



Dŵr Cymru  
Welsh Water

# Brand book

## How we sound



If you've got any questions about our new voice or if you'd like some more examples of Welsh Water's voice in use, just get in touch with the communication team.

**[commsdesignteam@dwrcymru.com](mailto:commsdesignteam@dwrcymru.com)**  
**01443 452628**



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social media
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(we didn't quite get to Z...)



# Introduction





Information  
is giving out;  
communication  
is getting  
through.

Sydney J Harris



We communicate with our customers and each other in lots of different ways. Letters, phone conversations, emails, tweets, giant signs, bills...

This information is always important – and sometimes it can be complicated.

So we need to simplify the way we talk to people. We need to make ourselves easier to understand and make everyone's lives a little easier as a result.

**It's all about being human – and talking to people as individuals.**





Building a bond with our customers through the way we talk to them will help to build trust. It means we can inspire them to work with us to change our part of the world for the better. It also means they're going to be a lot more forgiving when things go wrong.

This book gives you tips and advice to make sure that you're using our new voice effectively. It's also full of useful 'before and after' examples to show how this all works in practice.

**Words are powerful, so let's use them wisely.**



LineMarker

# Our company name



**Yes, Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water is a really long name to keep repeating inside booklets and web pages. So, here are five easy rules to follow:**

- 1 When you're writing in Welsh, just use Dŵr Cymru.
- 2 When you're writing in English, use Welsh Water.
- 3 If you're talking to colleagues, you can just use Dŵr Cymru.
- 4 Don't abbreviate to DCWW. In fact try to avoid abbreviations wherever you can when communicating.
- 5 Remember there's no need to repeat the company name over and over. It can normally be substituted for 'we'.

And by the way, always remember the circumflex (little roof) on the ŵ. It's really important. You can usually add it by clicking on Insert then Symbol in Microsoft Office programmes.

# Telling our company's story



There aren't many things more important in life than water, and our company has got a pretty remarkable story to tell. A unique story.

We're steeped in history. From the early pioneers who bravely built great dams and pipes, to the bold thinkers who helped Welsh Water reinvent what a water company could achieve at the beginning of the 21st century.

Our job is to tell this story. To inspire people to love water and work with us to change our part of the world for the better.

Summing this up in a few lines is not easy, but describing ourselves as a **utility company which supplies potable water and waste water treatment services to domestic and non-domestic properties** is never going to inspire anyone. So here goes...

## What do we do?



Although rain falls freely from the sky, we put a lot of work, energy and love into getting every drop of water to you. Then, after you've used it, we take your dirty water away and clean it before returning it to our beautiful rivers and seas.

**Or:**

We keep three million people healthy each day with safe, reliable water, and take away waste water to clean, before returning it safely to our beautiful rivers and seas.

We serve customers in most of Wales, Herefordshire and communities along the English border.



# How is our company different?



## **In a few sentences:**

Welsh Water is different from other water and energy companies. We don't have shareholders.

This means that we're able to keep your bills down, and put every single penny we make straight back into looking after your water and beautiful environment – now, and for years to come.

We think it's a much better way of doing things. After all, there aren't many things more important to you than safe, clean water.

## **In a few lines:**

We're your not-for-profit water company. This means that every single penny goes back into looking after your water and environment.

## **Or if you really haven't got that much room, in a few short words:**

Your not-for-profit water company.

# Our personality

in six characteristics







When people  
see your  
personality  
come out, they  
feel so good,  
like they  
actually know  
who you are.

Usain Bolt

# Human: always real, never corporate



**You'd think it would be easy, but sometimes it can be hard to be human – especially in a structured working environment.**

If our customers are able to recognise us at Welsh Water as human beings, rather than just another big utility company, it really will benefit everyone involved in the conversation.

This isn't a one-size-fits-all instruction to paste on an insincere smile and say, 'Have a nice day!'. That won't work.

Being human, we don't all communicate in the same way. What makes these guidelines useful is the fact that we can turn to them for clear and simple advice, even when we're in the thick of it.

We're never going to be perfect. But if we can be approachable, friendly, supportive, reassuring and fair – well, that's not a bad start, is it...

## Human characteristics we identify with...

Using words like 'you', 'we' and 'us'. Being friendly, approachable and understanding. Helping and supporting.



# Examples of human



## Before

Welsh Water is making preparations to ensure we can continue to provide essential supplies and services over the colder months and are asking customers to prepare for winter too.

## How about...

We're getting ready for winter.  
Are you?

## Before

A burst at an empty property could result in a great deal of water being wasted and significant damage to the building and its contents.

## How about...

A burst pipe could flood your  
home and cause a lot of damage.

BRRRRR...  
cold out!



### **Before**

Following the repair you may experience discolouration when your supply is restored. Customers are advised to run their tap until the appearance returns to normal.

### **How about...**

After we turn your water back on, it may look a bit cloudy at first. Don't worry – just let your tap run until it clears.

### **Before**

Dear Customer or  
Dear Sir/Madam

### **How about...**

Hello

# Honest: It helps build trust



**Working at Welsh Water means sometimes we're going to have to say sorry. When we do, it's really important that we mean it.**

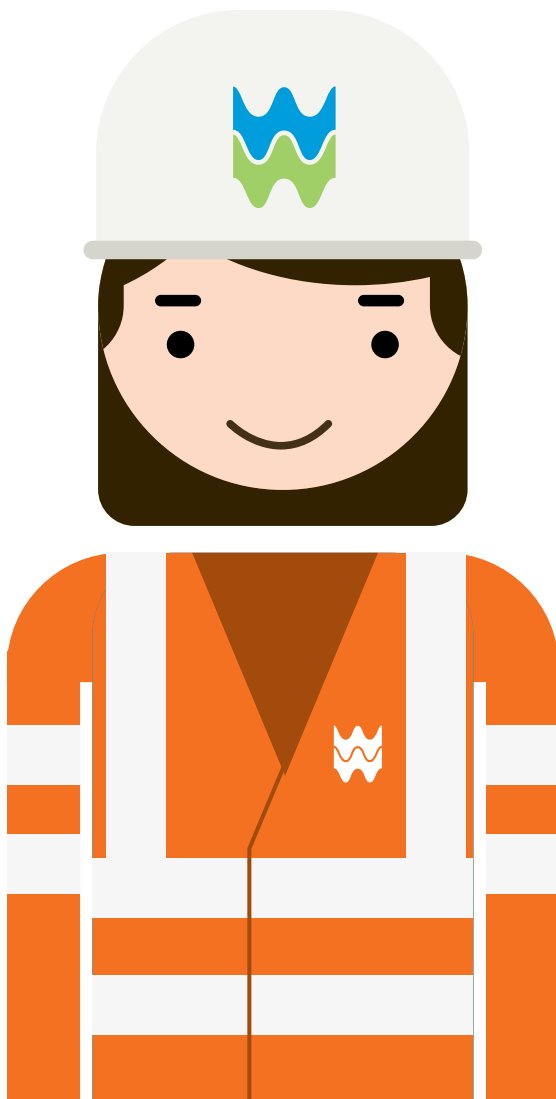
Honesty allows communications to be less complicated. Talking to people without using jargon makes the relationship more meaningful and builds trust.

Trust is really important. If customers think to themselves: 'But what do they really mean when they say that,' it means we're not getting the message across clearly enough.

**And that's our problem, not theirs.**

## Honest characteristics we identify with...

Clarity, being concise and jargon-free, the ability to give simple explanations, keeping promises, credibility, explaining things, saying sorry (and meaning it).



# Examples of honest



## **Before**

Welsh Water would like to apologise for any inconvenience caused during this essential repair. The matter will be resolved in as timely a manner as possible.

## **How about...**

We're really sorry that your water is off. We're working hard to fix a burst pipe, and we'll get your water back on as soon as possible.

## **Before**

Notice is hereby given in accordance with S.75(2)(b) of the Water Industry Act 1991...

## **How about...**

If you don't fix the leak within seven days, we may need to do the work ourselves, and then claim the cost back from you.



### Whatever you do, don't write

'Due to circumstances beyond our control...'

It may be true, but the customer doesn't care. They just want us to take control. And fix the problem.

I'm sorry



# Engaging: Inspiring people to help us



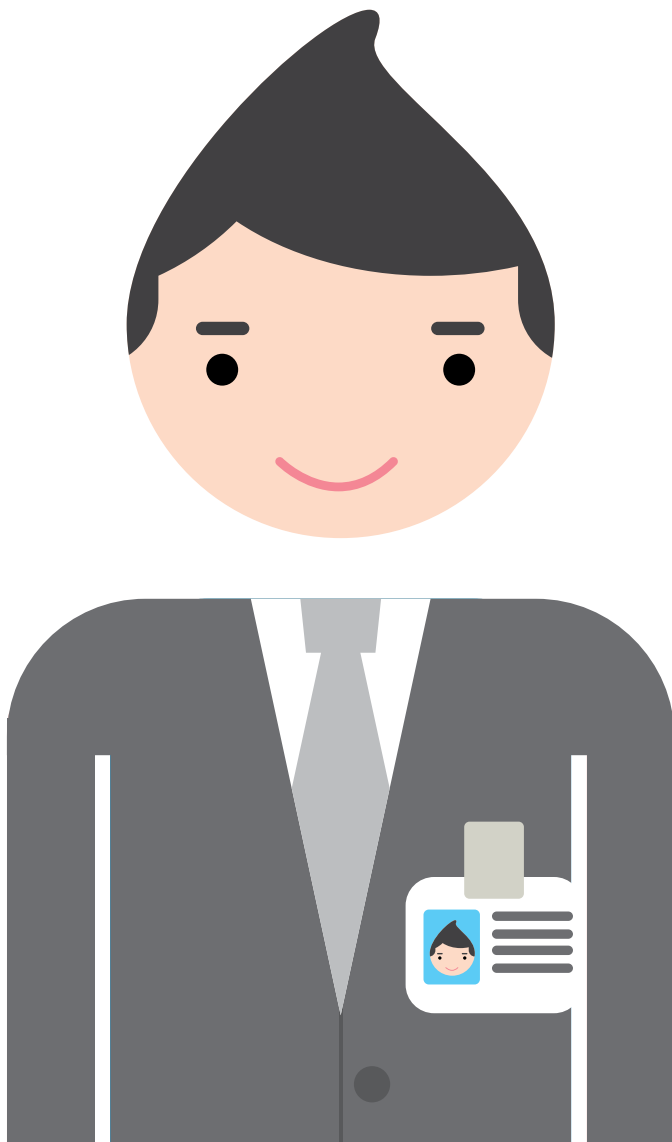
Looking after our customers' water and environment is a big job. And to be honest, we can't do it all by ourselves. We need their help too. That's why we need to be engaging.

We can be engaging in lots of ways, like showing our customers what we're doing (and why) and explaining how they can help play their part too.

Personal engagement goes a long way towards building loyalty and trust. That helps the relationship between us and our customers, which benefits everyone in the end.

## Engaging characteristics we identify with...

Being interesting, relevant,  
entertaining and useful, taking  
care to explain what we're doing,  
approachability, understanding.



# Examples of engaging



## **Before**

We would like feedback from our customers on the mains renewal work that was recently carried out in the local community.

## **How about...**

Last month we put in some new water pipes in your village. We just want to check: are you happy with the work we did?

## **Before**

A public information event is being held to inform local customers of our upcoming work to upgrade the waste-water network. We would like customers' feedback before starting this planned capital work in your area.

## **How about...**

We'll be replacing the sewers on your street next month. This work will help protect your environment for years to come, but it might cause a bit of traffic disruption. So, we're holding an event to show you what we've got planned and answer any of your questions.



# What do you think?

Last month we put in some new water pipes in your village. We just want to check: are you happy with the work we did?



# **Memorable: A happy experience is priceless**



**It's all about the locale memory system\* apparently. This is the bit of the brain that loves stories – that can effortlessly recall the scene from a movie in precise detail.**

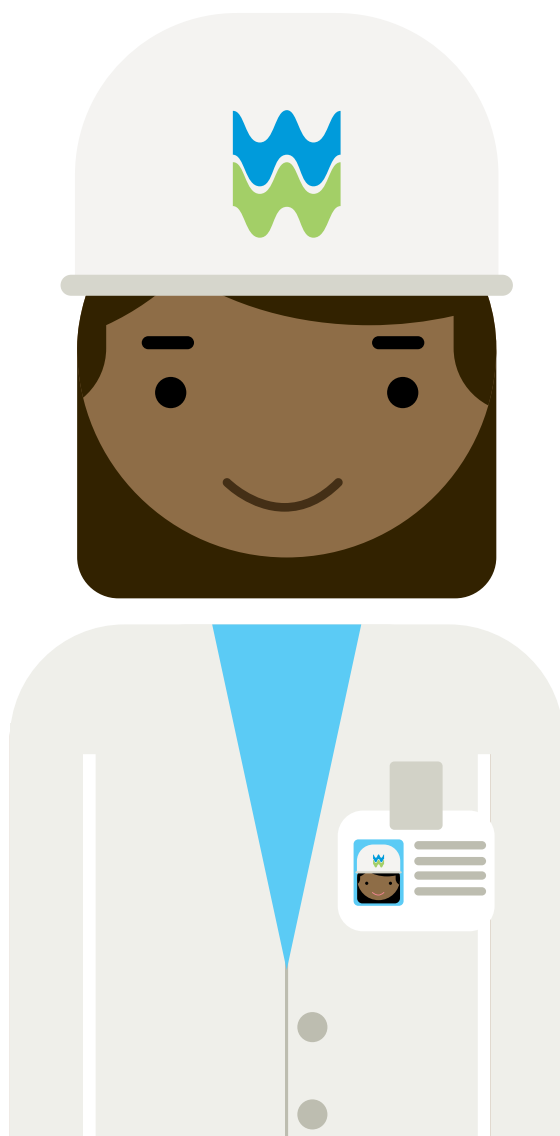
It's more about making sure those things like our advertising campaigns, our education work or visitor centres create a lasting positive memory.

