose of the discussions and the role they were being asked to play, as illustrated in Figure 4.13.

Figure 4.13: Participant response to the statement 'I understood the purpose of the workshop and my role.'



Source: All participant evaluation forms (126)

In each of the different fora however participants were asked, either explicitly or implicitly, to play a different role depending on the methodology used. In the focus groups, for example, participants took part as individuals: there to give their personal opinions and, while they were encouraged to listen to others and reflect on their views, there was little need for them to actively engage in dialogue with the others present in order to achieve their task. This is typical of a focus group event and places few demands on participants beyond the willingness to join a conversation.

In the structured dialogue participants again began the day participating as individuals, however in this case they were invited to share their ideas, knowledge and opinions with a group of their peers (rather than 'give' them to the facilitator). From the outset therefore this approach created a different dynamic, one focussed on building dialogue rather than simply discussion. The structure of the activities and the overall facilitation methods, including asking participants to work in self-facilitated groups both at the beginning of the workshop and during the carousel, also put participants into a role of collaborators on a joint task. Working together this way demanded that participants explicitly engaged in processes of public reasoning in order to try and understand the viewpoints of others. This rather than simply the length of time spent

together, is one of the reasons the dialogues were able to provide more detailed and nuanced information about people's preferences and priorities for the sector.

It is clear from both the evaluations and the facilitators' feedback that for some participants however this role was quite challenging and one that they were less able, or less willing, to take on. In one of the dialogue sessions particularly there was an evident tension between the roles people understood they were there to play. While in the evaluations of all of the fora people commented on the amount they had learnt through the process, in this forum comments seemed to suggest that a considerable proportion of the group saw their role on the day principally in terms of their own learning: with references being made to 'the course', 'teaching' and 'the class' and far fewer comments made about interacting with others. In retrospect, this different understanding of their role in the process, explains the somewhat difficult dynamic that emerged at times during this particular session where, once information had been provided and they had expressed a first response, several participants were obviously keen to move on, evidently seeing no purpose in exploring the issues further. It also helps to explain the proportionally high number of comments from this group about the day being drawn out: *'Too long – didn't need to be', 'condense the materials', could have been talked about over 2-3 hours'*.

When planning sessions like this it is sometimes easy to overlook the fact that the collaborative role that people were being asked to play is one that is often very unfamiliar to participants. While experience shows that in many cases participants, even those initially unsure of what is being asked of them, will choose to trust in the process others will, often unconsciously, revert to more familiar roles. Looking back, perhaps more time needed to be built into the early stages of the workshop to ensure all participants understood, and were comfortable with, the role they were being asked to play.

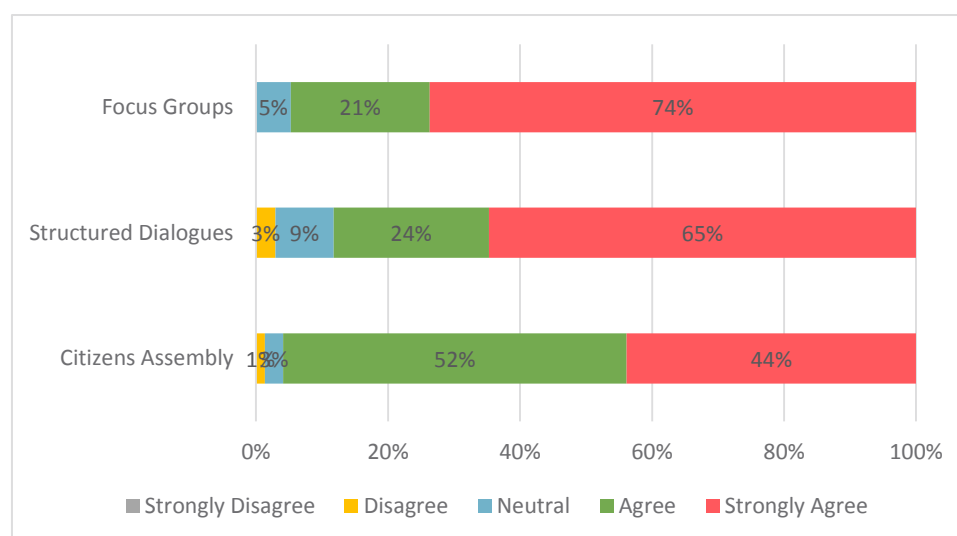
In the citizens assembly, participants were again cast in a different role, although perhaps a less challenging one. From the outset of the workshop it was highlighted to participants that they had been invited to take part in the fora as a representative cross-section of the population, whose views were being sought to infer the opinions of the wider public. Although they may have participated in the specific discussions and activities as individuals, the overall goal of measuring collective and/or majority views and testing them through discussion and deliberation, not only shaped the structure of the day and the types of activities they were asked to undertake but gave participants a greater direct responsibility for the overall outcome than, for example, in the focus groups.

Developing dialogue and deliberation

Each of the fora were designed to take participants on a collective journey, from using their own experiences of the water environment and with the water industry to explore expectations and levels of satisfaction, through considerations of responsibility and individual impact, to thinking about priorities for future investment and improvement. Across the three methods used to address this it is easy to make the argument that, compared to the focus groups, the additional time given to discussions in the dialogue and citizens assembly, have produces outputs that are more detailed and provide a better understanding of what really matters to consumers, and why. However, given the dual purpose of this research project, additional evaluative elements were built into the process design to enable these assumptions to be tested further.

Within the constraints of each method, all of the fora were designed and facilitated in a way to promote the exchange of opinions and collective public reasoning. As part of the evaluation participants were asked whether they felt they had had enough opportunity to express their views throughout the discussion and the results for each forum are compared below.

Figure 4.14: Participant response to the statement 'I was given enough opportunity to express my views.'



