

RAINWATER MANAGEMENT

Year 1 Advanced WINEP

Lessons Learnt Report

August 2026



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Year 1: Impact summary

ADVANCED WINEP PROGRAMME

Investing in nature-based solutions to reduce dependencies on conventional storage and deliver wider benefits for people, place and nature.

409

opportunities
identified

107

projects
created

£6.8m

invested in
solutions

37

projects
completed



774

rainwater planters
installed, with
innovative
community
incentive schemes



TWO MASTERPLANS



Bolton



Oldham

IMPACT DELIVERED

1,478m³ equivalent avoided storage (PCD)

60+ properties protected from flooding

90,000m²+ sustainable drainage area

100+ rainwater management solutions

£1.4m partnership funding

OPPORTUNITIES ACROSS FIVE COUNTIES

12 in Cumbria

61 in Lancashire

195 in Greater Manchester

112 in Merseyside

29 in Cheshire

1. Summary

United Utilities Water (Uuw) was awarded an Advanced WINEP for AMP8 (2025–30), which has unlocked earlier, innovative investment and partnerships in rainwater management. By focusing on catchments where further action will be required beyond AMP8 to meet the Storm Overflow Discharge Reduction Plan (SODRP) targets, it is helping to accelerate the transition towards sustainable, catchment-based solutions.

Through a successful first year where targets have been met, the programme is now demonstrating how flexible funding and adaptive delivery models can unlock benefits for people, places and nature. Rather than relying solely on traditional engineering solutions, it is enabling water companies, local authorities and communities to work together to deliver resilient, nature-based approaches that improve water quality, reduce flood risk and create wider environmental and social value.

By sharing the lessons from our first year of delivery, we hope to support a broader shift towards more flexible decision-making and funding approaches, enabling regulators, policymakers and delivery partners to scale successful nature-based solutions more quickly and efficiently.

The case studies featured in this report provide early evidence of what can be achieved when innovation, partnership and flexibility are brought together to tackle some of the most complex challenges facing our catchments, and to inform future delivery at greater scale.

The report reviews key areas for learning highlighted in the business case¹, and the key headlines are shown on the right.

Ongoing review and dissemination of these lessons supported by the independent academic evaluation being undertaken by University of Liverpool and University of Sheffield will help us continually improve delivery, optimise ways of working, and provide a critical foundation for scaling the programme into AMP9 and embedding rainwater management delivery mechanisms within Uuw.

¹ [Advanced WINEP Final Submission August 2023](#)

TECHNICAL APPROACHES

Masterplanning is an approach we recommend to replicate; being able to undertake stakeholder management, technical feasibility and commercial arrangements in parallel, culminating in a single vision.

PARTNERSHIP WORKING

Partnerships are critical to embed rainwater management interventions within wider regeneration and place-making initiatives, but require novel commercial approaches.

DELIVERY

The type of project informs how delivery can be done most effectively and efficiently. Our approach around **dedicated major and minor works addresses this**.

GOVERNANCE

The need for agile governance models outside of traditional WINEP allow iterative refinement of project scopes and costs throughout the project lifecycle.

MARKETS, DATA AND VALUE

As water companies do not have powers to build sustainable drainage assets in private land, the incentive mechanisms and **communication of benefits and wider values are essential**.

EMBEDDING LESSONS INTO AMP9

Longer-term regulatory flexibility has provided the certainty needed to **build internal capability, establish delivery partnerships and increase the scale and pace** of rainwater management interventions.

CONCLUSION AND NEXT STEPS

The Advanced WINEP has demonstrated that when greater flexibility is provided, more innovative, partnership-led and adaptive solutions can be identified and delivered, helping to achieve environmental outcomes while creating wider benefits for communities, customers and nature.

