

Principal threats and opportunities

The implementation of our strategic priorities is measured using a number of strategic performance indicators and managed using an opportunity/threat management model.

Strategic Priorities	Strategic performance indicators (SPIs)	Principal threat (PT) /Principal opportunity (PO) Read more pg76
Customer – delivering an exceptional customer experience Read more pg32	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduction in customers reporting service failures First point of contact resolution More customers singing our praises (Net Promoter Score) 	PT1 PT2 PT3 PT5 PT6 PT7 PO1 PO3 PO4
Water – delivering great tasting, clean and safe water to meet customer need Read more pg36	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Water quality compliance Reduction in leakage Reduction in supply interruptions 	PT1 PT2 PT3 PT4 PT5 PT6 PT7 PO1 PO4
Economy – efficiently delivering infrastructure to underpin sustainable growth Read more pg46	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase/(decrease) in customer tariffs excluding inflation Number of economic constraint areas removed Number of serious development restrictions removed Bathing water quality 	PT1 PT2 PT3 PT5 PT6 PO1 PO3 PO4
Nature – protecting and enhancing the natural environment Read more pg52	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduction in our pollution incidents Wastewater compliance Reduction in number of properties at risk of out of sewer flooding Reduction in our carbon footprint 	PT1 PT2 PT3 PT4 PT5 PT6 PO1 PO3 PO4
People – providing a great place to work Read more pg66	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Employee engagement score Reduction in health and safety incidents 	PT1 PT2 PT3 PT4 PT5 PT6 PT7 PT8 PO1 PO2 PO4

Principal threat (PT)	Principal opportunity (PO)
PT1 Governance model and funding	PO1 Customer service and innovation
PT2 COVID-19	PO2 Wellbeing
PT3 Brexit	PO3 Living with Water Programme
PT4 Health and safety	PO4 Stakeholder engagement and sustainable development
PT5 Climate change	
PT6 Asset resilience	
PT7 Data integrity and cyber risks	
PT8 Pension fund	

Risk and resilience

Increasingly, NI Water faces downside threats which are external to the organisation. These include, for example, COVID-19, factors which impact our supply chain, uncertainty regarding funding, Brexit, cyber attacks and climate change/extreme weather events.

While management of these threats is to a large extent outside the control of NI Water, we recognise the need to build a resilience culture in order to protect the value we create.

NI Water manages risks (both threats and opportunities) in line with our integrated risk and resilience framework which demonstrates the interconnectivity between risk and resilience, and the need for accountability to protect value creation.

NI Water's integrated risk and resilience framework



Integrated

The framework and the model outline the requirement for risks (threats and opportunities) to be managed on a cross-directorate basis and with input from external partners where required (e.g. supply chain, strategic partners and service users).

Resilient

NI Water recognises the need to adopt a resilience culture to prepare for unavoidable risk factors, which are external to NI Water.

NI Water defines resilience as 'the strategic and organisational capacity of NI Water to resist, respond to, and recover from disruptive threats both foreseen and unforeseen'.

A resilience culture within NI Water means that all employees are united in purpose and are clear on the need to be prepared for when that incident does occur rather than simply thinking that it might occur. This is demonstrated by putting plans in place in advance and then being adaptive when an incident does occur so that disruption is minimised and NI Water can return to 'business as usual' in the most effective and efficient way possible. Our response to the impact of COVID-19 is a prime example of how having effective business resilience in place makes a difference to managing even unexpected incidents. All the corporate risk maps have a section which records the existing controls and the actions to be put in place to continually improve on our resilience.

