

**NORTHUMBRIAN**  
**WATER** *living water*

**ESSEX & SUFFOLK**  
**WATER** *living water*



# DRAFT ASSURANCE PLAN SUMMARY

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HAVE YOUR SAY

FEBRUARY 2022

# ABOUT US

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**Northumbrian Water (NW) and Essex & Suffolk Water (ESW) are both part of Northumbrian Water Limited (NWL). Northumbrian Water provides water and sewerage services to 2.7 million people in the north east of England. Essex & Suffolk Water provides water services to 1.6 million people in Essex and 0.3 million in Suffolk.**

## OUR ASSURANCE PLAN

Our Assurance Plan (that we'll publish in April 2022) will tell you about the things we do to make sure any information we are giving out to customers, regulators and stakeholders is true and correct. It will also tell you how we plan and manage risks and some of the ways we make sure we are prepared for the future. This document is a draft version of a summary of that Plan, so it gives you the opportunity to read the draft, and let us know what you think, before we publish the final version. For the full version of our Draft Assurance Plan, [click here](#).



# WHY DO WE NEED AN ASSURANCE PLAN?

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We are delivering services that are vital to public health and take our responsibility as the provider of your water services (and in the north east, sewerage services) very seriously.

It's really important we have tough measures in place to show how the company is run and how we police ourselves. This means our employees, customers and stakeholders can trust we are responsible, the way we behave is ethical, and the way we report on our finances and company information is clear.

# HOW CAN YOU GET INVOLVED?

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You can tell us what you think of this Draft Plan. We developed it by talking to our customers and stakeholders, and carrying out reviews with people who work for NW and ESW. Who better to help us develop the final version of our Plan than you, our customers?

Have a read through our approach over the next couple of pages, and let us know if this information gives you enough confidence in us.

To have your say, please [click here](#) to fill in our short survey (it should take no more than five minutes) and be in with a chance to **win an iPad** before **Monday 28 February 2022**.

\*Terms & conditions apply.

You can also tell us your thoughts by emailing us:

E: [haveyoursay@nwl.co.uk](mailto:haveyoursay@nwl.co.uk)

# THE WORLD'S MOST ETHICAL WATER COMPANY

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In February 2021 we were named as the World's Most Ethical water company by Ethisphere. One of only five UK based companies on the list, it is the tenth time we have been given this global recognition from the Ethisphere Institute.

It's a privilege that our customers put their trust and confidence in us and the work we do every day. We are committed to providing the best possible service for our customers at the best value and doing this in the right way for the environment, our communities and our people. Being included in this list is a wonderful recognition of this.

As one of the top water companies in England, we go through tough checks to make sure you can have confidence in the information we provide. It's important you can find evidence of this and be reassured that we have our customers' best interests at heart.

WE WANT OUR CUSTOMERS TO SAY THE SERVICES THEY RECEIVE ARE GOOD VALUE FOR MONEY.



## CHARGES

Water and sewerage services should be affordable to all our customers, whatever their circumstances. How we charge our customers is set out every year in April and you can be reassured that this is done properly and fairly because we follow the rules set out by the water industry regulator, Ofwat. As well as this we use an external company, plus our Board, to review the way we set the charges every year.

OUR FINANCES ARE SOUND, STABLE AND ACHIEVE A FAIR BALANCE BETWEEN CUSTOMERS AND INVESTORS.



## OUR FINANCES

We share information about how we are financed in an open and honest way. You can check this on our websites. We post our [Annual Report and Financial Statements](#) and [Regulatory Financial Statements](#) in July every year and these are checked by independent external auditors.



## REPORTING IT RIGHT

We have a team of people that measure the performance of each area of the business carefully, and check that the information in our [Assurance Plan](#) and [Annual Performance Report](#) is correct and true. They have to follow strict checking procedures inside the business and work with external companies who also check our information as independent reviewers.

Finally, another way customers can trust that we are reporting our data and information correctly is because we work closely with [The Water Forum](#). This is an independent customer challenge group that works on our customers' behalf and have their best interests at heart.



## DATA PROTECTION

Your data is protected by us in a number of ways and we have strict processes and controls in place to keep your personal details safe. Whenever we have to use personal data we are committed to protecting your privacy rights. We only use your personal data when we have a specific and legitimate reason to do so, and only keep it for the correct period of time. You can access your personal data when you wish. Find out more by reading our [Data Protection Policy Statement](#).



## CYBER SECURITY

We know customers are worried about cyber-attacks and our priority is to keep your personal details, and our customer systems safe. Our employees have regular awareness training and guidance on security and password controls. Our security processes are reviewed regularly with our Board as this is a priority for us. You can read more about this in our [Information Security Policy Statement](#).



## WE WANT OUR CUSTOMERS TO FEEL WELL INFORMED

Customers can trust the information they read on our websites. Following customer feedback, we launched our new websites in 2019 [www.nwl.co.uk](http://www.nwl.co.uk), [www.eswater.co.uk](http://www.eswater.co.uk) and [www.nwg.co.uk](http://www.nwg.co.uk) and launched our new app where customers can make payments and check their bill.