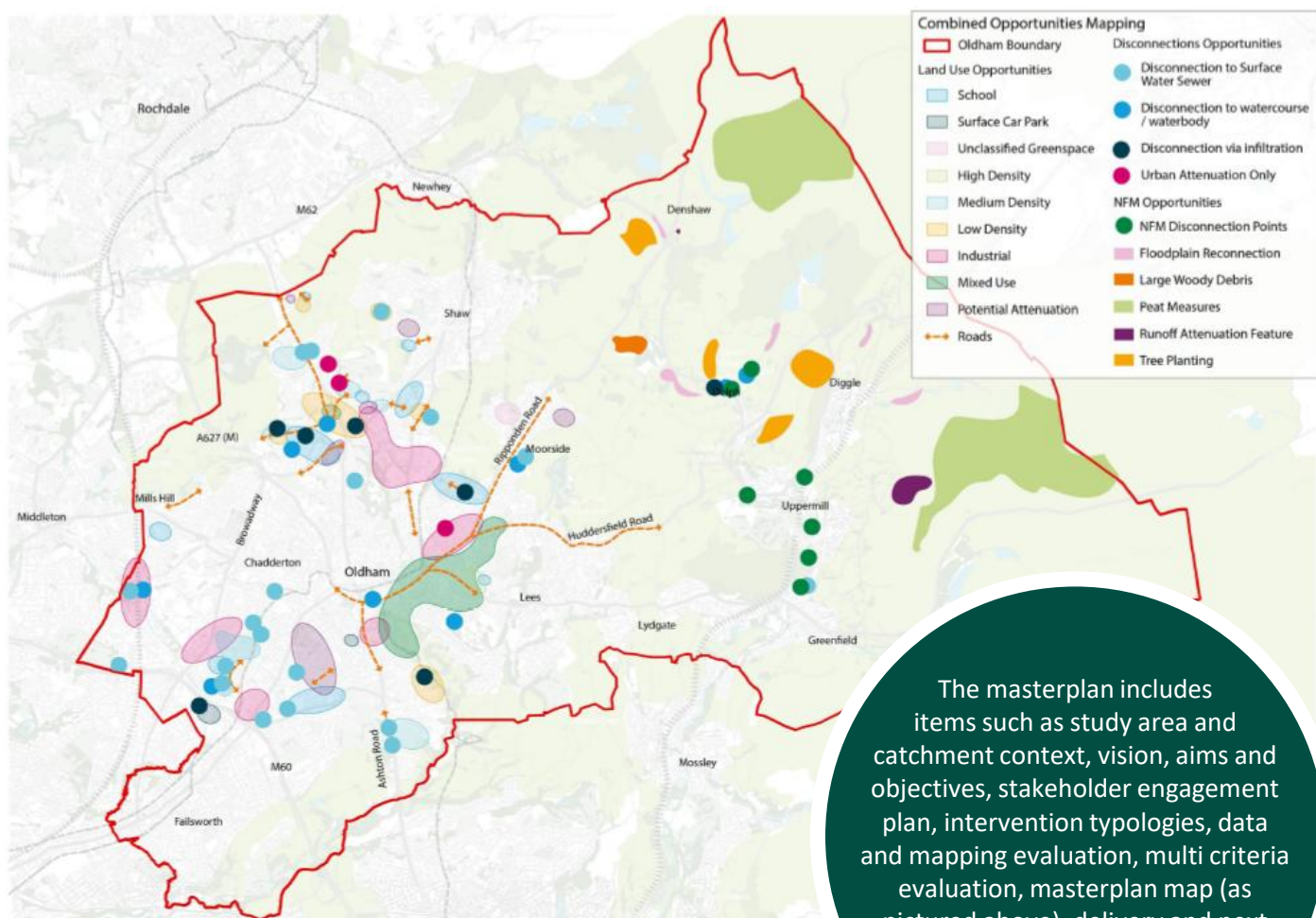
2. Technical approaches

STRATEGIC CATCHMENTS - MASTERPLANNING

A core element of the Advanced WINEP programme is the adoption of a masterplanning approach. Masterplans provide a 10-25-year strategic vision for an area, setting out future land use, infrastructure needs and development opportunities. They create a framework for rethinking water systems and integrating blue-green infrastructure in collaboration with local authorities, communities, businesses and other stakeholders. This helps identify shared priorities and place-based projects for AMP8, while also setting out longer-term opportunities beyond 2030. We are developing Masterplans for all priority districts: Oldham, Bolton, Wigan (Hindley) and Liverpool.

The masterplanning process has demonstrated that local authorities often have a strong pipeline of opportunities to deliver rainwater management, but their ability to progress these can be constrained by limited capacity and resources. A key lesson has been that early stakeholder engagement and strong working relationships are critical to turning opportunities into deliverable projects. In Oldham, for example, the masterplanning process has been significantly strengthened by the relationships established through the AMP7 Green Recovery Programme, which created a foundation of trust, collaboration and shared understanding between partners.

Masterplanning is an approach we recommend to replicate; being able to undertake stakeholder management, technical feasibility and commercial arrangements in parallel, culminating in a single vision.

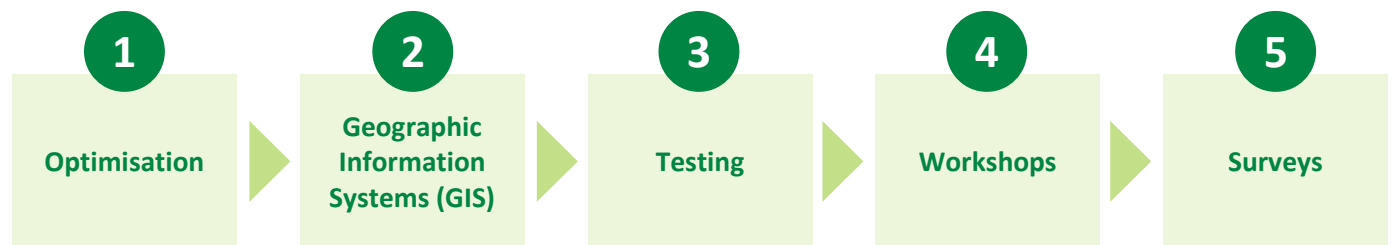


The masterplan includes items such as study area and catchment context, vision, aims and objectives, stakeholder engagement plan, intervention typologies, data and mapping evaluation, multi criteria evaluation, masterplan map (as pictured above), delivery and next steps and the operation and maintenance strategy.

2. Technical approaches

NAMED SCHEMES - TECHNICAL APPROACH

A five-stage approach was developed by the Rainwater Management technical (design) team to standardise feasibility assessments for each Advanced WINEP schemes.

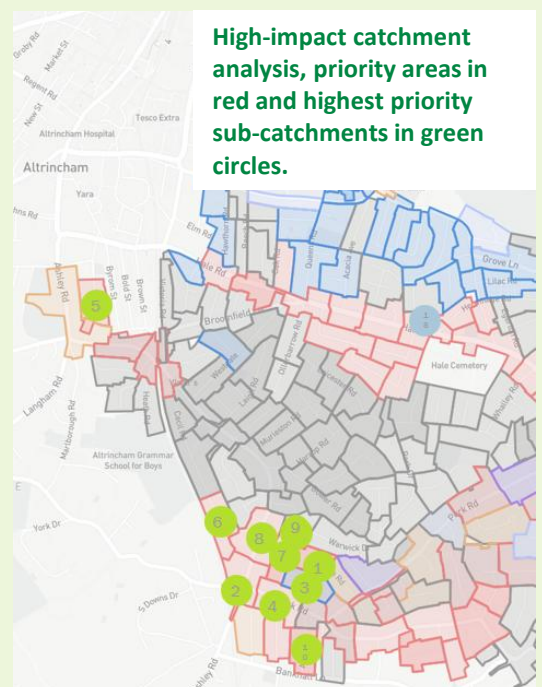


Stage 1: Optimisation

We used optimisation modelling to identify the sub-catchments with the greatest influence on CSO activation, enabling feasibility assessments to focus on the areas with the highest potential benefit. For example, in the Hale catchment, optimisation identified that around 7% of the catchment was responsible for a large proportion of storm overflow activity. Efficiencies can be achieved by targeting investment in these priority areas, helping to deliver better environmental outcomes and greater value for money.

