

Fast read

Water for life

Northern Ireland Water (NI Water) exists to provide the water for life we all rely on to thrive. The Board and management are pleased to present our strategy designed to make Northern Ireland a more healthy, sustainable and prosperous place in which to live. Every aspect of life in Northern Ireland relies on the services we provide. Our business is essential to support a healthy and thriving population, a growing economy and a flourishing natural environment. Our focus is delivering high quality drinking water and recycling wastewater safely to the environment today and tomorrow.

Changing how we all think about water

Nature provides us with a range of ecosystem services, which filter our fresh water, absorbing and retaining carbon, protect us from flooding, provide recreation, attract tourists and support our overall health and well-being. NI Water relies on fresh water as the key input to provide its services. Sustainably managed, this renewable natural capital infrastructure is a gift, which keeps on giving.

As a society we need to place more value on water; to reduce pollutants entering our waterways and the millions spent on removing them through water treatment; to work with nature rather than against it to support sustainable economic growth; to be ready for more extreme weather conditions; to better design our homes to use less high quality drinking water for flushing the toilet and washing the car; and reduce the millions spent keeping our sewer networks clear of inappropriate items.

NI Water must also play its part, and identify profitable solutions that underpin a healthy and thriving population, a growing economy, and a flourishing natural environment. In doing so, we can all help support a clean growth revolution.

Why do we need a strategy?

Our business invests to meet the needs of current and future generations. This requires long term planning as some of our assets have lives extending over 100 years. This document provides a longer term view across the next quarter of a century (2021-2046) and updates our existing long term strategy (2015-2040). It takes account of the progress to date, strategic risks, feedback from our customers and other stakeholders on what is important to them and the world in which we operate.

Building on our success

Since our formation in 2007, we have been leading the challenge on doing more for customers, with fewer resources. We have transformed the delivery of water services, delivering record levels of service for our customers while reducing our cost base through sustainable efficiencies. NI Water is one of the most successful examples of a public sector organisation achieving private sector levels of performance and efficiency. We want to continue to build on this success and become world class.

Drains before cranes

However, this future success and our progress to date is dependent on a solution being found to the funding of water and sewerage infrastructure. Northern Ireland is unique within the UK as being the only part where the regulated water utility is unable to fully implement the economic regulator's final determination due to public expenditure constraints.

Underfunding of our PC15 business plan 2015-21 (£990m actual versus £1.7bn required) has already resulted in curbs to economic development with new housing and businesses being unable to get connected to our sewerage system in over 100 towns across the province. Indeed, the growth of Belfast City, the primary economic engine of Northern Ireland will stall unless the £1bn investment in strategic drainage, under the Living with Water Programme, is supported. The City Deal risks not realising its full potential, as do the other local council development plans. If you want to put up the cranes, you have to invest in the drains.

Tipping point

We are therefore facing a tipping point as we approach the next business plan period PC21 (2021-27), which will require an investment of around £2.5bn, including the Living with Water Programme. The NI Water Board and Executives continue to work with stakeholders to identify a means to fund this vital investment. However, a solution has not been identified. Our shareholder, DfI, needs to commit to fund this investment but faces competing pressures from transport infrastructure. Unlike in the rest of the UK, the risk of shareholder sanction from the Utility Regulator is much diminished due to our Government ownership. A solution must be identified to avert a funding crisis for this vital infrastructure.

As we look to the future, we face a number of other strategic risks - some long-standing, some new. These include climate change, rising customer expectations, changes to legislation and customer demographics. The strategic risks pose threats to our resilience in terms of maintaining services for our customers. Advances in science and technology, known as the fourth industrial revolution, present a range of opportunities.

Putting back more than we take out

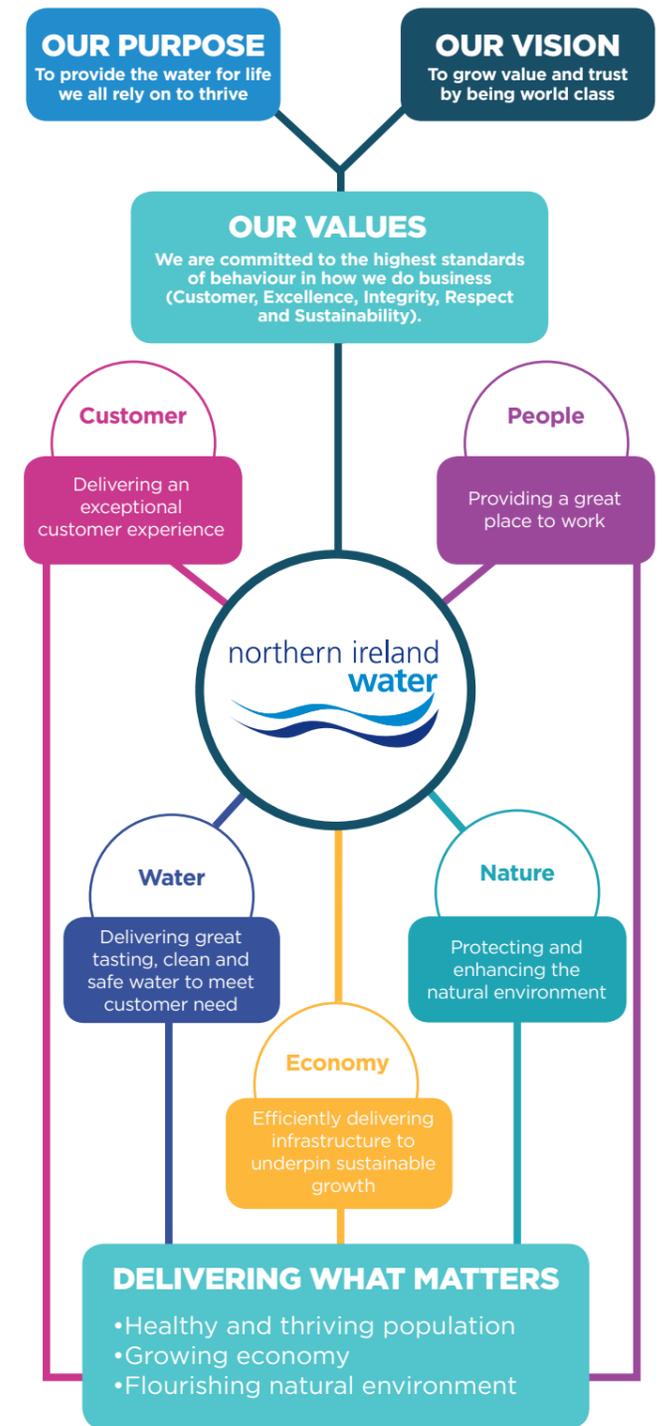
Our role is to have a strategy to address these threats and take advantage of opportunities available to us in a way which puts more back into society, the economy and the natural environment than we take out. We are therefore committed to the NI Executive's draft Outcomes Delivery Plan and the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals. In doing so, we can play our part in creating long term value in the resource constrained world of the 21st century. Otherwise our planet earth may not be sustainable for those who come after us by the end of this century. We all must change the way we think about water.

Our strategic response

Our strategy helps deliver a healthy and thriving population, a growing economy and a flourishing natural environment - in short - delivering what matters:

Thanks for having your say

We launched our strategy at a stakeholder event at Belfast wastewater treatment works and undertook public engagement on our website and through social media. The strategy has received broad endorsement from our stakeholders.



We have made further refinements to incorporate feedback and ensure that customers are right at the heart of everything we do.