You may well think to yourself that making every communication a memorable experience is a big ask. And you'd be right. You're not going to make every single letter or phone call memorable, that's not what we mean. After all, we're not expecting our customers to regale each other with sentences that start: 'You won't believe what someone from Welsh Water said to me the other day...'

\* We did have to look this up, by the way...

## Memorable characteristics we identify with...

Unusual, intriguing, significant,  
communicative, meaningful,  
catchy, unforgettable, important,  
positive, different (in a good way).



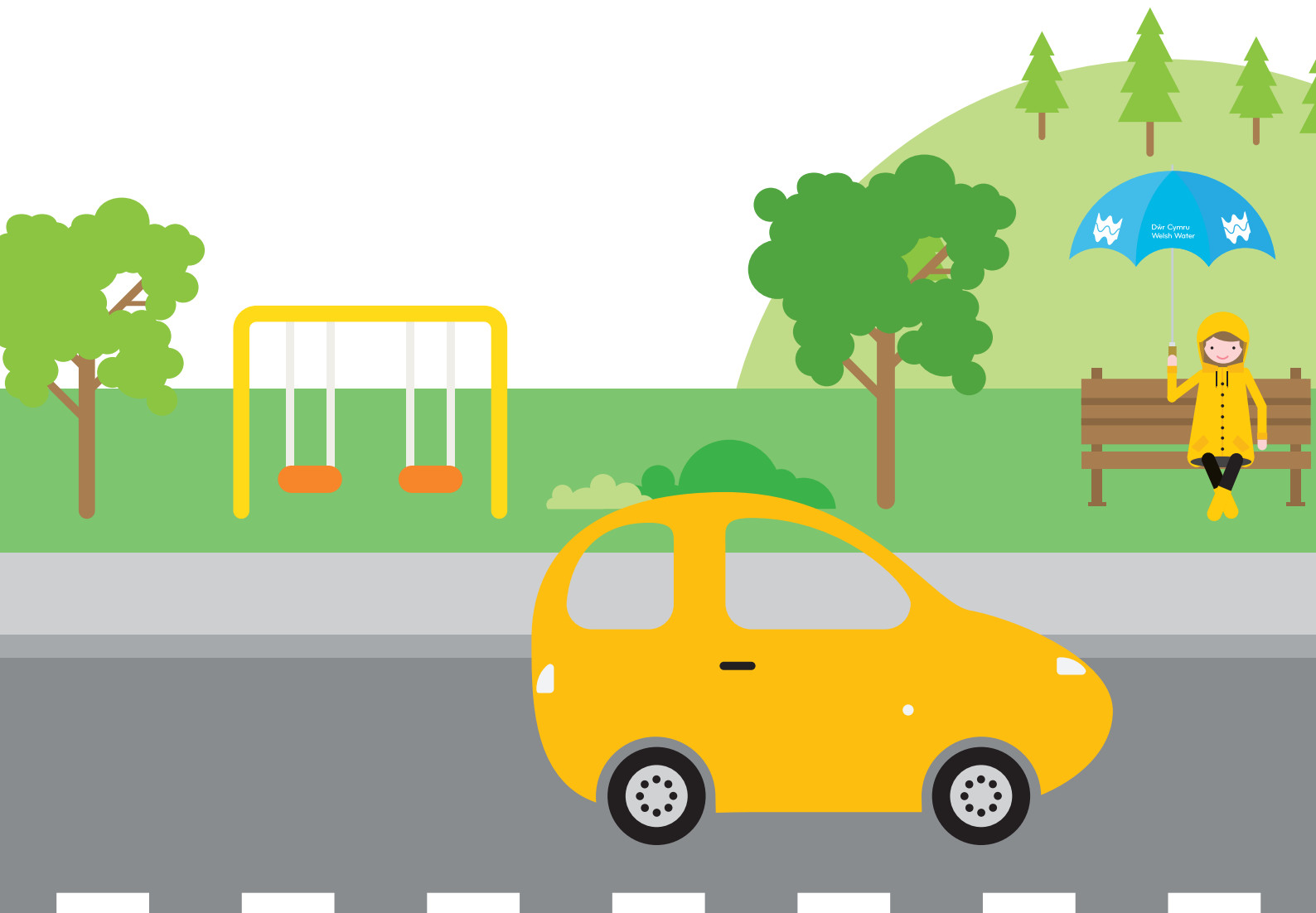
# Examples of memorable



## Before

Elan Valley

A visitor centre and recreational  
facility for all the family

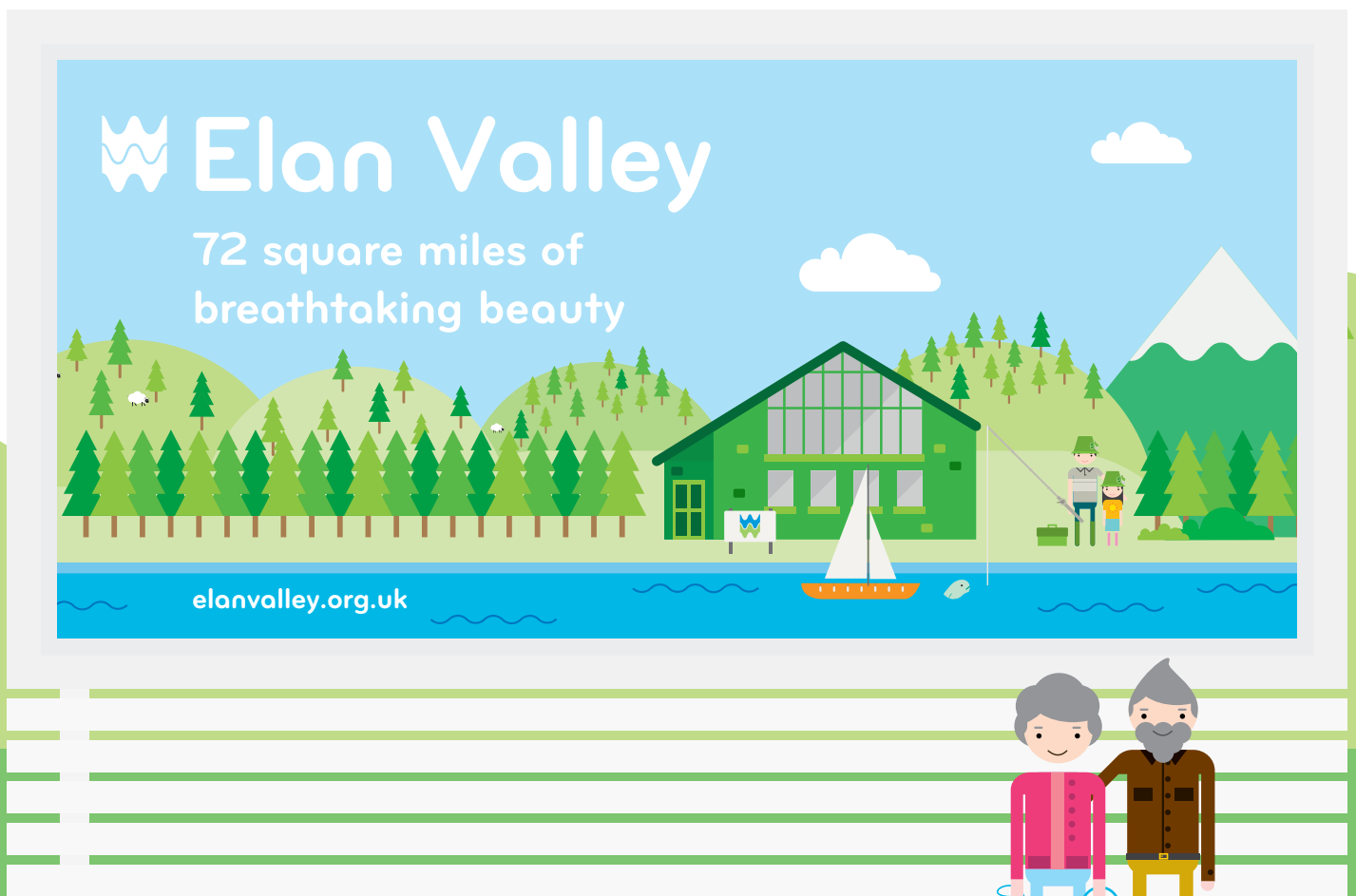
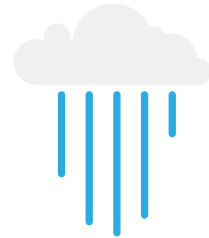




**After**

Elan Valley

72 square miles  
of breathtaking beauty



# Useful: Handy, practical and helpful



Someone clever\* once said:  
'Writing is a lot easier if you  
have something to say.'

## **Let's face it, we've got plenty to say.**

It's important we take the  
responsibility to work out what  
our customers need to know.

Let's not overwhelm or confuse  
them. That means keeping the  
jargon to a minimum, explaining  
things that are important to the  
customer and making an informed  
decision on what to leave out.

We need to bring the facts  
to the fore and break things  
down into manageable chunks.

If we work a little harder on our  
communication, it will make our  
customers' lives a little easier.  
And that will benefit us all in the  
long run.

\* It was 20th century Yiddish writer Sholem  
Asch. Wikipedia's great isn't it.

## Useful characteristics we identify with...

Well-timed, beneficial,  
succinct, valuable, convenient,  
handy, helpful, practical,  
suitable, relevant.



# Examples of useful



## **Before**

Reducing water usage will bring significant cost savings to your energy bill and benefit us as a company.

## **How about...**

Did you know that heating water is a big part of your energy bill? By using all the water you need, but being careful not to waste it, you can save lots of money. It's also great news for us and your environment, because there's no need to pump and clean all that water that used to go straight down the drain without being used.

## **Before**

Discoloured water can cause staining of laundry, so do not launder clothes if you are experiencing discoloured water. If your water does discolour your laundry, re-wash your clothes following the instructions given on the garment using your usual washing powder or liquid. We recommend you do not bleach or boil the laundry.

## **How about...**

Don't put a wash on just yet – discoloured water might stain your laundry. If this happens, simply re-wash your clothes as normal when the water is clear again.



## Discoloured water?

Don't put a wash on just yet – it might stain your laundry. If this happens, simply re-wash your clothes as normal when the water is clear again.



HANDLE WITH CARE

HANDLE WITH CARE

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HANDLE WITH CARE

# Playful: let's make people smile



Playfulness is about avoiding being too mechanical and predictable in the way we talk to our customers. It emphasises the point that we are human, we are smart and that we identify with the trials and tribulations of everyday life.

When we say playful we don't mean writing: 'Sorry, we've cut off your water supply... only joking!' It's simply writing: 'Hello, it's us again' in a chain of correspondence where appropriate.

Being playful can be an important aspect of earning the respect and the support of our customers. Although it's not appropriate for every conversation, we can really let this playful side shine through our campaigns, education work and recreation centres.

**What matters most is that we get the balance right.**

## HANDLE WITH CARE

Playful is usually perfect for campaigns or inspiring children at our Discovery Centres, but not suitable for every occasion. If in doubt, ask colleagues what they think. Or ask one of the Communications Team for advice.

HANDLE WITH CARE

HANDLE WITH CARE

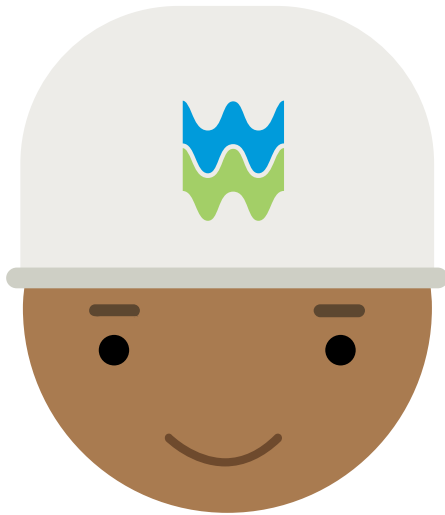
HANDLE WITH CARE

HANDLE WITH CARE

HANDLE WITH CARE

## Playful characteristics we identify with...

Witty, wry, friendly, intuitive,  
confident, having the ability  
to read a situation, being  
imaginative, personal and  
not trying too hard.



# Examples of playful



## **It's quite easy when we speak to people:**

'Lovely day, isn't it?'

You'll hear this on glorious blue-sky days, but also when the rain's coming in horizontally on a freezing February in Tonypandy. But it's much harder in writing.

## **Before**

Freezing pipes during extreme winter weather can cause considerable damage. Welsh Water would like to offer you the following advice to lag any external pipes or taps.

## **How about...**

Frozen. Great film. But it's  
a pain when it happens to your  
pipes. So here's how to get ready  
for winter...



## Before

Welsh Water maintains a vast network of sewer, measuring around 30,000km kilometres.

