



STRATEGIC  
PANEL  
& Committees

# Strategic Panel Engagement Plan

## Introduction

As the most senior industry group, the Strategic Panel will provide strategic direction and oversee work to improve customer outcomes. It is, therefore, essential that it engages stakeholders to ensure that priorities and programmes of work are aligned to their priorities and needs where possible. Stakeholder engagement will form part of the Strategic Panel's approach to its annual priorities setting and inform its thinking, where appropriate.

As part of the Market Governance Review which took place in 2020/21, the [independent report](#) by Satori Board Review stated that "Market engagement seems relatively under-developed". In its recommendations for improvement, it said "Once clarified communicate and socialise Panel role and function more widely across the market, proactively stimulate market engagement with Panel and its activities."

It is important the Strategic Panel responds to and addresses these recommendations in its approach. The Panel's establishment represents an opportunity to engage more openly and transparently with the market to resolve challenges and deliver effective market governance.

The purpose of this engagement plan is to outline the structured approach that the Strategic Panel will take to engage with stakeholders. This plan will remain flexible but will provide a structure for the Panel and its members to follow.

Stakeholder engagement will remain a continuous process, allowing the views of stakeholders to shape the planning and priorities of the Panel, where appropriate, whilst enabling the Panel to be responsive and objective, and deliver its remit.

## Approach to stakeholder engagement

The Panel defines "stakeholders" as anyone who is affected by, or has an interest in, its activities and outcomes.

Engaging with stakeholders is key to the Strategic Panel delivering on its purpose to provide strategic direction to the non-household water market and to oversee the required programmes of work to improve customer outcomes. The Panel can make better decisions in the interests of stakeholders and customers when their distinct and evolving priorities are at the heart of decision making. The purpose of engagement is to inform the Panel's thinking. Where there are occasions where this is not then reflected in the delivery plan, the Panel will be clear on tradeoffs and how different priorities have been balanced.

The Panel's approach to engagement is based around recognised frameworks for stakeholder engagement best practice:

- **Ongoing two-way dialogue:** engagement is an ongoing two-way dialogue that informs or influences decision-making
- **Golden thread of ‘you said, we did’:** there is a clear link between why and how stakeholder insights have driven priorities and activities
- **A continuous engagement cycle:** identify stakeholders, tailor approaches, engage with a purpose and listen, understand, review, decide, feedback, evaluate and measure impact
- **Responsive and transparent:** explaining how the views, concerns and priorities of stakeholders have influenced decision-making, and how the needs and priorities of different stakeholders have been balanced

## Engagement principles

The Strategic Panel and its engagement will be underpinned by the following principles:

### Transparency – to build stakeholder trust and show that we take their views seriously

- In our decisions and activities, we will be clear about what we are doing, why we are doing it and how we are doing it.
- We will be clear about the objectives we want to achieve with “engagement.”
- We will be clear about the scope of what we are asking and honest about any limitations or constraints.
- We understand the “spectrum of participation” and the difference between each part of that spectrum:
  - Inform, consult, involve, collaborate, empower.

### Objectivity

- We will seek to understand stakeholder priorities, rather than pre-determining their priorities or seeking to endorse our own priorities.

### Evidence-based

- We will seek to ensure that, in our decision-making, we draw as much as possible on available evidence or, where we can, seek to fill existing gaps in evidence.

### **Proportionate**

- We will remain conscious of the need to maintain value for money in our engagement approach.

### **Timely**

- We will seek to engage early in the process.

### **Responsive**

- We will seek to adopt a flexible process to engagement, responding to the information revealed as the process progresses.
- We will utilise stakeholder engagement as part of a continuous process, allowing views to shape planning and priorities and provide feedback as they develop.