Stage 2: GIS

A GIS-based assessment was undertaken for each priority sub-catchment to identify key characteristics, including network configuration, land conditions (e.g. gradient, cover and use), ground conditions, and utilities. This enabled opportunities and constraints to be systematically identified and recorded. The green circles highlight the ten highest-priority sub-catchments.



Stage 3: Testing

Our Design and Delivery partners tested and challenged their feasibility approaches across a range of catchment scenarios. Comparing different data sources, methodologies, processes, and outputs provided valuable benchmarking opportunities, helping to identify strengths and improvement areas. This informed the development of a robust, best-practice feasibility methodology.

Stage 4: Workshops

Lessons-learnt workshops brought all parties together to define a standardised feasibility approach. Agreed data sources, outputs, and decision-making tools were incorporated into a dashboard interface, enabling consistent assessment of spill reduction benefits and the efficient breakdown of large catchments into manageable, deliverable projects.

Stage 5: Surveys

Surveys provide a critical step between feasibility and outline design, improving confidence in both the proposed solutions and their deliverability.

The original process relied on complex processes, with survey outputs often taking 10-12 weeks to obtain. To streamline delivery, the Rainwater Management team trialled a single contractor model for all survey requirements. This reduced complexity, improved communication and increased accountability. Following an initial bedding in period, the approach delivered significant improvements in data quality, consistency and turnaround times.



CASE STUDY

Sponge City: The launch of a 'spongier' Liverpool City Region

OVERVIEW

Liverpool is part of a large strategic investigation in AMP8 looking at three wastewater treatment works and 85 combined sewer overflows, developing solutions to meet associated targets in AMP9.

Blundell Street, located within Liverpool's Baltic Triangle, was selected as an early pilot project to reduce rainwater inflow in advance of the regulatory dates. Critically, it allows us to build maturity around how rainwater management interventions can be retrofitted, developing practical experience, establish delivery processes and informing the investigation programme.

THE PROJECT

Two highway rain gardens were installed following collaborative design development between Environmental Planning Group (EPG), United Utilities Water and Liverpool City Council.

The interventions were designed to maximise the upstream impermeable area intercepted while integrating within the existing streetscape.

BENEFITS

The two rain gardens, each measuring 7.5m x 2.5m, intercept runoff from approximately 750m² of impermeable surface that would otherwise drain to the combined sewer network.

The scheme:

- Provides storage equivalent to approximately 300 bathtubs of water
- Achieves 90% betterment in discharge rates during a 1-in-30-year storm event
- Captures rainfall entering the combined sewer system during everyday rainfall events
- Creates additional urban greening benefits
- Establishes infrastructure that can be fully disconnected from the combined sewer in the future as wider catchment interventions are developed



A history of drainage in Liverpool

ENGAGEMENT

We wanted people to understand, experience and be excited by the changes being made through rainwater management. To bring the project to life, we commissioned a local artist to create a series of murals that tell the story of Liverpool's relationship with water, from its historic drainage systems to a future vision of the city as a Sponge City. The murals not only educate and inspire but also provide engaging public spaces and opportunities for people to connect with the project.

The initiative has successfully captured public imagination, generating coverage across social media, including climate-focused TikTok content, demonstrating how infrastructure projects can be communicated in a modern, accessible and engaging way.

Blundell Street has become a showcase for what can be achieved when engineering, placemaking and community engagement are brought together. Featured as a site visit at the CIWEM Flood & Coast Conference 2026, the project attracted coverage from BBC News, North West Tonight, BBC Radio 4 and BBC Radio Merseyside. It has also helped initiate discussions with Mayor Steve Rotherham on how Sponge City principles could be applied more widely across the Liverpool City Region.

Beyond its engagement success, Blundell Street demonstrates that relatively small-scale retrofit interventions can deliver measurable reductions in flood risk and stormwater runoff while creating greener, more attractive and more resilient urban spaces. As one of the programme's first delivery projects, it has provided valuable technical, commercial and governance lessons that will help shape future schemes at greater scale.



A 'spongier' city



Blundell Street, Liverpool

3. Partnership working

Partnerships are critical to embed rainwater management interventions within wider regeneration and place-making initiatives, but require novel commercial approaches.

WORKING WITH COMBINED AUTHORITIES

In the Advanced WINEP business case, we highlighted strong strategic alignment across Greater Manchester, through our partnership with the Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) and the Environment Agency. Together we have developed the Greater Manchester Integrated Water Management Plan (IWMP),² which brings organisations together to identify and deliver solutions that improve water management, reduce flood risk and support sustainable growth

Since the collaborative team was established, 41 partnership led opportunities have been identified across Greater Manchester where rainwater management interventions could deliver benefits for communities, the environment and the wastewater network. In addition, the partnership has identified a wider pipeline of 117 surface water flood risk projects.

² **Greater Manchester Integrated Water Management Plan (GM IWMP):** A partnership between United Utilities, Greater Manchester Combined Authority and the Environment Agency that coordinates long-term planning and investment to improve water management, reduce flood risk, enhance the environment and support economic growth across Greater Manchester. Find more information at [Integrated Water Management - Greater Manchester Combined Authority](#)

³ [Sustainable Water Fund](#)

The flexibility within Advanced WINEP has been instrumental in unlocking this level of collaboration. By allowing funding to be deployed more flexibly and in response to emerging opportunities, the programme has enabled partners to develop integrated solutions, secure co-funding and move more quickly from concept to delivery.