## How about...

Laid end-to-end, our sewers  
would stretch all the way  
to Australia and back.

**And even better if you can  
bring it to life on videos, leaflets  
and websites.**





# Top ten tips

(Strangely, alliteration isn't one of them...)

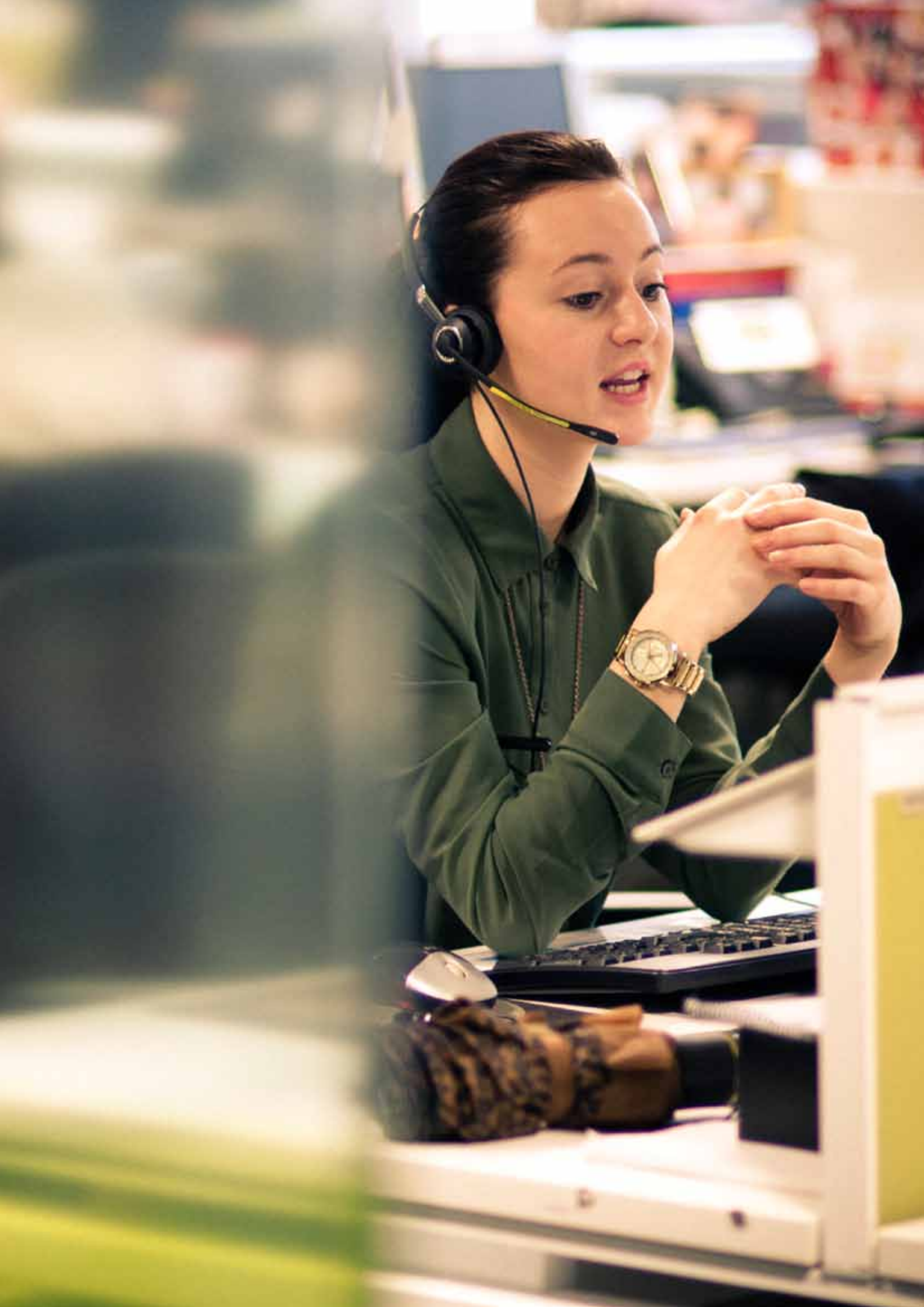


3



If you can't  
explain it simply,  
you don't  
understand it  
well enough.

Albert Einstein



# 1 It's not about us...



We all get wrapped up in what we need to say sometimes, rather than what the person on the other end of the line wants to know. Before you do anything you need to put yourself in the customer's shoes. Remember, always write for the reader, not for yourself. Ask yourself these questions:

**How can I say or write this in a way that will be useful to the customer?**

**How can I make the customer the most important person in this conversation?**

When you do this properly, you'll notice how often you're using the 'you' word when you communicate.

# 2 Keep it short



We should always try to communicate clearly and concisely. Our customers will really appreciate us keeping our messages short.

Whenever possible we should also keep our sentences under 15 words. Try to use short, engaging headers to break information into manageable chunks.

**Less really is more.**

## 3 Keep it simple      4 Don't sound like a machine

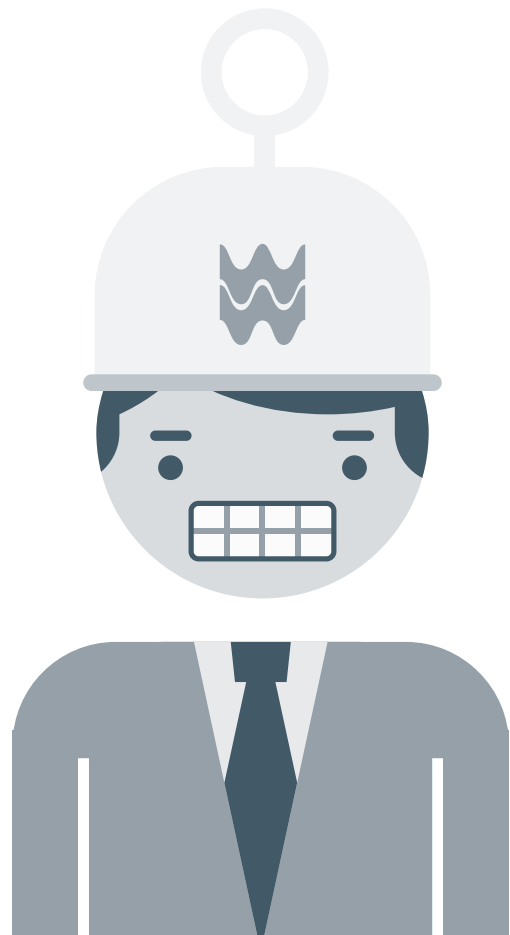


We communicate with people from age zero to 110. So, it's really important that we explain things using words that people can understand. Let's make sure that we always use everyday Welsh or English whenever we talk to customers and colleagues.



We're human beings. We're communicating with other human beings. So let's avoid using words that we wouldn't use in everyday conversations. 'Implementing' or 'undertaking' could just be 'doing', and let's cut out all of those acronyms and abbreviations, like CSOs, while we're at it...

**BEEP! WE... ARE...  
IMPLEMENTING...  
REPAIRS... BEEP!**





## 5 Turn up the positives



We often need to reassure people that things won't be as bad as they think. Instead of saying something non-committal like: 'We're doing everything we can to make sure you're not inconvenienced,' try: 'We won't be a minute longer than we have to and it'll definitely be worth it.'

## 6 Always explain



It's that dreaded 'because that's the way it is' moment. When a customer asks why, we should always be able to give a satisfactory (and simple) explanation: 'We're digging up your road because we need to replace old pipes and improve your water supply.'

## 7 Show how the customer benefits



### **This is a fact:**

'RainScape is a project to reduce flooding in urban areas.'

### **The benefit is:**

'Your street will suffer fewer floods and look greener.'

By emphasising the benefit you will always put the consumer at the heart of the story. They'll also understand what they'll get out of it.

## 8 Get active



Using the active voice is so much more personal, and simple. When you use the active voice, the subject is doing the action.

For example:-

**We will send you a bill next week.**

Whereas the passive voice seems less personal:

**A bill will be sent to you next week.**

## 9 Ask a question (as long as you know the right answer)



You can use questions in two ways. Rather than think: 'This is what I need to tell the customer,' ask yourself: 'How would the customer want me to tell them this information?'

The other way to use questions is to hook the attention of readers. Instead of a headline ask:

**'Do you want to know the easiest way to save money on your water bill?'**

It would take a very determined person not to read on, don't you think?

## 10 Tell a story

Instead of telling the customer: 'We're currently investing in yada yada,' tell them a story. This is what we're doing, this is why we're doing it and this is what will happen as a result of it.





## Explaining RainScope

To most customers, Sustainable Urban Drainage Solutions sounds about as exciting as watching paint dry. But tell the story of RainScope and it suddenly brings a series of complicated processes to life in an interesting way that everyone can understand.



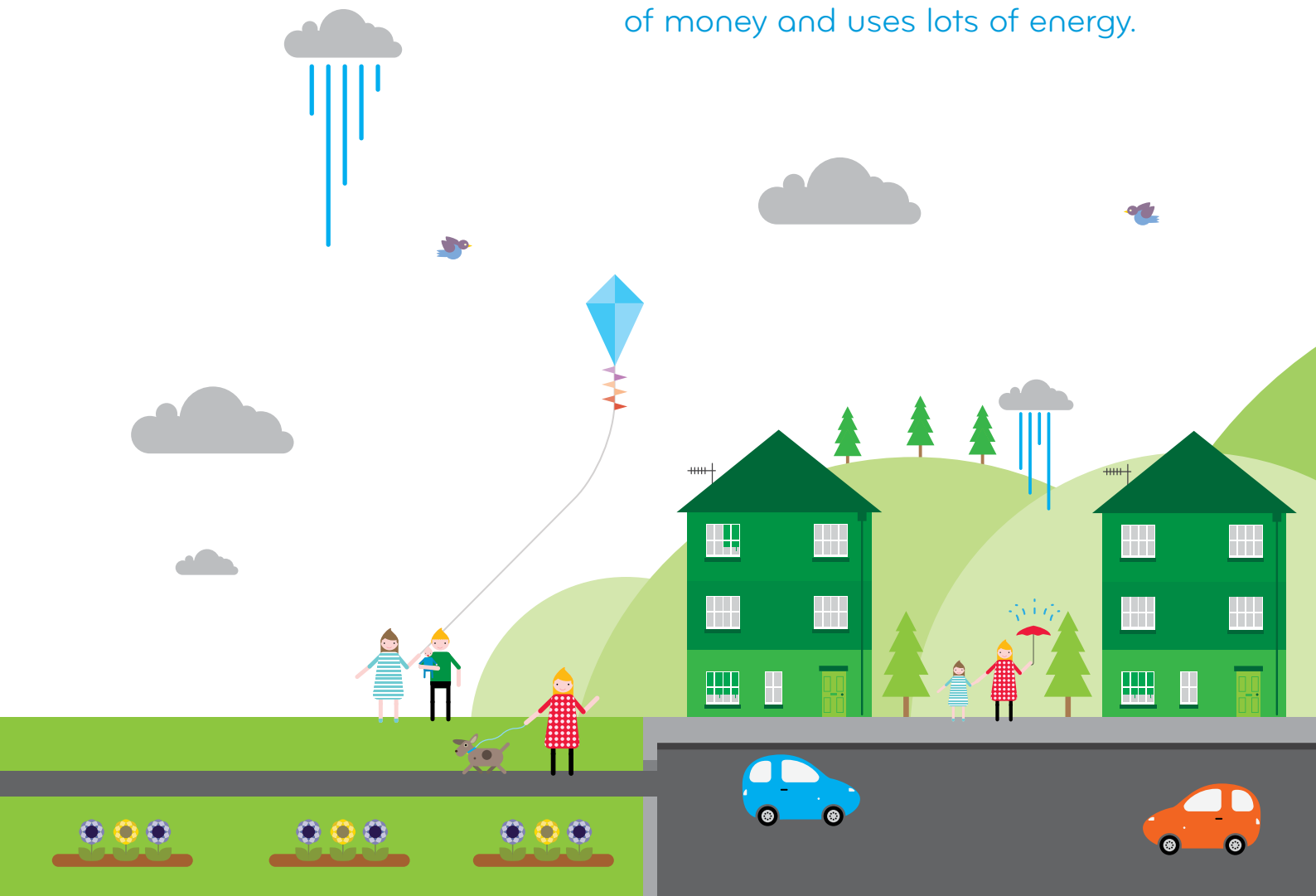


## The story of RainScope

Not so long ago the water cycle in our part of the world used to look after itself. Rain would soak into the land and usually find its own way to our rivers and out to the sea.

Then we started to change how we live. People moved to towns and cities. We built sewers and pipes to take dirty water away from our homes to keep us healthy. But we also built over the green areas with roads, pavements, driveways and buildings.

More and more rainwater that used to drain into the land, now runs straight from these hard surfaces into our sewers. Every drop needs to be pumped and cleaned before we return it to our rivers and seas. This costs a lot of money and uses lots of energy.



And now the climate is changing. It rains more heavily and more often. Sometimes our sewers can't cope when this happens. This can cause homes and streets to flood, and sewage to pollute our beautiful rivers and seas.

Building bigger and bigger sewers is not going to solve this problem. So, we've decided to RainScope.

RainScope catches rainwater and slows down the speed at which it goes into our sewer network. It's a better way of doing things. It helps reduce sewer flooding and pollution and creates greener, cleaner communities for us to live in.

