



South Staffs Water

Green Lane, Walsall WS2 7PD
www.south-staffs-water.co.uk

28th December 2023

Dear John

Thank you for your letter dated 16th January in relation to the freeze thaw that hit the UK in December 2022 and the impact on our business and customers.

For a number of years we have managed extreme weather events via winter and summer action planning initiatives, referred to internally as WAP and SAP. Both processes follow the same outline design with triggers based around actual or anticipated impacts and facilitates an escalation from business as usual through to an Event, and further escalation to an Incident if necessary. This process was followed for the 2022 Freeze Thaw, with our Winter Action Planning process commencing on 28th November, escalating to an Event on 12th December and to an Incident on 18th December 2022.

Appendix 1 includes a day by day overview of Incident.

Please see below our responses to the questions raised in your letter:

- a. ***Details of the impact of the freeze thaw in your company area, including: underlying causes of any impacts; numbers of properties and customers experiencing problems; length of time to resolve outages; etc.***

The prolonged subzero temperatures and subsequent thaw on the weekend of 17th/18th December 2022 resulted in a significant increase in demand across both our South Staffs (21% and Cambridge (31%) regions.

Between 14th and 19th of December a total of 109 customers contacted us suffering from frozen domestic pipework. We supported all of these with practical advise as to how to resolve the issue, and visited a small number at their properties to assist them in restoring their supply.

Throughout the freeze thaw event, we successfully maintained all customer supplies, across both regions, with the exception of 'typical' interruptions to facilitate mains repairs. Only 3 burst main repairs resulted in outages of greater than 6 hours, with two of these resulting in customer interruptions to supply, as summarised below:

Event	Location	Duration	Customers affected	Main size	ODI Impact	Date
Burst Main	Davey Close, Impington, Cambridge	6hrs 36mins	71	3" PVC	2 Secs	14 th Dec
Burst Main	Castle Street, Cambridge	10hrs 52mins	Zero	12" Cast iron	0 Secs	18 th Dec
Burst Main	Victoria Park, West Chesterton, Cambridge	6hrs 23mins	7	3" Cast Iron	0 Secs	13 th Dec

- b. ***A full and candid explanation of your company's response to any impacts, including: communication with customers; mutual aid with other companies; distributions of bottled water; and identification of vulnerable customers and the support provided for them.***

Despite the challenges that the weather presented our operations across both regions, no customers in either region were materially impacted, with only ‘typical’ length interruptions to supply while burst mains were repaired, with interruptions to supply greater than 6 hours outlined above. All customers who suffered in interruption to supply greater than 6 hours had bottled water delivered to their properties, irrespective of whether they featured on our Priority Services Register.

Mutual Aid was explored with Severn Trent due to the Incident at Hampton Loade outlined above, however due to the works being returned to supply within 4 hours Mutual Aid was not required.

All of our customer communications were proactive (See Appendix 3) as we did not experience any material loss of supplies.

c. Arrangements for compensation to impacted customers.

None of our customers had a reduction in service such that we triggered payment of any GSS compensation to any customer in either region.

d. Lessons learned from this experience and changes you intend to implement; and whether lessons learned from the 2018 freeze-thaw and recommendations from Ofwat's Out In The Cold review have been implemented.

On 9th February 2023 we held a post Incident review, and critically appraise our performance and identify learning points for us to further enhance our response to similar challenges in the future. We are in the process of concluding our investigation, however our early view is that the Incident was well managed, our colleagues supported our customers well and that we need to focus further on risks associated with condensation at our production assets. As referenced above, we are in the process of creating a controlled atmosphere around the PLCs at Hampton Loade, however we have further reviews to undertake at other critical assets.

In terms of implementing learning from the 2018 ‘Beast from the East’ freeze thaw incident, we concluded the following, together with an update as we entered the 2022 freeze thaw Incident:

<u>2018 Learning to be implemented</u>	<u>2022 Update</u>
A more pro-active communication with customers relating to winter preparedness	Targeted and tailored messages issued through multi communication streams well ahead of incident occurring.
Review of Priority Services Register (PSR) and refresh of contacts with local government, MP's etc.	The register is now reviewed annually which local government and MP's updated accordingly
Management of void properties, isolation of supplies to avoid leaks in unoccupied properties.	Agreement to isolate void properties where material leakage is identified to safeguard their properties
The need to facilitate a 24/7 social media presence.	Our social media now responds 24/7 from 2019 onwards.
The need for a greater number of 4x4 vehicles in the fleet	Vehicles purchased and in use.

In summary, our winter and summer action planning processes are well established, and have allowed the business to successfully navigate a number of extreme weather events in recent years, including the December 2022 Freeze Thaw Incident. Collectively, with our supply chain partners, we were able to successfully navigate the following challenges that December 2022 posed:

- A 21% and a 31% increase in the South Staffs and Cambridge regions respectively relative to 3rd December before the freezing temperatures
- A 50% increase in burst mains in December relative to average
- A material increase in leakage – December 2022 recorded the highest monthly leakage value on record at 104 MI/d. Best from the East in March 2018 was 95 MI/d.

Despite this, we were able to achieve:

- no material impact to customers in either region
- no customers suffered supply interruptions for greater than 12 hours in either region
- 78 customers without water for >6 hours due to 'typical' burst main repairs
- all operational service reservoirs remain in supply throughout in both regions
- no GSS compensation paid to any customer as none received any significant erosion in level of service delivered
- no alternative supplies stations established as mains supply was maintained throughout

I trust this response provides you the overview that you require. Should you require anything further to assist with the investigation you are undertaking into the sectors collective performance please do not hesitate to contact me.

Regards

Andrew Lobley
Operations Director