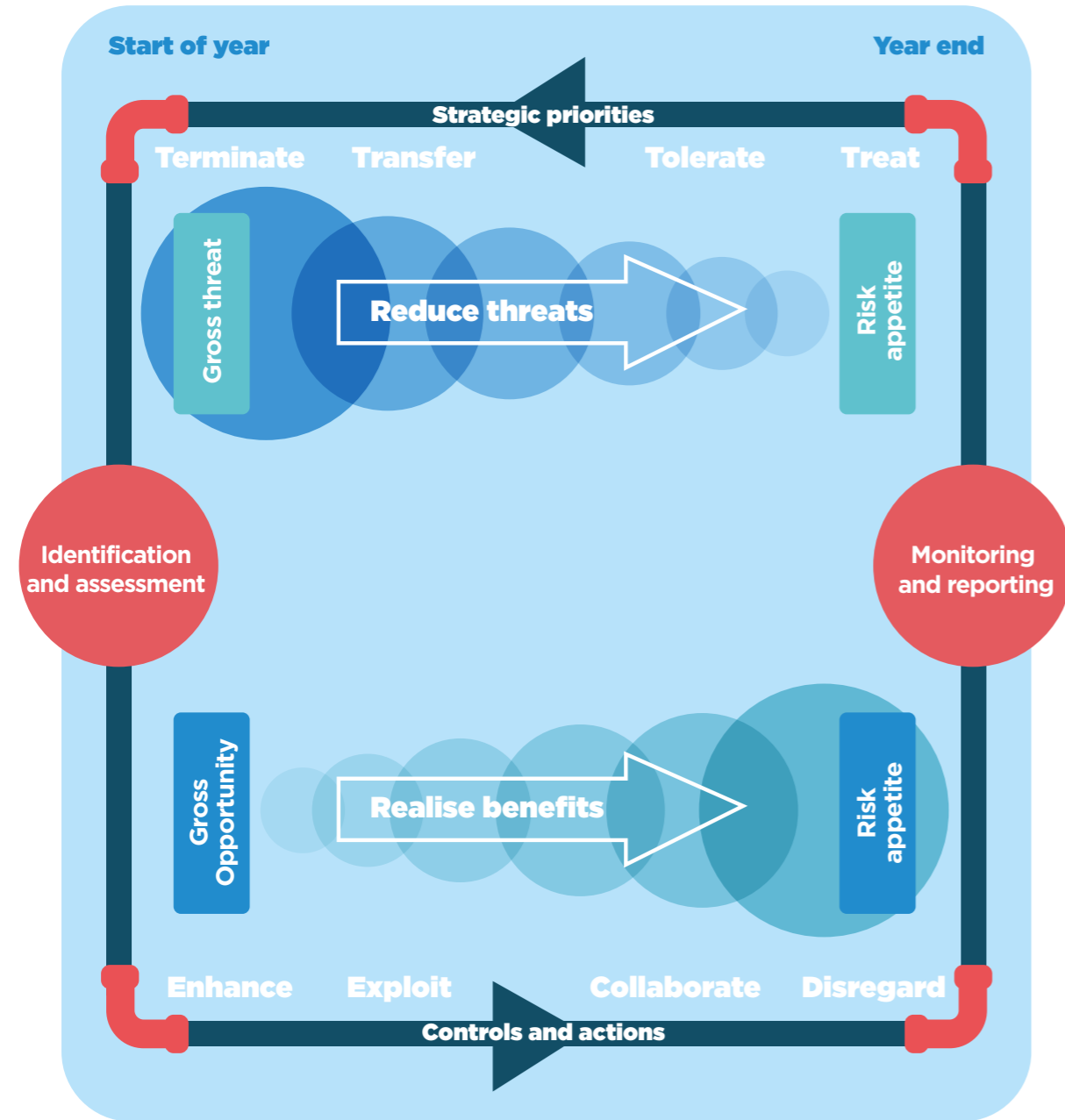
NI Water's integrated risk and resilience model



NI Water's approach to risk management

NI Water's approach to risk management is to have a risk culture where our employees and strategic partners are aware of how they contribute towards our strategic priorities. There is a collaborative approach to analyse

the downside risk (threats) that could have a detrimental impact on the achievement of our priorities but also to consider the upside risk (opportunities) towards deriving better outcomes, as shown below:



Through a process of horizon scanning emerging risks, benchmarking, risk trend analysis and workshops held on a business-wide basis, corporate threats and opportunities are established at the start of year. These are updated throughout the year to take account of emerging risks.

The wording of the risk, the risk gradings and the individual risk appetite are approved by the Board. The Board receives a monthly progress report on the management of risks towards the projected risk appetite for each individual risk.

The Board has set the risk appetite for seven principal risk themes. The movement of the current risk position against each of these seven principal risk themes is reported to the Risk Committee twice each year.

The Risk Committee considers the threat and opportunity maps throughout the year, reviewing the effectiveness of clearly defined controls and the completion of actions towards the delivery of expected outcomes and the appetite level.