FLEXIBLE FUNDING ALIGNED TO LOCAL OPPORTUNITIES

As a result of this flexibility, we have expanded our ability to work with all 39 local authorities across the North West, creating opportunities to identify and develop projects that deliver multiple benefits.

One example is the Sustainable Water Fund (SWF),³ a dedicated funding stream that allows Local Authorities to apply for UUK funding for projects that reduce or remove the volume of rainwater from combined sewers. To support stronger applications, we have integrated guidance directly into the application form, enabling partners to self-serve with all relevant information in one place. This has significantly increased interest in the fund, resulting in an increase in applications being developed and submitted.

OUR PARTNERSHIP ACHIEVEMENTS



41

opportunities
identified
with GMCA



117

SW flooding
pipeline of
opportunities



26

Local
Authorities
engaged



17

formal
applications



£1.5m

partnership
funding
leveraged

3. Partnership working

COMMERCIAL FRAMEWORKS

To deliver the Advanced WINEP programme, we need to implement rainwater management solutions at scale and pace. Statutory powers under Sections 158 and 159 of the Water Industry Act 1991 do not extend beyond laying pipes in streets and private land (Section 114 assets, such as drains and sewers) to sustainable drainage assets (Section 114A). As a result, we must work in partnership with local authorities and landowners to secure access to public and privately owned land for surveys that inform design and agreements to deliver the project and ensure maintenance for the life of the asset.

One of the key lessons from the Green Recovery Programme was the absence of a standardised agreement for funding projects. Existing mechanisms, such as Section 278 agreements under the Highways Act 1980, present practical challenges for this type of partnership working because they are designed for property development and highway improvement works linked to development.

To address this gap, we established an Umbrella Agreement. This creates an overarching framework that enables the Local Authority to grant permitted development rights to UUW, where UUW undertake works outside of having Section 158 and 159 powers. The agreement sets out how UUW and the Local Authority work together and includes principles for; roles and responsibilities, governance, information sharing, standard designs, ownership and maintenance and funding arrangements.

The umbrella structure provides access to call-off routes (agreements) that are mutually selected on a case-by-case basis. The call-offs determine who designs, delivers, funds, assures, owns and maintains the asset. Whether it is UUW or a third party responsible for works, they are all subject to contracts that robustly assure agreed milestones, technical details, ownership and maintenance to ensure the operability and health of the asset over its life to ensure compliance with regulatory obligations and expectations.

PARTNERSHIP FRAMEWORK

Two routes, one shared purpose.
A standardised framework that enables rapid, efficient and consistent delivery of partnership projects.



	FUNDING ONLY	ENABLING
DESIGN Who leads the design of the project?	Local Authority designs the project	United Utilities designs the project
DELIVERY Who delivers the project?	Local Authority delivers the project	United Utilities delivers the project
FUNDING Who funds the project?	United Utilities supports funding the project ensures regulatory compliance	United Utilities leads in funding the project ensures regulatory compliance
MAINTENANCE Who owns and maintains the assets?	Local Authority owns and maintains	United Utilities Owns and maintains Local Authority Owns and maintains the assets with 10 years annuity from UUW



CASE STUDY

Warrington Council and Environment Agency SW separation

The Flood Risk Management Scheme is a rainwater management partnership project between Warrington Borough Council, United Utilities Water and the Environment Agency. The area was identified as a significant flood risk area by the local authority and it was submitted as an application for UUW's Sustainable Water Fund in Spring 2025. It benefitted from £400,000 investment to remove 22,000m² of impermeable area from the combined network that drained to Warrington WWTW that has future storm overflow reduction drivers. The funding was blended with the Environment Agency's Flood Defence Grant in Aid (FDGiA) with £490,000 and completed in spring 2026.

BACKGROUND

Liverpool Road was ranked first out of 188 flood clusters within Warrington for a 1-in-100-year flood event. The area has a long-standing history of flooding, which has caused repeated disruption and distress for residents, businesses and road users. 62 properties were at risk of flooding on an annual basis.



1960s



Storm Christoph 2021



New Years Day 2025



March 2025

A COLLECTIVE APPROACH

The solution was to separate all the existing surface water drainage that went to the combined sewer and create a new drainage system along Liverpool Road and Hood Lane connecting to a new pumping station that discharged the canal.

The system incorporates two pumps designed to discharge surface water into the Sankey Canal. To support the long-term performance of the scheme, erosion control measures were also implemented within the historic canal, ensuring the stability and integrity of the receiving watercourse. This also delivers a benefit to the canal, as it had historically struggled to have sufficient water supplies.

SUSTAINABLE WATER FUND

The Sustainable Water Fund was launched to provide a route for local authorities to bid for funding to remove rainwater from combined sewers. It builds on the success of the Green Recovery Programme, a £9m investment across 15 projects that leveraged an additional 75% co-funding to deliver £50m of natural capital value in the North West. Following communications on the launch of the fund, this project was identified at an early stage as a suitable candidate. Warrington Borough Council applied using the application form and received milestone payments throughout delivery.

KEY LEARNINGS AND SUCCESSES

This project demonstrates the benefits of a more flexible and integrated approach to planning, funding and delivery. Success was not driven solely by funding flexibility, but by the ability to identify opportunities early, align investment with local needs, and implement solutions ahead of traditional investment timescales.

The project has delivered significant and permanent reductions in surface water entering the sewer network upstream of frequently spilling storm overflows, while also providing direct benefits to local communities. Without the Advanced WINEP approach, this scheme would not have progressed, as the location was not scheduled for investment until a future AMP. Instead, we have been able to remove flood risk for 62 properties now, resolving an issue that residents have experienced for more than 50 years. This demonstrates how a more agile approach to planning, prioritisation and funding can accelerate delivery, unlock wider environmental and community benefits, and address long-standing problems sooner than would otherwise be possible.



