



Assurance Plan AMP7

October 2023

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Introduction and Background

About Affinity Water

We treat and supply over 900 million litres of water every day so we can ensure that 3.6 million people have high quality drinking water when they need it. We understand that we provide an essential service to households and businesses across our region. It is what drives our ambition to be a trusted, community-focused water company.

But we face a very real challenge to our ability to continue to meet demand in the longer term. We supply water to one of the fastest-growing, most economically active regions in the country. And, while demand is increasing, the amount of available water is decreasing.

Our five-year business plan for 2020 – 2025 sets out our path for continuing to meet these challenges. In developing our plans we undertook an extensive and multi-phased programme of customer and stakeholder engagement to ensure our plan focused on the things that matter most to customers. We engaged with over 15,300 customers and stakeholders and took account of over 5 million day-to-day customer contacts as part of a combined engagement programme.

For the period 2020 – 2025 we have agreed with Ofwat 28 performance commitments designed to ensure that we:

- have enough water for everyone, whilst leaving more water in the environment;
- minimise disruption to everyone;
- provide high quality water that everyone can trust; and
- provide a great service that creates value for all our stakeholders.

Our plan is ambitious and challenging, but we are fully focused on delivering our performance commitments which will improve the service we provide to our customers and improve our environment.

We want to be open with our customers and other stakeholders about our performance against our commitments. We want them all to have trust in our service and confidence in the information we publish about our performance. We encourage customers and other stakeholders to provide feedback at any time about how we are performing.

About this document

We regularly publish information on our performance to demonstrate to customers, stakeholders and our regulators the extent to which we are delivering the services expected of us.

This document describes the main assurance activities that we either carry out ourselves or engage third-party providers to carry out independently, so that the information we report to customers, stakeholders and regulators is accurate, transparent, reliable, relevant, complete and up to date. We consider it essential to demonstrate that we report information on our performance that meets these criteria. This is part of our commitment to demonstrate that we take ownership of the information we report.

This Assurance Plan for AMP7 sets out the main categories of information we publish and the processes in place to assess and assure that information. In producing and publishing this document we aim to provide transparency around how we support our Board in providing assurance of the information we report. Whilst this document describes the assurance activities planned for the whole AMP7 period, we will review it annually to ensure that it remains up to date and reflects current practices.

This document also sets out our current views on the risks, strengths and weaknesses of our processes for creating and publishing reports on our performance.

Our Assurance Plan

General approach to assurance and information

Role of the Board

Our Board has overall responsibility for monitoring the Company's systems of internal control and for reviewing the effectiveness of these systems, including financial, operational and compliance controls and risk management, and is advised by our Audit, Risk & Assurance Committee on these matters. We continue to maintain a multi-layer assurance approach.

Role of the Independent Challenge Group (ICG)

The Independent Challenge Group (ICG) acts as a voice of all water users served by Affinity Water. The group challenges and supports the Company in the development of its future plans to ensure that they reflect customers' priorities.

The ICG understands that:

- many households are struggling with costs of living and higher overall bills; and
- people are worried about water shortages following recent trends towards increasingly drier and warmer weather.

Further, the ICG knows that customers want their water company to:

- provide a reliable supply of clean water now and in the future;
- look after the environment;
- ensure bills are affordable for all alongside consistently excellent service; and
- look to the future and develop innovations that benefit communities.

In its previous form as the Customer Challenge Group (CCG) it played a significant role in our PR19 business planning programme. The CCG was required by Ofwat to provide "independent challenge to the company and independent assurance to Ofwat on the quality of the company's customer engagement for PR19, and the degree to which this is reflected in its business plan". CCG continued to adopt this role through to Ofwat's final determination, issued in December 2019.

Risk Management Framework

We have an established framework for identifying, evaluating and managing the key risks we face. Our aim is to foster a culture in which teams throughout the business manage risks as part of their management of day-to-day operations. Our Executive Management Team (EMT) also carries out regular assessments of emerging risks, including horizon scanning and monitoring of early warning indicators.

Operational risks are reviewed and prioritised on a quarterly basis in the context of existing controls. Where risks fall outside of risk appetite, action plans are prepared to implement further mitigations and these are carefully monitored to ensure they are completed and provide the desired mitigation. The most significant risks are raised for review by the EMT and may be added to the strategic risk register, which is reviewed by the Board and the Audit, Risk and Assurance Committee. The latter reviews senior management's work on risk management and reports to the Board on the effectiveness of risk management processes.

