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The Water Forum logo consists of a white speech bubble shape with a tail pointing downwards. Inside the bubble, the words "the", "water", and "forum" are stacked vertically in a blue, lowercase, sans-serif font.

the  
water  
forum

# CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT PANEL

Candidate information pack

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# MESSAGE FROM MELANIE LAWS

I am delighted that you are interested in joining our Water Forum.

We are an independent customer challenge group, with a broad range of experience and expertise. Our role is to champion on behalf of Northumbrian Water Group customers in its Northumbrian Water and Essex & Suffolk Water operating areas, providing expert comment and challenge on its performance and future plans.

A crucial part of this role is in considering the quality of the company's customer research and engagement, and the extent to which this is reflected in its business plan.

Our new Customer Engagement Panel will support the Forum in doing this – providing expert insight on the engagement process, interpretation of results, and their application in business planning. This is an exciting new role that will help make sure customers' and stakeholders' needs and aspirations are met.

The Water Forum's Nominations and Review Committee, a formal sub-group of the Forum, will manage this recruitment process. The Committee has prepared this pack to give you further insight into the role.

Very best wishes for your application.

**Melanie Laws**

Water Forum Chair



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# BACKGROUND TO THE WATER FORUM

The Water Forum covers Northumbrian Water Group's two operating areas, Northumbrian Water (NW) and Essex & Suffolk Water (ESW).

We are a fiercely independent and balanced blend of industry regulators, subject experts and independent members who have wholeheartedly risen to the job at hand.

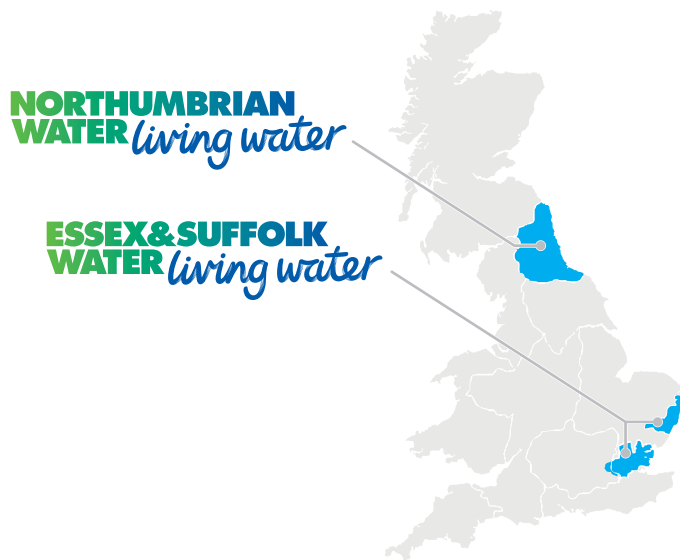
Our job isn't to run the company or to make decisions (that's for the Board and the Executive Leadership Team to do); it's to champion on behalf of customers and challenge the company to understand the impact of decisions before they're taken. Our challenges are always from an early starting point - we challenge the company during business planning and as it delivers its plans.

## Challenging the company during annual performance

We monitor the company's performance through its updates at our main meetings, and its Annual Performance Report.

We also review how effectively it fulfils its purpose in relation to communities and the environment through the Our Purpose report.

We combine these updates and reports with deep dives into areas that are important to customers, such as drinking water quality and protecting rivers and coasts. We can then challenge the company strongly and knowledgeably. We report on many of these things to the industry's economic regulator, Ofwat, within our statement in the company's Annual Performance Report.



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### **Challenging the company during business planning**

The England and Wales water industry is embarking on its 2025 to 2030 planning and price-setting process, known as Periodic Review 2024 (PR24).

Through this process, we will challenge the company to create a business plan that provides stretch in its targets, is affordable, provides the best options for customers, and fits with wider societal priorities.

### **The Customer Engagement Panel**

We will challenge the company to make sure this business plan is grounded in excellent customer research and engagement. Setting up the Customer Engagement Panel will support us to do this. Its expert members will assess and comment on the extent the company genuinely understands its customers' needs and priorities, and reflects these in its plan.

### **How the panel will work**

Customer Engagement Panel members will be part of the Water Forum, joining Forum meetings and taking part in discussions on customer research and engagement, and development of the PR24 plan. They will also meet as a sub-group to review detail of the company's customer engagement work. In order to maintain its independence, the panel's members will not take part in some other aspects of the Forum's work, where it involves specific performance monitoring, or be invited to take part in any co-creation activities.

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# THE ROLES AND COMMITMENT

## The roles

We are looking for a chair and one member of the Customer Engagement Panel, which will advise and challenge on the quality of the company's customer research and engagement process; the interpretation by the company of the results; and the extent to which findings are reflected in the company's decision making.

## Key responsibilities

Panel members will:

- Participate in meetings and events to explore specific topics or activities
- Review methodologies and materials
- Observe customer research and engagement events
- Provide feedback on the effectiveness of customer research and engagement activities
- Advise on use of a Forum budget to commission additional research and expertise
- Record challenges in relation to customer research and engagement
- Contribute to a final report evaluating the contribution customer research and engagement has had on the development of the PR24 business plan

In addition, the Chair will:

- Chair appropriate meetings and lead development of the final report evaluating the contribution customer research and engagement has had on the development of the PR24 business plan
- Represent views of the Customer Engagement Panel and wider Forum in meetings and events relevant to the role
- Liaise closely with the Water Forum Chair

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## The people

Candidates will have senior level experience of designing, commissioning, and interpreting customer research and engagement activity, preferably within a regulated sector.

Candidates will demonstrate:

- Expertise in aspects of customer research and engagement, such as:
  - Strategy development
  - Commissioning research to achieve targeted outcomes and insight
  - Engaging with diverse communities
  - Project oversight
  - Peer review
  - Triangulation
- Ability to listen to, reflect and represent customer views
- Ability to influence and challenge partners at all levels

In addition, the Chair will demonstrate:

- Ability to lead groups
- Excellent interpersonal skills
- Ability to speak confidently in public

## The commitment

We are seeking a flexible commitment of between four to six main Forum meetings per year, plus a similar number of Customer Engagement Panel meetings. These will mostly take place online.

We also expect members to be active outside of our meetings in reviewing materials, attending online and in person customer events, and providing feedback.

## Remuneration

The Chair will be remunerated at a rate of £5,000 per annum. Panel members will receive £400 for attendance at main Water Forum or Customer Engagement Panel meetings. A further activity allowance of £100 will be paid for events attended in this capacity.

## Annual Performance Review

The Nominations and Review Committee will carry out an annual performance review for the Customer Engagement Panel Chair.

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More information about Northumbrian Water Group can be found at [nwg.co.uk](http://nwg.co.uk).

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