Map of surface water flood risk in the area (red), showing high risk in dark blue areas.

4. Delivery

We are scaling up to deliver a £231m programme, up from £9m last AMP, which has resulted in us having to address how we practically deliver this programme. To ensure we delivered against our AWINEP proposal and deliver early learnings to inform PR29, it was essential to accelerate delivery. To do this, the programme introduced a dual-track delivery model, separating Major Works from Minor Works so that each can be planned and delivered using the most appropriate approach tailored to technical requirements.

Major Works are larger, more complex projects that often require significant design, stakeholder engagement and planning. These schemes are typically delivered at a catchment scale and include large projects that reduce the amount of rainwater entering the sewer network. Because Major Works require feasibility studies, outline design and detailed design before construction can begin, they naturally take longer to develop than Minor Works. Running the two workstreams in parallel enables the programme to deliver benefits throughout the AMP, rather than waiting for larger schemes to reach construction.

Minor Works are relatively simple interventions that require little or no design and can be delivered quickly and at scale. They enable early benefits to be realised, help build momentum, and provide opportunities to engage partners and communities at an early stage.

Both Major and Minor Works face common delivery challenges, including utility conflicts, highway constraints, asset adoption requirements and the need for proportionate monitoring arrangements. However, the dual-track model has proven effective, allowing projects of different scales and complexities to progress simultaneously while maintaining a steady pipeline of delivery. Some Minor Works processes continue to be refined as the programme evolves and scales up.

The type of project informs how delivery can be done most effectively and efficiently. Our approach around **dedicated major and minor works addresses this.**

MAJOR WORKS		MINOR WORKS	
Named schemes	Priority Districts	Minor Works	Five S's
Blackburn Edgeworth	Oldham	Sustainable Water Fund	Schools
Bury Prestwich	Bolton	Green Streets	Supermarkets
Trafford - Hale - Altrincham	Wigan	Disconnections	Stations
Tameside - Denton - Droylsden	Liverpool	Natural Flood Management	State Buildings
		Blue Properties	Social Housing



CASE STUDY

Project FLOW

Project FLOW is our rainwater management programme for schools. The mission is to inspire Future Leaders Of Water (FLOW) across the North West by creating resilient eco-friendly spaces. The goal is to deliver 400 school projects by 2030. Project FLOW has four key impacts for its users: improve drainage, reduce demand, introduce nature and educate.

PROGRAMME SUMMARY

Schools are selected using various criteria, working with Greater Manchester Integrated Water Management team and supporting indicators such as flood risk and deprivation indices. We work with various design and installation partners, including Green Blue Urban, Meristem and SuDSPlanter.

We have successfully delivered 39 school projects in year 1. Site area is used to determine whether the project is small, medium or large, which informs which specialist contractors are used to design and deliver the project.

RESILIENT DRAINAGE

By using rainwater planters, raingardens and other sustainable drainage features, we have delivered over 200 raingardens, rainwater planters and other interventions. Collectively, these have contributed 650m³ of our Price Control Deliverable. Rather than relying on large-scale grey infrastructure, this volume is now managed through sustainable drainage systems that contribute to biodiversity enhancement and environmental protection.

What's even better for schools is that they can benefit from UUW's site area-based charging and sustainable drainage incentives. The schools overall will benefit from £50,000 of savings over the next 10 years.

Rainwater planters installed by Meristem



This garden is more than just a playground improvement; it is a lasting asset that will benefit our school community for years to come. We are proud to partner with United Utilities on such a forward-thinking, sustainable initiative.

Woodlands Primary School, Birkenhead

WATER EFFICIENCY

We work alongside a charity, Groundwork, to do water audits when the drainage work is done to minimise disruption. Phase 1 results were significant, where 50 repairs and 27 water saving devices delivered over 15,000 litres of potable water savings every day saving schools on average £2,500 every year.

EDUCATION

We offer our Ripley the Raindrop online educational package in addition to encouraging stewardship by the school as part of their maintenance responsibility. We are also in discussions to expand the education offer with RHS Garden Bridgwater as part of a wider partnership with them.

NEXT STEPS

Project FLOW extends beyond rainfall management. It supports more resilient communities, creates greener spaces and empowers future generations to play an active role in advancing water sustainability.

Watch a short video on the project:

[Schools invite nature into their playgrounds to help tackle the rain](#)



5. Programme management and development

The need for agile governance models outside of traditional WINEP allow iterative refinement of project scopes and costs throughout the project lifecycle.

AGILE PROGRAMME GOVERNANCE

The Advanced WINEP programme has adopted a governance model that sits outside of, and differs significantly from, U UW's standard Capital Delivery approach. This reflects the nature of rainwater management interventions, where opportunities are often not fully defined at the outset and require early-stage investigation and evidence gathering before viable solutions can be confirmed.

To support this, our programme has established a tiered governance framework that enables timely decision-making while maintaining appropriate oversight, challenge and financial control. The framework is designed to balance flexibility with accountability, ensuring that investment decisions remain evidence-led and proportionate to the maturity of the opportunity.

A key feature of the model is its iterative approach to decision-making. Early approvals are typically based on best available evidence at that time. As projects progress through feasibility and early-stage investigations, governance reviews are revisited with improved data, refined scopes, updated costs and a clearer understanding of benefits.

This allows decisions to be informed by the best available evidence at each stage, while retaining assurance that projects continue to represent value for money, avoid delays and align with programme objectives.



St Vincent de Paul Primary School, Liverpool

PROJECT MANAGEMENT

The Advanced WINEP programme has also required adaptation of United Utilities Water's standard project management and assurance processes, as the traditional Capital Delivery model is not well suited to a programme built around developing and testing emerging opportunities.