The strategic risk register includes the principal regulatory risk as follows: 'We may fail to comply with laws and obligations under our instrument of appointment, legal, compliance or business obligations'. This risk encompasses, amongst other things, the risks managed at directorate level relating to the provision of accurate information to customers, regulators and stakeholders.

Internal systems and processes

Systems are designed to manage the risk of failure to achieve business objectives (though such risk cannot be completely eliminated), and provide reasonable, but not absolute, assurance against material misstatement or loss. Features of the systems of risk management, planning and controls include:

- a comprehensive suite of internal control procedures across both operational and financial matters, supported by detailed delegated levels of authority;
- an Internal Audit function, the head of which has direct access to the Audit, Risk & Assurance Committee, together with other internal control and assurance resources which monitor compliance with laws, regulations, policies and procedures;

- specialist planning teams retained within the organisation to work on major projects, such as business planning activities, supported by external specialists where appropriate; and
- the use of appropriate fiscal, regulatory and operational external assurance review. The Board approves the company's annual budget and regularly reviews actual performance. All major transactions are reviewed and approved by the Board.

The Company follows the principles of the 'three lines of defence' model, as promoted by the Institute of Internal Auditors and other professional and commercial organisations, as the basis of its assurance process. Assurance is achieved as follows:

1st Line: Management control

Controls are exercised by the operational managers who own and manage risks day to day. Controls form an integral part of systems and processes under the guidance of operational management.

2nd Line: Risk management and peer review

This comprises risk management and compliance functions established by management to help build and / or monitor the first line of defence controls, ensuring they are properly designed, in place and operating as intended.

3rd Line: Internal Audit

Internal Audit provides the Board and senior management with assurance based on a high level of independence and objectivity within the organisation. Internal Audit provides assurance, on a test basis, as to the effectiveness of governance, risk management and internal controls.

Internal Audit prepares an annual plan of reviews, taking into account risks identified in risk registers, and carries out a number of audits each year. Not all areas are reviewed every year. The Internal Audit Plan is approved by the Audit, Risk & Assurance Committee, which also monitors its delivery over the course of the financial / regulatory year. When reviewing processes which include recording and processing of data to be used in regulatory reporting, Internal Audit particularly focuses on ensuring the effectiveness and efficiency of controls to ensure accuracy and completeness of that data.

External Assurance

We also make use of third-party organisations to provide the Board with external assurance that the information prepared by management is accurate and compliant. This particularly applies to major items such as the Annual Report and Accounts and the annual tariff setting process. The main parties used to provide this assurance are PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP (PwC), who provide assurance on financial data, and Atkins Limited (our Reporter), who provide assurance on engineering and technical data. These contracts are periodically re-tendered and providers may change.

In addition, from time to time we may also use other assurance providers, such as Deloitte, Frontier Economics, Ernst & Young and Oxford Economic Research Associates, on specific issues where management or our Board consider it appropriate.

It should be noted that the three lines of defence model does not always require the controls within the three lines to be performed in strict chronological order. In fact, it is not uncommon for all three to be performed concurrently.

Compliance

We are subject to a significant number of laws and regulations and we have processes in place, aligned with the three lines of defence model described above, to ensure we comply with them. We have embedded a Legal Obligations Register which maps all of our legal and regulatory obligations, including those relating to regulatory reporting. This has provided greater visibility of individual ownership and accountability for each obligation; prioritisation of key obligations; and a reference point for a cycle of compliance audits.

Assurance of reported information

The tables on the following pages describe, for each of the types of information we publish, the main current assurance controls in place so that all information reported is accurate, transparent, reliable, relevant, complete and up-to-date.