**Discover how RainScope works, and how you can do your bit at [RainScope.co.uk](https://www.rainscope.co.uk)**







# Web and social media

4



Two  
monologues  
do not make  
a dialogue.

Jeff Daly



Most people now turn to the web when they need information. It's also where they turn to be entertained – which offers us a great opportunity to inspire people. But on the web, we will be competing for our customers' attention against a whole world of other distractions.



# Writing for the web



People have different reading habits online. They read more slowly and they try to make up time by scanning and scrolling through text to find the information they're looking for. They're also viewing content on tablets or smartphones more often.

It's good practice to communicate the most important information as early as possible in the text.

## **Remember to:**

- Keep things short and simple.
- Make no more than one point in a sentence.
- Explain how and why.
- Make what we say useful or entertaining. Or where appropriate, both.

## Content is king, and distribution is queen



Creating great, engaging content is a must online. People don't want information broadcast at them. They want clever, inspirational stories and memorable experiences that they can connect with on a personal level and share with friends. This is true of information videos, tweets, or websites.

## Social media



Communicating with our customers via email and social media is a big deal, and is getting bigger by the day.

People who follow **@dwrcymru** are allowing us into their private world. People who allow us to communicate with them on email trust us to offer them information that will be useful.

This relationship also gives the public the opportunity to interact with us. Some businesses struggle to cope with the unpredictable nature of this real-time communication. Fortunately for us, our new personality lends itself to this kind of communication.

# Top rules



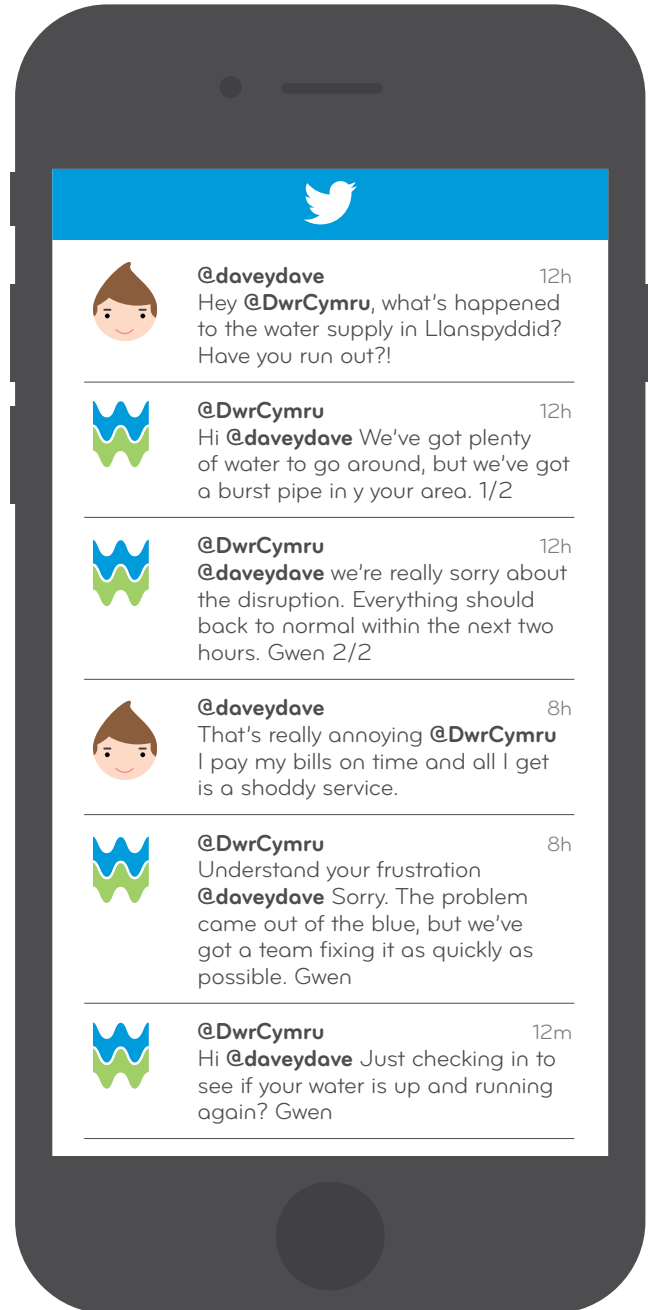
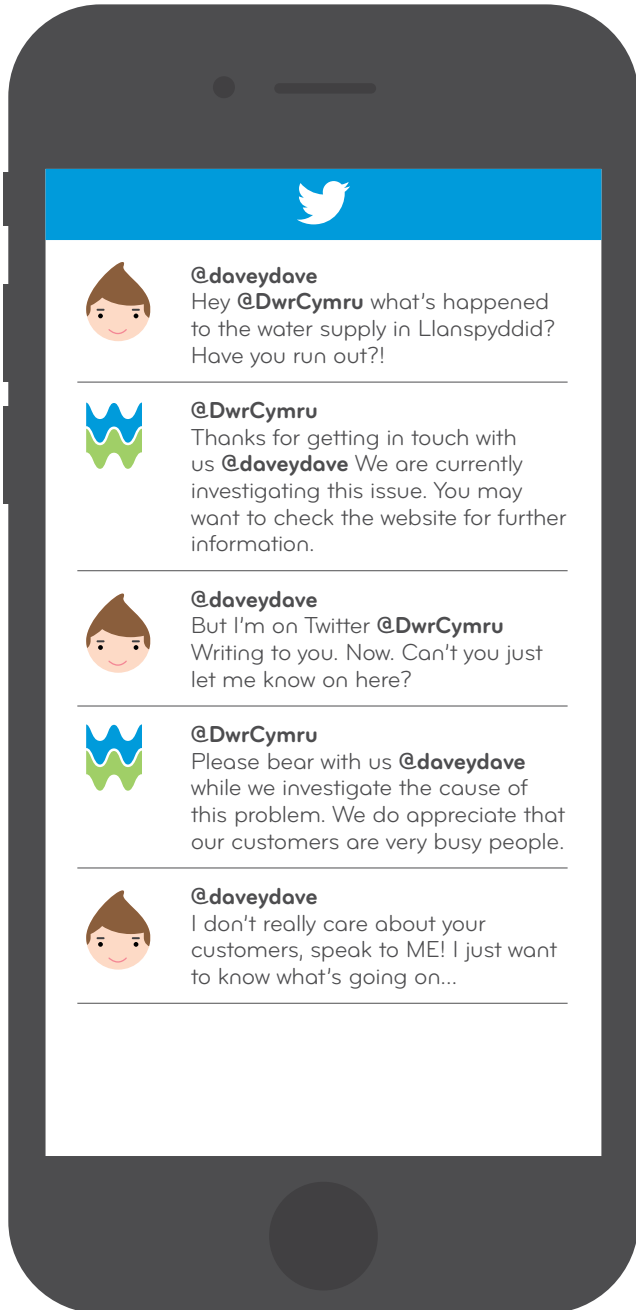
**Content:** use photos, videos, infographics and calls to action whenever appropriate.

**Be social:** it's about two-way conversations not one way broadcasting.

**Keep to the same channel:**  
Wherever possible, try not to answer a question on twitter by giving them a number to ring, or sending them to search on the website.

