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Putting customers at the heart of our decisions

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

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



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# Welcome to our report on compliance with the Consumer Involvement Rule and our 2026/27 Forward-looking Plan



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## WELCOME

**At Northumbrian Water,  
our purpose is clear -  
caring for the essential  
needs of our communities  
and environment, now  
and for generations to come**



Heidi Mottram CBE, CEO

This purpose guides every decision we make, and it is why we are unwavering in our commitment to putting customers at the heart of our business.

This Forward-looking Plan marks an important step in how we continue to strengthen that commitment. The introduction of Ofwat's Consumer Involvement Rule builds on our existing framework on how we listen, involve and respond to customers and provides an opportunity to go further - to deepen trust, enhance transparency, and ensure that the voices of our customers genuinely shape the outcomes we deliver.

We are proud of the strong foundation we have already built. Our customer service performance reflects the trust our customers place in us, and the passion of our people to provide an unrivalled customer experience. But we know that maintaining that trust requires constant focus, continuous learning, and a willingness to challenge ourselves to do better.

This plan sets out how we gather insight on what matters most to our customers, embed that insight into decision-making at every level of the organisation - including our Board - and learn from customer experiences to improve how we operate. It reflects our long-standing belief that meaningful involvement is not a one-off activity, but an ongoing dialogue grounded in openness, inclusivity and respect.

As we deliver our largest ever investment programme and plan for the future, it is critical that we work with our customers - co-creating solutions, balancing priorities, and making decisions that stand the test of time. The challenges we face, from environmental pressures to affordability, require us to listen carefully and act responsibly.

We will continue to be guided by our principles for good customer engagement - empowering customers, using a wide range of insight, and ensuring feedback leads to action. And we will hold ourselves to account through robust governance, independent challenge, and transparent reporting of both what we plan to do and what we achieve.

Above all, this plan is about doing the right thing - for our customers, our communities and the environment - today and into the future.

**Heidi Mottram CBE**  
Chief Executive Officer

## WELCOME

# This Forward-looking Plan sets out a clear and structured approach to how the company intends to meet the expectations of Ofwat's Consumer Involvement Rule

Importantly, it builds on a strong existing foundation of customer engagement and makes a positive effort to bring those activities together into a more coherent and transparent framework.



Peter Vicary-Smith

From my perspective as the Board Lead for customer-related matters, it is encouraging to see a continued emphasis on ensuring that customer views are not just gathered but are meaningfully reflected in decision-making at all levels of the organisation. The intent to strengthen governance, improve visibility to the Board, and incorporate independent challenge are all important elements in delivering this.

The test, however, will be in how consistently these commitments are applied in practice - particularly in demonstrating clearly how customer insight has influenced decisions, especially where trade-offs are required. Maintaining a clear line of sight from what customers say to what the company does will be critical.

The Board welcomes the focus on ongoing engagement, the use of multiple sources of insight, and the recognition that customer trust depends on transparency and feedback. The company's willingness to involve independent scrutiny, including through the Independent Challenge Group, is also an important part of ensuring credibility.

Overall, this plan provides a sound basis for meeting the intent of the Consumer Involvement Rule. Its success will ultimately be judged by the extent to which it delivers tangible improvements in outcomes that matter to customers.

### **Peter Vicary-Smith**

Board Lead for customer-related matters



## WELCOME

# Independent Challenge Group statement

As Chair of the Independent Challenge Group for Northumbrian Water and Essex & Suffolk Water, I welcome this Forward-looking Plan and the company's clear commitment to strengthening how it involves customers in its decision-making in line with Ofwat's Consumer Involvement Rule.



Robert Light

The Independent Challenge Group has seen first-hand the maturity of the company's customer research and engagement over several years. This plan builds on that strong foundation and sets out a more structured and transparent approach to how customer insight, experience and preferences will be gathered, considered and acted upon.

From an independent assurance perspective, it is encouraging to see a continued focus on embedding customer views within governance and decision-making processes at all levels, including the Board. The emphasis on using multiple sources of insight, maintaining robust tracking, and ensuring ongoing - not one-off - engagement reflects good practice and aligns well with the intent of the Rule.

We particularly welcome the recognition that involvement must be proportionate and meaningful, and that the true test of success lies not in the quantity of engagement activity, but in the quality of the decisions it informs and the outcomes it delivers for customers.

We welcome the positive way the consumer involvement rule is improving how the company uses the extensive customer insight it has. We are mindful that rules only take you so far, the right culture is what makes the difference between compliance and excellence. We have seen a wealth of evidence that there is a strong customer culture through out the company.

The Independent Challenge Group will continue to provide independent challenge and scrutiny as this plan is implemented. This includes focusing on how clearly the company can demonstrate the impact of customer insight on decisions, particularly in complex areas where trade-offs are required.

Overall, this plan provides a strong platform for compliance with the Consumer Involvement Rule and, importantly, for continuing to improve outcomes for customers. We look forward to seeing how these commitments are delivered in practice and reported on in future years.

### **Robert Light**

Chair, Independent Challenge Group for Northumbrian Water and Essex & Suffolk Water



## ABOUT THIS REPORT

# The Consumer Involvement Rule

In November 2025, Ofwat introduced the Consumer Involvement Rule. Ofwat expects companies to systematically gather representative customer insight, embed it into decision-making at all relevant levels (including the Board), and demonstrate how it has influenced decisions and improved outcomes for customers.

The Consumer Involvement Rule has a core requirement that companies should have in place appropriate arrangements to involve customers in decisions that are likely to have a material impact on customer matters. There are three components to that - insight on views and preferences; decision-making mechanisms; and feedback on customer experiences.

Ofwat requires companies to publish a Forward-looking Plan setting out how they will comply with the Consumer Involvement Rule. In the first year of the Rule (2026) companies are expected to outline how they will gather customer insight, embed it in decision-making and learn from customer experience. In future years, companies will also be expected to report on what they actually did and what impact it had.

This is our first Forward-looking Plan which outlines how we will comply with the core requirement and components and outlines our plans for customer involvement in 2026/27.

