Fictional sample. Carrow Water is an invented organisation; every person, figure and quote in this report is made up to show what a finished report looks like.

DRIFT REVIEW · FINAL REPORT

Carrow Water

What a review of 50 conversations, three focused exercises and two Drift Checks found, what was decided, and what moved.

PREPARED FOR	PREPARED BY	ENGAGEMENT	REPORT DATE
Chief Executive and executive team	Richard Bourne	February 2026 to October 2026	26 October 2026

1 · SUMMARY

Carrow Water measures itself very carefully, and hears itself much less clearly.

Across 50 conversations, the ideas people raised most were **Beyond the scoreboard**, **Ground truth** and **What goes unsaid**. Asked what three things they would fix, the most common answers were **clear decision rights** (30 of 50), **listen to the front line** (28) and **fewer, better measures** (24).

50	3	10	46 → 18
conversations across 10 teams and the executive	focused exercises, chosen from what the review found	decisions logged; 7 done or in place	average gap between the most and least concerned leader, out of 100

What we found

Two ideas were blind spots: staff raised **Beyond the scoreboard and What goes unsaid** far more often than leaders' first scores suggested. Leaders also disagreed most about exactly these, with a gap of 75 points on each between the most and least concerned leader.

What was done

The executive chose the moderate option: metric amnesty, corridor cards, capability fire drill. They led to 10 logged decisions, 7 of them already done or in place.