Report Categories	Main Risks	Controls / Assurance in Place		
		1 st Line (Data providers and management)	2 nd Line (Regulation, Financial Control, senior management)	3 rd Line (Internal Audit and External Providers)
<p>Regulatory Annual Performance Report (APR)</p> <p>(included within the Annual Report and Financial Statements)</p> <p>Summarises company performance in the preceding year and meets specific information requirements.</p>	<p>Underlying non-financial data is inaccurate or incomplete.</p> <p>Information reported is unclear or misleading.</p> <p>Reporting requirements are not sufficiently well understood by staff resulting in inappropriate reporting methodology.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A wide variety of day-to-day operational controls is operated to ensure that all transactional data is accurately and completely recorded. 2. We have in place well-established responsibilities and accountabilities, policies, methodologies and processes, all of which are subject to frequent self-assessment and independent review by Internal Audit on a cyclical basis. 3. Separation of duties is in place wherever possible to ensure that no single individual has complete responsibility for a business process and its constituent controls. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Reporting experts in the Regulation team carry out regular detailed reviews of underlying data and information to ensure accuracy and completeness. 2. Relevant members of Executive / Senior Management review all information prior to publication or submission. 3. The Audit, Risk & Assurance Committee oversees all processes required to produce the Annual Report and Financial Statements, including the Annual Performance Report. 4. The Board approves the APR prior to submission. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Atkins carry out reviews of methodologies and processes by which non-financial data are produced and information generated. We consider it essential to have this independent review given the penalties and rewards associated with the achievement of performance commitments and the consequent impact on customers' future bills. 2. PwC carry out an annual audit of the Regulatory Accounting Statements contained within our Regulatory APR. We have a regulatory obligation for our external auditors to confirm that these statements have been presented in accordance with Condition F and the Regulatory Accounting Guidelines issued by Ofwat. These reviews also confirm whether reports are prepared in accordance with relevant guidance and regulatory requirements. <p>N.B. the assurance work carried out in respect of our Regulatory APR is detailed in the "Data Assurance Summary", published on our website.</p>

APR Assurance Breakdown

Data	3 rd Line Assurance procedures performed
Certificate of adequacy	Review by PwC to enable the reporting of any inconsistencies between the information contained in the certificate and accompanying statement, and either the APR or any information obtained during the course of their audit work.
Tables 1A, 1B, 1C, 1D, 1E, 1F, 2A, 2B, 2C, 2D, 2E, 2F, 2G, 2I, 2J and 2K	External audit by PwC, including RAG5 compliance.
Tables 3A, 3C, 3D, 3S and 4A, 4D, 4L, 4P and 4Q	External review by Atkins of the procedures used to collect and report the information.
Tables 4B, 4C, 4D, 4F, 4G, 4H, 4I, 4J, 4L and 4V, transactions with associated companies and current tax reconciliations	Agreed upon procedures performed by our external auditor, PwC, including checking application of the guidance in the Regulatory Accounting Guidelines, checking application of the methodology statement, checking consistency with other tables within the APR and reviewing the calculation of current year data where numbers do not directly extract from other tables.
RAG5 Audit	PwC perform agreed upon procedures over our compliance with Regulatory Accounting Guideline 5. These procedures include review of the Corporate Services Agreements between group entities and ensuring that recharges are in compliance with the “Guidance for transfer pricing in the water and sewerage sectors (RAG 5.07)”, checking the consistency of the disclosures in the notes in the Annual Performance Report of the Financial Statements, ensuring the wholesale water charges to group entities are in line with the “settlement report” provided by the Market Operator and ensuring the mathematical accuracy of the charges.

Report Categories	Main Risks	Controls / Assurance in Place		
		1 st Line (Data providers and management)	2 nd Line (Regulation, Financial Control, senior management)	3 rd Line (Internal Audit and External Providers)
<p>Other Regulatory Reporting</p> <p>Data and information provided to our main regulators Ofwat, DWI and EA, and to CCWater.</p> <p>In particular: Performance Commitment / ODI reporting, Guaranteed Standards Scheme (GSS) information, written complaints data, annual data tables, annual tariffs and charges, quarterly reports to CCWater, ad-hoc requests (e.g. casework, response to Ofwat’s “out-in-the-cold” report)</p>	<p>Underlying non-financial data are inaccurate or incomplete.</p> <p>Information reported is unclear or misleading.</p> <p>Reporting requirements and the purposes for which submitted information will be used are not sufficiently well understood by staff, therefore reporting methodologies are inappropriate.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Day-to-day operational controls are operated to ensure that all transactional data is accurately and completely recorded. 2. We have in place well-established responsibilities and accountabilities, policies, methodologies and processes, all of which are subject to frequent self-assessment and independent review by Internal Audit on a cyclical basis. 3. Separation of duties is in place wherever possible to ensure that no single individual has complete responsibility for a business process and its constituent controls. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Reporting experts in the Regulation team carry out regular detailed reviews of underlying data to ensure accuracy and completeness. 2. Relevant members of Executive / Senior Management review all information prior to publication or submission. 3. Our Audit, Risk & Assurance Committee reviews and our Board approves our annual data tables submissions. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Atkins carry out reviews of methodologies and processes by which certain data are produced and information generated for inclusion in regulatory reporting submissions. Again, we consider it essential that we have this independent review of our processes and procedures given the importance of the information provided to customers and regulators. These reviews also confirm whether reports are prepared in accordance with relevant guidance and regulatory requirements.