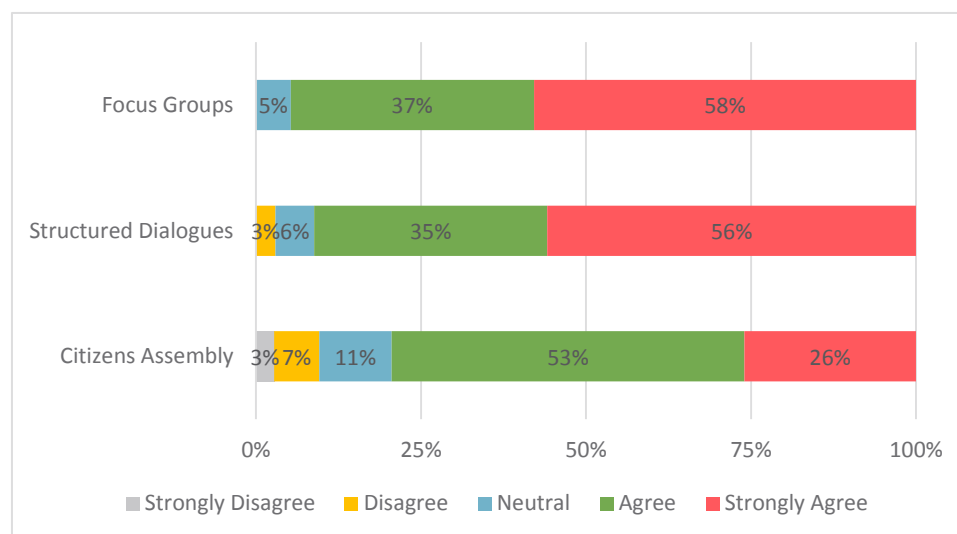
Source: All participant evaluation forms (126)

While high levels of agreement are shown across all fora it is interesting to note that the focus group, where there was least time available, is the forum which recorded the highest level of strong agreement. This may be because, as the discussions were more tightly focused, all participants felt that they had had enough time to contribute everything they had to say on this more limited range of topics. By contrast the citizens assembly, which saw people working in approximately the same sized groups as at the focus group, recorded notably lower levels of strong agreement. Comments from the evaluation forms demonstrate that some people found the discussions rushed and the groups too large to allow everyone to fully participate.

Views about whether there had been a sufficient time to discuss the issues properly also varied considerably across the fora, and between participants, facilitators and observers. Figure 4.15 illustrates that most participants in all fora, regardless of whether they had been together for 2 hours or 6 hours, agreed that they had had enough time to discuss the issues properly, suggesting that they left satisfied that the objective of the event had been achieved. While some participants in the dialogues felt that too much time had been allocated for the discussions, the feedback from facilitators and observers suggest that, while some participants' focus and energy levels were dropping towards the end, the overall length and structure of the event worked well.

Similar comments were also made in relation to the assembly which, was admittedly a long day for participants to be seated, relatively constantly in a busy room. What is however perhaps more interesting to note here is that, while 15 of the 77 participants commented that the day was too long, most of the suggestions for remedying this related to having less breaks and/or a shorter lunch rather than reducing the time given to the discussions. Further, the majority of those who disagreed in this case made comments suggesting that they would have liked to *"spend more time on topics"* (if not a longer day overall) or had *"less topics, more discussion time"*

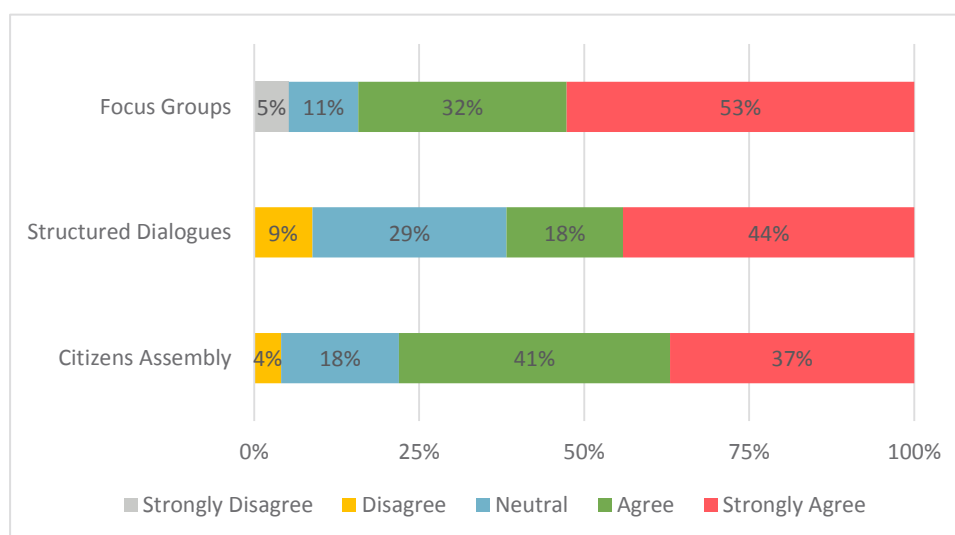
Figure 4.15: Participant response to the statement 'There was enough time to discuss the issues properly'



Source: All participant evaluation forms (126)

Central to the success of any deliberative process is the space it creates for peer-to-peer dialogue, where participants learn together, gain a greater understanding of each other's perspectives and, in some cases, revise their own views as a result. In their evaluation forms all participants were asked to reflect on to what extent their own views changed (or developed) as a result of listening to others. This question generated the most varied responses of all of the evaluation questions and the results are illustrated below.

Figure 4.16: Participant response to the statement 'My views changed or developed through listening to others.'



Source: All participant evaluation forms (126)

It is surprising that the focus groups, where there was the least scope for developing dialogue and limited demand for deliberation, show the highest levels of agreement here. Also contrary to expectation, the structured dialogue, where the principal design focus was on generating in-depth dialogue, shows the lowest level of agreement from participants with this statement (and the highest level of disagreement). This may in part relate to the difficulty some participants seemed to have had with the role that was being asked of them (as discussed previously) but any attempt to explain these results further would be purely speculation.

Throughout all of the fora however the facilitators and observers reported witnessing people's opinions develop and change throughout the discussions, and some of the quantitative results discussed earlier in this report demonstrate evidence of preferences and priorities shifting throughout the course of the workshops. This was most evident in relation to how people prioritised where investment should be directed, where people tended to move from initially being drawn to options that might directly benefit themselves (e.g. reducing costs, improving response times) towards more socially conscious and/or altruistic responses.

Capturing consumer insights

As demonstrated from the section of the report covering the findings from this research project, the 5 events have cumulatively provided substantial and detailed evidence to the CFU of consumers' priorities and concerns relating to water in the environment and expectations of service from Scottish Water. Further, the results were broadly consistent across all of the fora, providing a convincing argument for the veracity of the outputs.

At no time during the workshops were the specific research questions framing this project explicitly presented to the participants per se. Instead, a variety of different topics and prompts were introduced and explored in ways that cumulatively addressed the overall purpose. Thus it has been through a process of analysis by the research team that key themes have been identified and consolidated in response to the overall research questions.