The Audit Committee considers financial risks on a regular basis and at year end holds a joint meeting with the Risk Committee to consider the overall effectiveness of NI Water's system of internal controls and risk management.

The Executive Committee meets on a monthly basis to consider corporate risk

maps and the completion of actions within agreed timelines.

Corporate risk maps are linked to directorate, programme and project threats and opportunities, and business-wide groups either have or are being encouraged to have updated 'live' risk registers in order to better integrate risk management into ongoing activities.

Read more about risk management on pages 108 and 110.

Emerging from the corporate threat and opportunity maps are a number of significant principal threats and opportunities. For each principal threat or opportunity, we have identified the related strategic priority and the change in the level of threat or opportunity over 2020/21.

Principal threat	Strategic priority	Change in threat level*
PT1 Governance model and funding	Customer, Water, Economy, Nature, People	▲
PT2 COVID-19	Customer, Water, Economy, Nature, People	▬
PT3 Brexit	Customer, Water, Economy, Nature, People	▼
PT4 Health and safety	Water, Nature, People	▬
PT5 Climate change	Customer, Water, Economy, Nature, People	▲
PT6 Asset resilience	Customer, Water, Economy, Nature, People	▲
PT7 Data integrity and cyber risks	Customer, Water, People	▬
PT8 Pension fund	People	▬

Principal opportunity	Strategic priority	Level of Opportunity**
PO1 Customer service and innovation	Customer, Water, Economy, Nature, People	▬
PO2 Wellbeing	People	▲
PO3 Living with Water Programme	Customer, Economy, Nature	▬
PO4 Stakeholder engagement and sustainable development	Customer, Water, Economy, Nature, People	▲

*This column shows the change in the threat level compared to what was reported in 2019/20. An upward arrow means that the level of threat has increased.

**This column represents the change in the opportunity compared to what was reported in 2019/20. An upward arrow means that the potential benefits to NI Water from the opportunity have increased.

Principal risks

PT1 Governance model and funding

Strategic priorities: Customer, Water, Economy, Nature, People

Background to the threat

NI Water seeks to efficiently deliver infrastructure to underpin sustainable growth. In order to deliver this, NI Water requires a sustainable funding model which will ensure access to secure and resilient finances. The absence of a sustainable funding model has been recognised as the top principal threat to the delivery of our strategy in PC15 and the threat remains for PC21.

The current sub-optimal funding model is a result of the dual status of NI Water as both a regulated Government Owned Company (GoCo) and a Non-Departmental Public Body (NDPB). As a regulated company, NI Water prepares a six year Business Plan, to inform the Utility Regulator's price setting process, setting out the investment required to address the most critical needs and enable Northern Ireland to thrive from its water and sewerage infrastructure. The medium-term funding settlement required to enable NI Water to efficiently deliver that plan does not align with the annual cycle of public sector funding which NI Water faces as a NDPB.

NI Water is an asset intensive business and medium and long term planning is essential to improve services for customers today while investing to safeguard services for future customers. The uncertainty over funding adds complexity and inefficiency to longer-term asset resilience as NI Water cannot take a multi-year view of its investment profile and this makes it increasingly difficult to maintain momentum to complete programmes of work.

Like many businesses, NI Water is subject to threats which are largely outside its control such as pandemics; cost increases; adverse weather resulting in recovery costs and damage to our assets; unlawful acts by third parties (e.g. pollution, terrorism, legislation breaches) as well as downturns in the economy which could adversely impact on business performance. The timing and impact of these are dependent on the nature of the threat. NI Water does not have a contingency fund to deal with such financial

shocks. This could potentially impact on the recovery actions which NI Water could take.

Managing the threat

NI Water continues to work with the Utility Regulator and DfI to make the case for certainty of funding, including the approval of strategic capital projects to reduce the threat of adverse impacts on customers.

In the meantime, NI Water ensures that the implications on the delivery of our services as a consequence of funding constraints are fully analysed, managed and communicated to the public in a clear and responsive manner.

