

What do consumers think about water services in Scotland and Scottish Water's long-term strategy?

What is the Strategic Review of Charges 2027-33 (SRC27) process?

- SRC27 is a statutory process that sets **the maximum amount Scottish Water can charge consumers** for their water supply and wastewater services in a regulated 6-year period.
- As part of this process, **the Water Industry Commission for Scotland (WICS) will review Scottish Water's Business Plan** and issue a Final Determination on whether it is **affordable for consumers** and offers **value for money**.
- In commissioning the current review, Scottish Ministers required that WICS' Final Determination must **'command consumers' support'** ([Scottish Government, 2024](#)).

Why deliberative research?

- In deliberative research, participants are provided with expert information and given time to discuss an issue. By deliberating together, they reach informed conclusions that might be different from their initial views ([Burchardt, 2013](#)).
- To support the development of WICS' Draft and Final Determinations, Consumer Scotland has commissioned deliberative research to understand consumer views on Scottish Water's Business Plan and the proposed charges for customers over the next 6-year period.

The Process

- Phase 1 of the research familiarised household participants with the topic, explored their initial views and awareness of water and wastewater services, and examined key issues facing Scottish Water for its 25-year Long-Term Strategy and SRC27 business planning process.
- Phases 1 and 2 of the research are complete, and a separate summary of the second phase is also published on our website. Both summaries should be read with an awareness that **the third and final stage is still to take place**.
- Phase 3 will test consumer support for Scottish Water's Final Business Plan. Any unresolved areas of concern will be considered by WICS within the preparation of a Draft Determination.

Key findings

1. In phase 1 **participants initially reported mixed levels of knowledge about water and wastewater services** but were **generally positive** about the quality and supply of water in Scotland.
2. There was a **broadly positive view of Scottish Water** and the services they deliver, although some uncertainty remained about what its publicly owned status means in practice, for example how it is held accountable for its performance.
3. Participants were encouraged by Scottish Water's Long-Term Strategy and commitment to investing in sustainable solutions. They highlighted areas that they believed Scottish Water needed to focus more on, including:
 - external and internal sewer flooding,
 - repairing and replacing pipes,
 - maintaining water quality, and
 - ensuring uninterrupted supply.

They also thought Scottish Water should continue to prioritise the environment and do more around water use reduction.

4. Participants acknowledged the challenges ahead facing Scottish Water but raised **concerns about the impact of future price rises** on households already struggling financially. There was a clear appetite to learn more about what price increases and inflation might look like in the years ahead and the factors that could affect this. It should be noted that affordability support is a policy matter for the Scottish Government and outwith the remit of WICS and Scottish Water in relation to SRC27.
5. As Scottish Water's Business Plan developed, participants highlighted the importance of Scottish Water maintaining public trust and confidence through **transparent communication**.

Next steps

- Informed in part by the research so far, **Scottish Water will submit their Final Business Plan on 26th February 2026**.
- Phase 3 of our research will then seek to establish whether this Plan 'commands consumer support'.
- The results of our research will be made available to WICS ahead of their Draft Determination being prepared and published on 30th June 2026. The **final results (covering all three phases) will be published shortly after by Consumer Scotland**.