To enable this a variety of techniques were used at each fora to produce and record direct outputs from the participants (e.g. group surveys, card ranking / prioritisation exercises, or the identification of principles for 'good' service or 'good' engagement). Much of the evidence used to inform the findings report however has been taken from the notes and recordings made during small group and plenary discussions. Unlike in the focus groups and the dialogues however it was not practical to record the table discussions during the assembly. It was observed in feedback from this event that, as the table facilitators were focussed on managing the process and delivering planned outputs for each section, while also taking notes, this meant that some of the detail of the discussions may have been lost. While each of the discussion stages did achieve their planned outcomes and outputs, which have provided evidence for this report, in retrospect it may have been worth having a dedicated note-taker at each table to capture additional insights and ideas; however this would have significantly added to the costs of the event.

Looking back over the evidence provided by each different type of forum, it is clear that the focus groups were only able to provide an overview of opinions given the range of topics they were covering in a limited amount of time. That said, there was evidence of effective and engaged discussion at both of these sessions, demonstrating that participants were able to engage with the topic quite quickly, provide feedback on services (albeit briefly) and identify preferences and priorities. As noted by the facilitators however, there was little opportunity to probe their responses in more depth to get below surface level reasoning.

The dialogues by contrast, focussed on exploring people's reasoning to a greater depth and have provided considerable insight into both consumers' intuitive understanding of, and informed consideration of the issues and options surrounding the water sector in Scotland. This method also delivered the most detailed, and most considered, information in relation to how people view the services provided by Scottish Water at present and the service standards customers expect. Within this process however, there was less attention given to forming conclusions as a group and less expectation of purposeful deliberation than at the other fora. This has meant that, while the dialogues produced a wealth of evidence relating to individual preferences, reasoning and priorities, key themes and conclusions have needed to be drawn out through careful analysis of the data after the event.

The citizens assembly produced the most coherent and representative set of outputs of all of the methods, not only in relation to content but also due to the scale of the event. At each stage of the fora the outcomes of the discussions were recorded and consolidated publically (though polling, group feedback in plenary, or sets of cards summarising the priorities or themes from each table). There were also opportunities for participants to reflect on and/or revise conclusions after hearing the outcomes of different discussions, making the deliberation process at each table ongoingly iterative. This forum also provided the most detailed understanding of participants' reasoning in relation to priorities and willingness to engage with the idea of users all having a collective responsibility for the ongoing health of the water environment. Finally, the clear, collective outputs from this event overall make it arguably the most effective of the methods trailed here for providing robust evidence that is useful to and usable by policy makers if considered in isolation.

Comparative Costs

In this research project the three different methodologies under trial were delivered simultaneously for the purposes of comparison. In most contexts, however, a single engagement method would be chosen, or different methods used at different stages of a project, depending on the research aims and objectives.

The resources that would be required to replicate the different types of fora used in this project are outlined in the table below. The table shows the staff time and other costs required for planning and delivering each type of forum, plus the resources required for any additional events. The costs assume full analysis and reporting of findings from each forum, including a standard statement of methodology (as opposed to the comparative evaluation of methodologies that was carried out for this piece of research).

Staff time has not been given a financial value as the rate charged would vary depending on the skills and experience of the particular staff contracted for the project. However, a commissioning body could expect to be paying between £400 and £1000 per day for externally contracted specialist staff.

Table 4.8: Resources required to replicate the fora

FOCUS GROUP (2 hours, 1 facilitator)	
Research staff time	
Set up, planning and design of materials	2.7 days
Facilitation (including travel and set up time)	0.5 days
Analysis and reporting	1.5 days
Total	4.7 days
Other costs	
Recruitment (of 10 participants, aiming for at least 8 attending)	£650
Incentives	£300
Travel and subsistence	£150
Venue hire	£250
Transcription	£115
Total	£1,465
Plus additional focus group	
Research staff time	1 day
Other costs (as above)	£1,465

STRUCTURED DIALOGUE (6.5 hours, 2 facilitators)	
Research staff time	
Set up, planning and design of materials	4.4 days
Facilitation (including travel and set up time)	2 days
Analysis and reporting	3 days
Total	9.4 days
Other costs	
Recruitment (of 25 participants, aiming for at least 20 attending)	£1,625
Incentives	£1,500
Travel and subsistence	£300
Venue hire	£1,000
Transcription	£600
Total	£5,025
Plus additional structured dialogue	
Staff time	3 days
Other costs (as above)	£5,025

CITIZENS' ASSEMBLY (6.5 hours, 7 facilitators)	
Research staff time	
Set up, planning and design of materials	5 days ⁸
Facilitation (including set up time)	7 days
Analysis and reporting	4.8 days
Total	16.8 days
Other costs	
Recruitment (of 80 participants, aiming for at least 60 attending)	£4,375
Incentives	£8,000
Venue hire	£2,300
Total	£14,675
Plus additional citizens' assembly	
Staff time	10 days
Other costs (as above)	£14,675

The resources required may be lower or higher than those set out above depending on a range of variables:

- the number of participants to be recruited for each fora;
- the number of recruitment quota to be fulfilled (the above costs assume quotas on sex, age, working status and social class, plus additional quotas, as required for this research, on interest in water environment and awareness of council tax water charges);

⁸ Time allocated to planning for the citizen's assembly include time to set up and practices using an online live survey tool

- location(s) – the above costs are based on focus groups and structured dialogues being carried out in a location similar to that used for this research (Inverness), and the citizens' assembly being carried out in Edinburgh. Costs for travel and subsistence may vary depending on the location used;
- the level of incentive offered to participants – the above costs are based on offering £30 per focus group participant, £60 per structured dialogue participant and an average of £100 per citizens' assembly (the citizens' assembly incentive would be higher or lower depending on the location from which participants are recruited). If, for example, the structured dialogues were shorted to half a day, we would recommend an incentive of at least £40;
- whether or not respondents are required to undertake any tasks in advance, which could be an option for structured dialogues in particular. Additional staff time and respondent incentives may be required in such cases;
- whether or not break out groups are required in the structured dialogues and the number of break out groups anticipated. If there are more than two break out groups, more than two facilitators may be necessary;
- whether or not the discussions are to be transcribed. Professional transcribers typically charge 90p to 95p per minute for transcription.

Costs may also vary depending on how many of the different types of fora are used. For example, if focus groups, structured dialogues and a citizens' assembly are all used, there may be cost efficiencies in the set up and planning of the groups. However, this may be balanced by additional analysis time required to compare and contrast findings across the different types of fora.

Methodological Conclusions

The purpose of this methodology report has been to address the CFU's primary research question: Which deliberative research methods are most effective at identifying and understanding consumer preferences, motivations and priorities in relation to the water industry and water in the environment, and why?

