Background

Since AMP4 our engagement with customers on water efficiency measures has increased; starting from simple 'one way' messages on the need to save water, to our AMP6 Home Check programme that saw us complete over 21,000 home visits that has helped customers save around one million (1Ml) of water a day. As a whole, our AMP6 programme will achieve 4.4Ml a day savings

AMP7 sees us setting even more ambitious targets; 40,000 Home Check visits to help reach an annual saving of 5Ml a day by the end of the AMP. To do this, we knew that we'd need to look at how we deliver our Home Check programme and engage with a larger number of our customers beyond this. A digital approach was an obvious option, but with the tools available developing all the time we wanted to explore the options before commencing the tender for our AMP7 delivery partners.

Approach

We ran two challenges side by side to fully explore this area. The first was a data hackathon, and the second a pre-tender discovery exercise.

Data hackathon
Organisations were invited to enter to compete for a £500 prize. We shared our Home Check visit data for the previous 3 years (rough location, current water use, devices fitted, estimated savings) as well as the data we had gathered from our online calculator.

– Following an introductory Skype session, entrants were asked to explore the question
– How can we improve the efficiency of our in-house visits – can we improve the estimated savings or make it more cost effective to deliver?

Teams had one month to review the data, and were offered the chance for a mid-challenge check-in with the behaviour engagement team to talk through their findings so far.

We then held a presentation session at the Wessex Water head office for all teams to feed back their findings.

Discovery exercise
We asked the supply chain, via the Wessex Water Marketplace, to provide us with summaries of their available products in both the home audit and digital space. We used our bid assessment framework as a basis for the questions to ask, testing the approach before AMP7 commenced. Alongside this, the data from our 21,000 home visits, and limited data from our online calculator, was shared to aid potential partners. We then provided detailed feedback on our thoughts on the offers and the learnings we'd apply to the subsequent tender to allow partners to tailor their offers accordingly.
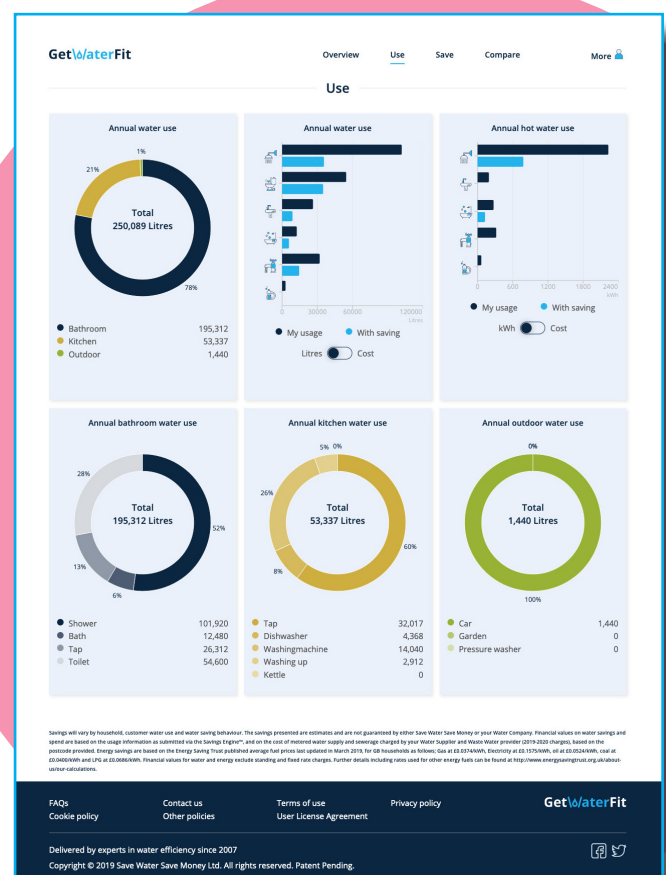
Results

Data hackathon

Artesia, Meniscus, Solo and WSP all rose to the challenge, with teams delving into the data, running it through algorithms and feeding it into decision engines to see what they could find.

- Artesia looked at how our savings estimates could be improved, focusing on particular devices and where they were installed.
- WSP looked at the engagement stats, and whether there were any trends we could exploit for future schemes.
- Meniscus created a decision tool in their calculation engine, creating wards within the region and ascribing them values to prioritise delivery.
- Solo built a Power BI dashboard to provide in-depth monitoring of the programme allowing the delivery to be tracked continuously.

Our judges, Pippa Bond (Participation Strategy Manager) and Dan Green (Head of Sustainability and Innovation) had a tough time choosing between the companies for the winner; each had focused on a slightly different aspect of the problem and had excelled in their area.

Pippa commented: "It was fantastic to see what teams did with our data – the range of approaches was brilliant, and it's definitely provided some input on how we can make better use of our data next AMP to deliver the programme. Thanks to everyone who took part."

Pippa and Dan awarded Artesia the £500 prize; their analysis revealed uses for data that we hadn't previously explored, confirmed some of our savings estimates and highlighted future areas of exploration.

We'll be looking at how we can apply these learnings to our AMP7 delivery and will also feed them into our plans for future hackathons. With some great suggestions from the participants on how we can take them forward we'll be looking at ways to further engage.

Discovery exercise

The learnings in the digital space were most beneficial to the team, having had limited activity in this space before. Comparing the variety of tools on offer:

- identified the need to have a system that was engaging for customers without the need for meter reads;
- confirmed the team's view that having a calculator element, where customers could understand their current usage, was important to start customers on that journey;
- highlighted the potential for gamification to incentivise customers to improve their water usage with a bit of 'healthy competition' between users.

We're in the final stages of contracting for our AMP7 contracts following this discovery phase - we'll share more on the blog at the start of AMP7.

Wessex Water
YTL GROUP