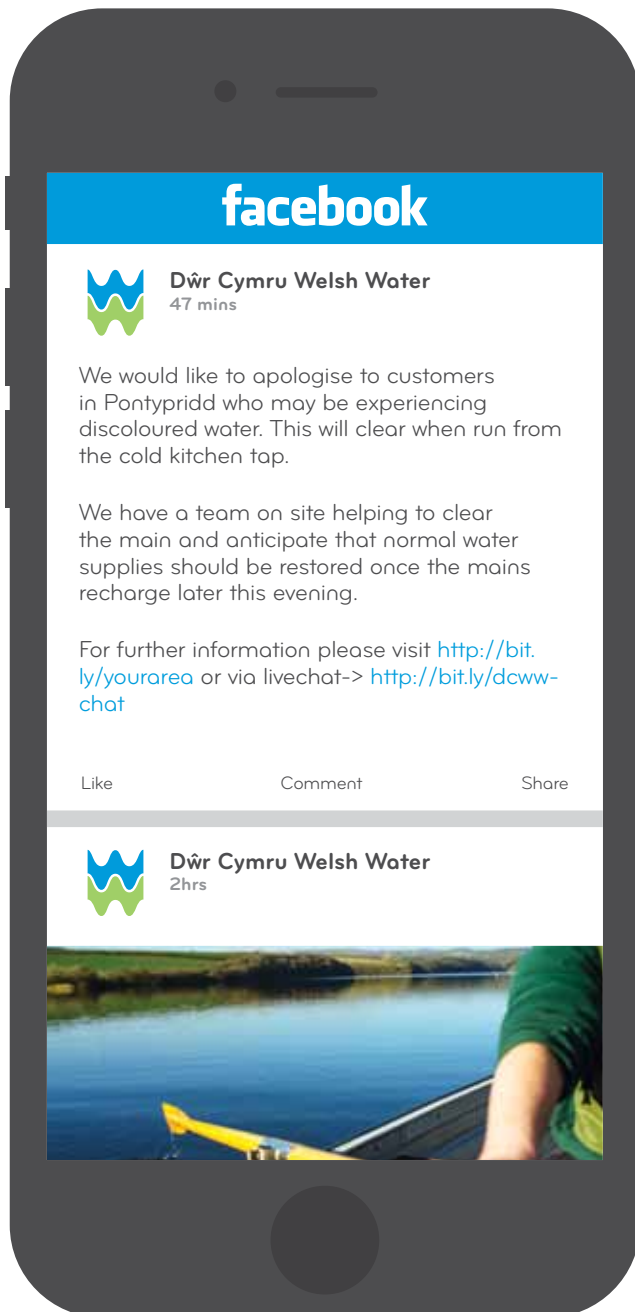
## Before

## After

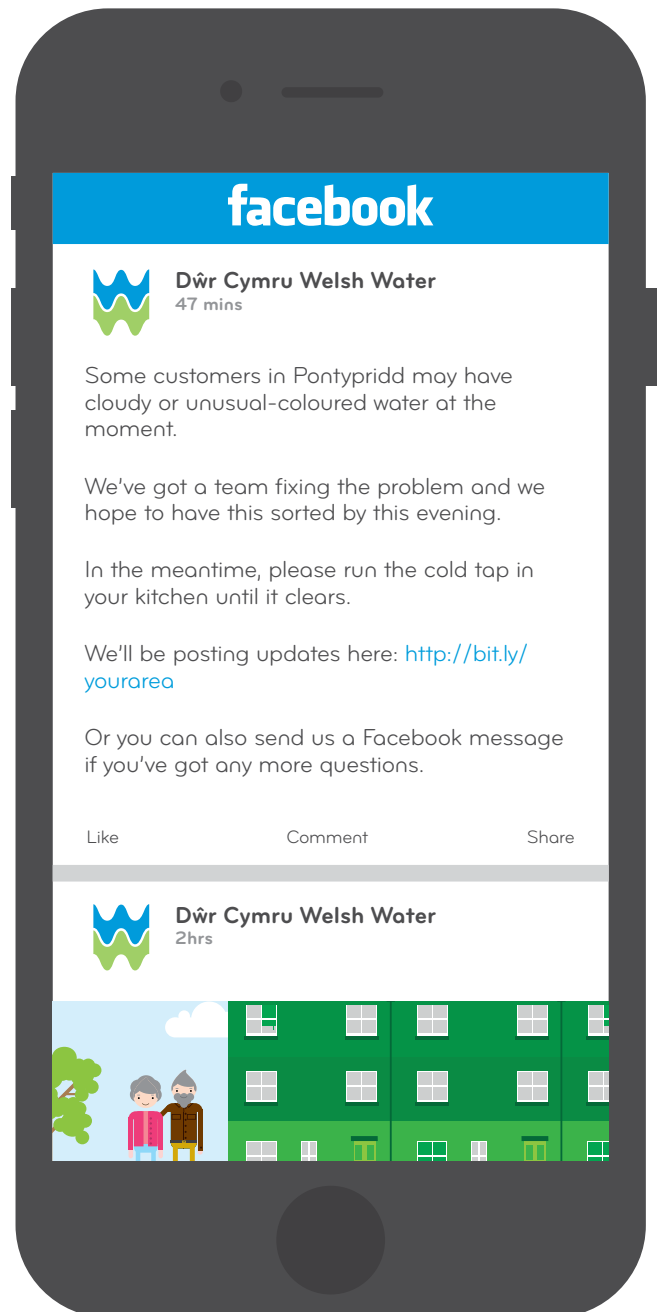




## Before

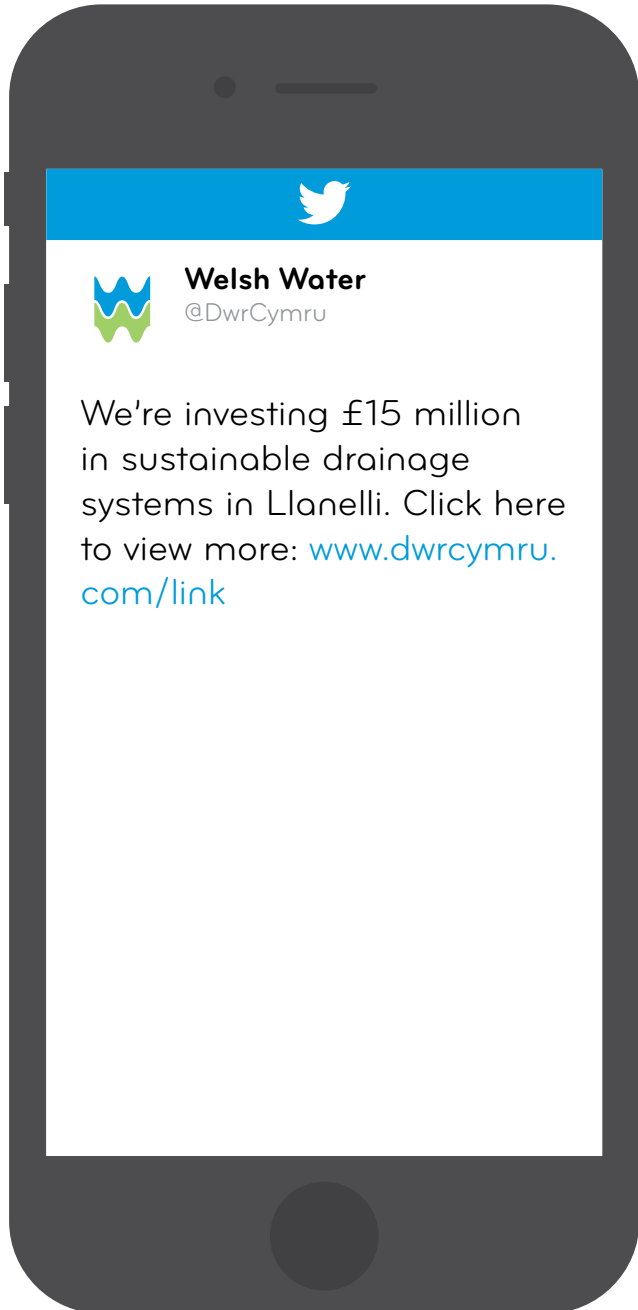


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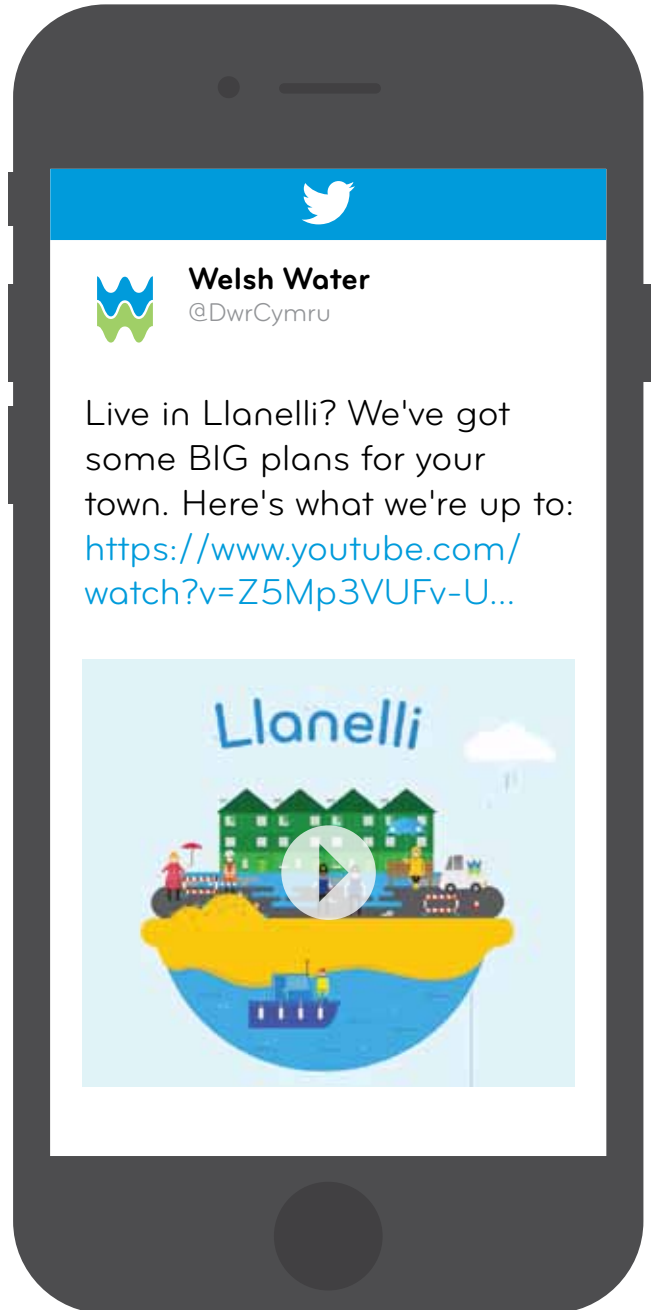


## Using images or video content

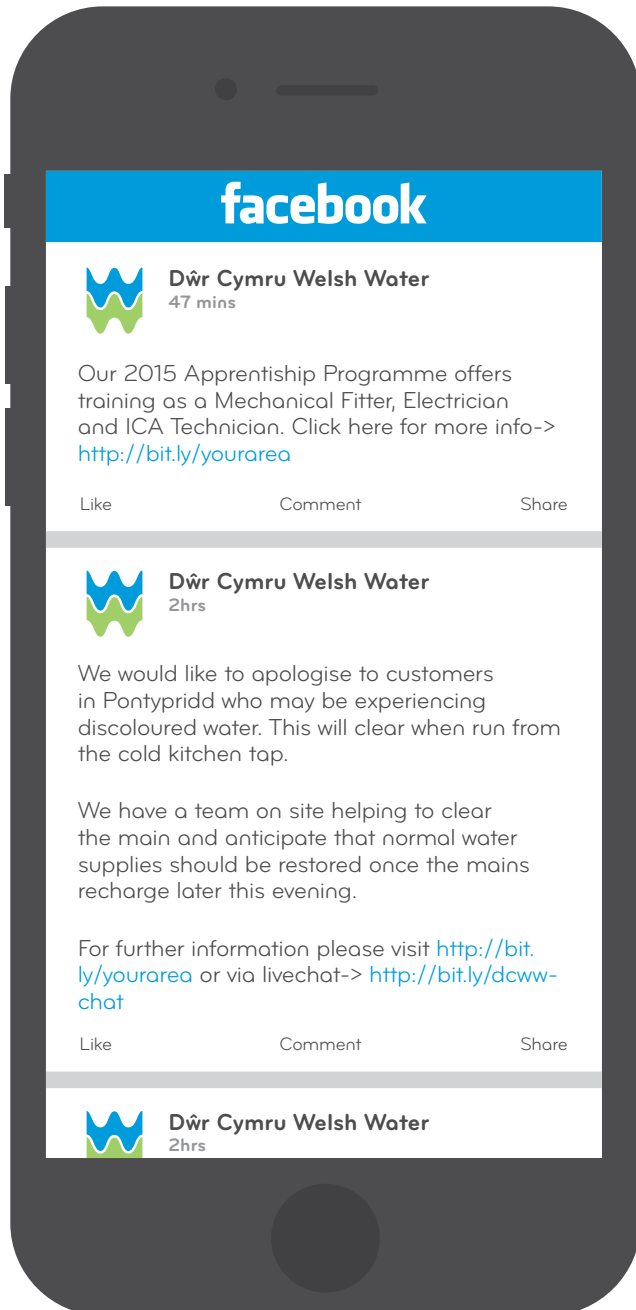
### Before



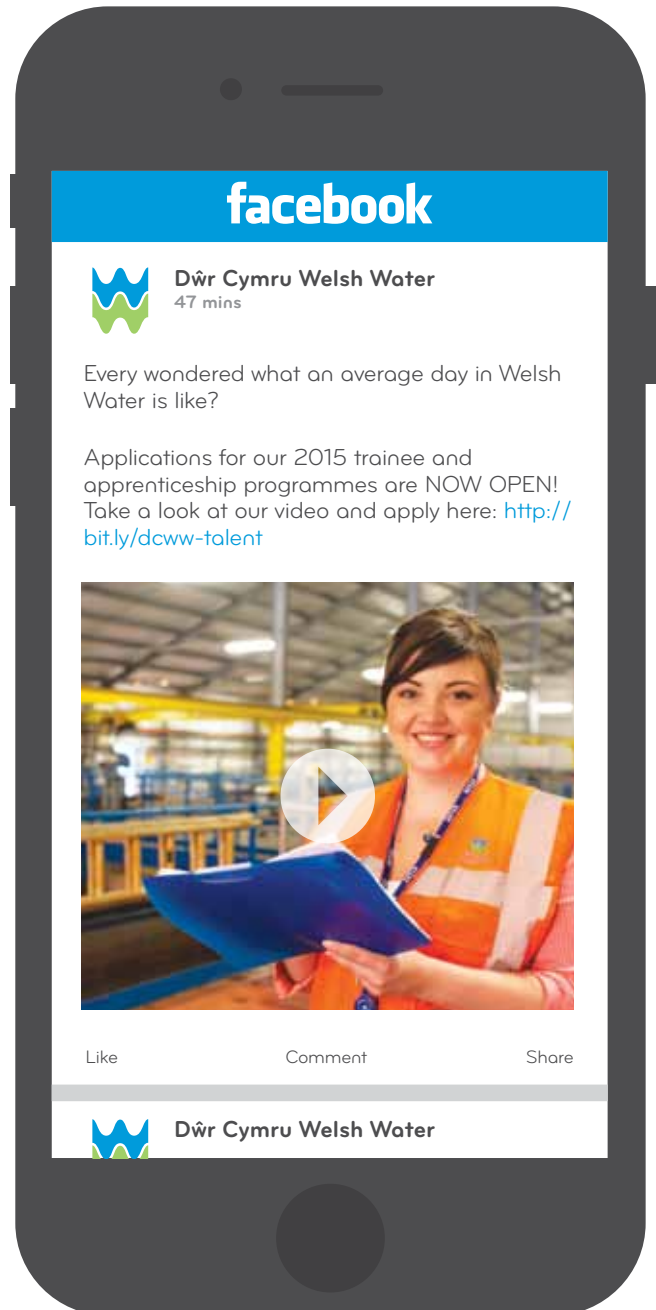
### After



## Before



## After





# Jargon Busters



Like Ghostbusters,  
but with less slime



Nothing kills  
content like  
jargon.

Angie Halama



**We might know what CSOs, hydraulic overload or potable water means, but that doesn't mean many of our customers will.**

Jargon can make it look like we're trying to hide behind complicated words. So we need to use everyday language that everyone can understand.

Ask yourself, who am I communicating with? And, will they understand what I'm saying?

Of course, there will always be times where you'll need to use technical words or phrases, in say an internal report or legal letter. If you do, you can always follow it with a little explanation the first time you use it.

### Simplifying our language

Additional → **extra**  
Advise → **let you know**  
Carry out → **do**  
Commence → **start**  
Complete → **finish**  
Comply with → **keep to**  
Consequently → **so**  
Customer → **you**  
Delivering → **try to avoid this word, unless you are delivering a parcel that is**  
Ensure → **make sure**  
Forward → **send**  
In excess of → **more than**  
In respect of → **for**  
In the event of → **if**  
On receipt → **when we/you get**  
On request → **if you ask**  
Particulars → **details**  
Persons → **people**  
Prior to → **before**  
Procure → **buy**  
Property → **could you say home or building?**  
Purchase → **buy**  
Regarding → **about**  
Terminate → **end**  
Upgrade → **improve / replace?**  
Utilise → **use**  
Welsh Water is committed to → **we want to / we will**

### Office jargon

Action plan → **a plan**  
Close of play → **end of the day**  
Could you action that? → **could you do that?**  
Could you timeline this? → **when will you be able to do it?**  
Drill down → **look at something in detail**  
Engage → **talk to?**  
Moving forward → **in future**  
Reach out to → **phone or meet?**  
Stakeholders → **do you mean colleagues, politicians or customers? Or simply 'us'?**



## Water jargon

Explaining some more technical watery words or phrases in everyday language

Abstraction → **taking water from**

Alleviate flooding → **reduce / stop flooding**

Analyse water → **test water**

Combined sewer (give the following explanation the first time you use this phrase) → **a sewer that collects water from inside homes as well as rain water from roads and roofs**

Domestic → **in your home**

Grey water (give the following explanation the first time you use this phrase → **rainwater from roofs / that hasn't been treated**

Hydraulic overload → **too much water for our sewers to cope with**

Internal flooding → **flooding inside a home / property**

Measured customers → **customers who have a water meter**

Potable water → **drinking water**

Property → **if you mean home, write 'home'. If you mean business, write 'business'**

Raw water → **water before we've treated it**

Recharge (as in water mains) → **refill / fill up**

Reinstate → **tidy up/ put things back**

**Sewage** is the thing that flows through the pipes

**Sewerage** is the pipes that carry the waste

Surface water (give the following explanation the first time you use this phrase → **rainwater from roofs, roads, and pavements**

Trunk main → **main water pipe**

Upgrading waste-water network → **replacing your sewers**

Unmeasured / unmetered customers → **customers who don't have a water meter**

**Waste water, rain water, storm water, grey water** (always use two words)



# Practical examples

(before and after)





The more  
we elaborate  
our means of  
communication,  
the less we  
communicate.

