
OUR DRAINAGE AND WASTEWATER MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR 2030-55

2026 Annual Progress Report

1. PURPOSE

The purpose of this document is to provide an update on our progress in developing the Drainage and Wastewater Management Plan 2028 (DWMP28) for the North East.

To set the context of the update, we include in Section 2 a high-level overview of the aims and structure of the DWMP, followed in Section 3 with an explanation of the information included within the accompanying DWMP report data table.



Seaham Hall beach

2. THE DRAINAGE AND WASTEWATER MANAGEMENT PLAN

The Drainage and Wastewater Management Plan (DWMP) is a long-term strategic plan that looks ahead from 2030 to 2055 and sets out how we will protect and serve our communities and environment through targeted investment to create and maintain a resilient drainage and wastewater system.

Our first plan, [DWMP23](#), was published in May 2023 and established the foundations for our long-term approach. DWMP28 marks a significant shift in how we plan for the future of drainage and wastewater services in the North East. While the production of DWMP23 was not a statutory obligation, DWMP28 is now a statutory requirement under the Environment Act 2021 and must meet strengthened expectations set out in [Defra's 2025 Guidance](#).

This new framework requires a more detailed, evidence-led approach, including assessments of asset health, system resilience, treatment capacity and interactions with wider drainage networks, as well as alignment with national priorities such as the [Storm Overflows Discharge Reduction Plan](#) and the [Government's 25 Year Environment Plan](#).

DWMP28 adopts three geographical levels across the region, shown within Figure 1. Our approach strengthens opportunities for collaborative working and enables effective engagement with regulators and stakeholders at both the wider company level and within local areas.

Our Customer Challenge Group, the Water Forum, provides independent oversight and challenge on behalf of customers and we will seek their input in our DWMP28. Our existing Local Action programme provides an avenue for local interest and community groups' voices and opinions to be heard, ensuring that the DWMP reflects local priorities, addresses real community needs, and builds trust through inclusive, place-based decision-making.

Customers' interests will also be incorporated through our **People Panels** – formal customer research, endorsed via representation at the Level 1 Group.

Figure 1: Levels of the DWMP





DWMP28 will guide long-term decisions from 2030 to 2055 and is being developed with regulators, local authorities, stakeholders and communities to ensure we produce a collaborative plan. Figure 2 illustrates key milestones in the production of DWMP28.

The draft DWMP28 will be published by November 2027, followed by a 12-week consultation, with the final plan to be published in August 2028.

We are seeking the views of our customers and stakeholders throughout the development of the plan, with the 12-week consultation offering a dedicated opportunity to comment on the draft.

In the next section we summarise the work already underway as we build the evidence, partnerships and engagement needed to deliver DWMP28 for the North East.

Figure 2: DWMP timeline



3. DWMP ANNUAL PROGRESS REPORT

3.1 Our progress so far

With the publication of our [Strategic Context](#) and [Customer Summary](#) in February 2026, we have reached key milestones in the DWMP28 process. Further information on these documents is outlined in 3.1.1.

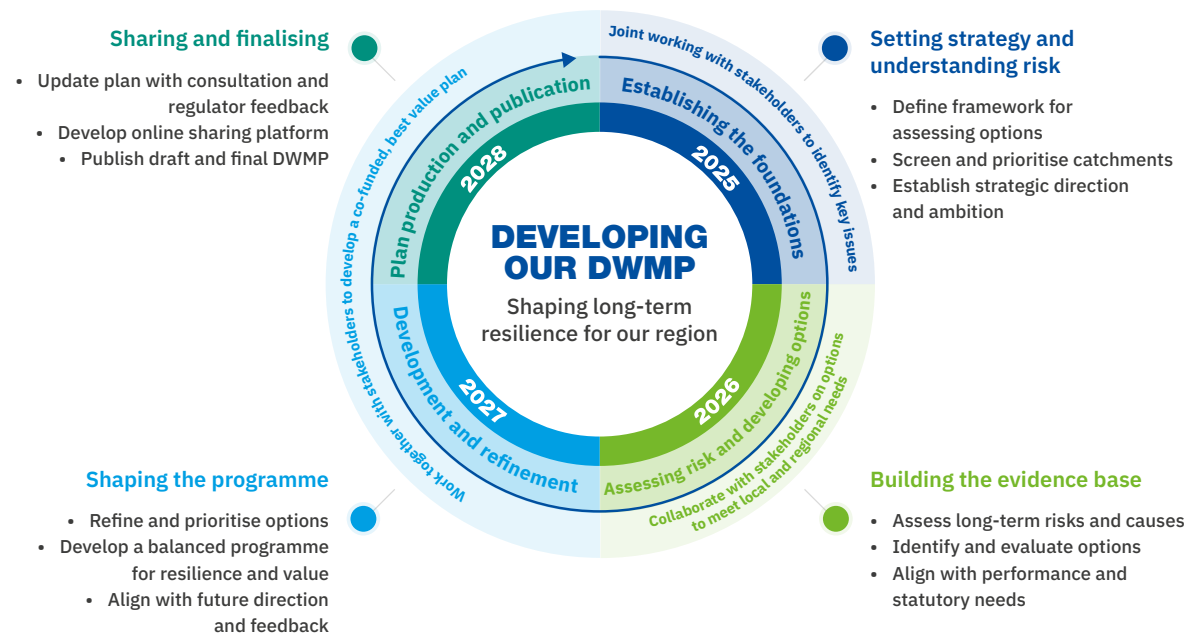
We are building the evidence base to support the case for investment in our drainage and wastewater systems as indicated in Figure 3. This involves understanding our current position by assessing performance data, alongside identifying future demands through comprehensive modelling and assessment of these systems and the resulting performance.