Specific reports in this category

Reports	Description	Assurance
CCW Quarterly Returns	We submit operational performance data to CCWater each quarter. Areas covered include supply interruptions, per capita consumption and complaints. This data is used by CCWater to compile and publish reports comparing water companies' performance. Therefore, it is important that it is complete and accurate.	Quarterly returns are subject to the 1 st and 2 nd line of defence controls as described in the above table. 3 rd line of defence assurance is carried out by Atkins on the annual return.
Delving into Water	We also submit "Delving into Water" reports to CCWater each quarter. These submissions are used by CCWater to compile their annual "Delving into Water" reports to highlight how the various water companies are performing in areas that "really matter to consumers". Again, in order to support the comparability of performance between companies it is vital that the information we provide is complete and accurate.	Quarterly returns are subject to the 1 st and 2 nd line of defence controls as described in the above table. 3 rd line of defence assurance is carried out by Atkins on the annual return.
Discover Water	Discoverwater.co.uk is a dashboard bringing together key information about water companies in England and Wales in one place for customers. The dashboard aims to be a clear and simple source for trustworthy and factual information. Much of the data underlying the dashboard is provided by water companies and it is vital that this data accurately reflects our performance.	Data provided are subject to the 1 st and 2 nd line of defence controls as described in the above table. All data provided to Discover Water have already been subject to external assurance by Atkins as part of their work on our APR.
Developer Services Levels of Service (LoS) Data	Every month our Developer Services team submits to Water UK its self-certified performance against a number of metrics. Water UK publishes quarterly league tables comparing performance across all water companies. Our Internal Audit team recently carried out a review of this area and recommended that these monthly submissions are subject to independent assurance.	Monthly submissions are subject to: (a) 1 st line of defence controls in the form of checks carried out by our Developer Services management team; and (b) 2 nd line of defence assurance in the form of independent checks by our Risk and Compliance team.

Report Categories	Main Risks	Controls / Assurance in Place		
		1 st Line (Data providers and management)	2 nd Line (Regulation, Financial Control, senior management)	3 rd Line (Internal Audit and External Providers)
<p>Financial Reporting</p> <p>Regulatory and statutory financial information, submitted to Companies House.</p>	<p>Financial position or performance mis-reported.</p> <p>Underlying financial transaction data are inaccurate or incomplete.</p> <p>Incorrect classification of transactions and balances.</p> <p>Incomplete / unclear notes to the accounts.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Day-to-day financial controls over financial transaction recording. Verification applied through delegated authority by managers. 2. Senior Finance managers are responsible for ensuring that all accounting processes are aligned to UK Generally Accepted Accounting Practice and relevant requirements of the Companies Act 2006. 3. We have in place well-established responsibilities and accountabilities, policies, methodologies and processes, all of which are subject to frequent self-assessment and independent review by Internal Audit on a cyclical basis. 4. Separation of duties is in place wherever possible to ensure that no single individual has complete responsibility for a business process and its constituent controls. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Finance team produces monthly management accounts which are reviewed by Executive / Senior Management and the Board. 2. The Audit, Risk & Assurance Committee oversees all processes required to produce the Annual Report and Financial Statements, including review of draft reports, and recommends to the Board that they can be signed off. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. As required by the Companies Act, PwC conduct annual audits of our financial statements in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (UK and Ireland). The objectives of these audits are to confirm that the financial statements give a true and fair view of the state of the Company's affairs, profit and cash flow; that they have been properly prepared in accordance with UK Generally Accepted Accounting Practice; and have been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Companies Act 2006. <p>N.B. the assurance work carried out in respect of our Annual Report and Financial Statements is detailed in the "Data Assurance Summary", published on our website.</p>