Our programme therefore adopts a modular project structure, where feasibility treated as a standalone project that concludes with a formal assessment and recommendation Opportunities identified are then grouped into deliverable work packages and progressed as separate projects.

This approach provides greater transparency over costs, benefits and delivery risks, while enabling more accurate planning, clearer milestone tracking and better alignment between project approvals and delivery activities.



Stockport Interchange

6. Markets, data and value

MARKETS (INCENTIVES)

To meet the ambitious targets of the Advanced WINEP programme, it is essential to scale uptake of rainwater management interventions across household and non-household customers. To support this, the Rainwater Management team developed a variety of innovative incentive trials.

New household incentives

- **Individual:** Up to £100 off their wastewater services charges dependent on the area of their roof from which rainwater is diverted into a rainwater management device. In addition, customers may also be entered into a prize draw for the chance to win the design and delivery of a permeable drive for their home.
- **Community:** Up to £200 off their wastewater services charges dependent on the percentage of customers in the community who agree to the supply and install of a rainwater management device, with a higher uptake in the community resulting in a bigger bill discount.

New non-household incentives in addition to site area-based charging and sustainable drainage incentive

- **Surface water connection:** Where there is a surface water connection into a combined foul and surface water sewer we will work with customers to transfer their existing surface water connection to either a surface water only sewer where one is available or to a new surface water sewer provided by us. For those customers who agree to this, we will reduce their surface water charges, once only, by up to 25% in the year of completion of the work.
- **Water re-use:** This trial will run for a minimum of two years, and, for the duration of the trial period, we will offer a reduction in a non-household surface water drainage area of 80% for areas covered by a rainwater harvesting system. This trial will look to increase the collection and reuse of rainwater, reduce potable water usage and reduce overall discharge to the sewer.

Choose your **free** planter:



BESPOKE PLANTER

Features:

- **Single function** – slows the flow of rainwater into the sewers
- **Bespoke design** by landscape architect and award-winning garden designer Leon Davis and Lloyd Feathers



DUAL-FUNCTION PLANTER

Features:

- **Dual function** – slows the flow of rainwater into the sewers AND captures up to 30 litres of rainwater for re-use around the garden
- **Slim and compact design** which is suitable for tight spots and smaller gardens

How to maintain your rainwater planter



Your rainwater planter will be fitted with a leaf catcher. This is a small device on the outlet of the downpipe, seated in the top planter area. It prevents leaves from entering the main tank and blocking the outlet.



The leaf catcher is visible and accessible, allowing easy maintenance. Leaves, moss and debris will accumulate in the leaf catcher basket with time. Simply remove the debris regularly, ensuring the inlet of the tank remains clear. The debris can be disposed of in a compost bin.



A well-maintained inlet filter ensures the tank remains clear of large debris and allows the outlet to perform optimally.



Water for the North West

6. Markets, data and value

DATA

We have engaged with our technical and delivery teams to design bespoke GIS tools and data management systems that meet user needs and answer their key questions. Understanding the need has been key to effective integration and uptake of these tools and systems.

A number of important lessons have emerged throughout this process:

- Investing in data literacy and analytical capability
- Streamlining and integrating systems
- The development of a centralised data hub
- Efficiency gains through automation and advanced data processing

Looking ahead, there is a clear opportunity to build on this foundation through further system integration, enhanced automation and exploration of emerging technologies, including AI-enabled solutions. This will be particularly important as the volume and complexity of data increases alongside the growth of the programme.

VALUE

The Rainwater Management team is committed to strengthening how best value decision making is embedded across programme delivery. A key focus will be ensuring that benefits realisation and best value decision making are applied consistently across the project's development.

We are using the [ciriabest](#)⁴ tool to quantify the wider benefits for six of our large projects in addition to where cost benefit potentially exceeds the rainwater management rate. The tool is the industry demonstrates how wider benefits assessments covering wider capitals can influence decisions around grey and green projects.

It is important to quantify and monetise wider benefits as we look to build how innovative financing can be used to attract investment from other beneficiaries in models that can be sustainable to scale approaches over wider geographies and timescales.

⁴ [ciriabest](#)



Project FLOW:
St Edmunds RC Primary School,
Manchester



Project FLOW:
St Edmunds RC Primary School,
Manchester

7. Evaluations

We have commissioned an independent academic of the Advanced WINEP programme to a multi-disciplinary team from the University of Liverpool and University of Sheffield in a four-year programme to develop a benefits framework. The Universities are tasked to evaluate the following outcomes.

Outcome 1

How well the design and execution of UU’s Advanced WINEP has enabled:

Outcome 1a: Greater partnership working

Outcome 1b: Delivery of catchment and nature-based solutions

Outcome 1c: Better management of rainwater entering combined sewers

Outcome 2

How well the design of UUW’s Advanced WINEP has enabled the delivery of interventions and identification of lessons learnt for regulators and how this might be scaled.

Outcome 3

Whether having an Integrated Water Management Plan in Greater Manchester has supported delivery of the Advanced WINEP projects in this part of the North West.

Outcome 4

The effectiveness of different delivery models in meeting the aims of the programme e.g. Delivery through UU supply chain or delivery through a range of partners including local authorities and eNGOs.

The benefits framework will inform annual reports and ongoing sharing of lessons and disseminations. A key output of the first-year report, assessing the baseline of the programme is to mature the monitoring programme which will now be put into action taking learning from previous projects the Universities have worked on.



8. People and skills

As one of the North West’s largest employers and a provider of essential services, U UW recognises that our people, and the skills available across the region, are critical to delivering sustainable economic growth, thriving communities and resilient infrastructure.

Our AMP8 (2025–30) programme will support 30,000 jobs across U UW and the supply chain. To support this, we will recruit an additional 750 apprentices and graduates on to schemes over the AMP8 period, with 135 having started in September 2025. We plan to hire 140 apprentices and graduates to start in September 2026.