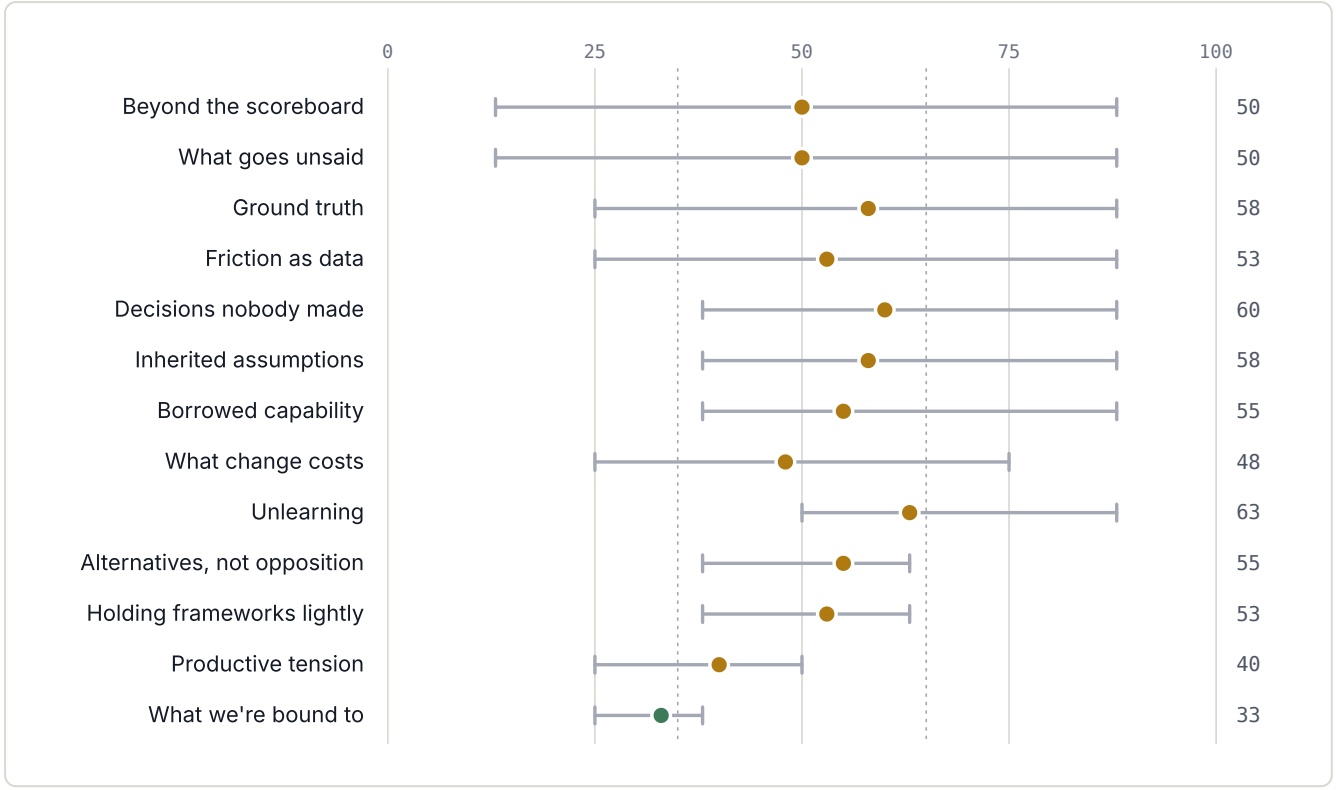
What moved

Average drift moved only slightly, from 52 to 48. The larger change is that leaders now see the organisation far more alike: the average gap between them fell from 46 to 18 points. The Chief Executive's own scores rose, which usually means seeing more, not doing worse.

Leaders agreed on some things and saw others very differently.

Each of the 5 executives took the Drift Check separately. The dot shows the team's average drift for each idea; the line shows the range from the least to the most concerned leader. Ideas are ordered by how much leaders disagreed.

Holding 0–34 · Drifting 35–64 · Unexamined 65–100 · Range across leaders



Most drift (team average)

Unlearning	63
Decisions nobody made	60
Inherited assumptions	58

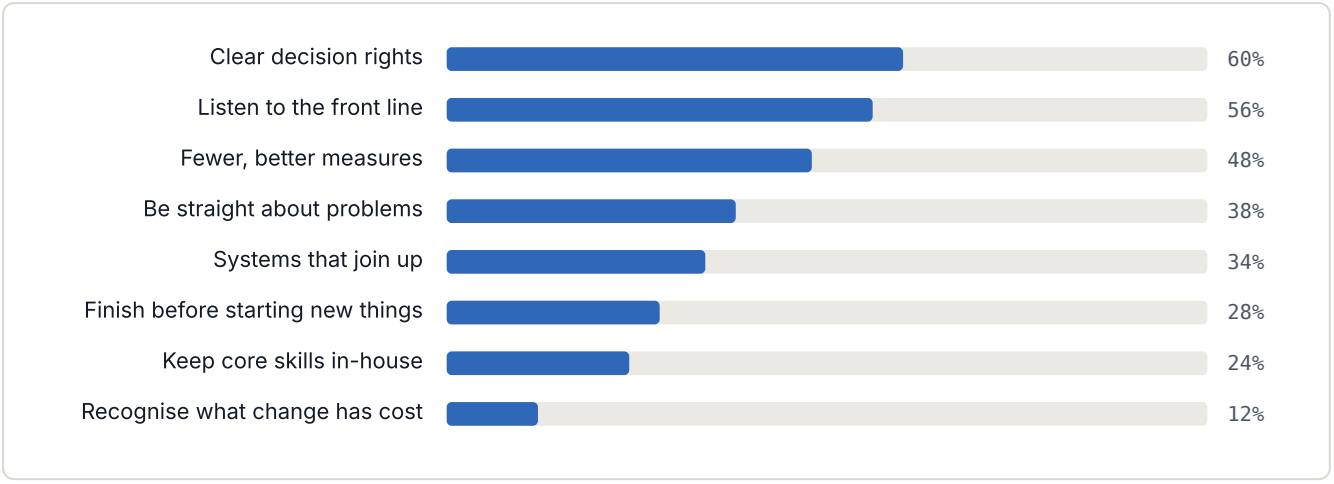
Widest disagreement

Beyond the scoreboard	13–88
What goes unsaid	13–88
Ground truth	25–88

These became the questions the review set out to test: is the drift leaders see the drift people live with, and who is closer to the ground on the ideas where they disagree?

People asked to be listened to, and for decisions to have owners.

Every conversation ended with the same question: *What three things would you fix?* Bars show the share of the 50 conversations that named each.



In their words

Beyond the scoreboard

12 conversations

We report spill hours very carefully. We talk about why they happen much less.

Wastewater networks, manager

Leakage is the number everyone watches. So we chase the jobs that move the number, not always the jobs that matter.

Leakage and field repair, manager

We close complaints fast. Whether we solve them is a different question.

Customer contact centre, manager

Ground truth

11 conversations

Head office plans the network from maps that are years out of date. We work from what's actually in the ground.