In order to do that the discussion in this chapter has focussed on exploring which of the selected methods - focus groups, structured dialogues and a citizens assembly - was most effective in providing evidence of what matters most to consumers. It has done this by drawing directly on the process, experience and evaluations of the 5 engagements events delivered for the CFU between February and March 2017 to explore with consumers what would drive more consumer focused regulation and service provision in the water industry.

Assessing the effectiveness of a specific methodology however is necessarily both a subjective and context sensitive process. Further, the success of a particular engagement event is dependent on a range of factors aside from the methodology: including the detailed process design, the experience and skills of the facilitators, the mood, mix and temperament of the participants on the day and even the weather.

To facilitate an evaluative comparison designed to assess the added value of using more deliberative methods for consumer engagement, the CFU therefore established a range of criteria for 'effectiveness' at the outset of the project. These were:

- i) the suitability of the method to the topic area and the specific policy question;
- j) the accessibility of the consultation to participants;
- k) the method's ability to provide information in accessible and relevant ways regarding the complexities of the sector;
- l) its ability to engage participants with the topic;
- m) its capacity to draw out meaningful dialogue and deliberation;
- n) the quality, depth and complexity of qualitative and, to the extent possible, quantitative data gathered;
- o) delivering outputs that capture consumer insight in ways that are relevant and useful to policy making;
- p) being replicable and affordable.

It is against these criteria therefore that conclusions will now be drawn, with particular attention given to what additional benefits the structured dialogues and the citizens assembly were able to bring over and above a standard focus group.

The purpose of this methodological analysis however is not simply to evaluate the effectiveness of the particular fora reported on here, but rather to have wider application in relation to how the CFU engages with consumers in the future. For this reason, while the specific consultation events that were delivered for the CFU will be used to illustrate the conclusions, the lessons learnt throughout the process and the research teams wider experiences of using these

methodologies will also be drawn upon to demonstrate whether there is a case for using deliberative methods to engage consumers with policy and practice within the water sector and, by extension, the wider regulated industries.

a) Suitability to the Topic

The 3 methods used were all appropriate to this research as the first policy question being addressed was quite broad and exploratory: How engaged are consumers in matters related to water and the environment and what is required to increase their engagement in these matters? Discussion based methods that allow participants to share stories and build up an understanding of the scope of the topic by listening to each other, before identifying priorities, were therefore particularly appropriate. As demonstrated in the findings section of this report, and the previous section detailing the methodological approach, the focus groups, structured dialogues and the citizens assembly all created suitable environments for this type of discussion to take place.

For the research to effectively assist the CFU to identify consumer's relative priorities in relation to the water sector, and provide an understanding of the reasons informing these choices, it was important that the methods chosen supported effective deliberation. In the dialogues and the citizens assembly participants were therefore tasked with working together to identify collective priorities through, for example, negotiating rankings, voting and reflection, or dialogue to consider differences between the needs of urban and rural consumers. Through these processes participants were explicitly encouraged to take in to account different viewpoints and wider societal needs in forming conclusions. Although more traditional qualitative methods, like the focus group, could have been used to identify and collate individual priorities, it was deliberative components of these fora that were most fully able to answer this aspect of the research question.

It is worth noting however that, if the engagement process had focussed on the second specific research question in isolation (Do consumers think there should be similar service standards across urban and rural areas and if so, to what degree?), different methods may have been selected. It is feasible to suggest that this question on its own may have been able to be addressed through a series of short deliberative workshops in different parts of the country, with the findings combined and compared for reporting. Alternatively, if a more detailed understanding of participants' reasoning was required, one option would have been to undertake a citizens jury, which by explicitly focusing on reaching a considered, collective 'verdict' could have directly provided specific recommendations to policy makers.

Key Conclusions:

- Focus groups, structured dialogues and the citizens assembly all proved to be effective consultation methods for this type of topic and policy question.
- Had either of the 2 questions been considered in isolation, particularly the question about variable services standards between urban and rural areas, it is possible that different methods might have been chosen to most effectively deliver deliberative outputs.

b) Accessibility to Participants

A variety of measures were put in place to ensure that the fora were accessible to those within the target group – in this case a representative sample of consumers living in rural and urban areas of Scotland. For example, all of the fora were planned to take place outside standard working hours to enable as wide a range of people to attend as possible. The locations for all of the fora were also chosen to be central and accessible within each catchment area, and participants had the opportunity to identify any additional support they would need to participate during the recruitment process.

Participants were also all given a monetary 'thank-you' (between £30 and £120), designed to recompense them for any travel, care or opportunity costs incurred by taking part. Each fora was attended by a mixed demographic from the targeted geography and the vast majority of participants reported that the venues were both easy to get to and suitable for their needs, and that the 'thank-you' payment was fair.

Key Conclusions:

- The focus groups, structured dialogue and citizens assembly all proved to be accessible to participants, as attested to by the demographically diverse participants (in terms of age, gender and working status) that took part.
- The structured dialogues and citizens assembly, taking place over a whole day, may have been less accessible to people with primary caring responsibilities, although this was not specifically reported as a barrier to participation.

c) Provided Information in Accessible and Relevant ways

Another key factor relevant to assessing the accessibility of an engagement method is its ability to make the topic itself relevant and accessible to participants, who may arrive both with limited knowledge of the issues intended to form the basis of the discussion and little existing interest in the topic itself. In order to involve participants in an informed conversation, able to yield useful outputs for the CFU and policy makers, the participants needed to have an understanding of the wider water industry, the role of Scottish Water and the scale and scope of their responsibilities, and also to be able to situate that knowledge within consideration of the wider water environment. Time was therefore allocated in each of the fora to ensuring that participants had the contextual information needed to be able to confidently, and comfortably participant in the discussions.

As discussed in the previous section however, the design of each fora approached this task in quite different ways: the focus groups by providing only that information strictly necessary to contribute to the discussion, the structured dialogues by encouraging participants to build a shared knowledge around the topic in response to stimulus and information handouts, and the citizens assembly by drip feeding information in different formats throughout the day to build a cumulative understanding of the wider issues. This was not simply because of the length of time available for each discussion but also a response to the constraints and opportunities offered by the specific method.

Key Conclusions:

- The focus groups, structured dialogues and the citizens assembly were all able to effectively provide participants with both the contextual and specific information needed to take part in the discussions in ways that were accessible and easy to understand.
- Participants were all able to combine this information with their own experience as consumers to particulate in the discussions in informed ways.
- The amount of information provided in the focus groups was quite limited and, as such was necessarily very targeted towards enabling specific questions to be answered.

