



## "Rain is music to our ears": How a Water Company Prepares for a Long Warm and Dry Summer

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Meet Mark Webber, Alarm Team manager at South West Water in the United Kingdom. South West Water is a water and wastewater service provider for a population of about 1.7 million in the southwest of England. They also provide water services in the Bournemouth water region to a population of half a million. As South West Water is the only water supplier in the region, there is a very strict system of regulation in place.

### **The Preparation: Long-Range Forecasts**

"We must always be able to meet customer demand," says Mark. "That means, to us, it's important to know what is going to happen on a longer term and on a seasonal basis. The year 2018 was a complete anomaly. We had the extreme cold at the end of winter and all of the chaos that resulted. It took a few months to recover from that. Then during that recovery phase, the dry weather came in. It was a rollercoaster of different variations."



**SOUTH WEST WATER**

forecasts from 2 weeks to 3 months ahead. "Being informed early helped. **With having the knowledge and information on the confidence of the forecasts, we were able to prepare to a better degree.**"

But South West Water was informed and, therefore, prepared. Weekly, they talked to meteorologists from MeteoGroup who explained all the ins-and-outs concerning the

## **Planning is Crucial**

Despite the prolonged drought and the persistent heat, South West Water felt in control all summer. Mark said, “The first thing we did last year was to look at the raw water levels. We asked: Is there enough water in lakes and rivers to extract from? We then had our strategic side look at the demand part. There must be enough water in our systems to channel that water strategically to customers. We were looking at our stock water and our reservoirs and analysing the forecasts. If it was not going to rain, we had to be careful what we were extracting. We are always thinking about what we can use, what we have in storage and what we can have as a back-up. The back-ups can be used to extract and put into our network. So, there is a lot of strategic planning in that.”

## **Contingency Plans**

“During the entire rollercoaster-year, we had enough water to cope. We did a nice job. Especially because this region is very popular in the tourist season. We have about 5 million extra people in the summer season and they all use the water facilities.”

“The seasonal and sub-seasonal forecasts have been very beneficial to us. We share it around in our business, we make clear contingency plans, and we are better able to react to weather events. Together with MeteoGroup, we are on a journey to more knowledge and to a better use of all the weather information. It’s a learning process.”

## **Hopes for Next Summer**

“The work is easy if there is a lot of water. So, company-wise, the perfect summer for 2019 would bring some rain. Although we did recover well, we still need to replenish some of the water in some of our areas. However, I’ve seen early **weather signals** saying we are in for drier weather. Of course we are looking ahead. We are always thinking of how we will cope with demand.”

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Alarm Team Manager

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