Wastewater networks, front line

The script tells us what to say. It doesn't tell us what's actually happening out there.

Customer contact centre, front line

There are people here who already know exactly what needs to change. They're just not in the room.

People and culture, manager

What goes unsaid

10 conversations

I raised the overflow at the pumping station three times. Each time it went into a system and disappeared.

Wastewater networks, front line

Customers ring about the same street flooding every time it rains. I log it and it goes nowhere.

Customer contact centre, front line

We know the costs on some schemes are wrong. Saying so feels like breaking ranks.

Capital delivery, specialist

Borrowed capability

9 conversations

The old operators could smell a filter going wrong. We wait for the screen to tell us.

Water treatment, front line

The modelling is done by the consultant now. We sign it off, but I'm not sure we could challenge it.

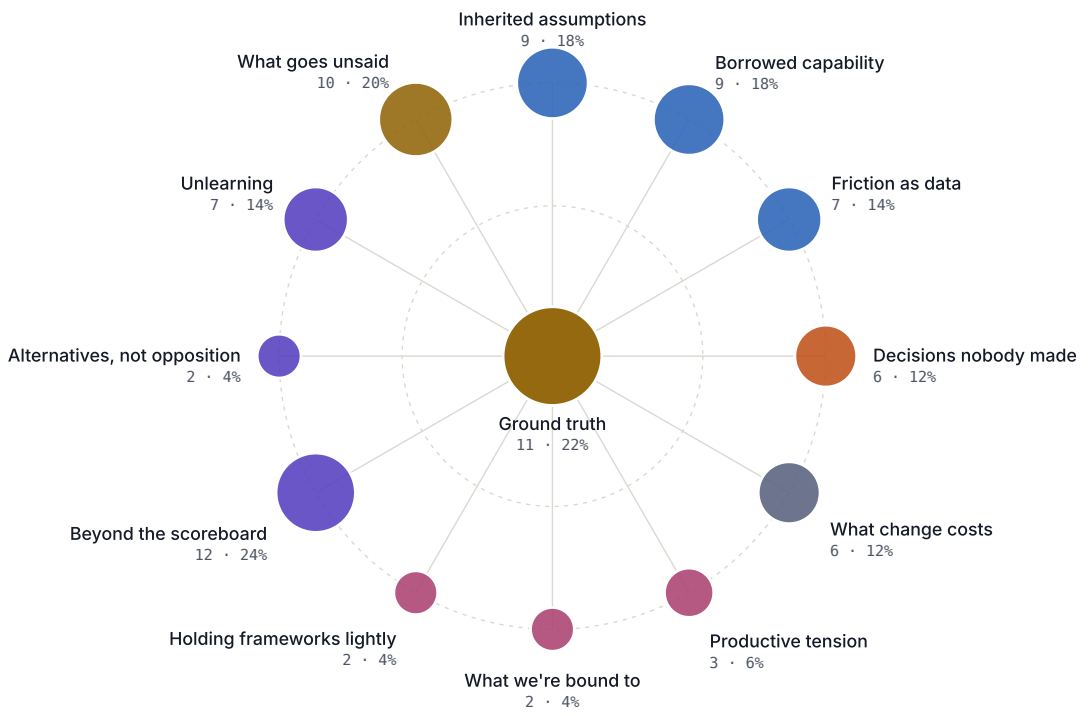
Wastewater networks, specialist

The contractor knows our patch better than we do now.

Leakage and field repair, front line

Where Carrow Water has drifted, in its own people's words.

The same twelve ideas as the Oppositism map, around Ground truth at the centre. Each circle is sized by how many of the 50 conversations raised that idea, and coloured by its place on the arc.



