

---

Centre City Tower, 7 Hill Street, Birmingham B5 4UA  
21 Bloomsbury Street, London WC1B 3HF

Ms Liv Garfield  
Chief Executive Officer  
Severn Trent Water  
PO Box 5309  
Coventry  
West Midlands  
CV3 9FH

19 June 2018

Dear Liv,

Water is an essential service and customers have a right to expect their water company to be well prepared to protect them from the impact of bad weather. The thaw that followed the 'Beast from the East' period of cold weather in late February and early March 2018 caused supply interruptions to over 200,000 customers across England and Wales. Some interruptions lasted several days, impacting households, businesses and essential public services, like hospitals and schools.

As a sector we must understand why this happened; why some companies have performed better than others and, crucially, that we take steps to ensure that there is a significant and sustained improvement in performance by the companies who did not perform well and a step up in the ability of the industry as a whole to protect customers from the impact of bad weather. Importantly, companies should take ownership of and responsibility for this process and ensure that lessons are learned so that their customers are better served in the future.

While Dee Valley Water was not heavily affected during this incident, we expect it to carefully consider the issues identified in our review, in this letter and in any internal review it conducts. Dee Valley Water should publish a response to the matters raised by 28 September 2018. This response should be proportionate to the issues identified. We would also like Dee Valley Water to help share best practice across the sector as a whole.

## **Planning and preparation**

- There are specific plans to manage a freeze and thaw incident, however Dee Valley Water indicated that their incident trigger for severe weather was a red

weather warning from the Met Office. **This is a high threshold, and is out of step with evidence of best practice demonstrated by other companies.**

- The response demonstrated **some evidence of co-ordination with Severn Trent Water, particularly in terms of staffing levels.** However other than this, there was no sharing of staffing and network preparedness plans with other utilities.

For the future, Dee Valley Water must take ownership of issues we have identified in this letter and our report, so that its customers are even better protected the next time there is bad weather.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'John Russell', written in a cursive style.

**John Russell**  
**Senior Director, Strategy and Planning**