This threat will be brought into sharp relief as NI Water seeks to secure a medium-term funding settlement for PC21 from DfI. The Utility Regulator's Final determination on NI Water's PC21 Business Plan (2021-27) was published in May 2021 and NI Water has until 13 July 2021 to decide on acceptability. The Board of NI Water is encouraged to see that the first year of PC21 (2021/22) has been fully funded by the Department for Infrastructure and the Northern Ireland Executive. The Board is in discussion with the Department for Infrastructure and other Government Departments to ensure that, in order to accept the PC21 Final Determination, there is support and continuing commitment to fund the determination.

The COVID-19 pandemic is having implications on funding and cash flow for NI Water. The additional personal protective equipment and IT requirements, together with delays in capital projects have resulted in higher costs. Personal protective equipment requirements will likely continue over the short and medium term. Delays in issuing invoices to help to reduce the impact of the pandemic on our non-domestic customers, coupled with significant reduction in usage by non-domestic customers, will also have an impact on cash flow. NI Water has operated with higher cash balances to manage cash flow impact.

PT2 COVID-19

Strategic priorities: Customer, Water, Economy, Nature, People

Background to the threat

In late 2019/20, we faced one of our biggest challenges with the onset of COVID-19. As an essential service provider, NI Water needs to ensure that it can continue to deliver water and wastewater services to protect public health. We activated our business continuity plans and pandemic major incident plan in response. All non-essential tasks and activities were stopped with only essential work necessary to maintain customer service, operate our assets and networks and meet regulatory compliance being undertaken. Our capital investment activities were suspended except for a small number of essential works. Many of our employees worked from home to reduce the risk to our front-line employees and members of the public. We saw an increased demand for drinking water due to hand washing, and cleaning to reduce the spread of COVID-19.

NI Water has stepped up preparations to protect its employees and minimise disruption to business. There is the potential for significant impacts as a result of COVID-19 including staff and resource availability, increased potential for cyber-attacks, additional financial spend for purchase of personal protective equipment, human resource management, incident management and IT infrastructure and resources.

The threats arising from the COVID-19 pandemic are included within each of the other principal threats and opportunities where appropriate and managed as part of NI Water's overall risk management process.

Managing the threat

NI Water is working within the remit of its Pandemic Flu Incident Plan and has implemented Business Continuity Plans.

NI Water has established two special COVID-19 projects to ensure the safety, health and wellbeing of employees in line with government guidelines. The first project is responsible for the provision of appropriate personal protective equipment, ensuring that working environments are clean and safe for employees who are continuing to work in their normal places of work, and getting workplace accommodation into a state of readiness for the return of home workers. The second project is focused on supporting employees through a range of measures including physical and mental health initiatives to safely return to offices under new hybrid working arrangements when government guidelines permit.

To keep our colleagues informed and engaged while remote working, new communications channels were put in place including Microsoft Teams. A dedicated COVID-19 website was established, and additional virtual health and wellbeing plans delivered including a series of guides covering everything from home schooling to mental health.

A detailed stakeholder and media engagement plan was put in place to keep our stakeholders informed. Liaison with other water utilities was also undertaken to draw on best practice.

We are conscious that the risk impact and scale of the COVID-19 pandemic will likely continue into the foreseeable future. NI Water will continue to engage our colleagues, business partners and stakeholders to manage emerging risks as we learn to live with COVID-19.

PT3 Brexit

Strategic priorities: Customer, Water, Economy, Nature, People

Background to the threat

The UK's exit from the European Union ('Brexit'), including the more recent implementation of the Northern Ireland Protocol, has added complexity to how NI Water provides its services.

Our preparations have focussed on addressing potential difficulties such as obtaining chemicals or spare parts to keep treatment works operating; identifying possible knock-on disruption from other infrastructure services like power, fuel supplies and transport; and determining any associated costs and providing assurance to stakeholders that NI Water had robust plans in place.

The threats arising from Brexit are included within each of the other principal threats and opportunities where appropriate and managed as part of NI Water's overall risk management process.

Managing the threat

Our Brexit preparations focused on having well developed and tested plans to address potential difficulties, the aim of which was to increase our resilience and provide assurance to key stakeholders.

To prepare for and manage the threat of Brexit, particularly the impact of any 'no deal' departure, NI Water established a Brexit Incident Management Group and has been working in collaboration with DfI and WaterUK. WaterUK implemented its Platinum Incident Management and National Chemical Specialist Group, which involved regular meetings with senior management from all UK Water companies, working together at a national level to address any risks to the UK Water Industry's ability to provide services. We also engaged with local government, stakeholders and community groups to improve resilience.