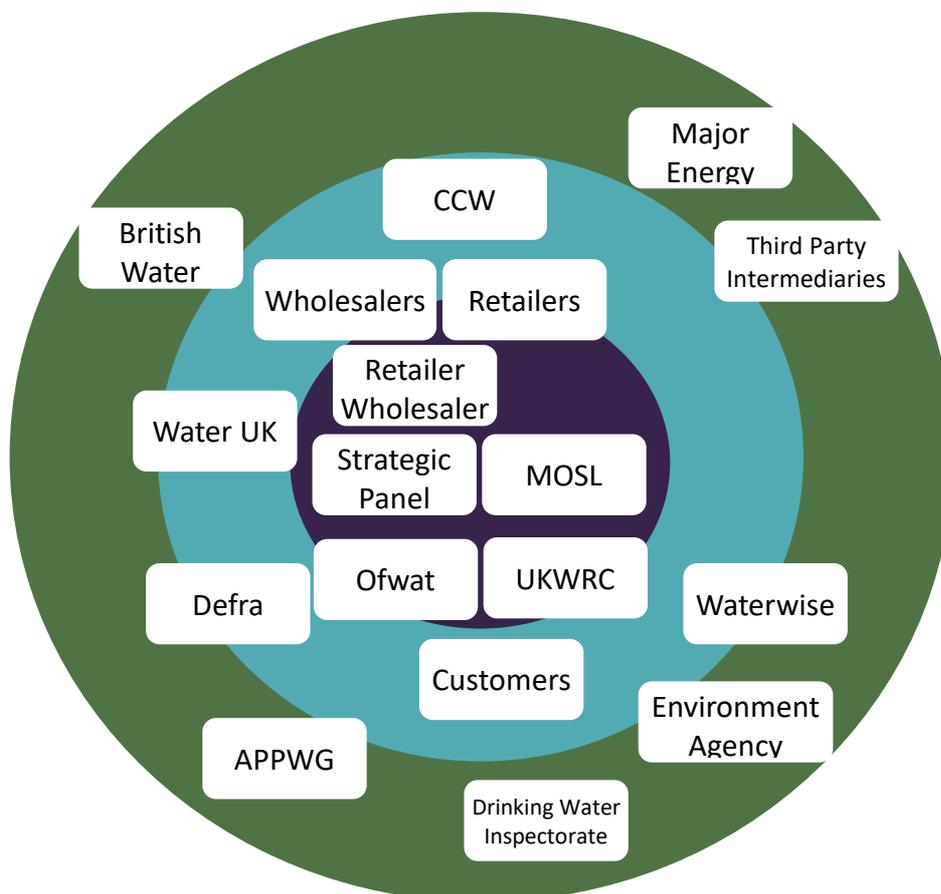
### **Inclusive**

- We will work with stakeholder groups to gather the fullest range of interests.
- We will aim to understand and balance the differences between different stakeholder segments.
- We will aim to understand and balance the differences between existing and future customers.
- We will be aware that those who often participate are not always representative.
- We will use targeted approaches to tailor engagement to the audience in a way that works for them.
- We will gather evidence through a range of methodologies and tools.

## **Key stakeholders**

The diagram below shows a map of key market stakeholders and an indication of their proximity to the non-household water market and the market codes. This is not a view of the relative importance of stakeholder views to the Panel. It is worth noting, for example, the market exists to deliver benefits to customers, however, customers are not close to the market code rulebooks.

The Strategic Panel is clear that it must engage more widely with those not currently or directly involved in the non-household market. In order to engage as inclusively as possible, the Panel will use targeted, principles-driven approaches to engagement that are adapted to meet the needs of different audiences.



The Panel has mapped its key stakeholder groups as follows:

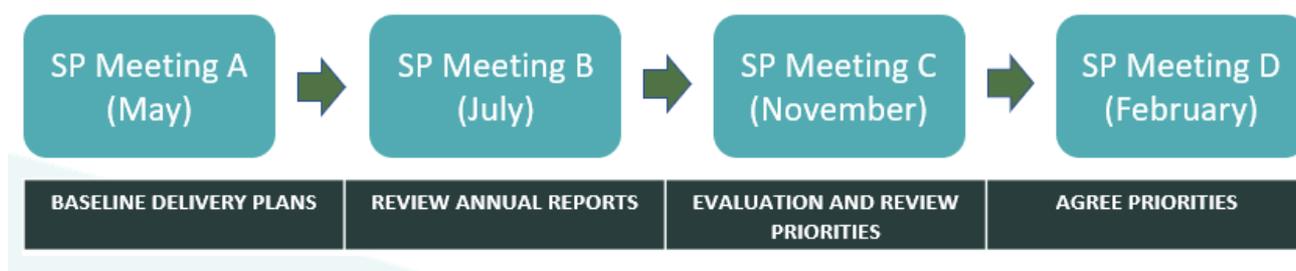
- Customer Segments
  - (Small / Large)
  - (Household / Non-Household)
  - (Usage Type – e.g. domestic equivalent / industrial use)
  - (Current / Future)
- Retailers
- Customer groups
- Wholesalers
- Water trade bodies
- Regulators (plural)
- Potential market entrants
- Defra / Government