We will report on our delivery of the Forward-looking Plan in 2027, alongside our plans for the future.

“We welcome the Consumer Involvement Rule as it provides us with an opportunity to demonstrate the **great ways** we already involve our customers in decision-making. It also provides us with the opportunity to formally review what we do and how we do it, to make sure we continue to put our customers at the heart of everything that we do.”



[Click here to view Ofwat's Consumer Involvement Rule](#)



# Our compliance with the Consumer Involvement Rule is aligned to Our Purpose

Ofwat state companies must have in place appropriate arrangements to involve consumers (customers) in decisions that are likely to have a material impact on consumer matters.

## OUR PURPOSE

We are a purpose-driven organisation that puts customers at the heart of everything we do. Our Purpose, which is shown in the infographic on this page, is enshrined in our Company Articles of Association.

Our Purpose is driven through our business by having 'Customers' as one of our core business strategic pillars and 'Customer Focused' one of our company values. We have Board-level governance of our customer-related strategies and activities and engagement structure for our customer experience agenda overall. As such, we welcome Ofwat's new Consumer Involvement Rule which has given opportunity for us to formalise some of the ways we ensure Board engagement and executive sponsorship of the things that matter most to our customers.



## OUR CUSTOMER EXPERIENCES

Our approach to providing excellent customer care is evidenced by the fact that we retained our number one spot for C-MeX for the second year in a row and have been ranked as the most trusted water and sewerage company (WaSC) by our customers in CCW’s annual Water Matters survey, with the trust scores in both our operating areas increasing since last year whilst the average scores for the water sector declined. C-MeX is an industry-wide performance measure that Ofwat use to compare water companies based on customer satisfaction and experience.

Our performance in D-MeX (Ofwat’s comparator measure for water companies’ service to developer customers, e.g. household builders, self-lay providers, NAVs) positioned us as the second placed WaSC. For BR-MeX (Ofwat’s comparator measure for water companies’ service to business customers and retailers) we finished the year as third placed WaSC.

These measures of experience results show how strongly our customers feel about the services we provide and reflect our commitment to providing unrivalled customer experience and showing our customers how much we care at every interaction.



[Click here to view the 2026 Water Matters report](#)

## OUR CUSTOMERS’ INVOLVEMENT

We want to make decisions that reflect what matters most to our customers – now and in the future. Listening to customer views helps us to:

- understand what people value most from our services
- improve how we balance cost, service and investment choices
- learn from what works well and what doesn’t
- ensure our campaigns and messages are understood by our customers, and are delivered via the correct channels

This approach supports trust, transparency and better outcomes for everyone.

We involve customers where decisions are likely to have a material impact, for example decisions about:

- **Bills and affordability**, including support schemes
- **Service performance**, such as reliability and support when things go wrong
- **Investment priorities**, including where and how improvements are delivered
- **Decisions** affecting specific groups, such as customers in vulnerable circumstances
- **Construction activities** around investment schemes in customers’ local areas

Not every decision needs the same level of involvement. The scale of involvement will be **proportionate to the likely impact on customers**, and we will also take into consideration the **materiality** of any change that may be brought in as a result of the decision.

We are also a highly regulated business and many of the actions and investments we make are required by regulators and Government. For example, in our current investment period over 90% of the enhancement schemes that make up our capital programme are to meet legal or regulatory requirements. In those instances material discussions with customers may focus, for example, around pace of investment or solution design as opposed to whether the investment is needed.

## OUR PRINCIPLES FOR GOOD CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT

Ofwat has outlined guiding considerations for companies when designing and operating their arrangements to cover the core requirements of the Consumer Involvement Rule. They are **accessibility; independence; timeliness; representativeness; and transparency.**

We already have seven principles for good customer engagement, which were established following best practice research in advance of our PR19 business planning activities, and reviewed prior to our PR24 business planning research. We adhere to our principles for all our research with customers. We believe that our seven principles for good customer engagement align very well with Ofwat’s guiding considerations, and that by working in the spirit of them in all that we do, we will both comply with Ofwat’s intended approach and ensure the right outcomes for our customers, where possible.

Our Forward-looking Plan and all our customer research is designed and conducted with our principles for good customer engagement and Ofwat’s guiding considerations in mind.

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**“We continue to work hard to ensure that both our Principles and Ofwat’s guiding considerations are core to how we engage with customers in relation to the Consumer Involvement Rule.”**

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# Our principles for good customer engagement

1

## Empower customers

We empower our customers by involving them transparently in designing our plans and helping to shape and co-create our services. It is critical that our customer research and engagement activities are aligned with our planning, decision-making and assurance processes, so that customer views are clearly reflected in the choices we make. This is important because **transparency** helps build trust and ensures that water companies deliver outcomes that matter to customers, society and the environment, at the right time and at a price customers are willing to pay.



2

## Be led by our people

Our engagement with customers is led by our people. Our Board members, Executive Leadership Team and senior managers are very active, attending customer events, stakeholder workshops, and our Innovation Festivals.

This is important because it creates **transparency** and a much clearer line of sight from our customer research to our decision-making – allowing decision makers to hear directly from customers, to explain their plans directly and understand the concerns and questions from customers, and to be able to experience this face-to-face.

We do still use third party research agencies to help design and facilitate research, particularly where this is needed to drive consistency, **independence**, and robust research, but this is co-created rather than the responsibility simply being handed to a third party.



3

## Continuous and ongoing

Customer engagement is part of what we do every day, not something we focus on at price reviews alone. **Timeliness** is important and our insights are used daily to enhance the customer experience – from tracking surveys to operational data, analysing our daily interactions to develop insights. These help us to improve our services.

To help us understand how our customers' views may change over time, we repeat measures of experience surveys and maintain a robust programme of tracking research. We carry out baseline surveys before entering communities to undertake construction activities and repeat those surveys during and after works to ensure **timeliness** in capturing views and measuring the impact of our activities.



4

## Have a deep understanding of customers

We know that the majority of our customers are not interested in, or do not understand, the details of the water and wastewater industry, so it is our responsibility to create engagement opportunities that motivate people to take part. Where appropriate, it is also important that we make sure our research is **representative** of our customers and our approach to segmentation takes this into account.