The risk of supply chain issues was mitigated by storing additional stocks of many of the key chemicals required for water and wastewater treatment. This additional stock holding extended to spare parts for use across our assets.

We engaged with WaterUK and Irish Water to understand their plans and how we could support each other.

We identified the key supply chains and routes, engaged suppliers on their preparedness for Brexit and their contingency plans. The number of suppliers on our frameworks was increased and consideration was given to opportunities for different supply routes.

A Brexit Readiness Group has been established to address issues such as tendering post Brexit, customs declarations, transactional impact brought about by the NI Protocol and cost implications for our supply chain.

PT4 Health and safety

Strategic priorities: Water, Nature, People

Background to the threat

Health and safety is an integral part of NI Water's day-to-day business. NI Water's vision for health and safety for employees, contractors and customers is the 'pursuit of zero harm by raising standards and performance through the identification and adoption of industry best practice and the development of an empowered, valued, engaged, accountable and competent workforce'. We are committed to ensuring that all work activities are conducted in compliance with the Health and Safety at Work (NI) Order.

NI Water has a Health and Safety Strategy and Action Plan for 2020 - 2025. Following significant actions undertaken during the year, including internal site visits and specialist surveys and assessments, the need for further work to build sound foundations for health and safety was identified.

Managing the threat

NI Water has a Head of Safety senior manager who has undertaken significant work to establish a clear view of areas for improvement.

The Safety, Health and Environment Team is key in ensuring NI Water complies with relevant legislation and best practice. The Health and Safety Focus Group, made up of representatives from across NI Water, meets on a monthly basis to examine NI Water and contractor incidents, review health and safety training needs, and general promotion of health and safety, providing assurance to the Executive Committee, the Risk Committee and the Board on health and safety related matters.

The COVID-19 pandemic has presented challenges to NI Water in terms of the health and safety of our employees. We continue to undertake significant work to adequately control the health and safety risks that frontline workers and homeworking staff may be exposed to and continue to provide additional health and wellbeing support to colleagues and their families. We continue to manage the risks associated with a return to office when appropriate and have undertaken a significant 'office safety readiness' project involving many teams across the business.

PT5 Climate change

Strategic priorities: Customer, Water, Economy, Nature, People

Background to the threat

As a natural capital business, with infrastructure entwined with the natural water cycle, we are committed to playing our part in addressing climate change. The changes required to decarbonise our economy and restore biodiversity over this century will require a colossal joined up effort across the public, private and voluntary sectors to rethink policy development, decision making and funding in order to help our society meet the challenges of the 21st century.

There have been a number of significant developments over 2020/21 including the move towards mandatory climate change reporting against the Taskforce for Climate-related Financial Disclosures (TCFD) for large sections of the UK economy by 2025, proposals on a Climate Change Bill for Northern Ireland and the publication of Water UK's net zero carbon route map.

Managing the threat

NI Water's strategy (2021-46) aims to decarbonise our business by taking a sustainable consumption path and we recognise that we can play a key role in supporting the wider societal shift to a decarbonised circular economy centred around nature based solutions. We believe that our infrastructure, which includes significant land holdings and over 3,000 grid connected sites across Northern Ireland, can be used in innovative ways to deliver game changing actions such as:

- delivering 'blue green' infrastructure, which utilises nature's ecosystem services to filter our raw water, slow flood water, store carbon and restore biodiversity. As part of this work, we are piloting multi-capitals decision making on the £1bn Living with Water Programme to address strategic drainage in Belfast;
- better designing our homes to use 'green water' such as recycled water, storm water or rain water to flush our toilets, wash our clothes or for outdoor use. This could

reduce the total demand for drinking water by 25% and help alleviate the amount of water returned to the wastewater network, which is at or near capacity in many areas;

- as Northern Ireland's largest user of electricity, we are targeting 100% renewable energy usage by 2027. In doing so, we can play a pivotal role in doubling Northern Ireland's renewable generating capacity. In addition our large volume, distributed load base will undoubtedly have a key role to play in supporting electricity grid services;
- we are the first water company in the UK and Ireland to pilot the production of hydrogen fuel from wastewater. This presents the opportunity to open a network of green fuel stations at our wastewater treatment works across Northern Ireland to kick-start our hydrogen economy and help the gas network remain relevant in a decarbonising world;
- our 16,000km sewer network can be used to provide sources of warmth for district heating schemes; and
- we have successfully demonstrated the use of natural wetlands for low carbon wastewater treatment.