Report Categories	Main Risks	Controls / Assurance in Place		
		1 st Line (Data providers and management)	2 nd Line (Regulation, Financial Control, senior management)	3 rd Line (Internal Audit and External Providers)
<p>Direct Customer Communications</p> <p>Multi-channel communications such as website information, on-line surveys, social media, customer call centre data, operational staff contact, customer billing leaflets, etc.</p>	<p>Information provided is inaccurate, incomplete or unclear.</p> <p>Information provided does not meet the needs of customers.</p>	<p>1. Day-to-day controls are in place to ensure that all data are accurately and completely recorded. Data assurance is carried out by operational management.</p> <p>2. We have in place well-established responsibilities and accountabilities, policies, methodologies and processes, all of which are subject to frequent self-assessment and independent review by Internal Audit on a cyclical basis.</p> <p>3. All materials used to communicate directly to customers are developed jointly by our Customer Relations and External Communications teams.</p> <p>4. Separation of duties is in place wherever possible to ensure that no single individual has complete responsibility for a business process and its constituent controls.</p>	<p>1. Reporting experts in the Regulation team carry out regular detailed reviews of underlying data pertaining to regulatory submissions to ensure accuracy and completeness.</p> <p>2. Executive / Senior Management review information prior to publication or submission.</p>	<p>1. Individual communications materials are not typically subject to specific external assurance. However, any underlying data used in such communications will already have been subject to external review by Atkins as part of their assurance work on our APR and other Regulatory Reporting.</p>

Report Categories	Main Risks	Controls / Assurance in Place		
		1 st Line (Data providers and management)	2 nd Line (Regulation, Financial Control, senior management)	3 rd Line (Internal Audit and External Providers)
<p>Other Stakeholder Information</p> <p>Information provided to a range of customer, consumer and local government and other stakeholder groups.</p>	<p>Information provided is inaccurate, incomplete or unclear.</p> <p>Information provided does not meet the needs of relevant stakeholders.</p>	<p>1. Day-to-day controls are in place to ensure that all data are accurately and completely recorded. Data assurance is carried out by operational management.</p> <p>2. We have in place well-established responsibilities and accountabilities, policies, methodologies and processes, all of which are subject to frequent self-assessment and independent review by Internal Audit on a cyclical basis.</p> <p>3. All materials used to communicate directly to customers are developed by our External Communications team in conjunction with other areas of the company dependent upon the nature of the information being reported.</p> <p>4. Separation of duties is in place wherever possible to ensure that no single individual has complete responsibility for a business process and its constituent controls.</p>	<p>1. Reporting experts in the Regulation team carry out regular detailed reviews of underlying data pertaining to regulatory submissions to ensure accuracy and completeness.</p> <p>2. Executive / Senior Management review information prior to publication or submission.</p>	<p>1. Individual communications materials are not typically subject to specific external assurance. However, any underlying data used in such communications will already have been subject to external review by Atkins as part of their assurance work on our Annual Performance Report and other Regulatory Reporting.</p>

Specific reports in this category

Reports	Description	Assurance
Gender Pay Gap Report	Since 2017, as an employer of more than 250 employees, we have been required to publish and report figures about our gender pay gap.	Reporting is based on data which is subject to stringent 1 st and 2 nd line of defence assurance controls embedded in our payroll processes.
Payment Practices and Performance	Since April 2017, large companies and limited liability partnerships have been required to publicly report twice a year on their payment practices and performance, including the average time taken to pay supplier invoices.	<p>Our reports are based on data which is (a) subject to 1st and 2nd line of defence controls embedded in our Accounts Payable processes, and (b) reflected in our financial statements which are subject to review by PwC as part of their annual external audit.</p> <p>Reports are subject to rigorous checking by senior and executive management.</p> <p>During 2019/20 an internal audit of Accounts Payable was carried out. The scope of this review included external reporting obligations. In their report, our Internal Audit team concluded that they were able to provide assurance in respect of the effectiveness of controls around meeting our external reporting requirements.</p>

