

Regulated Water Supply

South Staffordshire Water operates under a single supply licence as Cambridge Water and South Staffs Water. It is a regulated water only company that provides clean drinking water to customers and businesses across Cambridgeshire and in parts of Staffordshire, Derbyshire and the West Midlands. It does not take away wastewater or treat sewage.

The reporting year marks the first year of the investment planning period known as AMP8, which covers the five years from 2025 to 2030. The business has committed to deliver ambitious plans over the course of AMP8 to improve its water supply network, protect and enhance the environment and deliver the services that are important to its customers. This includes significantly increasing the amount of support it makes available to those customers who may be struggling to pay their water bills.

There have been some challenges for the business during the reporting year. A combination of geopolitical and price shocks, coupled with the ongoing war in Ukraine, have continued to drive a cost-of-living crisis that is making bill affordability a greater concern for some of its customers. In addition, the period of prolonged dry weather and significant drought in the Cambridge Water and South Staffs Water operating areas during the spring and summer, followed by a wet and at times cold winter, has impacted its performance for some of its weather-dependent targets, including household water demand and mains bursts. However, people across the business have demonstrated their professionalism by working hard to ensure the continued provision of clean, safe drinking water to customers across both regions, particularly during the summer.



Delivering for customers

A key focus for the business is always delivering reliable services for its customers and being trusted to do this well and efficiently. This includes performance in respect of its regulatory measures of customer experience for household, nonhousehold retail and developer services customers. During the five-year planning period from 2020 to 2025 (AMP7), the business made some progress but failed to meet its stretching targets overall. It has started to see improvements during the reporting year but recognises it still has more work to do in this area.

One of the ways the business has demonstrated its strong commitment to being community-focused is with the publication of its vulnerability strategy in June 2025. This ensures customers who may find themselves in vulnerable circumstances can access water services that are inclusive, appropriate and affordable. It aims to ensure no customers are left behind and that appropriately targeted support is available to meet their needs.

The business also considers that being accountable to its customers is a key consideration for all its decisions. As well as the exploring how it will comply with the regulator Ofwat's new consumer involvement rule, introduced under powers granted by the Water (Special Measures) Act 2025, it has also welcomed the launch of the new Water Voice accountability sessions organised and facilitated by the Consumer Council for Water (CCW), the consumer watchdog. This gives a small, representative panel of customers the opportunity to quiz senior executives from the business directly, ensuring it listens, learns and acts on their concerns. The main output of the first session in March 2026 was an action plan, agreed with customers, on the things they expect the business to deliver. This helps to build trust and confidence in the services it provides.

Ensuring operational resilience

There are a number of areas where the business has performed well against its stretching targets during the year. One of these is its universal metering programme, where it has exceeded its target for the number of meters installed in the year. This is a critical programme for the business – as well as giving customers more power over their water bills, it will also help to build resilience in its network. To ensure success, the business has put communication at the heart of the programme. It has also put plans in place to help customers, especially those in vulnerable circumstances, through the process of transitioning to metered charges.

Another area where the business has performed well is with its main replacement programme. Here, it has been targeting areas of the network that have a history of bursts or leaks to help build long-term operational resilience. Again, clear and timely communication to customers and other stakeholders is critical to the success of this programme. The business has exceeded its target for the reporting year, placing it in a strong position for the remaining four years of AMP8.

One area where the business has struggled to meet its target is in relation to its commitment to proactively replace lead pipes across its network. In its AMP8 investment plan, it said would undertake a programme to replace 'mains to tap' connections at primary schools and nurseries across the Cambridge Water and South Staffs Water operating areas where it believed there were lead pipes. However, investigations carried out during the reporting year have so far yielded disappointing results, with fewer lead pipes found than expected. The business is working with Ofwat and other stakeholders on the next steps for this programme of work.



Protecting the environment

Both the Cambridge Water and South Staffs Water operating areas have been designated areas of serious water stress by the Environment Agency. However, the impact of prolonged dry weather and drought is more keenly felt in the Cambridge Water operating area. There are several reasons for this: the principal one being that all the water the business has available to supply comes from groundwater sources that feed the rare chalk stream habitats across the region. When combined with stringent abstraction caps, this reduces the volume of water it can sustainably take from these water sources to put into public supply, in order to protect the environment.

During the reporting year, the business continued to work closely with the UK Government, Anglian Water and other stakeholders on the Fens reservoir and Grafham transfer programmes, which are continuing to progress in line with the timelines set out in its AMP8 investment plan. The business has also continued to deliver against its other environmental obligations, including its statutory Water Industry National Environment Programme (WINEP) schemes and its catchment management and biodiversity enhancement programmes.

A changing water sector

Everything the business has delivered during the reporting year has been set within the context of a changing regulatory environment. In late 2024, the Government announced its intention to establish an Independent Water Commission, chaired by former Bank of England Deputy Governor Sir Jon Cunliffe. The Commission was tasked with developing a set of recommendations to fundamentally reshape the regulatory framework within which the England and Wales water sector operates, with the aim of rebuilding public trust and confidence in the monopoly water companies.