As well as using multiple methods of engagement, we seek to understand our customers' interests and motivations for engaging with us. To explore attitudes and behaviours, we go beyond traditional segmentation approaches such as socio-economic grouping or age. We also ensure **accessibility** to engage with customers who are experiencing vulnerable circumstances, either physical or financial. Through our education programmes we engage with young people from ages five to nineteen.



## 5

### Be creative and innovative

We use creative and innovative approaches because this improves **accessibility**, stimulates easy discussion, and allows customers to express themselves in ways that they would perhaps not otherwise do. It also helps us to reach customers who may not usually choose to get involved with more traditional forms of engagement, improving **accessibility** and **transparency**. To make our engagement more accessible for customers, we look at a range of different methods. For example, we might run an online survey in parallel with face-to-face interviews. We also use our mobile customer engagement vehicles, to reach out to customers on their own turf. Every year, we have a FanZone at our Innovation Festival where emerging ideas are shared with customers and instant feedback is provided to our Innovators.

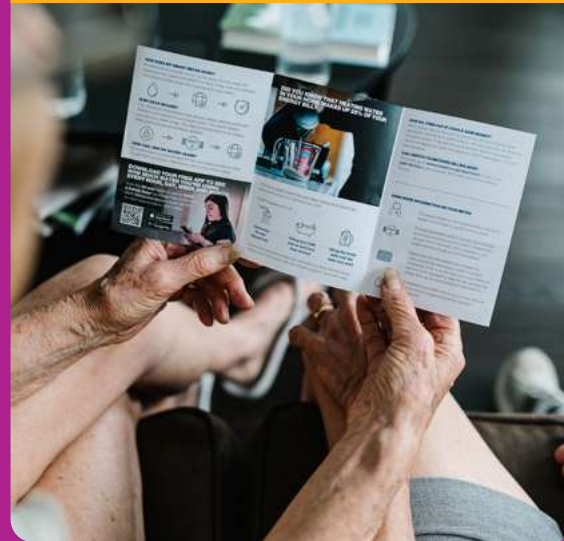


## 6

### Use multiple sources

We make sure that we use all the qualitative and quantitative insight that we gather in a detailed and balanced way. This process, called 'triangulation', is about developing a deep and broad understanding of our customers' needs and expectations from multiple standpoints.

By drawing on all available sources of insight, we can make sure that we use these in a weighted, **representative** and proportionate way when making decisions, taking the quality of evidence and divergence of customer views into account. As a result, our services are founded on a more complete understanding of our customers' priorities.



## 7

### Provide regular feedback to customers

We value **transparency** and highlight to customers how their views make a difference to decision-making. We provide summaries to customers who have taken part in qualitative customer research and want them after engagement projects. We also invite customers who have taken part to keep the conversation going by signing up to be contacted about future research. We published all our customer research when we submitted our last business plan and are developing a process to do that on an ongoing basis.





# How our principles for good customer engagement align with Ofwat's guiding considerations

Our principles for good customer engagement

Ofwat's guiding considerations					
	Accessibility	Independence	Timeliness	Representativeness	Transparency
Empower customers					✓
Be led by our people		✓			✓
Continuous and ongoing			✓		
Have a deep understanding of our customers	✓			✓	
Be creative and innovative	✓				✓
Use multiple sources				✓	
Provide regular feedback to customers			✓		✓





### OUR BENCHMARKING AND PEER LEARNING

We continually seek to improve how we engage with our customers. We are active members of various industry and cross-sector groups. These are forums where we can share our experiences with our peers and learn from others outside of the water sector too.

For example, the Collaboration Network brings together cross-industry experts in the water sector to discuss key themes like vulnerability and accessibility. More broadly, through organisations such as the Institute of Customer Service (ICS) and The Forum Group Community, stakeholders across all industries have monthly community sessions to share best practice and share solutions/problem solving discussions around key customer systems and issues outside of the water sector.

Across 2025, we were also highly engaged in the series of CEO-sponsored best practice sharing events that brought together companies' Chief Executive Officers and other directors, and executives from Ofwat, CCW, Water UK and the ICS to champion positive sharing and learning across the sector. Our sponsored topic was having a positive company culture and the benefits of that to organisations and their customers.

### OUR INDEPENDENT CHALLENGE GROUP

Our Independent Challenge Group's (ICG) overarching role and objective is to act as an informed influencer and challenger with the aim of helping improve outcomes and delivery for customers.

The Independent Challenge Group provides expert comment and challenge, and independent assurance on:

- The quality of the Company's customer research and engagement in preparing its five-yearly business plan
- The extent to which the results of this research and engagement are reflected in the Company's plan
- How the company has applied the Consumer Involvement Rule in its decision-making

We will share our Forward-looking Plan with the Independent Challenge Group, and they will provide us with expert comment and challenge, and independent assurance on it.









# Our compliance with Ofwat's Three Components

Ofwat has set out its expectations in the form of three components, and below we share each of the components in turn and explain how we intend to meet Ofwat's core requirements in relation to each of them.

## COMPONENT 1 – INSIGHT ON VIEWS AND PREFERENCES

Ofwat state that to support delivery of the core requirement, companies must put in place, and follow, effective arrangements to appropriately understand the views and preferences of their consumers in relation to the Consumer Involvement Rule.

Our customers are at the heart of everything that we do. It is important to us that we understand what our customers need in relation to the services we provide and how we provide them. We engage with our customers and stakeholders to understand their views and preferences in many ways, in person and digitally, including through:

-  Our People Panels
-  Surveys and qualitative research
-  Our Customer Heroes and Customer Ambassadors
-  Community events and workshops
-  Our online community
-  Engagement with experts
-  The Independent Challenge Group (ICG)
-  The annual NWG Innovation Festival

Our online community, Have Your Say, is a friendly place where customers can chat with us, and other customers, about anything and everything to do with the services we provide and how we provide them.



Click here to join us, Have Your Say, and help to shape what we do and how we do it.

