

Resolving the challenge of a scarce resource

We help the water industry understand the needs and priorities of its customers, thus helping create agreeable and sustainable means to meet increasing demand.

The challenge for the water industry

The reliable supply of water continues to be a major item on social and political agendas. Hosepipe bans, water conservation initiatives, leakages and affordability are discussed from the House of Commons to the corner shop.

Much of the country's sewer system needs investment to effectively meet people's needs. Customers are unclear of sewer and lateral ownership and responsibilities, whilst Water and Sewerage Companies are uncertain about the precise location of the full sewer network.

Workable and sustainable solutions must be found.



How we can help

We help water companies, government departments, regulatory bodies and customer representatives by:

- improving communication between customers, water companies and Ofwat;
- identifying customer priorities for service improvements, and what they will pay for;
- identifying ideas of greatest potential for water conservation;
- highlighting supply and demand issues at national, regional and local levels;
- understanding the needs of different customers;
- engaging businesses and the public on the key issues;
- gaining public support for policy decisions.

Our market and social research capabilities

Whether you need deeper understanding of your customers or quantified evidence on current conditions, we can provide robust representative information, advice and recommendations to support your decision-making, on time and on budget.

We offer a comprehensive range of conventional and innovative research techniques, qualitative and quantitative, plus GIS and information technology expertise. We tailor research specifically to your requirements, delivering reports and data fully attuned to your needs.

Helping to conserve water

Our national survey for central government identified water-conserving appliances that customers found most acceptable, and were willing to pay for. We found support for government intervention to encourage more water-conserving appliances, and the findings provided valuable input to the consideration of new government legislation for the construction of new homes.

Re-cycling of water

Through national consultation, we successfully quantified the proportion of water customers who were willing to harvest rainwater and re-cycle greywater in and around the home.

We assisted a private Water Only Company in understanding the level of customer support on proposals to re-direct out-flows from a nearby treatment works as an additional source of water supply to customers.

Future investment and security of future water supply

For Defra and Ofwat, we conducted a sensitive and large-scale, quantitative study of customer attitudes to current and future water and sewerage services across England and Wales that formed an essential input to the PR04 process. We worked with the co-operation and support of Water UK, Environment Agency, Drinking Water Inspectorate, the consumer council for water and other key stakeholders. This objective research provided the customers' view of, and level of support for, their water companies' Business Plans and identified customers' priorities for service maintenance and improvements.

We assisted a Water Only Company in their plans to build a new reservoir as a means of securing long-term water supplies by identifying the levels of support for such a move, and highlighting any areas of customer concern.

Clarifying the ownership of private sewers

We conducted a large-scale, national qualitative study of sewer ownership, as perceived by sewerage service customers. In partnership with WRc, we successfully assisted Defra in developing proposals for a change in ownership of sewers and laterals. Through a large-scale, national qualitative study of sewerage service customers, we identified where the current system is seen as unfair or confusing, and how to overcome such problems to the satisfaction of industry stakeholders and customers.

Understanding different customers' needs

Through a range of consultative techniques, we assisted the Consumer Council for Water in understanding the needs and expectations of different customers, from large non-domestic users of water to domestic customers on low incomes, including what customers want from their consumer champion. Moreover, having conducted focus groups with customers throughout the country, we have first-hand knowledge of local issues, from the high cost of maintenance of coastal paths in the South West, to a lack of mains sewerage service provision in East Anglia.