We have undertaken a gap analysis with TCFD and identified a number of actions to take in advance of mandatory TCFD reporting for large companies in 2023/24. Over 2021/22 we plan to develop a climate change strategy in liaison with key stakeholders such as the DfI and the Utility Regulator covering mitigation and adaptation measures. The strategy will outline the governance arrangements, include a net zero carbon route map to 2050 and address climate resilience.

PT6 Asset resilience

Strategic priorities: Customer, Water, Economy, Nature, People

Background to the threat

NI Water inherited an aged asset base and significant investment is required to bring it to a comparable level by UK standards. Significant capital investment together with a funded maintenance programme for water and wastewater networks and treatment facilities is required in order to comply with regulatory and environmental performance standards.

There is a very real threat that NI Water could suffer a major failure in its assets or be unable to respond effectively to a major incident such as severe weather which has affected NI Water's assets. This could cause a significant impact to our customers due to deterioration in the quality of drinking water, interruptions to supply and management of wastewater services, including an adverse impact to the environment.

The threat of service failure or service deterioration due to ageing assets not being replaced in a timely way has increased over the PC15 period.

Managing the threat

NI Water continues to work with the Utility Regulator and DfI on medium and long term funding arrangements in order to be able to make further improvement to its assets and take opportunities to manage exposure to threats associated with climate change. As part of the PC21 submission, detailed capital maintenance plans have been developed to ascertain the correct level of funding and the likely impact on customer service if this funding is constrained. The assessment for PC21 has demonstrated that additional capital (base) maintenance will be required for PC21 in order to be able to maintain service levels.

In line with the Integrated Risk and Resilience Framework, NI Water continues to identify and implement actions to improve resilience.

NI Water's business continuity management framework and major incident plan are continually being updated to reflect best practice and key learning points from annual testing, exercises and previous major incidents. An IT disaster recovery plan is in place to reduce the impact of adverse events and to manage recovery to 'business as usual'.

PT7 Data integrity and cyber risks

Strategic priorities: Customer, Water, People

Background to the threat

The robustness and accuracy of data, increasing regulation, changes in technology and the impact of cyber-crime may have a significant disruption to the quality of service that customers have come to expect.

The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) brings increasing regulatory requirements in respect of privacy and the processing, storage and retention of personal information. The Network and Information Security (NIS) Regulations, mandatory for Operators of Essential Services, establishes a set of principles to improve the security and resilience of network and information systems across the UK.

Cyber-crimes are increasing in both frequency and disruptive potential, leading to disruption to services, interruption to computer control systems and impact on data integrity. This could have a significant adverse impact on business performance over the recovery period.

Managing the threat

NI Water is continually making improvements in its information governance to manage the quality of information to support service delivery and policy making.

In terms of the NI Water Corporate IT Network, there is a constant cycle of work to improve cyber resilience through updating of systems controls, compliance with IT system supplier updates and through training and awareness programmes. In 2020/21 we continued our simulated phishing campaigns to test our awareness of phishing email attacks and to help educate users in how attackers attempt to gain access to their systems. In 2021/22 we will continue to liaise and collaborate with the National Cyber Security Centre to keep at the forefront of an ever changing threat landscape and be aware of new methods of attack as they develop.

For operational technology (OT) which is the technology used to run the NI Water sites, a Cyber Resilience Programme was created in 2018/19 in response to an external report on cyber security readiness. Significant work has been ongoing to deliver this Programme and a follow-up to the initial report, undertaken during 2020/21, demonstrated that good foundations have been laid with improvements made in key areas.

With a high number of our employees working from home as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, coupled with an awareness of increased levels of cyber fraud, NI Water is further enhancing its IT security to ensure that systems remain secure and that any hard copy documents are maintained securely.

PT8 Pension fund

Strategic priorities: People

Background to the threat

NI Water Limited operates a funded, defined benefit pension scheme. Given the nature of the NI Water Limited Pension Scheme, NI Water Limited is exposed to the threat of paying unanticipated additional contributions to the Scheme.