Most of our employees are our customers and we also proactively seek their views. We also have an internal first approach to communications which uses multiple channels to deliver information and seek insight from colleagues in a timely, audience appropriate and engaging manner. This approach makes sure our colleagues feel heard, valued and able to influence change. Our success in this area is reflected in our Great Place to Work survey results where, for example, in the latest results 86% of employees say this is a great place to work.

## COMPONENT 2 – DECISION-MAKING MECHANISMS

Ofwat state that companies must have arrangements in place at appropriate levels of decision-making, including Board-level, to ensure that the views, experiences and preferences of consumers are taken into account in decision-making processes for decisions that are likely to have a material impact on consumer matters. Companies must also participate in CCW-convened consumer panels and provide a summary of matters discussed to their Board.

Since 2010 one of the Independent Non-Executive Directors (INED) on our Board has specific responsibility for customer-related matters, and as part of our preparation for Ofwat's new Consumer Involvement Rule, we have strengthened their remit to ensure that we can demonstrate we are meeting the requirements of this component.



Click here to read about the Independent Non-Executive Director (INED) responsible for customer matters

The Lead INED for customer-related matters has monthly meetings with our Customer and Corporate Services Director ensuring he is well-briefed and able to challenge on our approaches, priorities and plans.

They also attend our Independent Challenge Group as an observer and attends regular site visits to meet with the customer-facing teams. The lead INED will observe CCW's biannual Consumer Panel (Water Voice) Accountability session and provides feedback to his fellow INEDs.

The lead INED makes regular visits to our customer contact centres to meet the teams and listen to customer calls. They are also involved in all customer-related initiatives and play an important role in contributing to customer-related consultation responses and publications, such as this one.

At Board-level we have formalised reporting so that our Board has regular and appropriate engagement on consumer matters. For example, a report on customer service performance goes to each Board meeting, 'deep dives' on customer topics, including research and insights, are presented and discussed at the Board Environment, Social and Governance (ESG) Committee and visits each year to the customer contact centres allow INEDs to listen to live customer calls. This reporting, with discussion and challenge, also occurs at a more detailed level every month at our Executive Leadership Team meetings.

We have close senior engagement with CCW, and in addition to

participation in CCW's Consumer Panels, our Director of Customer and Corporate Services meets quarterly with CCW and our CEO meets with CCW biannually to discuss customer service performance and feedback from customers received via customer research and complaints. CCW are also represented on the Independent Challenge Group.

Our ongoing drive for continuous improvement ensures our focus on using learning and insight from customer feedback (for example through our Voice of the Customer programme) builds into our decision-making and we will continue to evolve this to reflect guidance on materiality.

### COMPONENT 3 – FEEDBACK ON CONSUMER EXPERIENCES

Ofwat state that companies must seek feedback from consumers on their experiences, including those during incidents, that are relevant to this rule, so that the impact on consumers of past decisions is understood, taken into account in decision-making and informs relevant future planning for delivery of this rule. Companies must seek independent feedback on how they deliver the core requirement of the Consumer Involvement Rule.

We use the expertise of the Independent Challenge Group, to independently challenge our compliance with the core requirement of the Consumer Involvement Rule.

We recognise the value of seeking feedback from our customers in relation to the decisions we make, and we have a strong track record of engaging with them in key business decisions, such as in relation to our ongoing service performance and affordability support for customers or the planning and preparation of our business plan where we always seek customers' views on what matters most to them. We also learn from our own experiences, for example during an incident, and those of others – including through research commissioned by both Ofwat and CCW which provides both cross-sector learning opportunities and specific deep dives to highlight key opportunities for learning and improvement.

We consider feedback from our customers on their experiences relevant to the core requirement through:



**Their insights on views and preferences (Component 1)**



**Qualitative research**



**Our Voice of the Customer programme**



**Deliberative events and workshops**



**CCW Water Voice reports and Accountability Sessions**

Whilst most of the methods noted above are longstanding elements of our approach to engaging with our customers and are key to us using both their feedback and the insights from more structured research to inform our plans and service delivery, the CCW Accountability Sessions are new. We had our first session in April. Whilst the outputs from Water Voice and the Accountability Sessions are not representative, they can provide some useful pointers for us.

We are keen to embrace the spirit of the CCW Accountability Sessions engagement opportunities and have already used the feedback as a valuable source of insight that can help us shape our approach to things we know are important to customers. We have completed our Action Plan and because of the insight gained we have, for example, committed to explore with customers how we can further enhance the information that we provide for them relating to our finances. We are also launching a new customer newsletter, that we will use to share information with customers and seek feedback from them.



[Click here to view our first \*\*Water Voice Accountability Session Action Plan\*\*.](#)

In preparation for publishing our first Forward-looking Plan, water and wastewater companies, across England and Wales, clubbed together to commission research into what matters most for our customers collectively ie what they deem to be 'material' and how they want to be involved in decision-making. The main output from the study – Involving consumers in defining material impact – was a series of decision trees that were populated from discussing various scenarios with participants to determine materiality. The report from the research can be found below. We will use the findings from that research, alongside our Defining the Future customer research, and further work we are planning to carry out, to frame our approach going forward.



[Click here to view the \*\*research report\*\*](#)



[Click here to view the \*\*appendix\*\*](#)



[Click here to view our \*\*Defining the Future customer research\*\*](#)

We have some great examples of where we have listened to customer feedback that has helped us reshape our approach to key programmes. An example would be around smart metering and the placement and aesthetics of masts and street furniture. Customers, particularly in rural communities, were expressing concerns about the visual impact of smart metering infrastructure which would be installed by our partners to enable smart metering. Customer feedback led us to undertake targeted engagement to work through and unpack challenges and opportunities and change approaches to this key infrastructure in rural areas. We will continue to apply this agile thinking and sprint-type approach in the future.

We have established systematic mechanisms to capture learning from things that go wrong, including complaints, incidents, and service failures. Operational incidents are treated as learning events, not just asset failures, demonstrating focus on customer impact.