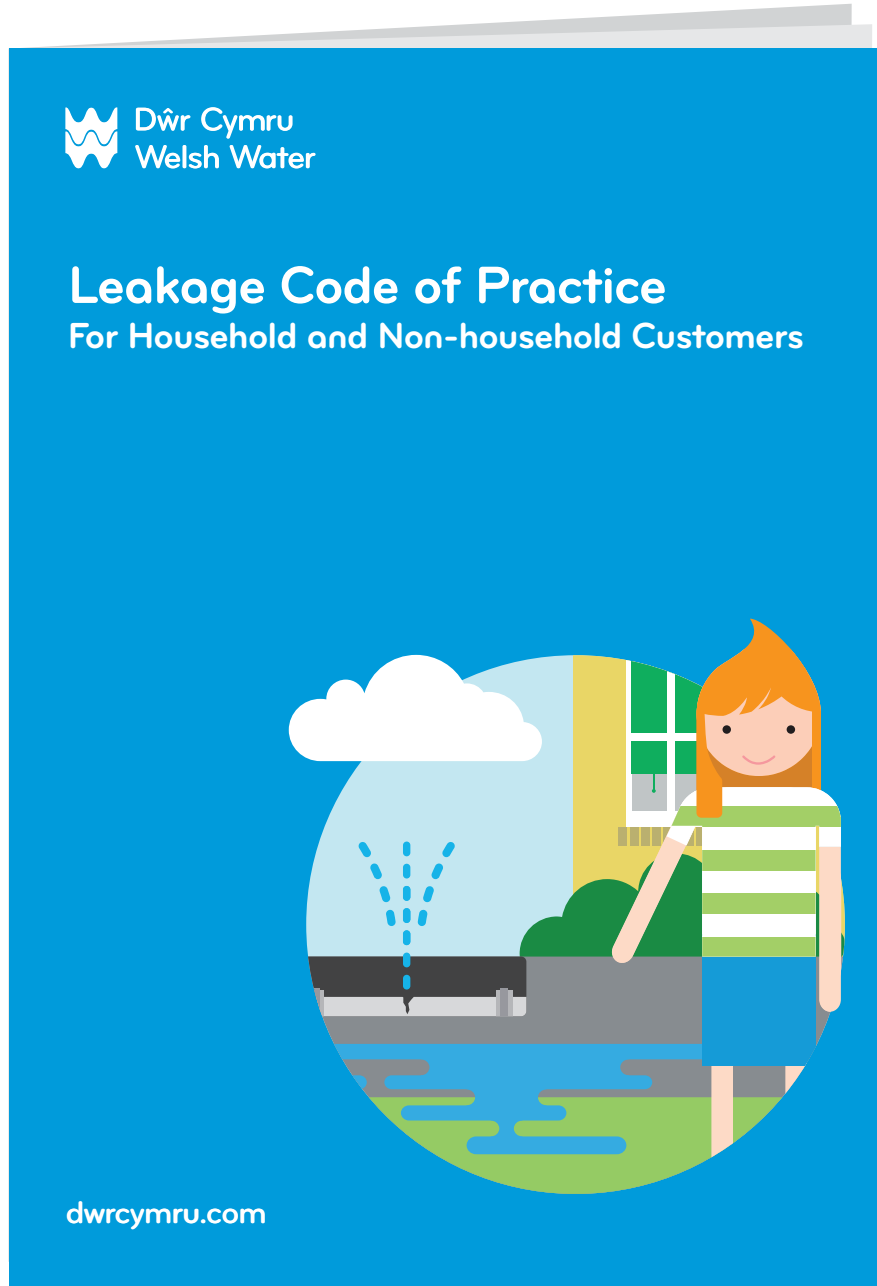
J B Priestley



# Naming things

Let's not try to be too clever when naming things like booklets, schemes or projects. The title should explain exactly what it does.

## Before:



Human

Honest

Playful

Engaging

Memorable

Useful

How about...

Human



# Water leaks

## What you need to do

Engaging



[dwrcymru.com](http://dwrcymru.com)



# Changing behaviours

Asking people to save water in Wales is a challenge, especially if they look out of the window and see pouring rain. So we need to tell a story, and show how people will benefit directly from doing their bit.

## Before

### Water efficiency advice

**There has been a significant increase in the demand for water during recent months. Water supply has increased by 140 million litres per day.**

Whilst our reservoir storage is at normal levels for this time of year and we do not anticipate any restrictions for this summer it is important we are all vigilant spotting and repairing water leaks.

Dealing with leakage is very important when we are in a dry spell so that we do all we can to preserve water stocks just in case the dry spell (with below average rainfall) runs into autumn.

We are always grateful to customers who notify us when they have spotted a leak and aim to repair these promptly. We would request that customers let us know of any leaks on our system so that we can reduce any losses as soon as possible.

You can report a leak online or by calling our Leak Line on 0800 281 432 and we will fix it as soon as we can.



Human

Honest

Playful

Engaging

Memorable

Useful

How about...

Playful

Engaging

Useful

### Saving water? In Wales?

**Did you know that heating water is a big part of your energy bill?**

By using all the water you need, but being careful not to waste it, you can save lots of money. It's also great news for us and your environment, because there's no need to pump and clean all that water that used to go straight down the drain without being used.

There are lots of really easy things you can do. And because every penny we save goes back to improving your service, there's even more reason for us all to do our bit together.

#### Here are five top tips:

1. Fit a hippo bag in your toilets.
2. Turn off the tap when you brush your teeth.
3. Wait until you have a full load before putting the washing machine on.
4. Use a watering can rather than a sprinkler in your garden.
5. Take shorter showers instead of baths.

Oh, and one more thing – if you spot any leaking pipes, make sure you let us know at [dwrwymru.com](http://dwrwymru.com) or call 0800 281 432

Useful

Human



# Laying down the law

We sometimes need to tell customers things they'd rather not hear. But even when we're laying down the law, we can still aim to be clear, concise and human.

## Before

Dear Sir or Madam

Waste of Water – S.73 Water Industry Act 1991  
Water Supply (Water Fittings) Regulations 1999  
Property: 3 High Street, Llanhathaway

A letter dated 11/4/15 was given to you regarding the waste of water at the above property whereby you were instructed to undertake necessary repairs to the apparatus. However, an inspection was carried out on 21/4/15 which confirmed the repair has not been completed; and the waste of water is continuing.

Notice is hereby given in accordance with S.75(2)(b) of the Water Industry Act 1991 that these repairs must be carried out within 7 days of this notice in order to prevent further waste of water. In the event of you failing to repair the apparatus within the specified period, then the company may exercise its statutory powers in accordance with S.75(9)(a) and S.75(9)(b) of the said Act, take these steps itself, and to recover from you any expenses reasonably incurred.

If the waste of water becomes an emergency, or the property appears to be unoccupied and the remedial steps have not been taken before the end of the specified period, the company is entitled to disconnect the service pipe or otherwise cut off the supply of water to the property in accordance with S.75(2)(a) of the Water Industry Act 1991.

I would draw your attention to the fact that in failing to undertake the repair you are committing an offence under S.73 of the Water Industry Act 1991 which states, "if any person who is the owner or occupier of any premises to which a supply of water is provided by a water undertaker intentionally or negligently causes or suffers any water fitting for which he is responsible to be or remain so out of order, so in need of repair or so constructed or adapted, or to be so used that water so supplied is or is likely to be wasted or, having regard to the purposes for which it is supplied, misused or unduly consumed that person shall be guilty of an offence and liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding level 3 on the standard scale."

Level 3 on the standard scale is currently a maximum fine of £1,000. In addition this is also a breach of the Water Supply (Water Fittings) Regulations 1999 which carries the same penalty. If you encounter any problems in undertaking the repair, or wish to discuss the matter, please contact us on 0800 052 0130.

Yours faithfully

Glyndŵr Waters

Human

Honest

Playful

Engaging

Memorable

Useful

Phew! Try this, which has been broken up into clear sections. Note that the tone remains quite firm, and there's still some essential 'legalese' ('Notice is hereby given...'; etc).

But if you find this one easier to understand, then so will our customers:

## How about...

Dear customer

### **Please act within 7 days – or you could be fined up to £2,000**

On 11th April 2015 we wrote to you about the waste of water at 3 High Street, Llanhathaway, and instructed you to carry out necessary repairs. However, our inspection on 21st April 2015 confirmed that the repair has not been done, and the waste of water is continuing.

We now need to take legal steps to get this fixed.

Notice is hereby given in accordance with S.75(2)(b) of the Water Industry Act 1991 that these repairs must be carried out within seven days of this notice in order to prevent further waste of water.

### **What happens if you don't fix the leak?**

If you don't repair the apparatus within seven days, then we can use our statutory powers to do the work ourselves, and claim the cost back from you.

### **Why it's important you act now**

By failing to do the repair, you are committing an offence under the Water Industry Act 1991. It's also a breach of the Water Supply (Water Fittings) Regulations 1999. You risk being fined up to £1,000 for each of these. So please do make arrangements to fix the problem urgently.

### **Get in touch**

If you're having problems doing the repair, or would like to talk about this matter, please contact us on 0800 052 0130.

Yours sincerely



Glyndŵr Waters

### **You and the law**

By failing to undertake the repair, you are committing an offence under S.73 of the Water Industry Act 1991. It's also a breach of the Water Supply (Water Fittings) Regulations 1999. You can see both in full at [www.legislation.gov.uk](http://www.legislation.gov.uk)

If you don't repair the apparatus within 7 days, then we can use our statutory powers in accordance with S.75(9)(a) and S.75(9)(b) of the Act, take these steps ourselves, and recover from you any expenses reasonably incurred.

If the waste of water becomes an emergency, or the property appears to be unoccupied and the remedial steps have not been taken before the end of the specified period, we can disconnect the service pipe or otherwise cut off the supply of water to the property in accordance with S.75(2)(a) of the Water Industry Act 1991.



# Working in communities

And here is a letter we'd send out before starting work in a community.

## Before

Dear Sir or Madam

**We will be working on your water supply**

Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water's job is to give you the best quality water and sewerage services. To make sure we can continue to do this we need to upgrade the mains in your area. This work will help to ensure all of our customers in this area continue to receive a top quality supply of water direct to their taps.

We need to replace 440m of water pipe on Castle Street, Broad Street and High Street in Builth Wells. Work will be carried out in two phases.

Phase 1: The first phase will involve replacing 200m of water pipe between Castle Street and High Street. We intend to start this phase during the first week of May and it will last approximately 8 weeks. During this phase, we will be using two-way lights to control the flow of traffic.

Phase 2: The second phase will involve replacing 240m of water pipe between Broad Street and High Street. This phase will commence in September and it will last approximately 8 weeks. During this phase, it will be necessary for us to close the road.

In order to minimise disruption as much as possible, we have been working closely with Powys County Council Highways Department planning this work.

We would like to give you the opportunity to view our plans. We intend to hold an information event where you can come along and meet the team and we can answer any queries you might have.

Yours faithfully

Glyndŵr Waters

**Human**

**Honest**

**Playful**

**Engaging**

**Memorable**

**Useful**

## How about...

### Hello

#### **We'll be digging up your road.**

The time has come for us to replace the water mains in your area. We're doing this to make sure that your water stays clean and safe for decades to come.

Over the next few weeks we'll be replacing nearly 450 metres of water pipes on Castle Street, Broad Street and High Street in Builth Wells.

#### **Where and when**

Phase 1 will begin in the first week of May between Castle Street and High Street. It will take us around eight weeks to replace 200 metres of pipe. We'll be running temporary traffic lights to keep the traffic moving as best we can.

Phase 2 will begin in September between Broad Street and High Street. It'll take about eight weeks to replace 240 metres of pipe. During that time we'll have to close the road completely.

We've worked hard with Powys County Council Highways Department to minimise the disruption. And we'll do everything we can to finish the work in good time.

Even so, it's likely that this work will be inconvenient in the short-term. But once we're finished, the improvements will benefit the whole community.

#### **Want to know more?**

You'd be welcome to join us at our information event, where we will explain what we're doing in more detail. If you're worried about anything in particular, come and talk to us. There will be tea – and plenty of Welsh Water.