Along with other water company executives, Elena Karpathakis, South Staffordshire Water's Managing Director, met with Sir Jon and his team to help shape the Commission's final report, which was published in July 2025. In response to the report's recommendations, the Government published a White Paper in January 2026. The business welcomes the clarity of the White Paper and will continue to work with the Government and other stakeholders to ensure a regulatory framework that means it can continue to deliver value for customers, society and the environment, reflecting its role as the provider of an essential public service.

Getting the basics right – brilliantly

During the reporting year, the business launched its 'Brilliant Basics' programme. This is a structured performance programme that is designed to strengthen the core management practices of frontline and mid-level management across the business. Its purpose is to create consistency in how teams are led, how performance is managed and how operational decisions are made. The business thinks this will help to deliver more reliable, proactive and data-driven services for its customers.

The programme starts with a three-day Management Development Workshop for operational managers and their leaders. This training focuses on building essential capabilities, including in the areas of:

- time management;
- prioritisation;
- data-led conversations;
- coaching skills;
- change leadership; and
- building high-performing teams.

Following training, each manager progresses into a 12-week coaching phase. Coaches selected from across the business work alongside managers through weekly sessions and observational support to help embed new routines across the business. They also help to strengthen accountability and support cultural change that benefits customers through more consistent service delivery.

Underpinning the programme are improved dashboards, clearer baselines and a more transparent view of operational performance. These tools ensure managers focus on the metrics that matter most. This enables them to make quicker, more informed decisions aligned to the outcomes the business wants to deliver to customers, society and the environment.

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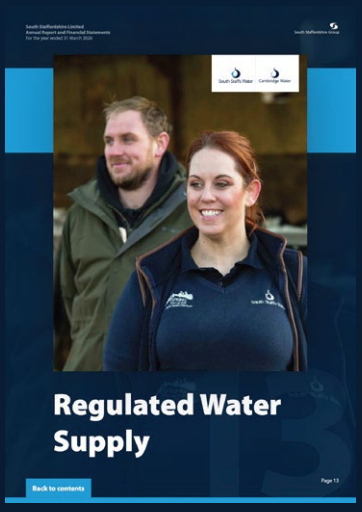

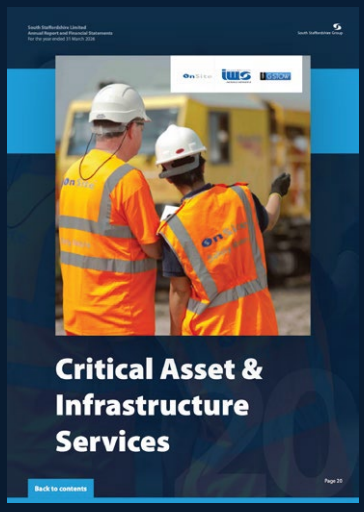

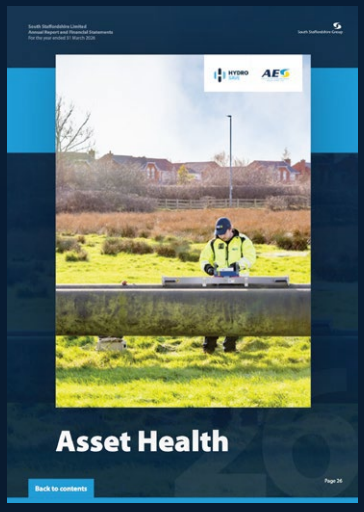

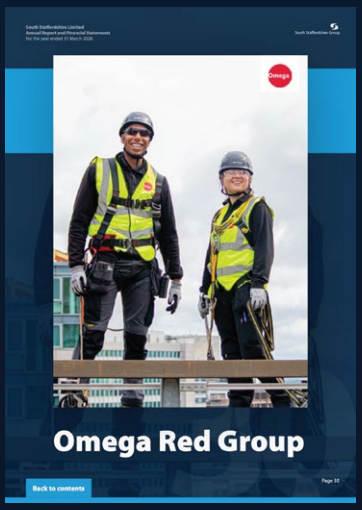

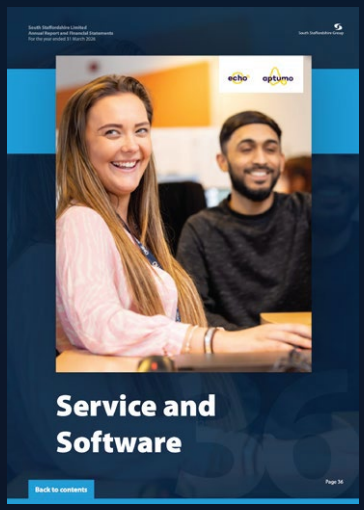





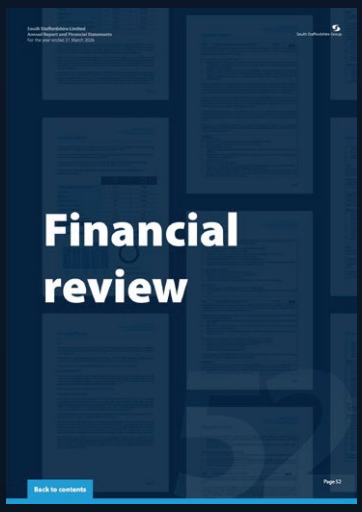

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(formerly South Staffordshire Plc)