During and after incidents and events, customer feedback, contact volumes and complaints are reviewed to reflect on the event. This may also include us carrying out specific customer research to understand how customers experienced the event and we use this to refine and improve our processes. For example, we identified that we need to respond more quickly during incidents, for example by having a greater presence 'on the ground'. To allow this to happen we have created secondary roles for our people, who have signed up to provide support during incidents and events, so that our operational teams can focus on resolving the root cause as quickly and efficiently as possible.

Every piece of Ofwat/CCW research that is published, relating to day-to-day operations or incidents, is shared with our senior leaders. This allows them to pick up learnings to improve our own processes.

We were delighted in Ofwat's recent Sewer flooding customer care review to be called out in several good practice examples including about how we assign case management to all incidents and how we shared our end-to-end process openly so that others could learn from us.



[Click here to view the Ofwat's Sewer flooding customer review](#)

We are proud to be a learning organisation. We actively share our experiences and our learning outcomes with other stakeholders including our peers across the water industry. In all our operating regions, we are members of every Local Resilience Forum (LRF) - multi-agency partnerships made up of companies that have a statutory duty to cooperate under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004. We use those Forums to share our experiences as well as learn from others.

We are also members of various industry steering and sharing groups, including those coordinated by Water UK. These are other places where we can share our experiences, both day-to-day and incident related, with our peers and learn from our peers too. We also share with others outside of the industry through organisations such as the Institute of Customer Service.



## CASE STUDY

# Our 2025-2030 Investment Programme

Our 2025-2030 investment programme (AMP8), driven by changes in the law to protect the local environment, is our biggest ever in terms of both scale and ambition. It provides great opportunity both to build on our proven community engagement practices and reshape how we demonstrate to customers where the money they pay in bills is going.

We know from conversations with customers – and our research – that this line of sight really matters. We also know that customers want to understand how investment ensures essential services, and their resilience, will improve – as well as more information on what will be happening in their local area and what that means for them if there is disruption during work.

We understand the importance of trust in and from our communities, and we will continue to work hard to strengthen that trust through engagement, listening to feedback, and reflecting our customers' views in how we deliver our essential work. This is important for the projects we undertake as well as in our day-to-day work to protect the environment and ensure our networks provide reliable everyday services to our customers.

We have developed new 'Community Hubs' where our customers and stakeholders can find out about the projects that are happening, and where, in our regions. Each investment project we commission has its own page, with a clear name, so that we can share the information that we know from feedback matters to our customers.

We want customers to receive an outstanding service whilst we work in their areas, and to help us deliver that we have some guiding principles.

1

When our work directly affects you, we will **seek your views** during the planning stage.

2

We will work with the local community and all other relevant stakeholders to **minimise the impact** of what we need to do.

3

When working next to your home or business, we will do our best to contact you before the work begins, **update you on progress**, inform you about any changes that may occur and notify you when leaving the site.

4

If we need to work on your land or in your property, we will **return your land and/or property back to the condition they were** immediately before the work began. We will agree this with you before we begin.

5

We will always act in a **professional, courteous and helpful manner**, keep our promises and ensure that any issues are resolved within a reasonable and agreed timescale.

6

**Your opinion is important to us.** We will ask for feedback on the performance of our employees and contractors, as well as the impact our work has had on you and your community.

7

We will make sure **work is carried out safely** and that our working areas are **secure and tidy**.

8

We will deal with all communication with you in line with our document 'Our promise to you'. Any complaints will be dealt with in line with 'Our codes of practice on complaints' which can be found on our website [www.nwl.co.uk](http://www.nwl.co.uk).



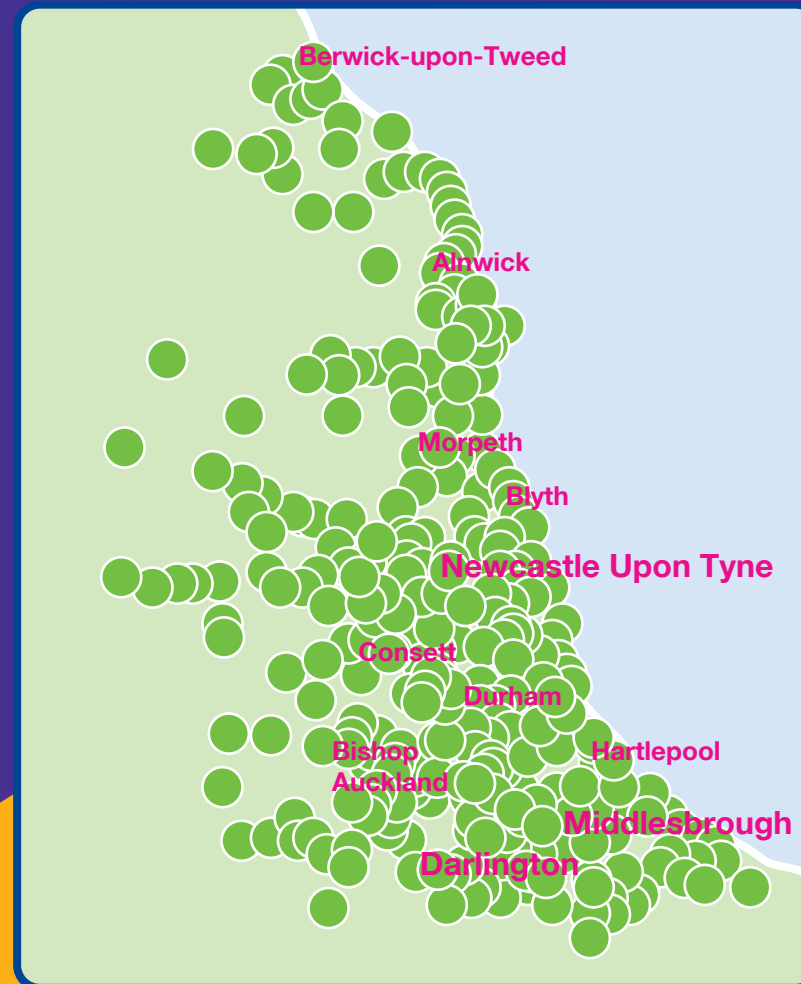
## CASE STUDY (cont)

Our pages capture the aims of the project, level of investment, details of the impact customers will see – both physically as we're working in their communities and from the social value we'll create. We also share forecasted timescales for the delivery of projects and programmes, and customers can sign up to get alerts when updates are added to the project. We work hard to ensure relevant information – such as the project manager and members of the wider team – and useful updates are regularly added so our customers and stakeholders can quickly access key details for our projects.