A special steering group was set up to manage the content and production of these websites and we now have a clear process for checking all information on our websites to make sure it's accurate. This now includes ongoing checks to make sure the information doesn't go out of date or become incorrect.

## WE WANT OUR CUSTOMERS TO SAY WE PROVIDE EXCELLENT CUSTOMER SERVICE AND RESOLVE ISSUES QUICKLY.



### GUARANTEED STANDARDS OF SERVICE SCHEME (GSS)

We believe world-class customer service is about getting it right first time, every time. We must meet certain standards of customer service by law. If we don't meet these standards, we have to make a payment, called a GSS payment, to the affected customer. For more information, [click here](#).

Our regulator, Ofwat, reviewed all water companies' performance in response to the 'Beast from the East', a cold wave we experienced in 2018. We have acted on Ofwat's recommendations and made changes to our GSS payments from 1 October 2019. Many of our payments are enhanced and go beyond what is required.

## WE WANT TO GIVE OUR CUSTOMERS WATER THAT IS CLEAN AND CLEAR AND TASTES GOOD SO THAT THEY CHOOSE TAP WATER OVER BOTTLED WATER.



### DRINKING WATER QUALITY

Our drinking water quality has to meet strict standards set out by our regulator, the DWI (Drinking Water Inspectorate). A perfect drinking water quality score would be 100%, and we routinely score greater than 99.9%. You can trust the quality of our water because we take samples all year round and only a small number of water samples (between 20 to 60 out of around 80,000) fail tests for lead, iron, nickel and taste and smell. None of these failures are a risk to health.

We work hard to supply the best quality tap water and do a number of things to make sure you're getting the best service you possibly can. These things include regularly flushing the system, replacing old water pipes in our network, improving our treatment works, managing the land around where we take water from, taking the right amount of water and regularly installing new filters and other treatment equipment.

A lot of investment is needed to manage this, for example we are investing £21m to build two new water treatment works in north Northumberland to help improve drinking water quality for more than 25,000 people. Refurbishing our water treatment works, has included £60m to modernise our Horsley works, which supplies Tyneside. And our projects in Essex will reduce the risk of water samples failing drinking water quality tests because of pesticides, but balance this risk against the availability and demand for water in that area.



## DISCHARGES FROM WASTEWATER TREATMENT WORKS

We know that the natural environment is a very important issue for our customers and stakeholders.

In November, we, along with all other wastewater companies, were contacted by the Environment Agency (EA) and Ofwat in relation to flows and storm discharges from Wastewater Treatment Works, asking for some specific information as part of a cross-industry investigation.

The water industry, EA and Ofwat, (the water industry regulator) are working closely together to tackle the challenges presented by discharges from wastewater treatment works and we have a shared participation in the Storm Overflows Taskforce that launched in August 2020. Currently we are installing new monitoring equipment across our sewer network, as agreed with Ofwat and the EA, we have been following a clear plan to address any issues that arise and continuously improve our environmental performance.

As custodians of the environment, we will also continue to carry out further investigations to make sure everything we can do to deliver the best possible outcomes for our environment is done.

We will update our customers, stakeholders and regulators in due course as we continue these investigations. We expect to include a more substantive update on this topic in our 2021/22 Annual Performance Report. Updates will be published [here](#).

# STORM ARWEN

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On Friday 26 November 2021 unprecedented and extreme weather events affected our customers through the impact of Storm Arwen. A rare red warning, the highest that can be issued, was issued by the Met Office across the east coast of Scotland and north east England. During this period we saw unprecedented devastation and disruption in our region from high winds and damaging gales, some of the highest waves to our coastline, snow, ice and freezing temperatures, significant damage to property including tens of thousands of trees bringing down powerlines and widespread disruption to essential services. The storm has been designated a major civil emergency incident for regions in the North East.

The storm resulted in the loss of power to a large number of our sites and pumping stations and as a result customers in some areas had their watersupply interrupted. Our teams faced challenging conditions but nevertheless worked around the clock to fix problems, install back-up power sources, deliver bottled water to customers and, ultimately, restore supplies.

As with all major civil emergencies, we are conscious that there will be many things that we can learn from the experience to improve the resilience of ourselves and the region. With that in mind we intend to engage with other local partners and utilities to undertake a strategic review of the experience and the actions of different parties, in addition to our own internal exercise. We will report back on the outcome of this review in our 2021/22 Annual Performance Report.





Now you've read about the things we do to make sure any information we are giving out to customers, regulators and stakeholders is true and correct, and how we plan for risks, is there anything else you can think of that you would like to see from us that would help give you confidence and trust in us?

To have your say, please **click here** to fill in our short survey (it should take no more than five minutes to complete) and be in with a chance to **win an iPad** before **Monday 28 February 2022**.

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W: **[www.nwl.co.uk](http://www.nwl.co.uk) | [www.eswater.co.uk](http://www.eswater.co.uk)**