- The structured dialogues gave participants the greatest level of responsibility for their own learning. In general, participants responded positively to this and it resulted in them also tending to take greater responsibility for the outcomes of the discussions.

d) Engaged Participants with the Topic

At all of the fora the facilitators reported that participants were generally very engaged in the discussions throughout. The topic itself shares some responsibility for this, as it is intrinsically relevant to all consumers, despite many admitting that they had previously given little thought to the issues under discussion.

Each fora was also designed to allow participant to find their own 'entry point' into the topic – either by identifying ways that they used and/or valued the water environment as individuals or working as groups to map out the infrastructure and challenges facing the water industry. This allowed participants to start developing and expressing views quite quickly, and stimulated an appetite for further information. The mix of tools and techniques used throughout the structured dialogues and the citizens assembly were also key to keeping participants engaged with the topic over these full day fora.

Key Conclusions:

- Participants in the fora generally found the topic itself engaging and relevant, and thus were able to contribute effectively to the discussion around broad priorities and expectations for the water industry.
- Using a variety of tools and techniques to stimulate and record discussions help participants remain engaged through out longer sessions, as demonstrated in the citizens assembly and structured dialogues.
- There is little further however that differentiates the effectiveness of each method from the other in terms of its ability to engage consumers with the topic.

e) Enabled Meaningful Dialogue and Deliberation

Central to the success of any deliberative process is the space it creates for peer-to-peer dialogue, wherein participants learn together, gain a greater understanding of each other's perspectives and, in some cases, revise their own views as a result. As demonstrated in the previous section of this report, there is evidence of dialogue emerging in all of the fora as participants shared their stories about how they engage with water in the environment, their experiences with water service provision, and considered priorities for ensuring a sustainable future for 'water' in Scotland.

Of the three methods however, the structured dialogues enabled the greatest depth of dialogue and the highest level of deliberation. This was not simply because of the additional time given to the discussion compared to a focus group, but also due to the range and types of tasks participants were asked to undertake, including a number of self-facilitated discussions which explicitly asked participants to listen to and consider other's perspectives before develop conclusions. When the outputs of these discussions were analysed they provided significant insight into participants' individual and collective reasoning, particularly in this case about the service standards expected from Scottish Water and the acceptable variations between urban and rural areas. Within this process however, there was less attention given to forming conclusions as a group and less expectation of purposeful deliberation than, for example, at the citizens assembly.

One of the strengths of the citizens assembly method demonstrated during this research is its ability to effectively engage a large number of people simultaneously in a process of learning, opinion forming and deliberation, even on an unfamiliar subject. While the pace and scale of the event meant that at times the depth of dialogue was lower than that in the

structured dialogues, the breadth of input into the deliberations, and the ability to effectively draw collective conclusions from the outputs, was arguably higher. It is also reasonable to speculate that, of the 3 different types of fora, participants in the citizens assembly left the event with the clearest sense of the overall results of their deliberations. As such, if they were to read the findings report, they would be the group most likely to recognise it as embodying their experience of the consultation.

Key Conclusions:

- The structured dialogue method provided opportunity for the greatest depth of dialogue and deliberation between participants, in ways that both drew out and collectively interrogated their preferences, motivations and priorities.
- The citizens assembly produced the clearest set of collective outputs from the deliberations.
- The results presented in the policy finding section of this report would arguably be most recognisable to participants in the citizens assembly, due to the way conclusions from each section of the discussion were drawn publically as part of the event. This can be a valuable consideration in relation to methodology choice if consultation outcomes are to be used to publically evidence a specific policy position.

f) The Quality, Depth and Complexity of the Outputs

Each of the fora produced a range of qualitative and quantitative outputs that captured consumers' awareness of, engagement with and priorities for the water sector in Scotland which, through analysis by the research team, enabled key themes to be identified and consolidated in response to the overall research objectives.

The depth and complexity of the outputs from each forum however did vary. The focus groups did successfully address all of the elements of the topic required to form a response to the research question, however the depth of discussion, and therefore the amount of information gathered that would enable a deeper understanding of consumers reasoning, was limited. By contrast, in the structured dialogues, the range of activities, and the time for more in-depth discussions in small groups, produced the most detailed set of outputs for analysis and provided considerable insight into both consumers' intuitive understanding of, and informed consideration of the issues and options surrounding the water sector in Scotland.

Much of the qualitative information used to evidence the findings report has been drawn from the transcripts of recordings made during small group and plenary discussions. Unlike in the focus groups and the dialogues however it was not practical to record the table discussions during the assembly, meaning that some of the detail of the specific discussions may not have been captured. This is typical of this method however, where each stage of the discussion is designed to capture specific outputs which enable results to be cumulatively 'built' throughout the day and requires careful planning in the design stage to ensure that outputs are produced with sufficient depth and complexity to meet the objectives of the research.

Key Conclusions:

- The structured dialogue method provided the most detailed and nuanced understanding of consumers' priorities and expectations regarding the standards of service consumers expect from Scottish Water, and as such was most effective for addressing this aspect of the research.

- While the citizens assembly produced substantially more considered and reflective outputs than the focus groups one limitation to this method, as delivered here at least, is the challenge of capturing the detail of the individual table discussions when recording for later transcription is not feasible.
- If a similar citizens assembly process was to be delivered in the future however, and if capturing the fine detail of the discussion was considered to be a priority, additional staff (or volunteers from the commissioning body) could be recruited to fulfil specific note-taking functions.

g) Delivers Outputs that capture Consumer Insight in ways that are Relevant and Useful to Policy-making

All of the fora took participants through a process that situated the water industry within the wider water environment to understand how consumers ascribe value to 'water', explored their existing level of engagement and satisfaction with water services, and allowed conclusions to be drawn about consumers preference and priorities. Through this the fora were all able to provide policy makers with a range of different types of outputs to inform future policy and practice from a consumer perspective in the context of ambitions to develop Scotland as nation that manages and uses its water resources in a sustainable way.

In this research project the structured dialogues and the citizens assembly both ran for approximately the same length of time, and for considerably longer than the focus groups. This however is not the only reason that they were able to deliver outputs able to give the CFU greater insight into consumer preferences and priorities. Rather it is the approach to dialogue and deliberation inherent in these methods, and therefore the types of prompts given to participants and the types of tasks that they are asked to undertake, that distinguish the character of the outputs. Thus, while a shorter structured dialogue, for example, may still have been capable of delivering clear evidence of consumers collective reasoning (i.e. deliberation) simply running a longer focus group may not have.