The risk-based planning and risk assessment stages are establishing the system needs from 2030 to 2055 for which we will develop local and catchment options to address the needs identified.

In preparation for fully launching into the development of options to meet future system performance and resilience needs, we have been developing and testing a toolkit to automate the options development process. This will bring efficiencies to this part of developing the DWMP and enable the rapid exploration and evaluation of integrated catchment-wide solutions.

We are collaborating with key stakeholders across our region to understand their needs and opportunities, seeking ways to optimise option benefits for the communities of the North East.

Figure 3: DWMP development



3.1.1 Strategic context and customer summary

The Strategic Context and Customer Summary set out the foundations for how we are shaping DWMP28, focusing on three core areas:

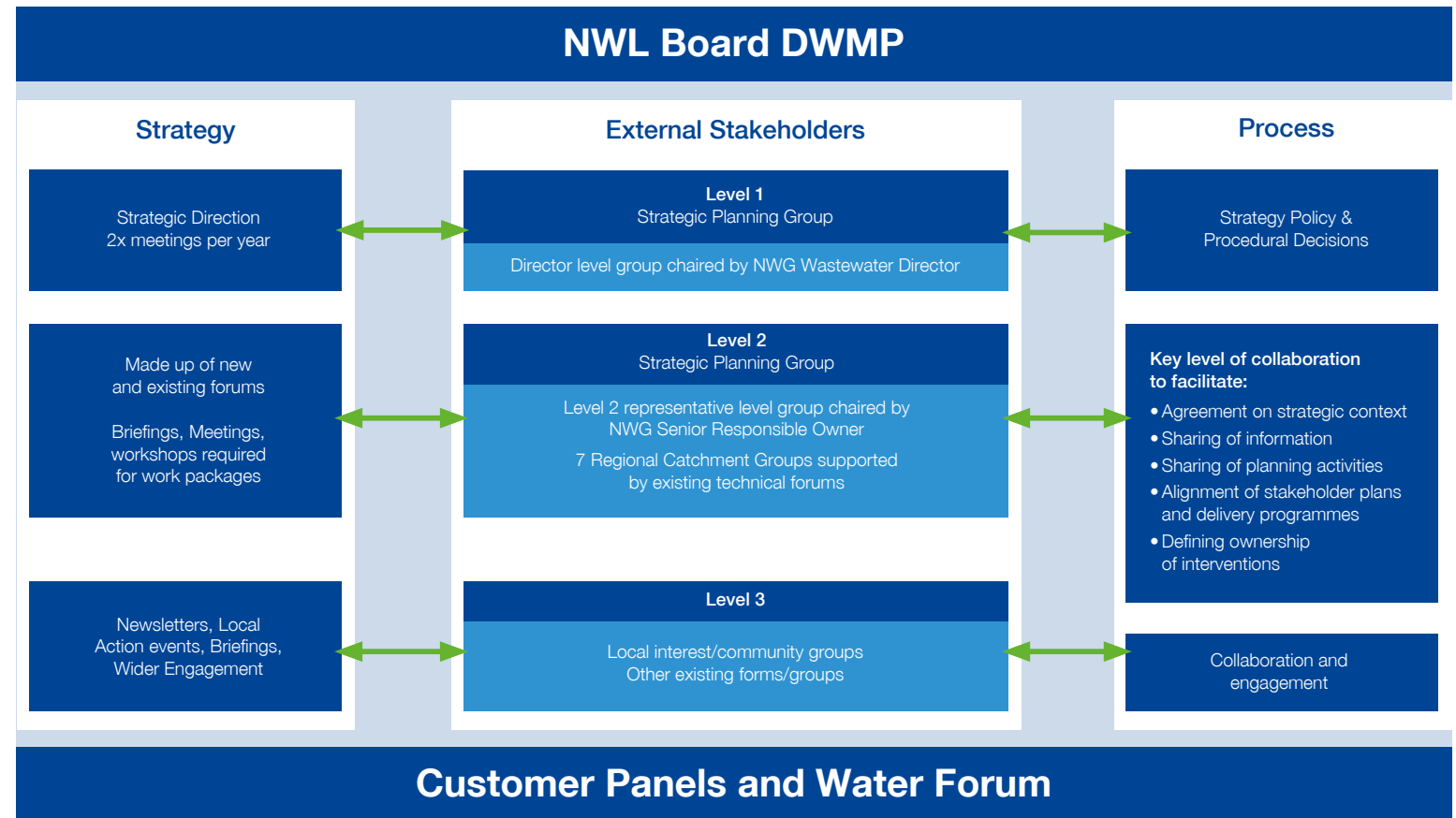
- **Defining our performance indicators**, providing a clear and forward-looking framework for assessing current and future performance across flooding, pollution, storm overflows, treatment compliance and wider environmental outcomes.
- **Identifying the future trends** predicted to impact drainage and wastewater systems over the 25-year period, including climate change, population growth, development pressures, regulatory change and technological advancement.
- **Developing our value framework**, which will allow us to evaluate future investment options consistently and ensure we deliver a best-value plan for customers, communities and the environment, focusing on long-term outcomes and not just quick fixes.