Report Categories	Main Risks	Controls / Assurance in Place		
		1 st Line (Data providers and management)	2 nd Line (Regulation, Financial Control, senior management)	3 rd Line (Internal Audit and External Providers)
<p>Charges scheme documents, tariff documents, charging arrangements and related information and documents.</p>	<p>Information provided is inaccurate, incomplete or unclear.</p> <p>Information provided does not meet the needs of relevant stakeholders.</p> <p>The Company does not properly comply with its legal and regulatory obligations.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. We have in place well-established responsibilities and accountabilities, policies, methodologies and processes covering development of charges, charges schemes and charges arrangements; these are all subject to annual self-assessment. 2. Various detailed controls are operated as an inherent feature of processes to develop charges, charges schemes and charges arrangements, designed to ensure the veracity of calculations and compliance with regulatory requirements. 3. Separation of duties is in place wherever possible to ensure that no single individual has complete responsibility for a business process and its constituent controls. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A Board sub-group is formed every year to review, on behalf of the Board, the development of tariffs, charges schemes and charges arrangements, and approve any submissions to be made to Ofwat. 2. All documents are subject to review by relevant members of our Executive Management Team and senior management prior to publication, to ensure compliance with all relevant legal obligations. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Internal Audit carry out an annual review to provide assurance that documented processes and procedures are designed to ensure compliance with all regulatory and legal obligations, and that charges schemes and charges arrangements are developed in line with those processes and procedures. 2. Atkins, our Reporter, review forecasts of customer numbers and charges volumes in order to provide assurance that these have been prepared on a reasonable basis. 3. PwC assess the computational accuracy of charges forecasts and provide assurance that expected revenue from our charges is in line with the price controls set out in our licence conditions.

Specific reports in this category

Reports	Description	Assurance
<p>Board Assurance Statement – Charging Arrangements for New Connections</p> <p>Charges Scheme</p> <p>Compliance Statements – Household Customer Charges</p> <p>Indicative Wholesale Access Charges and Assurance Statement</p> <p>Charging Arrangements for New Connections Services</p> <p>Primary Wholesale Charges – Indicative scope of changes to charges</p> <p>Statement of Significant Changes in Charges for New Connection and New Developments</p> <p>Household Customer Charges - Statement of Significant Changes</p> <p>Wholesale Charges Compliance Statement</p> <p>Wholesale Tariff Document</p>	<p>Each year we publish a number of documents which set out our wholesale charges to water supply licensees who operate in our supply areas; charges for services provided to household customers; and charges to developers for providing new water mains and for connecting to water mains.</p> <p>There are various legal and regulatory requirements covering these documents, summarised by Ofwat in an annual Information Note.</p>	<p>Each year, we establish a Board sub-committee to oversee development of the various charges and tariff documents, and the assurance activities operated to ensure compliance with the various legal and regulatory requirements.</p> <p>To support the sub-committee in making its Board Assurance Statement that we comply with all our relevant legal and statutory obligations, a robust assurance framework is in place to review the end-to-end tariff update process including review of the data collected, update of the tariff models, upload of the final individual tariffs into our billing system and review of our Charges Scheme.</p> <p>Atkins carry out an independent review to ensure that the company has appropriate systems and processes in place to extract and review the data and ensure that the information published in our Indicative Wholesale Charges is accurate. This review includes the collected data and volume consumption and billing forecasts for each charging year.</p> <p>In respect of our Charging Arrangements for New Connections Charges (NCCA):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Atkins carry out combined methodology and data audits designed to confirm whether: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Affinity Water has appropriate systems, procedures and reporting mechanisms in place to control and meet its NCCA calculation obligations. ○ Affinity Water understands the accuracy of the data that it is providing, is able to identify where source data may not be appropriate to meet regulatory expectations and uses reasonable assumptions as an alternative. • Our Internal Audit department carry out various assurance activities to ensure that all rates and other relevant details are accurately and completely transcribed from the New Connections Master Model to the NCCA document.