The threats in relation to the pension scheme include higher than expected actual inflation; lower than expected investment returns; the threat that movements in the value of the Scheme's liabilities are not met by corresponding movements in the value of the Scheme's assets; and members living for longer than expected.

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused disruption in the markets and as a result the funding level has fallen.

Managing the threat

The Pension Trustee's investment strategy is to invest the Scheme's assets across a diversified portfolio of investment classes, including, equities, diversified growth funds, secured finance, infrastructure funds, high lease value property, corporate bonds and index linked gilts. This is in order to strike a balance between maximising the returns on the Scheme's assets and minimising the threats associated with lower than expected returns on the Scheme's assets.

A triennial valuation of the pension scheme as at 31 March 2020 was completed by the Pension Scheme Trustees. The valuation has reported a higher deficit in the funding of the scheme. The Company agreed to pay a one off top-up to the scheme in March 2021 to avoid higher employer's contributions to the Scheme and deficit recovery payments.

Further information on accounting for the pension scheme is provided at page 201 and Notes E2 and G3 to the Statutory Accounts. The Trustee is required to regularly review the investment strategy in light of the revised term and nature of the Scheme's liabilities. This includes consultation with NI Water Limited.

NI Water Limited is continuing to engage with the pension scheme trustees and DfI on pension scheme costs.

With continued uncertainty in the markets as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic there remains the potential for further significant deficit contributions in the future.

Principal opportunities

PO1 Customer service and innovation

Strategic priorities: Customer, Water, Economy, Nature, People

Background to the opportunity

NI Water is seeking to deliver an exceptional customer experience which exceeds our customers' expectations.

Changing customer expectations, the digital revolution and demographic and lifestyle changes are all leading NI Water to embrace new ways to meet customer needs, now and in the future.

Exploiting the opportunity

Future developments in artificial intelligence and machines will enable us to spend less time on low value-added tasks and instead focus on customer care and improving customer journeys. More customers are using self-service options such as web and mobile self-service, interactive voice response or chatbots as their preferred point of contact.

Through cooperation with other utilities, business partners and universities and in-house development, we continue to support and implement new technologies to improve customer experience and efficiency in service delivery.

During 2020/21, NI Water completed several actions to lay the groundwork for future improvements. This includes increasing the number of customer contact details recorded and developing the NI Water digital strategy to set out the roadmap for digital development. A social media pilot is underway to help communicate operational issues to customers. Options are also being considered for an Intelligent Operations Centre.

PO2 Wellbeing

Strategic priorities: People

Background to the opportunity

NI Water is committed to providing a great place to work. Attracting, developing, retaining and partnering with the best talent is fundamental to the success of our business and therefore, we want to be recognised as a local employer of choice that champions diversity and puts people first.

We recognise the importance of our people in delivering the water that we all rely on to thrive and that's why we are committed to looking after them by eliminating all harm. We are aiming to ensure that our business has happier, healthier and safer employees by focusing on training, processes and procedures and developing a strong health and safety culture.

We recognise the link between wellbeing and performance and our award-winning Health and Wellbeing Strategy encourages and supports employees to prioritise their health to 'live well', enabling a culture of attendance and high performance.

We want to involve people in the decisions that affect them and ensure that our people strategies are focused in the areas that matter most. Over the course of the pandemic, we introduced pulse surveys as a quick and agile way of staying connected with all our people and to understand the sentiment of our workforce. Three pulse surveys have been issued and these have been highly effective in identifying clear areas of strength and further focus. Feedback received has been used to inform NI Water's ongoing COVID-19 response.

Exploiting the opportunity

Our award-winning Health and Wellbeing Strategy helps staff 'live well' through a range of initiatives to support mental, physical, financial and social health such as our Live Well Roadshow, Winter Wellness Programme and new Spring Forward programme. Each month launches a fresh programme of events centred around several wellness pledges to help people manage their wellbeing. The strategy uses absence data, survey feedback and best practice benchmarking to ensure that it is targeted in the right places and brings to NI Water the very best in corporate wellness practice.

The quality and impact of our health and wellbeing programme has been recognised externally, as NI Water has been named winner of the Best Health and Well-being Initiative award at the CIPD business awards. NI Water were also recognised as a 2020 Responsible Business Champion in Health and Wellness through the Business in the Community responsible business awards.

