

The Rt. Hon. Alistair Carmichael
Chair – Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
Select Committee

Email: EFRACOM@parliament.uk

Date: 14 March 2025



Following my appearance before the Select Committee on 12 March, and as promised, I have followed up with those that were involved in the production of the television advert so that I can answer Helena Dollimore MP's question on costs.

The advert originally aired in Autumn 2023 and then again in Spring 2024. At the time, the use of storm overflows was regularly featuring in news coverage and on social media, and the aim of the advert was to raise awareness of what storm overflows are, our position on their use, what we were doing, and what customers could do to help reduce their operation (e.g. by installing rainwater butts on their properties).

The cost of production and broadcast of the advert, plus associated evaluation activities, came to around £250,000. At that point in time, we were spending £3m each month improving overflows.

The Advertising Standards Agency investigation came about after a complaint from one individual. The advert was no longer being broadcast at the time of that complaint and was not reused. We engaged with the Agency and accepted the findings.

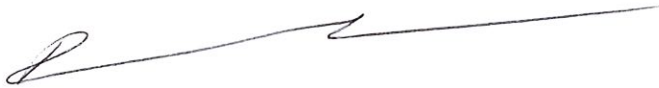
As part of the campaign we undertook our own independent market research of 550 people and found that viewers were largely positive about the advert, with feedback that it was educational/informative and included clear and simple information. More than half of those who had watched the advert said that they would consider installing a water butt on their property, and more than 80% of our customers say that it is important that we communicate our work through advertising.

We have a range of communication channels that we use to engage with our customers, and although TV advertising is more expensive than most, our view is that in certain circumstances it is the best means to reach more customers across the region we serve. In the event that we commit to the expenditure on a TV advertising campaign, we always undertake significant market research beforehand and afterwards to ensure that it represents good value for money for our customers.

Separately, I really welcomed the opportunity to discuss with the Committee the work we have been doing to use nature and catchment-based solutions in partnership with others. We were very pleased to see that the possibility of a catchment-based approach to regulation features in the Cunliffe Commission's Call for Evidence, and will be responding in detail on this.

If you or members of the Committee would like to see one of the nature-based solutions I mentioned, we would be delighted to arrange a visit. Please do let me know if this would be of interest.

Yours sincerely



Ruth Jefferson
Chief Executive

Wessex Water
Claverton Down
Bath BA2 7WW

Tel 01225 526 000
Web wessexwater.co.uk

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