We are the industry’s first ‘Rainwater Management’ team, where the internal multi-functional team is made up of almost 50 people, further supported by design partners and internal departments across legal, commercial, integrated water management, operations, planning and developer services.

We have recruited the first Rainwater Management graduates to our team, in addition to three apprentices who will learn and grow with the programme as it scales up, gaining not just an insight into the water industry but also the different elements of rainwater management.

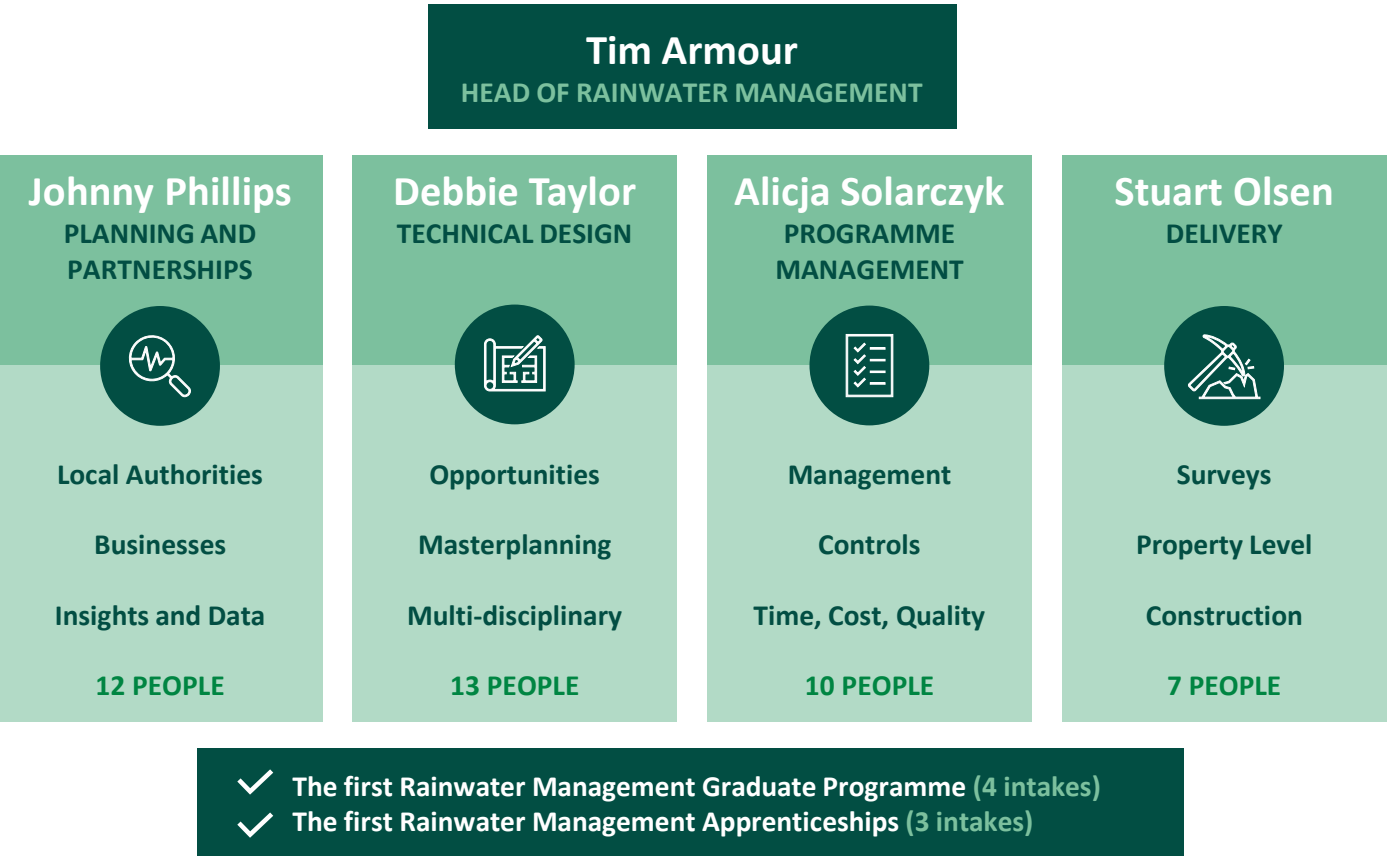
DESIGN PARTNERS

To deliver at the pace and scale required, we have proactively on-boarded a Rainwater Management specialist design framework. The framework consists of three companies (Metris, Systra and Arup) who are specialists in designing rainwater management projects.

Some of the specific technical disciplines that are important to consider including provision for when selecting design partners are landscape architects, hydraulic engineers, civil engineers, planning, highway engineers, strategic leaders, ecologists and geotechnical engineers.

The design partners have excelled on the requirements of the scopes that they have been set in year 1 to produce high-quality outputs.

We hold periodic lessons learnt workshops with the design partners that help iterate and refine our approach . This is being done as we move from stage to stage, starting with Masterplanning and feasibility before refining the outline and detailed design processes in year 2.



9. Embedding lessons into the future: AMP9 and beyond

The opportunity for regulatory flexibility has enabled United Utilities to scale up resource and mature the capability of the organisation to deliver rainwater management projects. Building on this, areas for further regulatory innovation have been identified.

In AMP8, UUW has gained significant learning through our Advanced WINEP Rainwater Management programme, through leading the Mainstreaming Nature Based Solutions Ofwat Innovation Project and by being an early adopter of Taskforce for Nature-related Financial Disclosures (TNFD).