NI Water has undertaken significant work in relation to diversity and inclusion. Our roadmap includes investment in inclusive leadership training for the Executive Committee and Board members, a Choose to Challenge campaign recognising International Women's day and the creation of a new working group made up of employee champions from across the business.

In recognition of our commitment and progress in this area, NI Water was awarded the Bronze Diversity Charter Mark for the third year.

We are currently advancing our efforts in supporting social mobility post COVID-19 by becoming the first company in Northern Ireland to participate in the UK Levelling Up Campaign.

Read more about diversity and inclusion at page 127.

PO3 Living With Water Programme

Strategic priorities: Customer, Economy, Nature

Background to the opportunity

In July 2014 the NI Executive agreed to develop a strategic drainage infrastructure plan for greater Belfast. The plan aims to protect against flooding, enhance the environment and support economic growth by improving capacity for new connections. The initiative is now known as the 'Living With Water Programme' (LWWP) and is led by DfI.

NI Water has been a key partner in the LWWP since inception as the plan strongly aligns with NI Water's strategic priority of protecting and enhancing the natural environment and building a more resilient network. Implementation of the programme will provide an opportunity to deliver significant investments that will help to improve the drainage networks and wastewater treatment works that discharge into Inner Belfast Lough.

The LWWP is currently overseen by a Board that includes DfI, NI Water, the Utility Regulator, Department for Agriculture, Environmental and Rural Affairs (DAERA), NIEA and Belfast City Council.

The LWWP was referenced in the draft Programme for Government and the 'New Decade, New Approach' deal which accompanied the restoration of devolved government for Northern Ireland in January 2020. DfI led a public consultation on the draft LWWP Belfast Strategic Drainage Infrastructure Plan, which ended in January 2021. The consultation responses received were overwhelmingly positive, and welcomed the objectives and approach taken, both in terms of the partnership working proposed and the whole catchment methodology. DfI plans to submit the final plan to the NI Executive in Summer 2021 for approval.

Exploiting the opportunity

NI Water's participation in the programme provides an opportunity to develop the catchment based multi-agency and sustainable solutions needed to achieve key outcomes included within the draft Programme for Government and upgrade the sewerage networks and six wastewater treatment works that discharge into Inner Belfast Lough. The upgrades need to be undertaken in a way that Government and NI Water can afford, and which minimises disruption during construction.

NI Water's investment appraisals to inform the plan commenced in 2015 and during 2020/21 over £9m was invested in planning and preliminary works, which included the commencement of an interim upgrade to the capacity of Belfast wastewater treatment works. The main capital delivery stage will commence in 2021/22 and take 12 years to complete, during which NI Water will invest around £1bn.

The requirement to fund these essential infrastructure improvements has been factored into the draft Investment Strategy for Northern Ireland and the PC21 Business Plan.

PO4 Stakeholder engagement and sustainable development

Strategic priorities: Customer, Water, Economy, Nature, People

Background to the opportunity

NI Water is seeking to create a legacy for our communities and to work in such a way which puts more back into society than we take out.

Exploiting the opportunity

NI Water is engaged in numerous and wide-ranging sustainable development projects to safeguard public health, underpin economic growth and restore nature. Our work positions us as custodians of the natural environment. In 2019/20 NI Water was awarded the prestigious Queen's award for Enterprise in Sustainable Development which is the highest award for UK businesses and recognises organisations that have demonstrated outstanding commitment to sustainable development.

We had to put our fantastic Cares Challenge/Little Ripples programmes temporarily on hold over 2020/21, replacing them with digital volunteering for local charities. We were able to recommence some of our usual volunteering activities supporting Marie Cure deliver essential items to their teams across Northern Ireland and the Simon Community to deliver Christmas hampers. A number of initiatives are planned for 2021/22 to support charities such as Tiny Life, Simon Community and Age NI, with a view to resuming our full volunteering activities when government advice allows.

We are really proud of our unique education programme, which includes the Waterbus mobile classroom initiative. We have educated over 200,000 'water-whizz' school kids about the value of water for health, the economy and nature. We had to adapt our approach over 2020/21 due to COVID-19. We developed a home-schooling pack, in place of face to face learning on our Waterbus, and produced a number of online video lessons to support over 270 virtual school visits.