We complement these updates with a tailored blend of in-person customer events at key points in project lifecycles, stakeholder events (including our Local Action programme), multi-media communications and, where appropriate, wider engagement, promotion and media coverage.

We're committed to ensuring that the insights and information we gather from these activities informs our approaches and our decision-making processes. This could be in relation to whether we create nature-based attenuation basins, rain gardens or below ground storage; what our kiosks look like once our work is complete and where we site them; or even how we set up our compounds and traffic management approaches to have least impact on the community. It's important to us that we work with our customers and stakeholders to be a good neighbour, and we commit to continuous learning and engagement as our projects progress.

## Where we're investing in AMP8





# Our 2026/27 Forward-looking Plan





This is our Forward-looking Plan for 2026/27. In delivering our Forward-looking Plan, we will follow our principles for good customer engagement, outlined on pages 9 and 10, and utilise the channels and methods outlined on pages 13 and 14.

Some customer involvement can be pre-determined whilst in other instances we will be responsive and, for example, take place during and following incidents or events seeking to understand customers' views and opportunities to learn and improve. We also consider other companies' and regulators' published insight in these areas. Below we describe some areas that we intend to explore with customers during 2026/27."

**"We always put customers at the heart of our business."**

## Our principles for good customer engagement

We will carry out a best practice review of our seven principles for good customer engagement and refine them if appropriate. We will share the principles with some of our customers to understand if they agree with them.

**STATUS:** Commencing July 2026

## Defining Materiality

Defining the Conversation (2016), our foundation research for the PR19 Price Review, established what customers wanted to talk about, what they wanted us to talk to experts about and where they trusted us to act independently. Defining the Future (2021), our foundation research for the PR24 Price Review, tested whether those priorities still held or if what resonated with customers had changed since 2016.

[Click here to view the Defining the Future research](#)

Defining Materiality will take the next step: it will translate insight into a decision-ready framework, distinguishing what genuinely needs customer influence, what requires transparency and assurance, and what customers are content for NWG or experts to determine. It will provide a clear basis for proportionate engagement, prioritisation and compliance with the Consumer Involvement Rule.

This piece of research will also build on the water companies' Club Materiality Project research with customers, in April and May 2026, about the Consumer Involvement Rule and materiality.

Following our customer research, we will develop a simple process framework and guide that colleagues can use to establish the consumer materiality of decisions they need to make and how to gather customers' views.

We will also develop a process for recording such decisions using a You Said, We Did framework.

The Independent Challenge Group will provide us with expert comment and challenge, and independent assurance on this important piece of customer research and engagement.

**STATUS:** Commencing July 2026



# Our Unrivalled Customer Experience Strategy

Living Water, Loving Customers – Our Unrivalled Customer Experience Strategy 2016-2020 was launched in 2016. Its refresh was put on hold during the Covid pandemic, and it was refreshed and republished as Living Water, Loving Customers – Our Unrivalled Customer Experience Strategy 2023-2028 alongside our 2025-2030 business plan submission. It sits alongside For Everyone: Our customer inclusivity strategy 2023-30.



Click here to view the **Living Water, Loving Customers – Our Unrivalled Customer Experience Strategy 2023-2028**



Click here to view the **For Everyone: Our customer inclusivity strategy 2023-30**

Our challenge is to ensure that the next iteration of Our Unrivalled Customer Experience Strategy is not only evidence-based but is co-created with customers and is grounded in what customers genuinely value, need, and experience when interacting with us. At the NWG Innovation Festival 2026 we will host a closed Sprint: Fans for Life 2 – Love What We Do Together. Over three and a half days, customers will be recognised as experts on what unrivalled looks like and will begin to shape the next strategy.

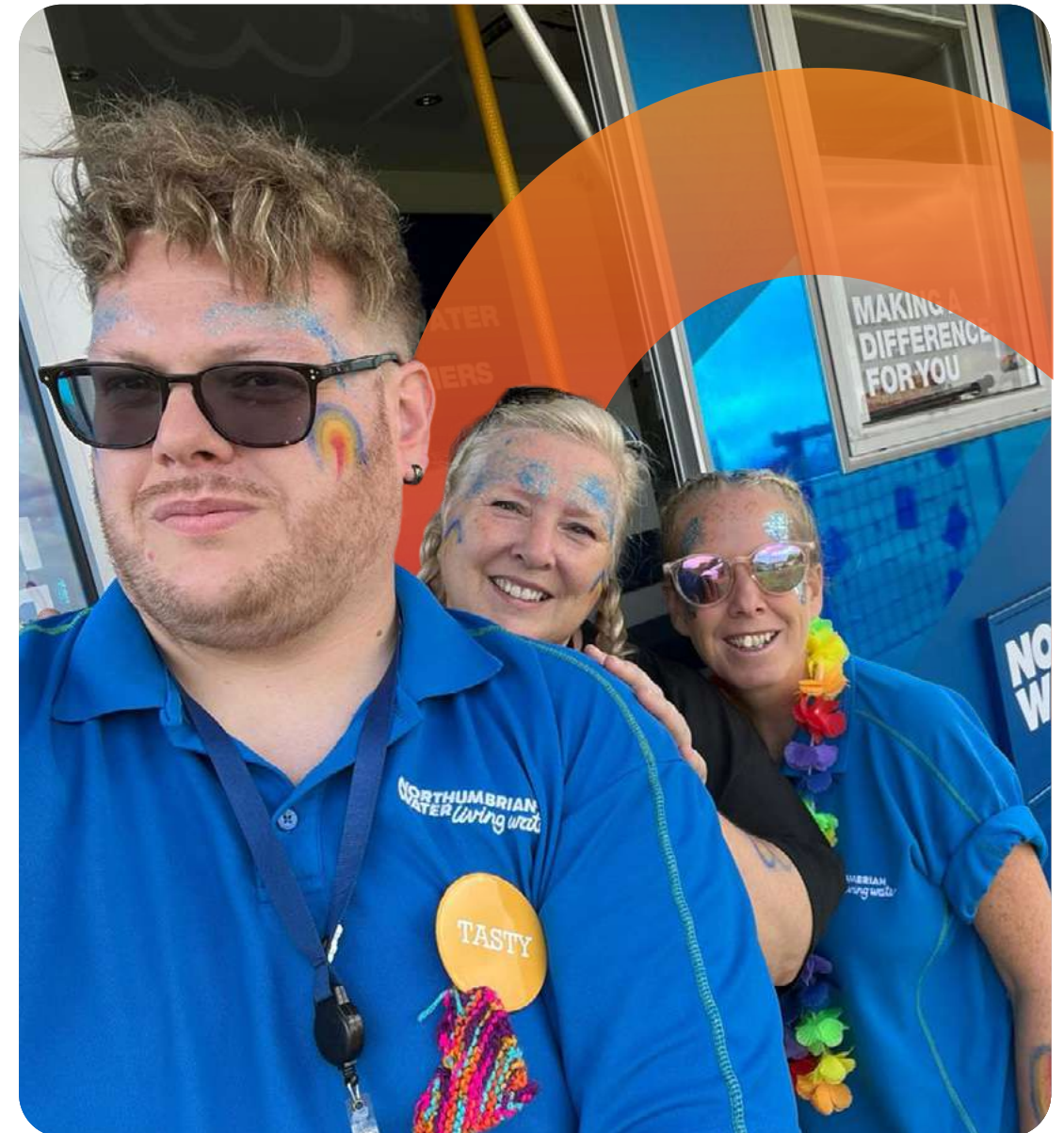
What the Sprint produces will be a first cut of thinking, not a finished strategy. It will then be further developed with our People Panels, as a minimum taken on the road to customers in Essex and Suffolk, and then brought back to the Sprint's customers to close the loop. The Sprint will be the beginning of the start of a year of work, not the end of one.

