BLUESPACES GOVERNANCE GROUP

TERMS OF REFERENCE

November 2026

1. BACKGROUND

At NWG, we take care to protect and improve the environment in everything we do, leading by example. In our PR19 customer research, our customers told us that they would like us to work with others to deliver wider improvements beyond just water quality to the areas of rivers and beaches that they use. In response, and with support from our partners, we developed a new approach to improving the water environment for 2020-25 (AMP7). We also pledged to improve 500 km of water environment improvements for our customers in our regions by 2030, with this commitment set out in A vision for our coasts and rivers.

Over the 5 years of AMP7, Bluespaces has been successful in achieving a total of 248.1 km of improvements (158.5 km in our NW region and 89.6 km in our ESW region), across 59 projects (37 in our NW region and 22 in our ESW region).

Bluespaces allows us to build on the existing activities in our plan, working with others to go 'above and beyond' our baseline activities and investment where we think it is of benefit for our customers. Building on the success of Bluespaces in AMP7, we have an ambition of enhancing 252 kms of accessible water environment for 2025-2030 and want to continue working in partnership with other stakeholders to develop and deliver environmental improvements.

The Bluespaces Governance Group (previously known as the Water Environment Governance Group, WEGG) provides internal and external assurance and gives our regulators and stakeholders confidence that where we decide to invest in water environment improvements, we do so for the right reasons and with customers' interests at heart.

Further detail on NWG's approach to water environment improvements and bluespaces are available on our webpages.

2. PURPOSE

The Bluespaces Governance Group provides NWG with advice, guidance and internal and external assurance on its water environment approach. The group helps ensure, through development of and involvement in due process, that the approach taken delivers km of improvements that are justified and of benefit to customers. The Bluespaces Governance Group is also responsible for providing evidence of external assurance to the Environment Agency and Natural England through Action Specification Form (ASF) reporting.

More information about the scheme can be found in our Bluespaces Information Pack.

3. SCOPE

This group covers NWG's approach to improving the water environment across its Northumbrian Water and Essex & Suffolk supply and operating areas (10 management catchments across the North East, Essex, Suffolk and Norfolk). The areas of interest for ESW include ESW supply areas, drinking water source areas, and downstream management catchments (Figure 1). The water environment within these regions is considered to be all rivers, streams, lakes and reservoirs, wetlands, beaches and coastline.

Accessible water environment is defined as the areas of rivers, streams, lakes and reservoirs, wetlands, beaches and coastline that customers can get to via public or private permissive access, allowing customers to engage with, enjoy and benefit from water in the environment.

Improvements delivered upstream may benefit downstream accessible areas.

The Bluespaces Governance Group determines whether proposed projects fit within the scope of the approach and has the final say on eligibility.

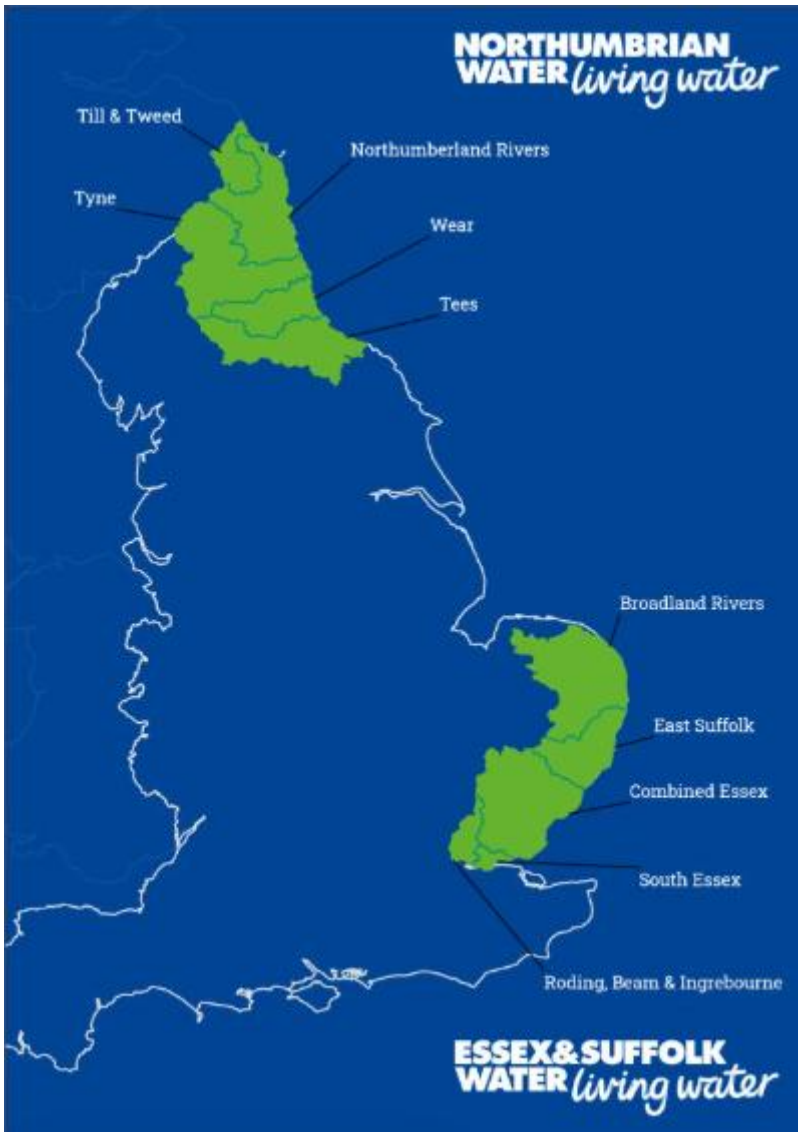


Figure 1. Areas of interest for delivering Water Environment Improvements

4. AIMS

The aims of the Bluespaces Governance Group are to:

1. Bring together key individuals to work together to provide NWG with advice, guidance and internal and external assurance on its Bluespaces scheme, and Branch Out Scheme where appropriate, and associated project development and delivery;

2. Provide strategic and independent advice and support to NWG's Integrated Catchment Manager, who has overall responsibility for NWG's Bluespaces and Branch Out schemes, and NWG's Bluespaces and Branch Out Team/s who are responsible for developing and delivering projects;
3. Ensure, thorough development of and involvement in due process, that the approach taken by NWG delivers projects which are cost-beneficial, justified and of benefit to customers and improve km of accessible water environment to an appropriate standard;
4. Provide a formal link to regional stakeholder groups and through these to other partnerships and partners, demonstrating external assurance and supporting engagement activity which can be of benefit to improving the water environment;
5. Provide evidence of external assurance to the Environment Agency and Natural England through ASF reporting and Annual Performance Reporting (APR).

5. OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the Bluespaces Governance Group are to:

- Review and advise on projects in development as these are presented to the group at meetings;
- Review and advise on Enhancement Projects presented to the group at meetings or via email and give formal approval as a group for these to be included in annual programme plans and taken forward as Bluespaces-funded projects;
- Review and advise on Proposals for Project Feasibility Funding, Maintenance Funding, and Branch Out Funding for those proposals which have a funding request in excess of £50,000;
- Review and advise on Evidence Packs for delivered projects and give formal sign off as a group for km water environment improved to be recorded against AMP8 target;
- Give feedback on the approach and the programme to NWG as it progresses to support its successful delivery;
- Submit an annual formal statement to NWG which can be included with the APR to confirm assurance activities have been undertaken by the group.

6. MEETING INPUTS AND OUTPUTS

The Bluespaces Team will provide the following to Bluespaces Governance Group members ahead of meetings:

- Meeting papers, including agenda, notes, decision log and action log from previous meeting, and any supporting papers for other agenda items.
- Enhancement projects for review and approval
- Project or evidence packs for sign off

Expected outputs from meetings include:

- Action log
- Decisions log
- Meeting notes

- Presentation pack as PDF

7. STANDARD AGENDA

The proposed agenda items for Bluespaces Governance Group meetings are:

1. Introductions
2. Review of actions
3. Programme update
4. Project approvals
5. Project sign offs
6. Projects in development
7. Issues and risks
8. A.O.B

8. ADMINISTRATION AND REPORTING

- Initial Terms of Reference were agreed at the first meeting of the WEGG on 14/10/20. Following the completion of the feasibility study and the agreed approach, these ToR were updated in August 2022. These have been further updated in July 2025, to reflect changes made in the transition from AMP7 to AMP8, and were approved at the first meeting of Bluespaces Governance Group in August 2025. Since, updated versions have been uploaded to the Bluespaces Governance Group External SharePoint with any updates referenced and agreed in meetings.
- The Bluespaces Governance Group meets every two-three months.
- The agenda and papers for each meeting and further information of relevance to the group are stored a Bluespaces Governance Group SharePoint site.

9. MEMBERSHIP

Members have been selected for their individual skillset and personal strengths, in addition to their organisational representation. The group has aimed for a balance of members from across NWG's NW and ESW regions. Where duplicate roles are represented in both NW and ESW region, those individuals may choose to share their representation, agreeing their input to the Bluespaces Governance Group between them, and notifying the Chair accordingly.

All enhancement project approvals and final project sign-offs will require input from a minimum of 50% of the Bluespaces Governance Group to provide assurance of adequate project scrutiny and validation. If Group input is less than 50%, but still exceeds 40%, a decision may be made by the Chair, who will also have the casting vote in all other project approvals and sign-offs.

Bluespaces Governance Group members are required to declare any interests they may have in individual projects. They will be asked to remove themselves from approvals of enhancement projects, or sign-off of completed projects, if their involvement in either process could be deemed to present a conflict of interest. All Branch Out proposals put

forward through enforcement undertaking funds will not be reviewed by members from the Environment Agency due to a conflict of interest.

The external Bluespaces Governance Group members are:

- Richard Powell OBE, Independent Member (also former member of The Water Forum) – Group Chair.
- Anna Gerring, The Rivers Trust (also representing the Catchment Based Approach)
- Heather Harrison, Catchment Coordinator for the EA
- Rebecca O'Connell, Environment Programme Manager, EA, NW region
- Matt Butcher, Catchment Manager (Essex), Environment Programme Team, EA, ESW region
- Patrick Welsh, representing Local Nature Recovery Strategy and Natural England, ESW region
- Helen Dangerfield, Essex & Suffolk Rivers Trust (host to Bluespaces Delivery Manager and Officer in ESW region)
- Jim Cokill, Durham Wildlife Trust (host to Bluespaces Delivery Manager in NW region)

NWG members are:

- Zoe Frogbrook, Head of Environment & Sustainability
- Jo Matthews, Integrated Catchment Manager
- Clare Deasy, Integrated Catchment Manager
- Clementine Moule, Bluespaces Lead
- Alex Wills, Bluespaces Advisor
- Sian Whitehead, Bluespaces Delivery Manager, NW region (Durham Wildlife Trust)
- Sophie Negus, Bluespaces Delivery Manager, ESW region (Essex & Suffolk Water)
- Emily Baldock, Bluespaces Delivery Manager, ESW region (Essex & Suffolk Water)