Report Categories	Main Risks	Controls / Assurance in Place		
		1 st Line (Data providers and management)	2 nd Line (Regulation, Financial Control, senior management)	3 rd Line (Internal Audit and External Providers)
<p>Community-based Reporting</p> <p>Information provided in respect of our 8 communities.</p>	<p>Information provided is inaccurate, incomplete or unclear.</p> <p>Information provided does not meet the needs of relevant stakeholders.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Day-to-day controls are in place to ensure that all data are accurately and completely recorded. Data assurance is carried out by operational management. 2. We have in place well-established responsibilities and accountabilities, policies, methodologies and processes, all of which are subject to frequent self-assessment and independent review by Internal Audit on a cyclical basis. 3. All materials used to communicate directly to customers are developed by our External Communications team in conjunction with other areas of the company dependent upon the nature of the information being reported. 4. Separation of duties is in place wherever possible to ensure that no single individual has complete responsibility for a business process and its constituent controls. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Reporting experts in the Regulation team carry out regular detailed reviews of underlying data pertaining to regulatory submissions to ensure accuracy and completeness. 2. Executive / Senior Management review information prior to publication or submission. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Individual communications materials are not typically subject to specific external assurance. However, any underlying data used in such communications will typically already have been subject to external review by Atkins as part of their assurance work on our Annual Performance Report and other Regulatory Reporting.

Risks, Strengths and Weaknesses

We have carried out an internal review of the processes which we have in place to provide assurance of the data we report, and how we aim to ensure trust and confidence in what we provide. We have listed below the main risks, strengths and weaknesses of those processes which we have identified as part of this review.

Risks

- There is a risk of deliberate / fraudulent or accidental regulatory misreporting to Ofwat
- There is a risk that information produced for stakeholders other than Ofwat is inaccurate
- There is a risk that customers and other stakeholders will not have trust in our service or have confidence in the information we publish about our performance

We believe that we have adequate controls to mitigate these risks including a documented process for reporting all regulatory performance information to Ofwat and other regulators that is subject to Reporter and Auditor scrutiny in preparation for the Audit, Risk & Assurance Committee meeting each year. The Audit, Risk & Assurance Committee has delegated authority to approve regulatory submissions on behalf of the Board.

Strengths

- Financial Monitoring Framework: We are confident that we continue to meet Ofwat's expectations regarding the transparency and consistency of the information published in relation to financial monitoring. We continue to follow Ofwat guidance, and we are confident that the quality of data and the transparency of published information continues to meet their expectations.
- Outcomes: We believe that we continue to meet Ofwat's expectations in this area. We will continue to publish performance information in our Annual Report and Financial Statements available on the 'Investor Library' page of our website; accessed using the 'Investors' link on the homepage. This report is also available on the 'Our Performance' page, accessed using the 'About us' link on the homepage.

- Long-term viability statement: Overall, we believe that we continue to meet Ofwat's expectations for the long-term viability statement included in the Annual Performance Report for 2020/21. The directors provided a statement that they have a reasonable expectation that the company will continue to operate and meet its liabilities, as they fall due, for a period of ten years to 31 March 2030 and we set out the approach to the assessment and the basis for the period reviewed.

We clearly set out the risk management process and principal risks facing the company, describing each risk and the potential impacts on the company and our obligations, the link to our strategy, the movement in the current risk exposure, as well as mitigation and management actions taken.

- Risk & Compliance Statement: Each year our Board provides a clear statement confirming that we have an understanding of, and are meeting, our obligations. We also confirm that we have sufficient processes and internal systems of control to meet those obligations and have systems and processes in place to identify, manage and review our risks. The statement is appropriately signed off on behalf of our Board.

Weaknesses

- Customer feedback has indicated occasional difficulties in accessing performance information on our website, in particular, community-focused information.
- The CCG's review of our PR19 Business Plan raised a concern that our engagement with customers on future and long-term issues (such as water scarcity) only partly met requirements (registering an Amber rating). Particular reference was made to our draft Water Resources Management Plan and the materials used for customer engagement. Here, greater customer understanding is needed to allow them to properly influence plans.

Next steps

We would like to hear the views of customers, stakeholders and regulators on this document, the way we assess data and information and how we present our performance.

Please contact us at:

assurance@affinitywater.co.uk

We would be delighted to receive feedback at any time.

Customers, stakeholders and regulators may wish to consider the following questions:

- Do you have any concerns about the information we report?
- Is the information we publish easy to understand?
- What do you consider to be the most important type(s) of information that we provide?
- Do you have any concerns about the quality of the information that we provide?
- Do you feel confident that the data we publish is robust, accurate and reliable?
- Would you value information presented in a different way?
- Is there any additional information that we do not currently publish that you would find helpful?