

Stakeholder Newsletter

**COVID-19
UPDATE**



INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 emergency has created an atmosphere of concern and uncertainty for us all but as a key public service we believe it is more important than ever that we stick to delivering our day to day business as closely as we can. Therefore we are maintaining and strengthening our focus on delivering our core service of providing uninterrupted top quality water to all of our customers and communities. Although working arrangements have changed significantly over the last two weeks, our dedicated and committed staff continue to be available around the clock to maintain this essential public service and to support our customers in all sorts of ways.

We have prepared this short newsletter in order to reassure all of our stakeholders that for us it is 'business as usual' and that our teams are working 24/7 to deliver our water service. In addition we are putting in place arrangements to help and support our most challenged and vulnerable customers during this difficult period. As a 160 year old, local water company we care passionately about the communities we serve and are doing all we can to help.

Please contact me if you have any questions.

Bob Taylor
Chief Executive Officer

MAINTAINING SUPPLY TO OUR CUSTOMERS IS OUR CORE FOCUS

When we first heard about the COVID-19 we mobilised our Business Continuity Plan for Pandemic situations.

The key focus of this plan is to maintain safe and secure supplies. We looked at:

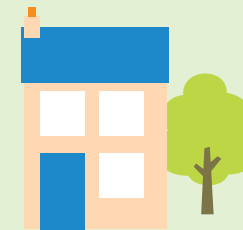
- Working with the supply chain to ensure sufficiency of chemicals, products including PPE and services that are operationally critical.
- Risk based review of planned works, delaying / ceasing as necessary, where they do not represent a risk to security of supply.
- Instigated new working practices, such as working from home and separating staff into smaller remote teams, to manage the risk of a large proportion of staff being unwell or self-isolating at the same time.
- Working with contractors to agree plans to support works that are critical to supplies in the event of a shortage of direct labour.

We are confident that we currently have the plans and resources in place to maintain reliable and secure water supplies for our customers and our communities.



OUR STAFF

In line with Government advice we quickly changed our working practices which has resulted in a large number of our staff now working from home.



80% OF STAFF ARE WORKING FROM HOME OR REMOTELY IN THE FIELD

AN INDUSTRY WORKING TOGETHER

At industry level we have been working together to ensure that we understand the key issues that will affect our ability to deliver services to our customers. In addition we are monitoring stocks of vital supplies such as PPE and chemicals and where needed helping each other by sharing.



COMMUNICATIONS

We have set up a link on our website giving customers information about how we are dealing with Covid-19.

We have utilised all our social media channels to promote and support the government and public health advice about staying at home and social distancing. This advice has been given to our staff, customers and the wider community.

We are updating customers via our website and twitter accounts on a regular basis. Please look at either of these for information.

www.portsmouthwater.co.uk

 @PortsmouthWater



HAVANT THICKET RESERVOIR

Our plan for submitting the planning application for the construction of the Havant Thicket Reservoir by the end of the year continues. On Monday 11 May we will be opening a month long on-line public consultation. The responses will help shape the planning application.

More details about the reservoir and the consultation can be found at www.portsmouthwater.co.uk/new-reservoir/

CUSTOMERS / HOUSEHOLDS

With the majority of our customer service staff now set up to work from home we are pleased to say we have had no significant issues in managing our household customers – call volumes are about 70% of our normal expectation for this time of year.

We are encouraging customers to contact us by e-mail or utilise live chat where possible. This has been communicated via our social media channels.



WATER DEMAND

We are seeing an increase in demand of around 10%, with household demand 10-12% higher and commercial demand lower.

Sunday has historically been the highest demand day in the week. We are now saying 'every day is like Sunday' in terms of water usage.



Despite this increase, which is predicted to last throughout the "lockdown" period, we are confident that we will have enough supplies to ensure water is available to customers throughout the summer.

HELPING THE FINANCIALLY VULNERABLE

Our business ethos is to provide a personal local service with staff empowered to do the right thing in their dealings with customers. Accordingly, we believe that this enables us to deal with customers in a flexible and compassionate way that will ensure that all customers are supported through this difficult time.

In addition to the financially vulnerable we have placed added focus on:

- Offering payment holidays for those that need it.
- Promoting tariffs that assist customers - we have simplified the application processes for these tariffs.

We have also:

- Stopped all enforcement activity to recover debt and our Affordability and Debt team are contacting those with known financial vulnerability to review their current payment arrangements to ensure that existing payment plans remain affordable.
- Started a proactive campaign to identify and assist those that find themselves falling behind with their water bill for the first time.