We are increasingly aware of and focusing on our dependency on nature. This learning has fed into our thoughts on how the Advanced WINEP could be structured to support regulatory innovation. We propose the Advanced WINEP enables delivery in line with an adaptive planning framework based on the following approaches:

- 1 Delivering in advance** of statutory requirements, regulatory drivers or conventional ‘grey’ solutions, building on the AMP8 Advanced WINEP Rainwater Management approach.
- 2 Delivering in parallel** and complementary to conventional schemes to deliver more efficiently and unlock least regrets pathways.
- 3 Delivering for long-term resilience** to prevent future deterioration from factors such as climate change, urban creep and risks of nature loss.

These approaches can be applied across the water cycle to address water quantity, quality and resource issues. Some areas where we see the application to be particularly pertinent include the following:

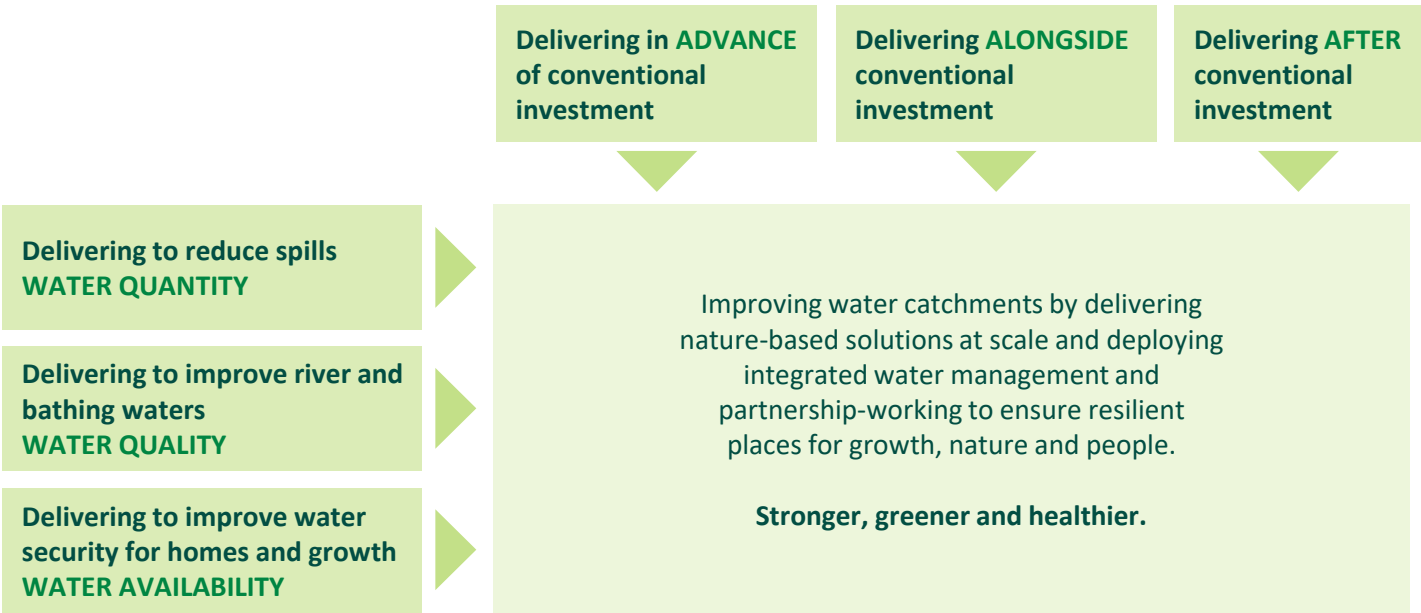
Overflows - the flexible Rainwater Management approach of AMP8 has built and embedded partnerships across the North West and we are on track to leverage a record amount of partnership funding. There is considerable opportunity through continuing and building on this approach.

Achievement of and prevention of deterioration against the Water Framework Directive and Habitats Directive standards, for example using nature-based solutions to manage nutrients across catchments.

The proposal of a catchment resilience driver to ensure that wider opportunities to deliver Nature-based Solutions (NbS) for the benefit of resilient water services can be acted upon. For example, techniques like natural flood risk management could be utilised to deliver multiple benefits such as protecting drinking water quality, enhancing water resources by storing water in the catchment and reducing the flood risk of downstream communities.

By taking steps to implement this framework, holistic improvement can be achieved, through working in partnership, in both urban and rural catchments.

PROPOSED AWINEP SCENARIOS



10. Conclusion and next steps

The first year of the Advanced WINEP programme has delivered to its year 1 regulatory targets and profile, demonstrating that rainwater management can be delivered at greater scale when supported by flexible funding, adaptive governance and strong partnerships. Delivery has confirmed that nature-based and blue-green solutions offer significant potential to improve resilience for communities, reduce flooding, enhance the environment and support storm overflow reduction objectives. However, it has also highlighted the practical barriers associated with existing regulatory frameworks and legislative barriers.

The second year of the Advanced WINEP programme will demonstrate how Masterplanning work is matured into outline, detailed and the start of delivery stages whilst the minor workstreams will establish and be completed at scale to meet year 2 targets and beyond.

The programme has shown that successful delivery depends on more than technical design. Long-term partnerships, early stakeholder engagement, robust governance arrangements and innovative funding approaches are equally important to unlocking opportunities and achieving sustainable outcomes. The lessons presented within this report provide a foundation for improving delivery across AMP8 and shaping future approaches in AMP9.

Looking ahead, there is a significant opportunity to embed rainwater management as a core part of how water, wastewater, flood risk, growth and environmental challenges are addressed. By continuing to develop adaptive planning approaches, collaborative delivery models and mechanisms that recognise wider societal value, the sector can accelerate the transition towards more resilient catchments and healthier places for people and nature.

The Advanced WINEP has demonstrated that when greater flexibility is provided, more innovative, partnership-led and adaptive solutions can be identified and delivered, helping to achieve environmental outcomes while creating wider benefits for communities, customers and nature.



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