



Research Pre-task: January 2021

Thanks for agreeing to take part in our group discussion. We're really looking forward to hearing what you have to say! As we mentioned, we'd like you to complete a couple of quick tasks beforehand.

You can do them any time before the discussion, but we recommend you get stuck in sooner rather than later, to give yourself time to think the information over.

Please note down your thoughts somewhere handy (if you have access to a printer, you might find it easiest to print this task sheet off) and bring them along to the group discussion. The notes you bring along will be important to our session together, so do take 15-20 minutes to record them somewhere.

Task 1

We'd like you to think about a few items that most people own and are responsible for upkeep of:

- Mobile phone
- Your main family (or personal) vehicle
- The roof on your house
- The boiler that heats your house

Don't worry if you don't own all of these things! You can just skip that column if that's the case.

In the research, we're going to think about and refer to these sorts of things as 'assets,' and our focus will be on how people make decisions about maintaining them. What sorts of assets need to be in great condition all the time, no matter what? In what situations are people prepared to 'scrap' an asset like a mobile phone and get a new one – and how does that differ for a boiler or a roof? What causes the differences?

Please think about the different factors that play into the decisions you make when it comes to looking after these different assets and answer the following questions.

Brief notes are fine: we're going to discuss your thoughts in more detail in the group.

	Mobile phone	Family or personal vehicle	Roof of your house	Boiler that heats your house
Write down three words that come to mind about this item				
What do you personally do to keep this asset in good condition?				
How often would you expect to replace this?				
Describe a situation where the item needs repairing				



Describe a situation where you'd buy a new one				
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Task 2

In the group discussion we're going to talk about the 'assets' that water companies like United Utilities own, and get your thoughts on how decisions should be made, when it comes to maintaining those asset bases. We'd like you to read the text below, to give you a brief overview.

United Utilities delivers 1.8 billion litres of water a day to more than 3 million homes and businesses in the North West, and is responsible for 78,000 kilometres of wastewater pipes which take sewage from 7.3 million people for treatment at nearly 600 wastewater treatment works. It also owns numerous renewable energy sites, vehicle fleets and other properties.

So, United Utilities has a significant asset base. Maintaining those assets effectively is critical to United Utilities being able to deliver a reliable and quality service.

But United Utilities also has to take into account the cost of maintenance, and the balance between maintaining and repairing assets it's had for some time, versus investing money in approaches that improve services.

Before the group discussion, please have a think about the different things United Utilities has to balance, and the sorts of trade-offs it might need to make. If you want jot down any thoughts about this, that's great – but it's not a requirement!