Alongside this work, we have a comprehensive programme of engagement to inform and engage with stakeholders throughout the development of the DWMP.

The customer and stakeholder engagement structure is illustrated in Figure 4.

Engagement will provide valuable insight into local priorities, opportunities for partnership working and expectations around resilience, affordability and environmental improvement.

Figure 4: DWMP stakeholder engagement structure



3.2 Annual Progress Report Data Table

In alignment with DWMP guidance, our progress report is presented as a data table summarising key metrics at both the company level (Level 1) and wastewater drainage catchment level (Level 3).

Level 1: Company-wide metrics

- Percentage of the total population covered by each stage of the plan.
- Percentage of the total population covered by a plan delivered in the last five years.

Level 3: Catchment-level metrics

- Catchment name.
- Current and forecast population.
- Whether a detailed planning study is required.
- Whether a water quality impact study is planned.
- Date of most recent revision of the full plan including dates from earlier DWMPs.
- Date of most recent revision of the short-term plan including dates from earlier DWMPs.
- Whether a revision is required due to performance or trend changes.
- Current stage of study.

A full definition of each metric is provided within the [Annual Progress Report Data Table](#).



4. NEXT STEPS

Activities in 2026 continue to focus upon assessing current and future risk and developing options to meet the needs that have been identified. A key element of option development is collaborating with stakeholders and customers to shape the DWMP.

Stakeholders representing government and non-government organisations will be engaged through a series of catchment-focused workshops to identify shared priorities and explore how we can work together to deliver wider benefits for our communities and the environment. Our wider engagement with local customer and community groups will continue, presenting opportunities to share DWMP progress and outputs.

Throughout production of the DWMP, we want to keep hearing from customers, communities and stakeholders. Your views will help shape a long-term plan that protects homes, the environment and our communities.

The DWMP is being prepared in a time of regulatory change. In January 2026, the Government published a white paper, [A New Vision for Water](#), which sets out its action plan for reform in response to the recommendations from the [Independent Water Commission](#). The white paper proposes changes to strategic planning in the water sector, which may result in changes to the DWMP process. We are therefore progressing with development of the DWMP in line with current guidance, while recognising that we may need to be agile in our approach and adapt to deliver what is required by the evolving regulatory landscape.

If you wish to contact us about this document or about the DWMP, please email DWMP@nwl.co.uk.