Our work will also include looking at best practice research across UK plc and will incorporate thinking from recognised experts more broadly, as well as our customers specifically.

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**STATUS:** Commencing July 2026  
at our Innovation Festival

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# Statutory management plans

We have started developing our Water Resources Management Plan and our Drainage Water Management Plan. In the future the reforms envisaged by the Independent Water Commission and supported in the recent White Paper may change these plans but for now we will need to complete the current planning cycle. During 2026/27 we will develop our programme of customer research and engagement to underpin their development.

**STATUS:** Ongoing



Click here to view the **Independent Water Commission white paper**

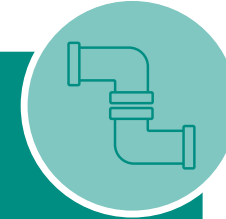


## Water Resources Management Plan

We will plan joint research with Water Resources North (WReN) and Water Resources East (WRE) to develop regional plans and consider company-specific customer research when refining our local plans.

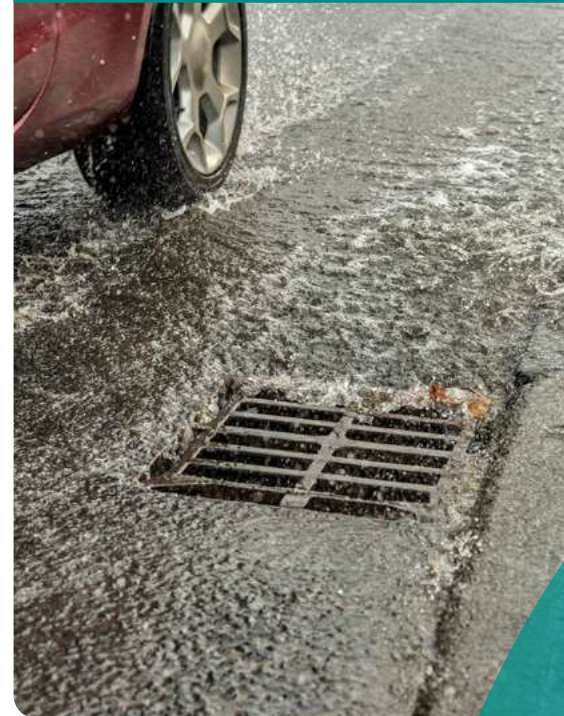
Projects to understand our own customers' views will include:

- Berwick supply options
- Exporting / importing water options, including water trading
- Innovative tariffs and water trading for businesses
- Suffolk supplies preferences



## Drainage Water Management Plan

We will plan customer research to gather customers' views on the emerging plan. It is likely that will take place in the first quarter of 2027/28.





# Our 2025-2030 investment programme

As we deliver our biggest ever investment programme for 2025-2030, we will continue to engage with our customers to make sure that they receive an outstanding service whilst we work in their areas.

Our goal to be collaborative, transparent and accessible for all will ensure we create real social value in our communities as well as enhancing our network and assets. In doing this strategically, we will not only forge new relationships and partnerships in the communities where we'll be working, but we'll also inspire and attract new talent and skills for the sector so that we develop a future-ready workforce and maintain and enhance confidence in us, the most trusted water company in England.

**STATUS:** Ongoing



# Local Action programme

We care about our local communities and want to better understand how we can support them. So, we developed our Local Action programme, where we visit local communities to share information about our **Restore and Regenerate: Our Environment Strategy to 2050**. This is our long-term plan to reduce water waste, safeguard nature, and help our communities thrive.

Local Action events provide us with the opportunity to hear first-hand about the environmental issues that are important to the people who live and work in our communities. It is their chance to ask questions and find out more about what our investment over the next five years will mean for their community and the local environment.

Our Local Action programme was shortlisted in the National Sustainability Awards - edie Awards.

We will continue our Local Action programme and update our website to show where we have been and where we are going as events are scheduled - **Northumbrian Water Local Action** and **Essex & Suffolk Water Local Action**. We will focus on communities that are likely to be impacted by our investment programme.