See · Challenge · Acknowledge · Include · Redesign · Ground

IDEA	CONVERSATIONS	ONE VOICE
Beyond the scoreboard REDESIGN	12	*We report spill hours very carefully. We talk about why they happen much less.*
Ground truth GROUND	11	*Head office plans the network from maps that are years out of date. We work from what's actually in the ground.*
What goes unsaid GROUND	10	*I raised the overflow at the pumping station three times. Each time it went into a system and disappeared.*
Inherited assumptions SEE	9	*We run the works to the procedure because the procedure is what gets audited, not because it's the best way to run it.*

IDEA	CONVERSATIONS	ONE VOICE
Borrowed capability SEE	9	*The old operators could smell a filter going wrong. We wait for the screen to tell us.*
Friction as data SEE	7	*Half the alarms on night shift are noise. Everyone knows which ones to ignore, and that worries me.*
Unlearning REDESIGN	7	*We've had four leakage strategies in six years. Each one was going to be the one.*
Decisions nobody made CHALLENGE	6	*Nobody decided we'd stop doing manual sampling on weekends. It just stopped when people left.*
What change costs ACKNOWLEDGE	6	*We were told the new shift pattern was better. Nobody asked what it cost the people with kids.*
Productive tension INCLUDE	3	*Disagreeing with the plan is fine in private. In the meeting, it's settled before we arrive.*
What we're bound to INCLUDE	2	*People are busy, but if half our reports stopped tomorrow I doubt anyone would ring.*
Holding frameworks lightly INCLUDE	2	*We follow the stage-gate process even for jobs it was never designed for.*
Alternatives, not opposition REDESIGN	2	*Our best changes started as someone quietly trying something better, not a programme.*

Two of the ideas people raised most were ones leaders had scored as only moderate drift.

Each idea compares leaders' first Drift Check average with the share of conversations that raised it. An idea counts as high when leaders scored it 55 or above, or when at least 16% of conversations raised it.

IDEA	LEADERS' DRIFT	LEADERS' RANGE	CONVERSATIONS	READING
Ground truth	58	25–88	22%	SHARED CONCERN Leaders and staff both see drift here.
Inherited assumptions	58	38–88	18%	SHARED CONCERN Leaders and staff both see drift here.
Borrowed capability	55	38–88	18%	SHARED CONCERN Leaders and staff both see drift here.
Beyond the scoreboard	50	13–88	24%	BLIND SPOT Staff raise it far more than leaders' scores suggest.
What goes unsaid	50	13–88	20%	BLIND SPOT Staff raise it far more than leaders' scores suggest.
Unlearning	63	50–88	14%	LEADERS' WORRY Leaders score it high; few conversations raised it.
Decisions nobody made	60	38–88	12%	LEADERS' WORRY Leaders score it high; few conversations raised it.
Alternatives, not opposition	55	38–63	4%	LEADERS' WORRY Leaders score it high; few conversations raised it.
Friction as data	53	25–88	14%	QUIETER Neither group put much weight on it.

IDEA	LEADERS' DRIFT	LEADERS' RANGE	CONVERSATIONS	READING
What change costs	48	25–75	12%	QUIETER Neither group put much weight on it.
Productive tension	40	25–50	6%	QUIETER Neither group put much weight on it.
What we're bound to	33	25–38	4%	QUIETER Neither group put much weight on it.
Holding frameworks lightly	53	38–63	4%	QUIETER Neither group put much weight on it.

Shared concerns (Inherited assumptions, Borrowed capability, Ground truth) are where to build agreement fast. **Blind spots** are where the review adds most: leaders were split on them, and the people closest to the work were not.

The executive chose the moderate option, and three exercises followed.

BOLD

A twelve-month reset of how performance is measured, reported and discussed, led by the Chief Executive, with every regular report re-justified from zero and a standing front-line voice at the executive meeting.

MODERATE · CHOSEN

Three focused exercises over a quarter, aimed at the themes people raised most: measures that drive no decisions, concerns that don't travel, and skills held only by suppliers. A second Drift Check six months on.

LIGHT

Adopt three habits immediately: corridor cards at the monthly leadership meeting, a fresh-eyes log for new starters, and a rule that every new initiative names what it replaces.

The review also identified 11 people across the organisation who already see clearly where things need to go. Their names were shared privately with the chief executive, and several took part in the exercises below.

Metric amnesty

Beyond the scoreboard · May 2026

WHO

Executive team, heads of service and report owners (34 people)

WHAT WE DID

Listed every regular report, dashboard and KPI pack. For each, named who reads it and which decision it drives. Anything driving no decision went on a retirement list, with no blame for having built it.

WHAT WE FOUND

147 regular reports and dashboards. 61 could not be linked to any decision. Report preparation took an estimated 1,900 staff hours a year across those 61.

WHAT IT PRODUCED

38 reports retired, 14 merged into others, 9 kept under review until January 2027.

