

UN GLOBAL COMPACT

Wessex Water Communication on Progress 2006/07

The following provides an update of Wessex Water's work during 2006/07. More information can be found at <http://www.wessexwater.co.uk/annualreview07>.

Sustainability vision

Our sustainability vision was conceived in partnership with external experts. Signed off by the Board in 2004, it sets out what a sustainable Wessex Water would look like and the things that need to be in place for progress to be made. As part of our continued focus on building the vision into the company's core business planning processes, we have now fully integrated our annual report with our sustainability report, *Striking the Balance*. The report brings together our financial results, service performance and corporate social responsibility into a holistic view of our progress towards becoming a truly sustainable business.

Carbon management

For Wessex Water becoming carbon neutral is a crucial part of our sustainability vision. As part of our commitment to managing carbon we have continued to strongly pursue energy efficiency. For example, we have a computer based energy management system which enables us to track energy anomalies and deal with situations where energy use is higher than normal. Transport efficiencies have been implemented, including a new vehicle management system for sludge tankers to help reduce miles travelled, associated fuel consumption and emissions. Wessex Water is also a partner in the Somerset Bioethanol Vehicles project. The company is maximising self generation of renewable energy, with improvements to help generate more energy from biogas from sludge digesters. We are also continuing to investigate the potential for the generation of significant quantities of electricity from wind power on our land.

Stakeholder consultation

Wessex Water has various arrangements in place – formal and informal – for communications and working with different interests. For example, consultation with stakeholders is an integral part of our low flows project which is investigating sites which may be adversely affected by public water supply abstraction. Successful consultation meetings have been undertaken as part of this project and have contributed to the decision making process. In 2005, a Forum for the Future review of all of our regular discussions with stakeholders also resulted in the creation of an annual stakeholder forum, with the first meeting held in 2007.

Affordability

An affordable water bill is one that a household can pay without sacrificing other necessities. Wessex Water is committed to improving the affordability of its services. Since 2004 we have worked closely with the Citizens Advice Bureau and have funded debt counselling. In addition to our Restart scheme (designed to help get customers who are having difficulty paying back on track), our Restart Plus scheme has now successfully completed its first year. Restart Plus offers additional financial help for those in exceptional difficulty. During 2006/7 we also launched a two year trial of our Assist tariff, a reduced charge for customers in severe financial difficulty.

Upskilling

The high quality of water and sewerage services has been achieved through investment in more sophisticated equipment. Having staff with the relevant technical knowledge and skills is crucial to ensuring the successful operation of this equipment, as well as interpretation of its performance. Launched eighteen months ago, our upskilling programme aims to improve the skill sets within the business by training operators in the field, followed up by competency assessments.