**STATUS:** Ongoing



You can download our full Restore and Regenerate: Our Environment Strategy to 2050 using this link.

[Download](#)

# Incidents and events

We will continue to utilise our established systematic mechanisms to capture learning from things that go wrong, including complaints, incidents and service failures. During and after incidents, we will analyse customer feedback, contact volumes and complaints to reflect on the event. This may include us carrying out specific customer research to understand customers' experiences.

Every piece of Ofwat/CCW research that is published, relating to day-to-day operations or incidents, will be shared with our senior leaders. This will allow them to pick up learnings to improve our own processes.

We will continue to actively participate in Local Resilience Forums (LRFs) sharing our experiences and learning from others.

We will continue our membership with various industry steering and sharing groups, including those coordinated by Water UK.

**STATUS:** Ad hoc

[Click here to view the events for Local Action Northumbrian Water](#)

[Click here to view the events for Local Action Essex & Suffolk Water](#)

# Tracking programmes

Our research tracking programmes are part of our always-on listening system giving us consistent, comparable data over time on customer experience, sentiment, priorities and awareness. They are a set of ongoing, structured studies that sit alongside bespoke/ad hoc research and are a core part of our 'business-as-usual' insight and include:

- Domestic tracking – measuring overall customer sentiment and perceptions with 4,000 customers each year
- Long term priorities tracking – measuring customers' priorities for investment
- Omnibus tracking – measuring awareness, recall, perceptions and behaviours linked to campaigns

We also use CCW's annual tracking – Water Matters – to compare our customers' views with those of other water and wastewater companies' customers.

Stakeholder tracking is also carried out to measure overall stakeholder sentiment and perceptions.

Throughout 2026/27, we will continue to use our tracking programmes and Water Matters to provide insight to decision makers within our company.

**STATUS:** Ongoing

# Voice of the Customer programme

Our Voice of the Customer (VoC) programme uses Medallia Experience Cloud (MEC). It uses text analytics, sentiment analysis and root cause analysis to help us understand drivers of satisfaction and dissatisfaction, and of trust and effort.

We use MEC as a real-time, always-on system for capturing, analysing and acting on customer feedback following an interaction with us. We capture feedback across multiple customer touchpoints, analyse large volumes of data and trigger operational responses to improve customer journeys. Where customers score their interactions poorly, it provides us with the opportunity to close the loop with customers, improve their satisfaction and understand how we can improve customer journeys in the future.

VoC insight is also used to measure performance of Customer Advisors and Field Operatives, with team leaders able to view tailored dashboards and provide feedback to their team members. Those dashboards are also available to our Executive Leadership Team and other managers and leaders within the company.

Through MEC, we carry out surveys based on the C-MeX Customer Satisfaction Survey (CSS). We do this at scale. We are able to mirror the types of contact that are included in the official Ofwat C-MeX surveys and gain valuable insight by being able to link the survey results back to individual customer journeys.

**STATUS:** Ongoing

In 2026/27, we will carry out a Proof of Concept that is aimed at exploring:

- Further developing segmentation to provide richer insight. For example, we are looking at how we can include Priority Service Register (PSR) attributes into the dataset so we can more readily analyse whether different vulnerabilities or customer traits have an impact on issue resolution and customer satisfaction.
- Attaching call recordings to surveys and using advanced analytics and AI to provide richer insight and signal patterns at scale.
- Using AI and text analytics to understand what insight wider customer contact (e.g. not attached to surveys) can provide.

**“Throughout 2026/27, we will continue to use our VoC programme to provide insight for decision makers and leaders within our company.”**



# Billing Journeys: Improving customer experiences

In early 2026, Ofwat published research that:

“aimed to better understand the reasons for billing contacts and complaints, including the experiences of what can be classed as ‘the worst served customers’ in relation to billing, to consider the range of customer experiences, and to highlight any learning and best practice. It did not include those who contact their water company for purely transactional reasons, such as to pay a bill or reset an account password.”

Ofwat asked all companies to reflect on the findings from the research and provide an action plan to:

- Set out the company’s plan to address the findings of the research
- Include any relevant actions and commitments developed in response to other engagements and initiatives, such as CCW’s programme of company assessments
- Explain clearly where action plan commitments are new commitments developed in response to Ofwat’s report, and where they are workstreams that were already in progress
- Describe how the company intends to track progress on implementing its action plan, and how it will monitor whether the action plan is having the intended impact on customer outcomes



Click the link to view the action plan on our website.

In developing our action plan, we spoke with CCW and some other water companies. An action that we collectively agreed with CCW, United Utilities and Wessex Water was:

- Our **Innovation Festival** enables companies to work together to unpack problems and frame challenges in a way that drives innovation and continuous improvement. Working with CCW, United Utilities and Wessex Water, for our 2026 Innovation Festival, we will co-create a sprint or other activity, open to all, to explore ways the industry could enhance billing journeys and utilise this Ofwat research.

We will ensure that the learning and feedback here is harnessed in the spirit of the Consumer Involvement Rule and that we use it to continually improve our services in ways that matter to our customers.

**STATUS:** Commencing July 2026 at our Innovation Festival



# CCW's Water Voice insight

We will use the insight gained from Water Voice accountability sessions to improve transparency and services for our customers. Our first accountability session was held in April 2026. Two key actions that we are undertaking as a direct result of that accountability session we are revisiting Our Finances Explained and publishing a Customer newsletter.



Click here to view the action plan  
Consumer panels - Water Voice - CCW.

**STATUS:** Ongoing



## Our finances explained

We will explore with customers how we can further enhance the information that we provide for them relating to our finances and ensure it is written in plain, easy-to-understand English. We will complete this by December 2026.



## Customer newsletter

We will launch a new customer newsletter that will be used to share information with customers and seek feedback from them. We will publish our first newsletter in July 2026.

# Next steps

We have put in place, and will maintain, robust governance arrangements to ensure a clear line of sight for our Board of our customers' views in their decision-making.

In next year's publication we will report on how the findings of research and engagement with our customers has impacted the choices we make.



[www.nwg.co.uk](http://www.nwg.co.uk)

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**NWG**  
*living water*

July 2026