Key Conclusions:

- All of the methods used in this research project have effectively provided insight into consumer opinions, experiences and preferences that should be useful to policymaking, both at a service specific level and for wider future planning and priority setting.
- The results from each of the fora were also broadly consistent, which should give policymakers confidence in the veracity of the conclusions drawn regarding the policy research question.
- The structured dialogues produced arguably the most, and also the most detailed, outputs for analysis and as such delivered the greatest level of insight into the reasons behind consumers' preferences and priorities.
- The citizens assembly produced the clearest collective outputs, making it arguably the most effective of the methods trailed here for providing robust evidence that is useful to and usable by policy makers if used in isolation.

h) Is Replicable and Affordable

As illustrated by the table of comparative costs to replicate the fora delivered as part of this research project included earlier in this report, deliberative methods are generally more expensive to deliver than more traditional qualitative consultations. This is not simply because they will usually involve participants in longer discussions, but also because they will usually require more planning and higher levels of facilitation (although in this case all of the methods were delivered

using 1 facilitator for every c.10 participants). Further the skills needed to plan and facilitated effective deliberative engagement events are more specialised, and therefore contractors will tend to charge more for these services.

Key Conclusions:

- Deliberative methods will usually cost more to plan and deliver than other qualitative consultation methods.
- Most of the resources necessary for an effective deliberative process are needed for staff time, particularly for workshop planning and the development of materials if the process is designed to address a complex or multiple layered subject.
- The other key cost tends to relate to recruiting and incentivising participants, however this is a necessary expense if it is important for the research to involve a representative sample of the population, rather than volunteers who are interested in the topic. .
- Considerations of affordability and value for money however must come down to identifying the types of outputs that are most important for the success of the research i.e. what it is that the commissioning body really wants to know.

Overall methodological conclusions

The purpose of using three different methodological approaches in this research project was to test which deliberative research methods are most effective at identifying and understanding what matters most to Scottish water consumers, and assess whether using more deliberative methods added value to the outputs.

As evidenced in the finding section of this report all of the methods used, including the focus groups, were able to effectively address the policy research question and provide the CFU with insight into consumers' preferences, priorities and reasoning.

There was however limits to what was able to be achieved by using a focus group format, and not simply due to the limited time available for the discussion. Focus groups are traditionally a primarily extractive form of consultation, where participants take part as individuals, albeit in a group context. The discussion structures used in a focus group will therefore generally concentrate on the collation of individual responses and the reactions to the opinions of others. Although an explicitly deliberative component was included in the discussion guide for these focus groups to enable fairer comparison, the outputs produced in these sessions lacked the negotiated quality and purposeful consideration of the views of others that was evident in the outputs produced in the other fora.

The outputs produced through the structured dialogues provided the greatest level of insight into the reasons behind consumers' priorities, due to the emphasis given in the discussion guide to developing dialogue and creating the conditions for deliberation and public reasoning. The complexity of the subjects under discussion also enabled one of the key strengths of this method to be highlighted, i.e. the ability to incorporate a wide range of methods throughout a session to build up the participant's level of knowledge and gradually increase the demands being placed on them to collaborate on drawing conclusions. While the dialogues, particularly as delivered in this project over a full day with c.20 participants, demanded significantly more resources to deliver than a focus group, this was arguably balanced by the additional depth and quality of the information they provided.

The citizens assembly produced the clearest collective outputs of all of the fora and most explicitly answered the research questions within the context of the event itself, and thus in view of the participants. One of the strengths of the citizens assembly method demonstrated during this research is its ability to effectively engage a relatively large number of demographically and geographically diverse participants in a process of learning, opinion forming and deliberation as part of the same discussion. This not only has a bearing on increasing the representativeness of the outputs from the consultation event but also has the potential to positively contribute to the quality of the dialogue that takes place during the process, as participants are exposed to a wider range of opinions and experiences than would be the case in a smaller workshop.

Both the structured dialogue and citizens assembly methodologies therefore clearly added value to the outputs able to be produced by a focus group, although each in different ways. Determining which method has been most effective, and therefore of most value to the CFU in planning future engagement with consumers, however will come down to which aspects of the findings they find most useful for influencing the development of policy and practice in relation to the water industry in Scotland.

Appendices

Appendix A: Priorities for Expenditure

These statements were used during the focus group card sorting exercise and the structured dialogue voting/ranking exercise to gaining an understanding of consumers' priorities, and preferred approaches, to achieving a sustainable balance between maintaining the quality of Scotland's water environment and the parallel need to deliver a high quality water service for consumers.

Improving the way Scottish Water deals with its customers

e.g. enquiries, complaints and general customer service.

Improving the quality of the water supplied to homes and businesses

e.g. in look, taste, hardness etc by cleaning and upgrading drinking water pipes or improving water treatment works

Conserving and protecting natural catchment areas and the quality of Scotland's source water

e.g. by working with land managers within the catchment areas to help reduce the amount of pesticides in watercourses

Reducing the costs of water to consumers

E.g. by developing more cost effective treatment processes

Educating consumers about how their behaviours can damage the water environment

e.g. that putting the wrong things down drains (oil, chemicals, rubbish) can cause blockages and result in overflows or leakages into rivers, beaches etc.

Developing alternative forms of energy production to reduce the water industry's demand on electricity supplies

E.g. hydro turbines, small scale wind turbines, solar schemes and/or biomass burners.

Improving response times

E.g. when water supplies are unexpectedly cut or there are drain blockages or sewerage leaks

Educating consumers about reducing water consumption

E.g. reducing the amounts of treated tap water that enters the waste water system without really being 'used'.

Improving the reliability of core water and sewerage infrastructure

E.g. modernising pumping stations, improving water treatment works, upgrading water mains and pipes

Developing new, 'greener' ways to deliver sustainable services

e.g. creating reed beds to filter waste water or using the heat naturally produced by sewerage processing to generate energy

Focus group only

Ensuring there are no differences in service standards between rural and urban areas

E.g. that response times are the same if water supplies are unexpectedly cut or there are drain blockages or sewerage leaks

Appendix B: Scottish Water Service Standards / Code of Practice

The information on the next 5 pages was used as handouts for the focus groups and citizens assembly and stimulus displays during the Carousel exercise in the structured dialogues. It was drawn from 'Scottish Water – Our Promise to you: Code of practice' <http://www.scottishwater.co.uk/contact-us/our-promise-to-you/our-services-your-rights/code-of-practice>



Scottish Water

Our Promises to You: Code of Practice

When planned maintenance and improvement work means Scottish Water has to turn off water supplies

Scottish Water's promise to customers:

If Scottish Water needs to carry out essential maintenance work that involves shutting off the water supply they promise:

- To write to householders in advance to warn of any disruption. If large areas are affected, they may also use their website, social media, local TV or radio;
- To give at least 48 hours notice if the work is planned to last for more than 4 hours;
 - The only exception to this is when they are looking for leaks, in which case they will do the work between midnight and 6am when customers are unlikely to notice.
- To give as much notice as possible to householders if their water supply is likely to be affected for longer than 8 hours – including issuing leaflets or letters to households explaining what they are doing and why they have to do it;
- To ensure customers have access to alternative water supplies for planned interruptions that exceed 8 hours;
- To deliver drinking water to people who may be particularly vulnerable during an interruption to supply like the elderly and those with a disability or medical condition.