Corridor cards

What goes unsaid · May to July 2026

WHO

Six leadership and operational meetings (78 attendees in total)

WHAT WE DID

Near the end of each meeting, everyone wrote anonymously what they would say in the corridor afterwards. The chair read the cards out unedited and the group chose one to act on.

WHAT WE FOUND

112 cards. The most common themes were concerns already raised that went nowhere (31 cards), doubts about capital scheme costs (17) and workload from duplicate reporting (14).

WHAT IT PRODUCED

Six issues acted on, including a direct escalation route for repeated overflow and flooding reports, and an open review of three capital scheme estimates.

Capability fire drill

Borrowed capability · June 2026

WHO

Control room and network teams (19 people)

WHAT WE DID

The control room ran a planned four-hour shift with the supplier's analytics dashboard switched off, working from raw telemetry and network knowledge, with full fallback in place.

WHAT WE FOUND

2 of 9 controllers could confidently interpret raw telemetry for the trunk mains. The alarm prioritisation logic was documented only by the supplier. Three manual procedures referred to equipment no longer installed.

WHAT IT PRODUCED

A capability register for the control room, alarm logic documentation brought in-house, and paired training for controllers.

7 · WHAT WAS DECIDED

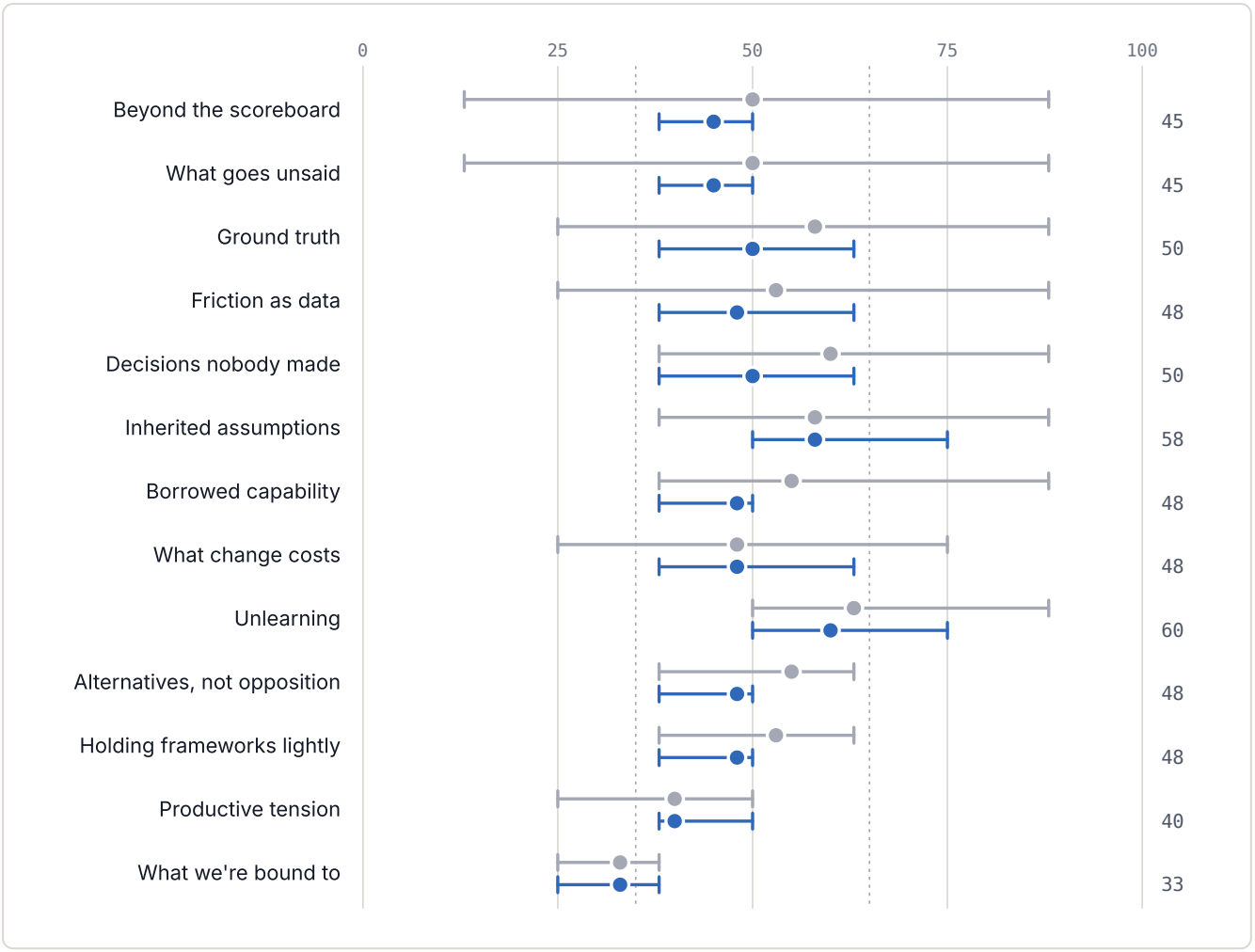
10 decisions, each with an owner. 7 are done or in place.