Thanks

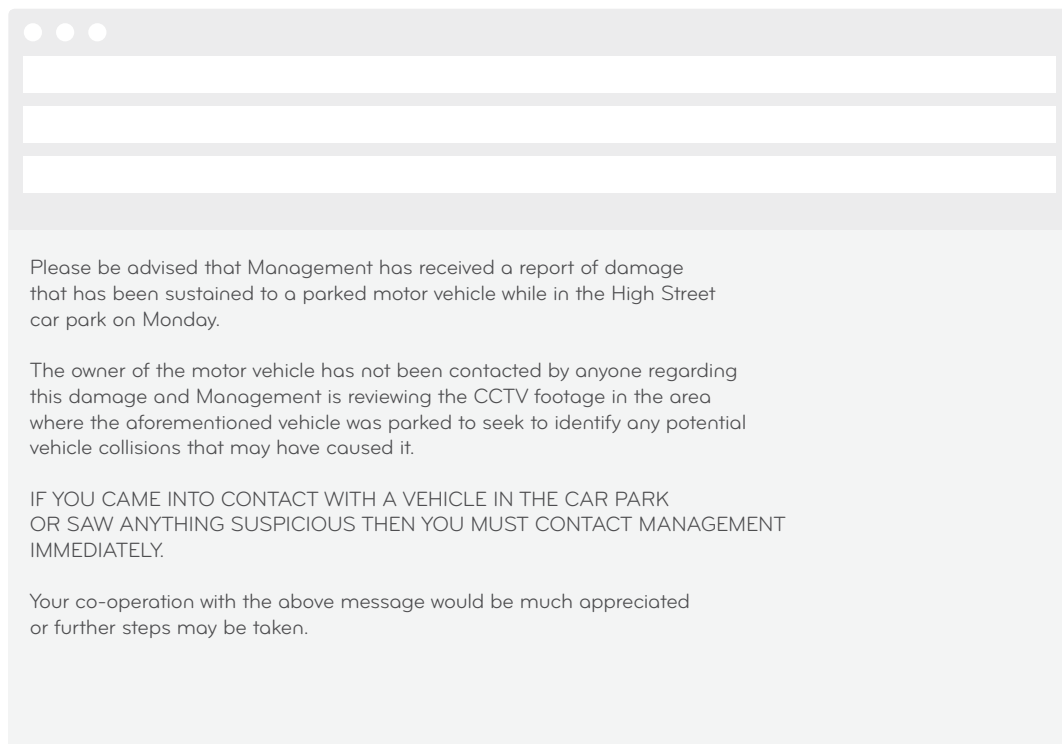


Glyndŵr Waters



# Better emails

## Before

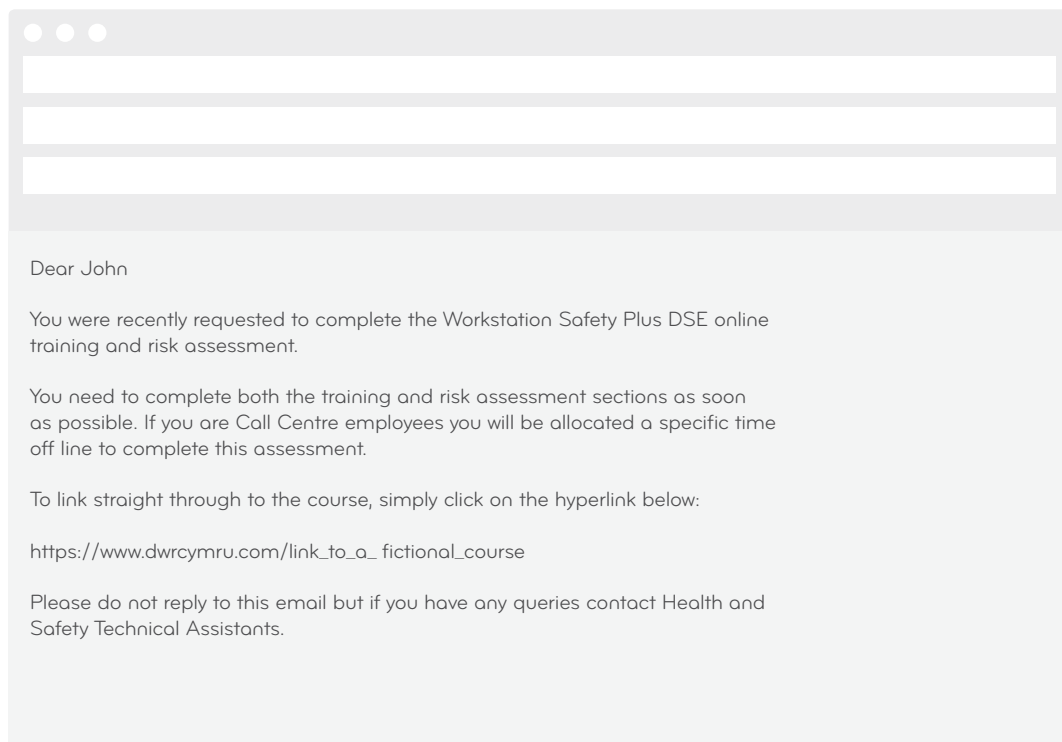


Please be advised that Management has received a report of damage that has been sustained to a parked motor vehicle while in the High Street car park on Monday.

The owner of the motor vehicle has not been contacted by anyone regarding this damage and Management is reviewing the CCTV footage in the area where the aforementioned vehicle was parked to seek to identify any potential vehicle collisions that may have caused it.

IF YOU CAME INTO CONTACT WITH A VEHICLE IN THE CAR PARK OR SAW ANYTHING SUSPICIOUS THEN YOU MUST CONTACT MANAGEMENT IMMEDIATELY.

Your co-operation with the above message would be much appreciated or further steps may be taken.



Dear John

You were recently requested to complete the Workstation Safety Plus DSE online training and risk assessment.

You need to complete both the training and risk assessment sections as soon as possible. If you are Call Centre employees you will be allocated a specific time off line to complete this assessment.

To link straight through to the course, simply click on the hyperlink below:

[https://www.dwrcymru.com/link\\_to\\_a\\_fictional\\_course](https://www.dwrcymru.com/link_to_a_fictional_course)

Please do not reply to this email but if you have any queries contact Health and Safety Technical Assistants.

Human

Honest

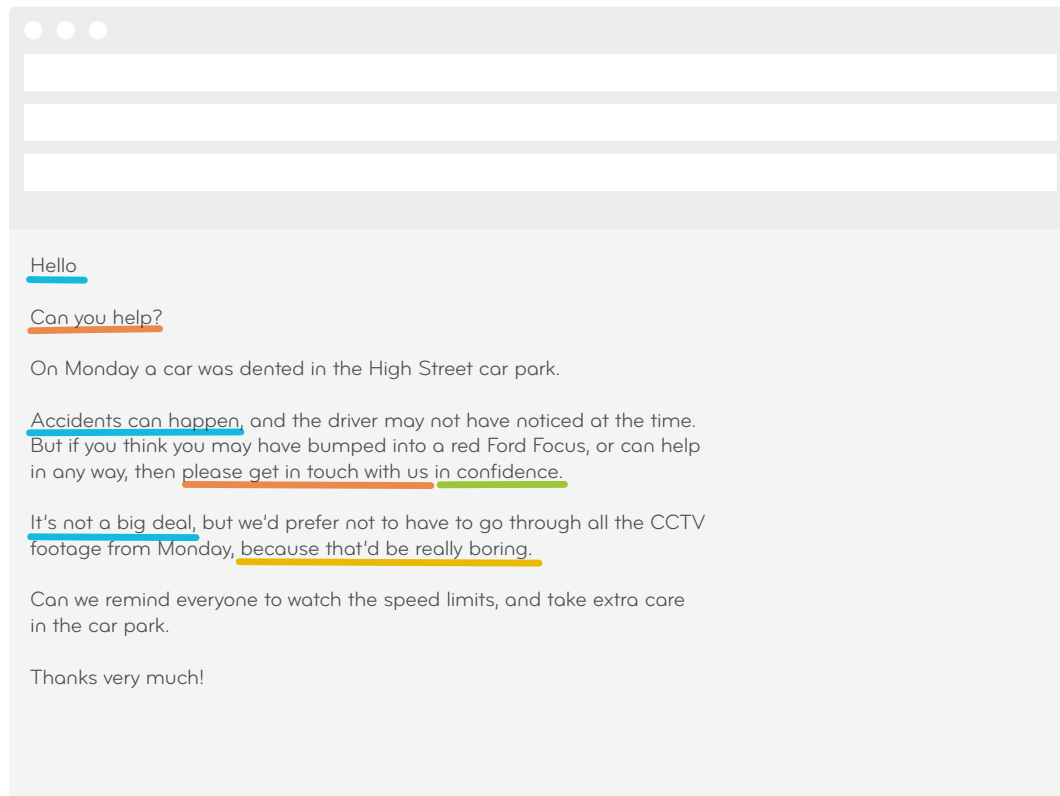
Playful

Engaging

Memorable

Useful

## How about...



A mockup of an email template. It features a header with three dots, followed by three horizontal bars representing a logo or header image. The main body of the email contains the following text:

Hello

Can you help?

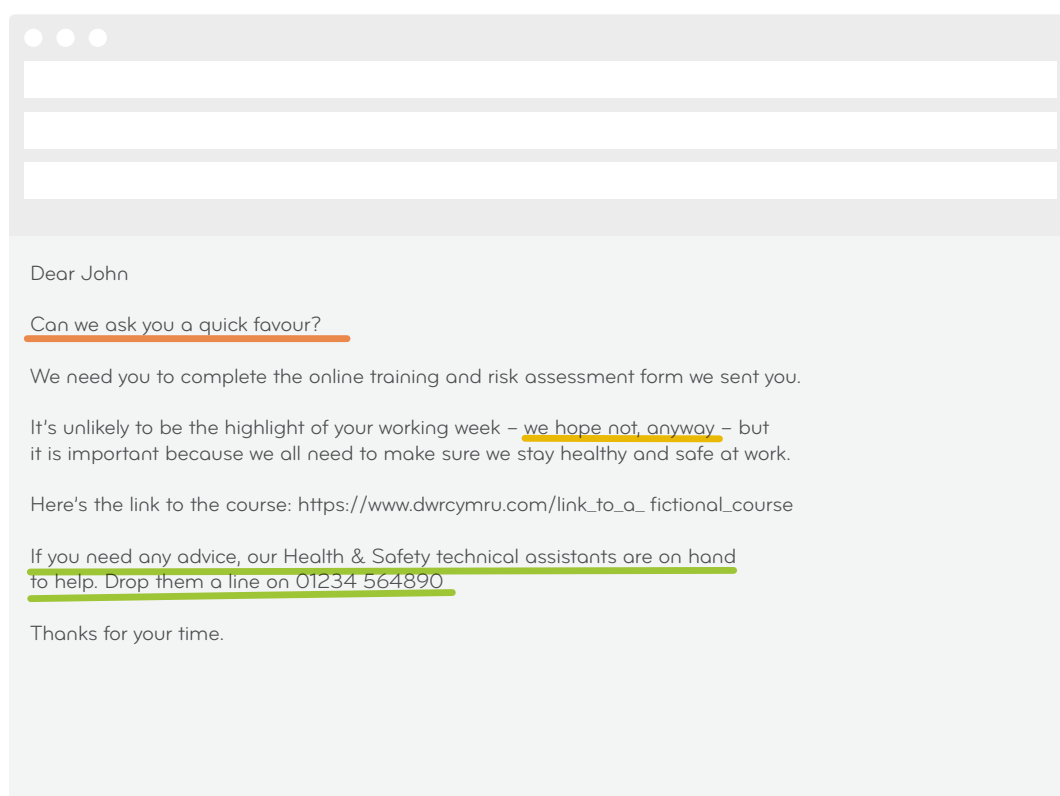
On Monday a car was dented in the High Street car park.

Accidents can happen, and the driver may not have noticed at the time. But if you think you may have bumped into a red Ford Focus, or can help in any way, then please get in touch with us in confidence.

It's not a big deal, but we'd prefer not to have to go through all the CCTV footage from Monday, because that'd be really boring.

Can we remind everyone to watch the speed limits, and take extra care in the car park.

Thanks very much!



A mockup of an email template. It features a header with three dots, followed by three horizontal bars representing a logo or header image. The main body of the email contains the following text:

Dear John

Can we ask you a quick favour?

We need you to complete the online training and risk assessment form we sent you.

It's unlikely to be the highlight of your working week – we hope not, anyway – but it is important because we all need to make sure we stay healthy and safe at work.

Here's the link to the course: [https://www.dwrcymru.com/link\\_to\\_a\\_fictional\\_course](https://www.dwrcymru.com/link_to_a_fictional_course)

If you need any advice, our Health & Safety technical assistants are on hand to help. Drop them a line on 01234 564890

Thanks for your time.



## Clear signs

**We work in communities across Wales and Herefordshire, and it's important that people know what we're doing, especially if we're digging up their road.**

There's always the temptation to try to cram loads of information on big banners. But people will only be looking at them for a split second from some distance away. So keep signs and banners short and simple. Remember, we can give them more detailed information in the post or online.

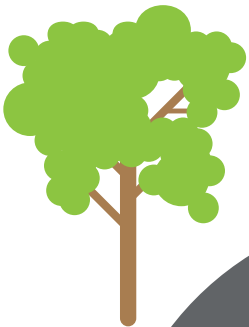
1

Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water is currently investing £250,000 to upgrade the water network in your area. We would like to apologise for any inconvenience while we carry out this essential work.



2

We're upgrading the waste-water network in your area to ensure lasting environmental benefits.



We would like to apologise for any inconvenience while we carry out this essential work.

3





Human

Honest

Playful

Engaging

Memorable

Useful

**1**

**Human**

**Useful**

Dŵr Cymru  
Welsh Water

**We're putting in new pipes**

To give you great quality water for years to come.

**2**

**Playful**

**Human**

Dŵr Cymru  
Welsh Water

**It's a dirty job, but someone's got to do it...**

We're putting in a new sewer to protect your environment.

**3**

**Honest**

**Human**

Dŵr Cymru  
Welsh Water

**We're sorry**

We know that our work can cause disruption. Thanks for bearing with us.

The illustration shows a winding road with three billboards. The first billboard (1) is blue and features two workers in hard hats and safety vests. The second billboard (2) is white and features a person in a yellow raincoat holding an umbrella, with a dog and a house in the background. The third billboard (3) is blue and features two workers in hard hats and safety vests. A white van with the Welsh Water logo is on the road, and a blue car and a yellow car are also visible. The road is marked with dashed lines and has green bushes along the sides.