Compensation:

- Households can claim £30 compensation if Scottish Water fails to warn them of a planned disruption to their water supply in advance.
- Households can claim £30 compensation if Scottish Water fails to restore their water by the time they said they would.
- Households can also claim £30 for each additional 12 hour period they are without water.



Scottish Water

Our Promises to You: Code of Practice

If your water goes off unexpectedly

What you should do:

Scottish water advise that if you experience a loss of water supply to your home you should call their Customer Helpline on 0800 0778778 for assistance.

- If it is a problem they are already aware of they will provide you with an update on the situation
- If it is a problem they were unaware of they will begin an investigation to determine the cause of the problem
- If the problem seems to be just at your own home it may be a fault with pipes in or around your property, and that may be the responsibility of the property owner.
 - *If you are unsure whether this might be the case Scottish Water suggest customers call anyway so they can provide advice on who is responsible and what you should do next.*

Scottish Water's promise to customers:

If the loss of water supply to your property has been caused by a fault that is the responsibility of Scottish Water they promise to:

- restore your supply **within 12 hours** from the time they find out about it if it is **a fault with local pipes** e.g. a break or blockage
- restore the water supply **within 48 hours** of them finding out about it if it is **a fault with a strategic water main** that is causing the problem.

How these times are calculated:

- The 12 (or 48) hours begins once Scottish Water is aware of an interruption to supply and have all the relevant information to arrange our attendance.
 - This could be from a phone call, email or message on social media.
- The 12 (or 48) hours ends once water is restored to your cold water kitchen tap.
 - This may be just a trickle initially (depending on where your property is on the network) and it may be discoloured, however it will return to normal.

Keeping customers informed:

During the time taken to complete repairs updates are provided to customers who call the Customer Helpline and also on the Scottish Water website, Twitter and Facebook pages

Compensation:

- If Scottish Water fails to meet their promised repair deadlines then households can claim £30 compensation, and a further £15 for each additional 12 hour period without water.
- There is also compensation available if you experience repeated faults. If you report 2 interruptions in the same financial year, caused by a failure in the network (that isn't related to planned work being carried out by Scottish Water) you can apply to claim a payment equal to 25% of your annual water charges.
- If you experience and report further interruptions within the same financial year, you can claim a further 25% for each of these, up to a maximum of 100% of your water charges.



Scottish Water

Our Promises to You: Code of Practice

In a major incident affecting water supplies

A major incident is usually one which affects more than 13,500 households and where it is difficult to determine how long supplies may be interrupted for.

Examples of a major incident could include:

- Contamination of the water supply;
- Large scale flooding from water mains or sewers which interrupts the water supply.

Scottish Water's promise to customers:

- To provide alternative supplies (bottled water or static tanks) if the water supply is interrupted for more than 24 hours or is unfit for consumption even after boiling.
 - *Their goal is to supply at least 10 litres per person every 24 hours until the supply is restored.*
- To deliver drinking water to people who may be particularly vulnerable during a major incident, like babies under a year old, the elderly and those with a disability or medical condition.

Keeping customers informed:

During the time taken to complete repairs Scottish Water will give customers regular updates. This may be done using social media, our website, radio, local TV, using loudhailers in the street or leaflets through your door.

Compensation:

If Scottish Water fails to meet any of the promises to customers directly affected by a declared major incident there is a process in place for customers to claim compensation up to a maximum of £90 per household and incident. The level paid will be dependent on individual circumstances.



Scottish Water

Our Promises to You: Code of Practice

If your property is flooded or at risk of flooding

What you should do if waste water is flooding the inside of your home:

Scottish Water advise that if the inside of your home is flooded with waste water you should call their Customer Helpline on 0800 0778778 for assistance.

- They will attend as quickly as possible, usually within 4 hours of receiving a call.
- They will investigate the cause of the flooding and report their findings to you.
- They will help you to clean up the mess.

Compensation:

- Scottish Water will refund your insurance excess if you suffer waste water flooding from sewers within your home
 - unless the flood was caused by extreme weather conditions or your own actions (such as inappropriate items flushed down the toilet or drain).
- You may also be eligible to receive a payment equal to your total waste water charge for the year.
 - unless the flood was caused by extreme weather conditions or your own actions (such as inappropriate items flushed down the toilet or drain).
- Scottish Water will also, on occasions of severe internal sewer flooding, sometimes support a customer in finding temporary accommodation (local b&b/hotel) for the initial night. There is no obligation for Scottish Water to do this, and in most instances customer's own insurance company would cover this.

What you should do if waste water flooding or leaking outside your home:

Scottish Water advise that if waste water has flooded your garden or nearby roads or paths you should call their Customer Helpline on 0800 0778778 to report the incident.

- They will attend the flooding as soon as possible (usually within 24 hours for an external flood although extreme weather conditions may have an impact on these times).
- They will identify if the issue is the responsibility of Scottish Water and resolve it if it.
 - If the sewer flooding has occurred as a result of an issue with your private pipework or drains (or a neighbour's private pipework or drains) you/they will be responsible for resolving it.
- They will assist with any clean up required and where appropriate, disinfect the affected area.
 - However when the responsibility for the fault can be proven to be a private homeowner or landlord they may be charged for this.

Compensation:

- If Scottish Water is responsible for causing external waste water flooding (where you cannot access your property without stepping through sewage flooding within your property boundary OR your land is extensively flooded and effectively destroyed) you can apply for a payment of 50% of your waste water charges for each occasion up to 100% in any financial year.



Scottish Water

Our Promises to You: Code of Practice

Customer service

Scottish Water states that its aim is to 'ensure the highest level of customer experience' and has established additional Customer Service standards that are designed to ensure they achieve this. These include standards for:

- **Keeping appointments**

- When you make an appointment you will be offered you a morning or afternoon appointment or you can ask for someone to visit you within a 2 hour time slot.
- Scottish Water will give you at least 24 hours notice of any change in the appointment time.

