

# BOARD ASSURANCE STATEMENT

(South West Water inc. Bournemouth Water and Bristol Water)

## **Our approach to assurance**

The Board acts as the main governing body for the purpose of oversight for the company's regulated business. Our approach to governance is an integral part of our culture, guiding how we do business and create value for our stakeholders.

We publish information which ensures we not only meet our statutory, licence and regulatory obligations but also provide information to customers on the Company's activities, how the Company is performing and most importantly, how customers can get help when they need it.

Underpinning the information, we publish our robust risk and assurance processes. These processes have been embedded into the management of the Company and are designed to ensure risks are promptly identified, updated on a regular basis, and appropriate mitigation is in place to suit the level of risk.

We have a mature integrated risk management framework which is fully embedded into our governance structures and embodies our values of being 'trusted' and 'responsible' in the way we carry out our business. Details of this integrated assurance approach is published each year in our assurance plan.

Our integrated assurance approach includes our three lines of defence:

- Management – review, quality control and sign off
- Policy setting and compliance checking – adequate policies, internal audit, and business management systems
- External scrutiny – external audit and other assurance providers

Our risk and assurance framework remains largely unchanged from our previous review of our risks, strengths and weaknesses and the methodology for identification and mitigation of risk remains fit for purpose at individual business unit and corporate levels.

## **Assurance activities in respect of New Connections and Developer Services Charging Arrangements**

Assurance activities in respect of New Connections and Developer Services Charging Arrangements follow our integrated assurance approach with three lines of defence.

The calculation of the tariffs and charges within this structure, which comply with the constraints in place utilises a model developed by an external specialist.

Internally there is a robust process of sign off for all variable inputs into the model and for forecasts and judgements used.

Our external assurance provider performed a set of procedures mutually agreed between South West Water and the provider, reflective of risks which may result in tariffs and charges not meeting the constraints discussed above. These focused on:

- identifying whether inputs to South West Water's model agree to underlying sources
- replicating key calculations to ensure the model is operating correctly
- checking that the tariffs and charges comply with key constraints and charging rules
- checking that the revenues from the model outputs are in line with the approved business plan.

The external assurance provider's procedures are agreed-upon procedures and reported to the Board and are used to confirm that there were 'no issues identified that would present concerns that would represent material risk of the tariffs being non-compliant'.

## **Assurance activities in setting New Connections and Developer Services Charging Arrangements for 2025/26**

The charges as presented have been developed using the extent of known information, to be compliant with SWW's legal and statutory obligations and have been developed in accordance with Ofwat's New Connections Charging Rules.

The governance and assurance processes which have been applied to the development of these charges are summarised below:

- SWW has in place a well-established and effective set of policies and processes covered by our robust Quality Management System. Policies and procedures relating to the development of tariffs and charges are regularly updated, and charges have been developed in accordance with the company's quality assurance processes.
- SWW has a Tariffs Steering Group which is attended by a subset of the Executive Management Team, Senior Managers and discusses relevant policies, strategies and governance approach.
- SWW has a Tariffs Working Group which is attended by Senior Managers and relevant personnel to design, model and manage the tariff process.
- as well as internal assurance, external technical assurance is secured on both inputs into the tariff model and the tariff model itself, providing SWW Board confidence the tariffs model is fit for purpose. The reports from the independent third parties and the internal assurance team are available to the SWW Board and confirm there are no material issues.
- at appropriate stages in the development of tariffs and charges, SWW engages with the Consumer Council for Water (CCWater) and other stakeholders. As a part of its engagement with CCWater, SWW discusses its approach to the development of its charges, bill incidence effects and charges policies with its local CCWater representatives.
- SWW has robust processes in place to annually review policies which are contained within the Charges Schedules. For 2025/26, no changes to these policies are planned.
- the separate price controls applying to Bristol Water have separate tariff calculations and maintain policies and tariff rules consistent with those controls and the application in previous years.

### **Board Statement**

The South West Water Board (SWW Board) has overseen the development of the South West Water (SWW) inc Bournemouth Water (BW) and Bristol Water (BRL) New Connections and Developer Services Charging Arrangements for 2025/26.

SWW Board considers the process that SWW has gone through in setting the 2025/26 New Connections and Developer Services Charging Arrangements for SWW, BW and BRL is sufficient to ensure that in all material aspects the charges comply with the relevant legal and statutory obligations and have been developed in accordance with Ofwat's New Connections Charging Rules.

Due to the strong governance and assurance processes applied during the development of the wholesale charges, SWW Board can confirm:

- it has satisfied itself that appropriate systems and processes are in place to ensure that the charges are accurate.

SWW Board has carefully considered whether:

- the New Connections and Developer Services charges schedules are consistent with SWW's legal obligations in relation to New Connections Charging Rules.
- the impacts of the new charges on customer bills for different developer customer groups require impact assessments and handling strategies to be developed.
- appropriate engagement was carried out with relevant stakeholders, including CCWater, in a timely and effective manner.

The SWW Board has assessed the effects of the new charges on customers' bills for a range of different types of development, it approves the impact assessments and handling strategies developed in instances where bill increases for particular types of new developments exceed 10%;

There are no significant changes to the structure of charges except in the Bristol area where charges have been unbundled to improve cost reflectivity and to reflect updated business processes. Charges have also been updated to reflect the removal of income offset as required by Ofwat's new connection charging rules for agreements after 1 April 2025, except where these were in place prior to 1 April 2024. Environment incentive charges have been introduced as per Ofwat's new connection charging arrangement rules.

The impact on individual developments varies according to the services they require, reflecting the greater granularity. The increases are higher for standard scenario 1,2 and 5 than scenarios 4 and 6, which shows a reduction. The handling strategy is the granularity in the charging arrangement documents and engagement with developers, such as through the developer market engagement sessions.

For both SWW and BRL the tether ratios for the standard scenarios are below the maximum set out by Ofwat.