

Meeting note

15:00 – 16:00, Thursday, 11 May 2023
via Microsoft Teams

BR-MeX workshop – meeting note

This note provides a summary of the key points raised by water companies, Retailers and other stakeholders (with names excised) during the 11th May 2023 BR-MeX working group.

The accompanying slides on our website provide further details regarding the overview of BR-MeX which was presented by Ofwat during the workshop.

Participants

Organisation	Participant
Ofwat	Shaun Kent (Director, Business Retail Market)
	Sean Mills (Principal, Business Retail Market)
Wholesalers	
PRT	Sam Dawson
SES	Julie-Ann Anderson
SWB	Brett Conibere
TMS	Gerard Lyden
UUW	Paul Stelfox
Retailers	
UKWRC (Business Stream)	Trevor Nelson
UKWRC (Wave)	Wendy Monk
Other stakeholders	
CCW	Adam Boynes

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Overview of BR-MeX working group

Ofwat provided an outline of the working group's purpose noting that the group is intended to advise the development of the B-MeX and R-MeX survey design and pilot period.

Ofwat provided a further update on its timetable for the development of the B-MeX and R-MeX surveys.

Discussion 1: definition of contact for the B-MeX survey

The group's discussion centred on the need to define a business customer contact to determine which contacts are in scope of the B-MeX survey. Ofwat noted its starting point was that the B-MeX incentive should cover all instances where there has been a meaningful contact between the Wholesaler and the business customer in relation to a Wholesaler service – either directly or indirectly (ie. via the bi-laterals hub).

The main discussion points were as follows:

Bi-laterals contacts

- Question of need to isolate wholesaler aspect of contact, versus 'end to end'. Some participants noted that there is a question as to what we're trying to measure on the bi-laterals side of the survey. Is it the end to end customer experience or just the wholesaler aspect of the process. For example there are some meter issues that mean customers have less direct interaction with wholesalers e.g. looking at external meters. The level of interaction here is therefore relatively small and do we want to survey this? A couple of other participants by contrast suggested that we should be focusing on customer outcomes, even if the level of interaction was relatively small, meaning there may be some merit in the 'end to end' perception of customer.
- Contact details. One wholesaler participant noted that there are lots of things to consider regarding the contact e.g. the contact details for a hotel chain are likely to be for the front desk as opposed to the person on

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site that you will be most interested in surveying. Another noted that using the bilateral hub for the B-MeX survey could be problematic. For example if the customer says the problem was 'wait time' it's not necessarily clear whose responsibility this was (Retailer or Wholesaler) and therefore the results will be subject to challenge by water companies. Asked whether we are therefore wedded to the idea of using the bilateral hub contacts.

Survey design:

- Need to be clear about market structure and difference between retailer and wholesaler function. One participant noted that direct and indirect contacts between Wholesalers and customers are very different things, although in both cases there is a question as to whether we know who the customer has spoken to and what the contact was about. A couple of participants therefore highlighted the need to be careful that any survey design captures these difficulties. However another wholesaler participant emphasised that we also don't necessarily want this survey to have to educate customers and that a 'short and sweet' survey would be better and have a higher response rate. Another participant noted agreement with keeping the survey as simple as possible, but still thinks it's worth the survey explaining the different between Retailers and Wholesalers in the market to aid the customer.
- Statistical validity – One wholesaler participant noted that there is a question about statistical validity given the limited availability of sample and noted that C-MeX has a sample size of 1600

Pilots

- UU and Yorkshire pilots. The group noted that UU and Yorkshire had commissioned Accent to pilot aspects of the B-Mex survey, with a view to identifying issues and recommendations. Paul Stelfox shared Accent's report undertaken for UU.

Other – Gerard Lyden noted that the wholesalers are meeting at the end of May, and asked if this could be a chance to socialise some issues. Sean noted that he will speak to Sam and Gerard after the meeting about this.

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Ofwat thanked the group for their thoughts and noted that these are useful input into the pilot thinking. In terms of next steps Ofwat noted that they are close to appointing their contractor to kick off the pilot work and would come back to the group once the contractor is in place.