Compensation: Customers will automatically be paid £30 if they don't turn up when they said they were going to, or fail to give 24 hours notice of a change to the appointment.

- *If this payment is not received within 10 working days they will pay you a further £30.*

- **Dealing with complaints**

- They promise to try to resolve complaints to their Customer Helpline while customers are on the phone.
- If this isn't possible, they promise to look into the problem and call customers back promptly.
- If a customer want a written response to their telephone call, they promise to reply within 5 working days.
- If a complaint is received in writing, via post, fax or email, they promise to respond within 5 working days.
- If the complaint cannot be resolved within this time they promise to give customers regular updates of the progress they are making to resolve the problem.

Compensation: If they fail to respond within 5 days they will pay customers £30.

Appendix C: Relationships with water and water in the environment

The cards below were used to stimulate discussion in the citizens assembly.

I am disgusted by the amount of rubbish that ends up in our rivers. I don't know how any animals manage to survive in some of these places.



It sickens me when I see the amount of rubbish, and even sewerage, that washes up on our beaches and riverbanks. That shouldn't be allowed to happen.



Environments like this contribute a lot to our economy – through tourism, fishing and other outdoor activities. We need to protect them to sustain this.



For fishing, boating, swimming or even just for walking along the edge – I love being around the water.



Even when I'm out in places like this I don't really think much about the water – it's just something that is always there.



I'd like to spend more time in places like this but I'm not always sure where I am allowed to go and what I am allowed to do.



I try to do my bit to conserve water – like turning off the tap when I clean my teeth and having short showers.



I hate it when I see people wasting water. Pouring clear, fresh water straight back into the drains cost us all money.



The amount of pollution that gets washed into the water from industry and farming is damaging local ecosystems.



In Scotland we are so lucky that most of the reservoirs that provide our drinking water are filled from snow fields like this.



Spending time in places like this give me an opportunity to stop, relax and unwind.



Being near the water is not just about being in the countryside – there is water in our cities too!



Whenever I come back to Scotland after being in London, or somewhere else down south, I always notice how good our water tastes. I think we are very lucky.



I never really think about what is involved in ensuring safe clean water comes out of my tap. I guess I take it for granted.



Whenever I can, I love to get out into the countryside and take a long walk beside the water. We are lucky to have so many rivers and lochs in Scotland.



I know the water that comes out of my tap is safe – but I think it tastes terrible! You can taste the chlorine in it. I would rather drink bottled water.



When I look out over a view like this I get an amazing sense of calm and tranquillity. Places like this are good for the soul.



Whenever I am tempted to complain about the rain I have to remind myself how good it is for our farms, gardens and open spaces.



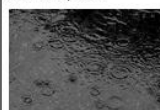
I'd never really thought about our tap water till I was on holidays recently and realised there are places not that far away where it's not safe to drink the water.



I worry about the amount of chemicals they use to purify our drinking water. I guess we don't really know what the long term impact might be on our health.



My family used to have a tank that collected rainwater for drinking, washing etc. but with so much pollution in the air nowadays I don't think I'd trust it anymore.



As a kid we used to catch fish in the burn that ran through the farmers' fields. Now farms are using so many chemicals and pesticides I wouldn't eat anything that came out of there now.



Water is a limited natural resource and we need to make sure we look after it. After all, the water we use is the same water that the dinosaurs were drinking!



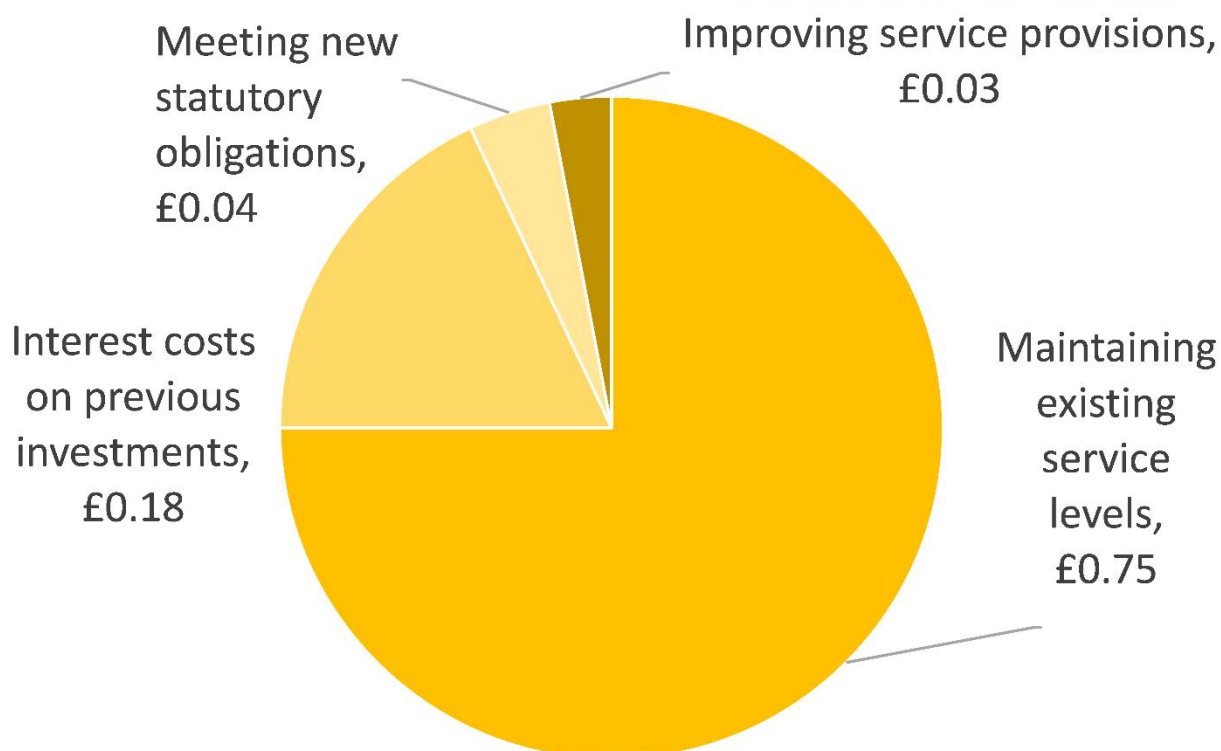
The idea of having a water shortage in Scotland seems crazy – but we had a drought in Dumfries just a few years back. We all need to be more aware that water is a resource not to be wasted.



Appendix D: Paying for water

The figure below was used to stimulate discussion in each of the fora.

Every £1 of customer charges goes toward....



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