

## 2. A new digital service experience for customers and developers



### Situation

Our customers tell us they want a modern, interactive web-based platform where they can submit applications for our services, track progress, make payments and digitally sign documents without the need for paper or telephone contact.

Northern Ireland's building developers rely heavily on NI Water when building the houses and commercial properties which are key to a thriving economy. Our services to these building developers are currently delivered using paper forms and telephone contact. This causes delays and does not compare favourably with other customer-facing organisations.

### Action

In 2020/21 we started work on our new digital services platform. The first phase was completed in March 2021 and focuses on improving how customers can manage their accounts and perform activities such as paying bills or checking consumption. Over 2021/22, we will offer digital applications for connections to our water or wastewater network for housing developers and applications for trade effluent.

We worked closely with these building developers and used Best Practice discovery techniques to understand exactly how we should deliver the services they need from us. They clearly told us they want and expect a modern, interactive web-based platform where they can submit applications for our services, track progress, make payments and digitally sign documents without the need for paper or telephone contact. Rather than make minor adjustments to our service delivery, we took a customer-centred approach and are building a new "Digital Services" platform which will support a radical shift in how we support our building developers.

Since work started in February 2020, we have been using innovative Agile techniques to structure delivery in a flexible, responsive manner and have engaged with a market-leading technical partner, Codec for the actual system build. Our in-house NI Water Finance and GIS (mapping) specialists have been heavily involved in the development of the system: when the detailed knowledge of these in-house domain experts is coupled with the expertise of a leading supplier, innovative solutions to previously insurmountable challenges have been found.

We have even succeeded in having the law changed to ensure that an end-to-end electronic service could be legally offered to our customers!

### Results

When completed in February 2022, the Digital Services platform will offer the great experience that our customers expect and demand. Our building developers will be able to submit applications for our services online, track progress, make payments and digitally sign documents without the need for paper or telephone contact.

We asked our customers what they wanted, we listened carefully and have been delivering what they asked for.

The scope of services offered on the platform will continue to grow in future years.