# The A-Y style guide

(we didn't quite get to Z...)







**Writing and speaking – it’s all about communication, isn’t it? Getting the message across, as clearly and simply as possible. It’s also about how we say things. Our choice of words, and how we use them, gives our customers a clear sense of what we’re like as a company, and as people.**

We’re a Welsh company. We’re friendly people, so we speak to each other in a friendly way – even if that means bending a few grammatical rules along the way.

### **Having said that...**

Accuracy builds trust. There are some simple rights and wrongs that our customers expect us to know, and to get right, every time.

We’ve listed some of the main grammatical dos and don’ts in the following pages, along with a few style points that’ll help all our communications to speak in the same friendly voice.



## Americanisations

We try to use British spellings, rather than American ones. Even when your computer spellchecker is set to British English, a few American words may slip through. Watch out for these:

### -ise/-ize

We spell words like organise, realise, standardise and Americanise with an 's'. Americans always use a 'z' – organize, realize, etc. A Microsoft spellchecker will accept both, but always go for the British English 's' version.

### Advise/Advice, etc

British English still distinguishes between verbs (s) and nouns (c). I advise you to follow my advice, because I am licensed to carry a licence to practise dentistry in a dental practice, etc. Americans use the 's' for both verbs and nouns.

### Colour/color

If you enjoy the colour and flavour of leeks, you're probably British. But if your neighbor is in labor, she's American (and you should probably call a midwife).

If in doubt, pick up an English dictionary (Collins is our favourite).

[We're not going to comment on spoken Americanisations, other than to note that if you say, 'Can I get a coffee?' instead of 'Could/may I have a coffee?' then we will silently judge you.]

## Ampersands

The little & squiggle. We don't use them unless they're part of a name, like Marks & Spencer.

## And another thing...

In school, you're taught not to use words like 'and', 'but', 'because' and 'so' at the start of a sentence. But we like to do it sometimes. Because it sounds friendly. And we're happy with that. So there.

## Apostrophes

Misplaced apostrophes can change the meaning of what you're trying to communicate.

For example...  
'Here's a shiny new pipe.  
Mines on order.'

### It's / its

**It's** is a contraction of **it is** (or sometimes it has).

It's a lovely day. It's been great talking to you.

Next time you write **it's**, take a moment to re-read the sentence and ask yourself: does it mean **it is** or **it has**? If not, go for **its** (no apostrophe).

Apostrophes are also used to show possession:  
Rhian's car is nicer than Rhodri's.

Note the difference between a customer's bill (just one customer) and our customers' bills (all of them).

The same applies here:  
A day's rent  
One week's notice  
Three months' credit  
Eight years' service

We always write **Wales's** and not **Wales'** (as in, 'Water is Wales's greatest natural asset') because that's the way we'd speak it.

Oh, and watch out for the dreaded 'grocer's apostrophe', which is placed randomly at the end of plural words.

e.g. Thank you to our customer's, Welsh Water does not have shareholder's, minimise disruption to resident's, etc. All wrong!

## Big words aren't always clever words

When writing formal communications, it's tempting to use big, official-sounding words. Here's an example from a police officer's notebook:

I was proceeding on foot along the public highway when I observed a male individual rapidly egressing a residential property. I issued a loud verbal command to the individual, advising him to remain in a stationary position.

Or to put it another way...

I was walking down the road when I saw a man running out of a house. I shouted at him to stop.

Which has the greater pellucidity? (Sorry, we mean, which is clearer?) If in doubt, always go for shorter, easier-to-understand words. Here are some to watch out for:

Accede – **agree to**

Additional – **extra**

Advise – **tell**

Apprise – **notify**

Assist – **help**

At this point in time – **now**

Biannually – **twice a year**

Biennially – **once every two years**

Commence – **start**

Complete – **fill in**

In order to – **to**

Inform – **tell**

Necessitate – **need**

Prior to – **before**

Terminate – **end**

Utilise – **use**

You get the picture.

Some words can sound a bit old-fashioned, too. Given the choice, use the more modern variant:

Amidst – **amid**

Amongst – **among**

Whilst – **while**

## Brackets

If you can avoid brackets by splitting a long sentence into shorter ones, then do. But when you use brackets in a longer sentence, remember that the full-stop (or any other punctuation) goes on the outside (like this). However, when you have a whole sentence within brackets, the full-stop goes on the inside. (Like this.)

## Bullet points

We like breaking complicated information into bullet points. They're easier to understand. Start off with a colon:

- then start each point with a lowercase word
- don't punctuate at the end of each line
- finish the last one with a full-stop.

If the bullets are a self-contained list, or contain ideas that run into more than one sentence, do them like this:

- They should have a capital letter at the start of each one. Just like in this example.
- They should have a full stop at the end of each one. Like this one has.

## Capitals

It's easy to go berserk with capital letters, especially in headings and sub-headings:

Your Options for Receiving an Estimated Bill

This should read:

Your options for receiving an estimated bill

So we only use initial capitals where necessary, like here:

Let's Stop the Block together ...because 'Stop the Block' is the name of a campaign.



We don't use capital letters for points of the compass – north, south, east, west. South Wales, with a capital S is not a place. So these should always be lowercase: south Wales, north-east Wales, or even better, try southern part of Wales. The seasons aren't capitalised, either – summer, autumn, winter, spring – or job titles, so we refer to a managing director, not a Managing Director.

And don't use capitals for emphasis BECAUSE IT JUST LOOKS LIKE YOU'RE SHOUTING.

## Contractions

We like using contractions like it's, you're and here's (instead of it is, you are and here is) because they sound more friendly and relaxed. Feel free to use them wherever possible – but do remember that contractions aren't always appropriate. They can sound a bit breezily insensitive if, for instance, you're delivering bad news.

## Exclamation marks

Be careful when using them! They can become annoying!! Really quickly!!!

Journalists are taught to avoid exclamation marks. Sub-editors call them 'screamers' and 'startlers', and lots of other names that are too rude to mention.

Having said, that they can be useful when you're trying to convey a sense of friendly informality:

Don't panic! We'll have your water back on in a jiffy...  
But unless you're using an exclamation mark for a very good reason, and are confident that it won't annoy the reader, it's always best to leave it out.

## Hyphens

Sometime a little hyphen can make a big difference.

A man-eating shark  
A man eating shark

If you come across the first, swim as fast as you can.  
If you come across the second, don't worry – you're probably in a restaurant.

Notice also the difference between a heavy-metal detector (which would be useful for detecting mercury, cadmium, lead, etc) and a heavy metal-detector (which would be quite hard to carry).

Hyphens are also used in compound adjectives that come before a noun. Just to explain...

A three-day week  
A problem-solving exercise  
An in-flight magazine

## Less and fewer

The words less and fewer mean broadly the same thing – they both describe a reduced quantity – but it's worth knowing the difference.

As a general rule, if the quantity is made up of units you can count – people, bananas, eggs – then you should use fewer.

Less singular as in less traffic.  
Fewer plural as in fewer vehicles.



## Numbers

We write numbers from one to ten as words, and from 11 upwards as figures. The same applies for first, second, etc – but 11th, 12th.

Don't mix them in the same sentence (e.g. if you're talking about children between the ages of 8 and 15, go for figures). And don't use figures at the start of a sentence, e.g. '15 of our employees...' should read 'Fifteen of our employees...'

If a number is a unit of measurement, or refers to a page number – £6, 3mm, 8%, page 4 – use figures.

Note that we also refer to our 3 million customers (not 'three million').

Generally, we use metric measurements. But it's sometimes helpful to translate a cubic metre into 220 gallons or 12 baths, if it'll help our readers. And while we refer to our 27,000km of water mains, it's more natural to talk about Rhayader being 14 miles from Llanidloes, and not 22.5km.

Watch out for Cardiff telephone numbers. They're split like this:

029 2000 0000 (and not 02920 000000)

## Place names

Carnarvon, Llanely and Conway – just three names that will annoy people. It's really important to get place names right, in Welsh and in English. Always make sure you check if there's a separate name in Welsh, and make sure you always use the proper spelling. And make a special effort to learn how to pronounce place names.

Don't say 'England and Wales'. It's Wales and England unless you're talking specifically about the law.

## Quotation marks

Here's how we punctuate direct speech, for instance in press releases. Here we use the example of Mr Timson, who is very pleased with his new hat. Note that we use a colon to introduce the speech, which is contained within double quotes:

Tim Timson, chief executive of Timson & Co, said: "I am delighted with my new hat. It's the finest hat I've ever seen."

"My new hat is truly a work of art," said Mr Timson.

"The best thing about my new hat," said Mr Timson, "is that it protects my head from cosmic rays."

Quotes within quotes use single quote marks. Note also how the full-stop appears, depending on whether it's a complete or partial quote:

Mr Timpson said: "My wife told me, 'Your hat is the finest in all of Ebbw Vale.'"

Mr Timpson said: "My wife has described my new hat as 'the finest in all of Ebbw Vale.'"

When reporting speech, always use the verb 'said', and never use adverbs (ie, don't say that Mr Timson 'gushed excitedly', even if he did).

## Soundalikes

Some words sound similar, but have different meanings. Watch out for these:

### Affect/effect

When used as a verb, **affect** means to influence; **effect** means to bring something about.

I won't let the rain affect my plans. I'll effect my plans immediately.

**Effect** is more often used as a noun (the greenhouse effect; my new trousers had a startling effect on my colleagues). **Affect** does exist as a noun, by the way. It's an obscure term used in psychiatry, so you're unlikely to need it on Welsh Water business. We hope.



### Accept/except

To **accept** means to assimilate, to welcome on board, to agree with.

To **except** means to exclude, or not include.

I accept this award on behalf of all my colleagues ... except Neil, who's clearly an idiot.

### Of/have

Another pet hate of grammarians, which crops up quite often in written and spoken English:

I could **have** danced all night (never 'could of').

I should **have** brought an umbrella (never 'should of').

### Who's/whose

This is very much like the it's/its saga.

**Who's** is a contraction of 'who is' or 'who has'.

Who's there? Who's nicked my pencil?

**Whose** shows belonging. Whose pencil is that? I know whose car that is.

### They're, their and there

**They're** is a contraction of 'they are'.

**Their** is a possessive pronoun meaning 'belonging to them'.

**There** means... well, lots of things.

They're putting their books over there. So there you have it. They're happy with their lot.

[In colloquial Welsh-English, we sometimes use 'by there' and 'by here' to specify a location – as in, 'Go and fetch that spanner from over by there and bring it by here, would you butt?' This is unacceptable in written communication. Life is so unfair.]

### Stationary / stationery

Stationary describes something that's not moving. Stationery refers to office supplies.

The traffic was stationary. I'll just nip to the stationery cupboard for some envelopes.

Occasionally you may see a stationary stationery van parked outside WH Smith. Try not to worry about it.

### Staff

We avoid using this term. It's a bit outdated. When you're talking to other people inside Dŵr Cymru, let's use colleagues. For example: "I'm going to send a note to all of our colleagues to say thank you".

If you're talking to customers, it's ok to say: "I'll just transfer you to my colleague in the Billing Team", but even better if you could make it more personal: "I'll just put you through to John in the Billing team who will be able to help you". Or, if you can't use a name: "One of the waste water team will call with you to take a look at the sewer."

### Swearing

We don't, ever. Not when talking or writing to customers. You can develop a friendly rapport without swearing (even if the customer drops a friendly F-bomb first).

### Time and date

We use the 12-hour clock, am and pm, not the 24-hour clock.

We punctuate like this: 5pm (not 5.00pm) and 5.30pm (not 5:30pm).

The format for dates is day, number, month and, if needed, year – Friday 27 March, 2015.

## Who or whom?

The word 'whom' is dying out, poor thing. It sounds a bit old-fashioned, and few people are confident about how to use it correctly. But actually, it's quite easy to learn, and doing so might, one day, win you a hot date with a grammarian.

It's all about subjects and objects of verbs. Consider this sentence:

### I love you.

I am the subject, and you are the object of my love (and the verb). The same applies to he/him and she/her, etc. She loves him, he loves her, they love them, who loves whom, subject loves object.

Now, if you use the word who, you should be able to replace it with he or she and still have the sentence make sense. If you use whom, you should be able to replace it with him or her.

Whom does she love?  
She loves him.  
Who is a lucky bloke?  
He is, clearly.

It's worth noting, though, that 'whom' can sound a bit stuffy, especially on the phone 'To whom do you wish to speak?' sounds a lot frostier than 'Who would you like to speak to?'

That last version contains two grammatical errors ('who' instead of 'whom', and ending with the preposition 'to'). But which sounds friendlier? You decide.

## You and I and me

The best way to check whether you are correct is to miss out the other person in your sentence. Remove Alwyn in the example below and you wouldn't say 'Me went to our Cardiff office' would you?

Alwyn and me went to our Cardiff office.  
**Incorrect**

Me and Alwyn are meeting at our Nelson office.  
**Incorrect**

Bronwyn and I went to our Linea office.  
**Correct**

I and my colleague went to the reservoir.  
**Correct**

Myself and Bronwyn followed the procedure.  
**Incorrect**

Alwyn and I agreed the policy.  
**Correct**

The document needs to be signed by Bronwyn and me.  
**Correct**

I am not particularly fond of programming, myself.  
**Correct**

The award was handed to Alwyn and I.  
**Incorrect**

Here endeth the lesson.