- Third Party Intermediaries (TPIs)
- Environmental Bodies / Climate Change Movements
- Non-Governmental Organisations (e.g. Waterwise, Blueprint for Water)
- MOSL
- Citizens
- Investors
- Politicians
- Innovators and disrupters.

The Panel is clear this list will need to evolve as the Panel’s priorities and new stakeholders enter the sector.

## Customers

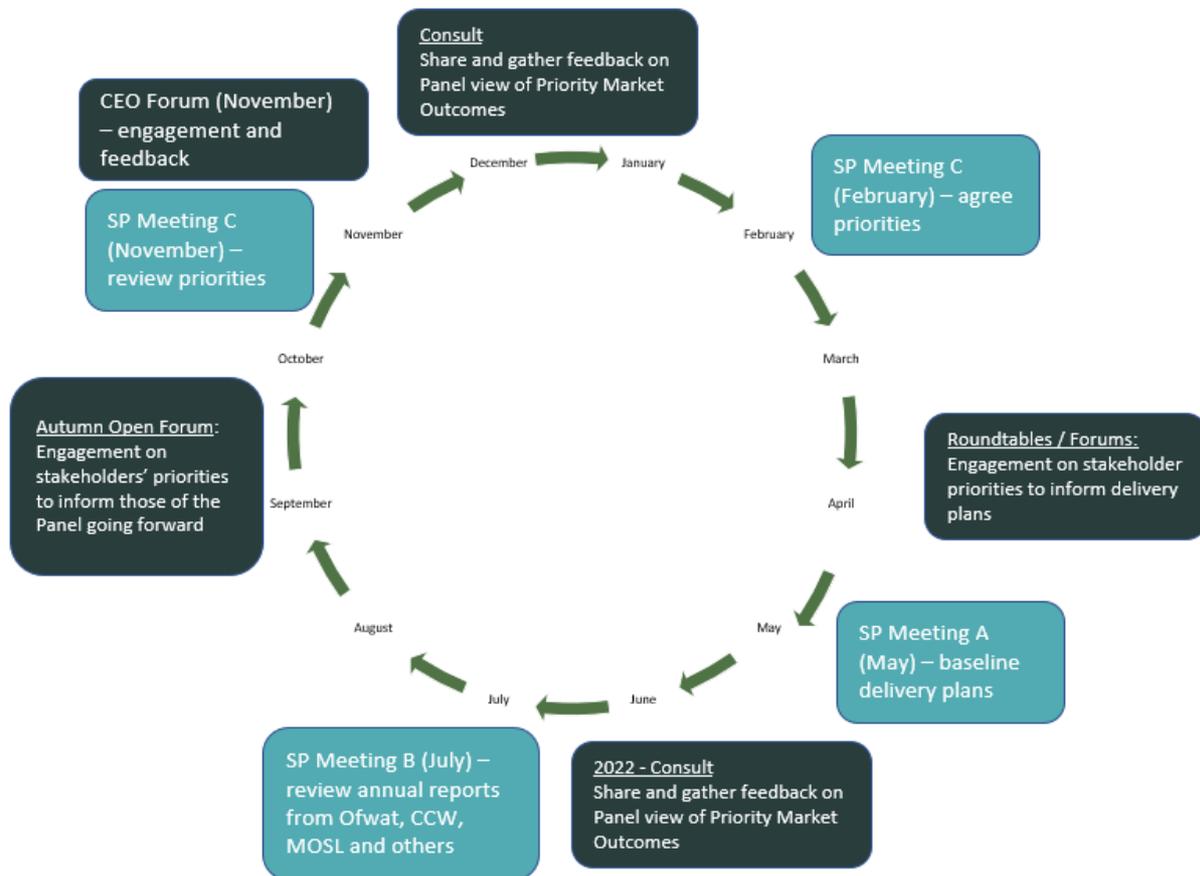
The Strategic Panel is clear that it needs to fully understand the needs and priorities of current, potential and future customers. Robust customer insight will be critical to that understanding. As a priority in 2022/23, the Panel will commission a review and gap analysis of existing customer insights as a basis for its ongoing and future engagement with customers. This will not look to start from scratch but to build on the work already done by the likes of CCW and Ofwat and the various reports published.



