Engagement framework
Price Submission 2028–33

In The Pipeline

South East Water

South East Water is continuing conversations with its customers, community and stakeholders to understand their expectations and what they value most.

To inform our 2028–2033 Price Submission to the Essential Services Commission, we are undertaking extensive engagement with our residential and business customers and community groups, including First Nations, hardly heard voices and people experiencing vulnerability.

As a water corporation, we need to think, plan and invest for today and the decades ahead. We must maintain safe and reliable water and wastewater services, upgrade ageing infrastructure and secure future water supplies to support a growing population in a changing climate. We must continue to focus on delivering sustainable environmental outcomes.

Advances in technology offer efficiency gains but also raise questions about data security, privacy and trust. At the same time, cost of living pressures are affecting many households.

Within this context, our price submission must navigate tough trade-offs — that is, balance affordability with the investments required to maintain and improve essential services.

Over the next 18 months, we'll engage deeply in our service region to understand what matters most and explore the trade-offs ahead. These conversations will help us balance affordability, reliability, innovation and long-term planning.

Our aim is to make the process inclusive and genuine and reflect shared values alongside technical and financial considerations — so we can shape a price submission that supports people today and invests responsibly for the future.

Remit

Your water, your future –what matters most?

South East Water is planning for the next five years and beyond. We need to maintain safe, reliable services, upgrade ageing infrastructure and prepare for a growing population and varying climate. At the same time, we know households and businesses are feeling financial pressure. We must invest wisely for the long term while listening carefully to what is a priority for our current and future customers and communities.

How should we balance differing customer needs and services for today and tomorrow?

Level of Influence

We'll partner with our customers and community and incorporate their advice and recommendations into our Price Submission to the maximum extent possible.



International Association of Public Participation spectrum of engagement



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How we will engage

ENGAGEMENT PRINCIPLES

Inclusive and accessible
We'll make it easy for all customers and community to get involved in ways that work for them, removing barriers and creating safe, accessible opportunities – with a strong focus on Traditional Owners and people experiencing vulnerability.

Clear and relevant information
We'll provide clear, accessible and timely information so people can contribute meaningfully and understand how decisions are made, including the link between choices, service levels and bills.

Early and ongoing
We'll start engagement early and maintain open conversations throughout the process, building trusted relationships over time.

Meaningful participation
We'll offer a range of ways to participate that reflect different needs, circumstances and preferences, enabling informed input.

Rigorous and fair
We'll record input accurately, consider all feedback fairly, and maintain consistent, auditable records of the process and decisions.

Genuine influence
We'll be upfront about the level of influence customers and community have, upholding that commitment and showing how perspectives shape our approach and outcomes.

Accountable
We'll clearly show how feedback has influenced proposals and openly explain where ideas cannot be incorporated, sharing updates and outcomes at every stage in plain, accessible formats - including during implementation.

SCOPE

These are the areas customers can influence:

LEVEL OF INFLUENCE: higher ↑ lower

- What commitments we make to customers and how we measure success
- How much additional support we provide to residential and business customers experiencing vulnerability or financial hardship
- How we invest in broader social, economic and liveability outcomes for the community, such as public spaces and access to support services
- Preferences for water efficiency measures, such as education, incentives or restrictions
- Levels of service for customers including quality and reliability
- The balance between service levels, reliability, costs and investment now and in the future
- The scale and ambition of integrated water management and water efficiency initiatives
- How we recover costs from different customer groups through our charges
- The pace and scale of service innovations and customer impacting technologies

These areas we are already committed to and we will keep you informed about:

- Meeting drinking water quality and public health standards.
- Compliance with environmental regulations and EPA licensing requirements.
- Externally set passthrough costs, such as wholesale water charges.
- Completion of major projects already underway, such as the digital meter rollout.
- Regulated financial settings, including the rate of return.

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PS28 engagement roadmap

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THE PHASE	**Planning** April to October 2025	**Wide engagement** October 2025 to March 2026	**Prioritisation** January 2026 to July 2026	**Deep engagement** July to February 2027	**Closing the loop and ongoing engagement** March to July 2027
PURPOSE	Design the engagement plan and build awareness.	Deepen understanding of customer needs and priorities by reviewing existing insights, running surveys, and engaging in community settings.	Consolidate insights and let customers assess options using tools like the bill simulator and focus groups. Results shape deliberation and support informed recommendations.	Customers and community representatives work through key decisions and test proposals against customer values in a deliberative panel and sub-panels from priority groups.	Finalise the proposal package, close the loop with participants, and prepare the PS28 submission. Establish a Standing Customer and Community Panel to monitor performance throughout the regulatory period and embed the process for the long term.
ACTIVITIES	• Requests for information, staff surveys, and workshops to agree on current state • Staff survey and workshops	• Online survey on customer and community values and expectations • Broad outreach: interviews, stakeholder and community workshops, pop up events across service region, multicultural and diverse engagement	• Online bill simulator survey to representative sample of 2,000 customers • Subpanels of lesser heard voices to test willingness-to-pay	• Deliberative panel (up to 7 days) • 5 sub-panel sessions (up to 7 days)	• Final deliberative session • Closing the loop session • Stakeholder briefings • Standing Customer & Community Panel
OUTPUT	• **Project Plan** • **Strategic Engagement Plan**	• **Qualitative Engagement Data Report**	• **Values, Experiences and Valuations Report**	• **Panel Recommendations Report** • **Process Report**	• **Price Submission**

TRADITIONAL OWNER ENGAGEMENT

Planning	Customer and Community Engagement Program	Monitoring, reporting and ongoing support