TYPE	DECISION	IDEA	OWNER	STATUS
STOP	Retire 38 regular reports and dashboards that drive no decision	Beyond the scoreboard	Director of Finance and Regulation	Done
CHANGE	Merge 14 overlapping reports into the monthly performance pack	Beyond the scoreboard	Head of Performance	Done
CHANGE	Open a direct escalation route for repeated overflow and flooding reports from the contact centre	What goes unsaid	Director of Customer and Communities	Done
KEEP	Corridor cards at the monthly executive meeting	What goes unsaid	Chief Executive	In place
CHANGE	Bring control-room alarm logic documentation in-house	Borrowed capability	Director of Operations	Done
TRY	Paired training: experienced and newer controllers working raw telemetry	Borrowed capability	Head of Control Room	In progress
TRY	Each executive works one front-line shift per quarter	Ground truth	Chief Executive	In progress
CHANGE	Open review of three capital scheme estimates raised on corridor cards	Productive tension	Director of Asset Delivery	Done
STOP	Weekend duplicate reporting for the leakage programme	Unlearning	Head of Leakage	Done
TRY	Fresh-eyes log for all new starters in operations	Inherited assumptions	Director of People and Culture	In progress

Leaders now see the organisation much more alike.

The same 5 executives retook the Drift Check 8 months after the first. For each idea, the upper line shows the range of their answers in February 2026, the lower line in October 2026. Dots mark the team average.

Before · 9 February 2026 After · 12 October 2026



Gaps closed

The largest narrowing was on Beyond the scoreboard (75 to 12), What goes unsaid (75 to 12), Borrowed capability (50 to 12). Beyond the scoreboard and What goes unsaid were the blind spots the review surfaced.

Averages moved less

Average drift went from 52 to 48. That is expected: the exercises were about seeing and choosing, and 8 months is short for systems to change.

A score that rose

The Chief Executive's overall score rose by 9 points. Read alongside the narrower gaps, this looks like seeing more rather than things getting worse.

Drift Check scores are a conversation starter, not a validated measure. Please don’t set them as targets: once a drift score becomes a KPI, people manage the score instead of the drift.

9 · WHAT YOU KEEP DOING

The aim is for Carrow Water to need outside help less, not more.

Corridor cards

At the monthly executive meeting, run by the chair.

Fresh-eyes log

Every new starter in operations, read and answered by their director.

Stop before you start

Every new initiative names what it replaces, checked at the investment panel.

Yearly Drift Check

The executive team retakes the check each October and discusses the widest spread.

How this review was done

Four steps: a Drift Check with the executive team, a Listening Review, focused exercises chosen from what the review found, and a second Drift Check.

The Listening Review began with a handful of names and grew by recommendation until the same themes kept returning. Each conversation lasted about 30 minutes and ended with one question: *What three things would you fix?* Quotes are as close to verbatim as notes allow, and attributed only by team and level.

Conversations by level: 17 specialist, 15 manager, 13 front line, 5 executive.

The reviewer's own background is in commercial service transformation, which will have shaped what he noticed. Findings are offered to be challenged.

TEAM	CONVERSATIONS
Executive	5
Water treatment	5
Wastewater networks	5
Leakage and field repair	5
Customer contact centre	5
People and culture	5
Capital delivery	4
Asset planning	4
Digital and data	4
Regulation and compliance	4
Finance	4
Total	**50**