## Engagement timeline

The engagement timeline for the Strategic Panel will be focused on the Panel’s business as usual cycle of meetings in February, May, July and November.

With each of the meetings having a specific purpose, the engagement that the Panel and its members undertake will be timed to ensure they allow stakeholders the best opportunities to influence priorities, ongoing programmes of work and the outputs.



Below is an overview of the engagement timeline throughout the year and the various opportunities for stakeholders to influence priorities and programmes of work. The diagram outlines the business as usual cycle of engagement and meetings going forward.

Because the Strategic Panel was established with specific transitional responsibilities over the winter of 2021/22, focusing on establishing its working practices and appointing the Code Change Committee, the initial engagement cycle will begin after the Strategic Panel takes over from the previous Panel at the end of the transition period in February 2022. Therefore, rather than waiting until autumn 2022, stakeholders will have the opportunity to influence the Panel’s initial priorities in the coming months so the Panel can ensure they are aligned to those of stakeholders.

It is envisaged stakeholders will have two principal opportunities to input each year:

- **Autumn open forum** – to enable as broad a range of views as possible, members of the Panel will lead an open forum to inform the Panel’s strategic priorities for the coming year. This will be held in the autumn and will inform the Panel’s review of priorities at its November meeting. This forum will be open to all interested stakeholders and not just the market actors illustrated in the diagram above. The Panel is particularly keen to involve prospective new entrants to the market and the wider customer and stakeholder groups identified in its mapping.
- **Segment specific deliberative roundtables/forums** – members of the Panel will host smaller, targeted, deliberative forums to inform the Panel’s thinking. These are planned for spring and summer and with different stakeholder segments e.g. small retailers, larger retailers, wholesalers, NAVs, self-suppliers, customer representative bodies. These will be designed to gather the fullest range of interests as those who always participate are not always representative and the voices of some segments of the market may not always be heard in a larger forum. Existing forums (e.g. the self-supply forum) will look to be used where they already exist to minimise the impacts on stakeholders and Panel members’ time.

There will also be a number of other avenues to engage with the Panel outside these forums:

- **One-to-one meetings** – The Chair or delegated Panel member(s) will meet with, for example, with senior leaders in the market. This may include Ofwat, Defra, CCW, EA and trading parties. It will also include regular meetings with the Market Operator, MOSL, including its CEO and Chair, and on occasions, the wider Board (through attendance at MOSL Board meetings).
- **Consultations and requests for information (RFIs)** – the Panel will seek to provide early consultations with the market, to provide easy-access opportunities for stakeholders to digest topics under consideration and influence the Panel’s priorities and activities. This will be supported where possible with webinars or online tools (provided on behalf of the Strategic Panel by MOSL) to provide easy-access opportunities for stakeholders to digest topics under consideration.

The Panel anticipates that engagement on more detailed matters associated with work to deliver its priority outcomes will be undertaken by the body that is responsible for this detailed work (e.g. a Panel Committee, the Market Operator or Ofwat etc.)

## Engagement culture

The Chair and Panel members will work with MOSL to embed its good practice engagement principles across its engagement planning and activities and to ensure that insight and input from all of these

engagements are captured effectively so that they can inform the Panel in a timeously and transparent way. The Panel will also develop a way to measure how successful the Panel has been in its engagement activities over the course of each year and identify continuous ways to improve.