

**UUW38**

# Working in partnership

**October 2023**

**Chapter 6 supplementary document**

This document sets out our ambitious AMP8 plan for partnership working to efficiently deliver greater social and environmental value for the North West, highlighting our extensive track record and strategic approach and how we continue to innovate and build our capability for the future.

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# 1. Our plan for partnership working

## 1.1 Key messages

- **An ambitious plan for partnership in AMP8, delivering more for less:** Partnerships are helping deliver customers' priorities and public purpose efficiently and effectively. In AMP8 we expect to invest at least £344 million pursuing partnership working and target a further £267 million through leveraged funding. This has enabled us to benefit bills in our plan for AMP8 by £95 million. We are working in partnership with others to support customers with affordability and vulnerability, protect water quality, prevent flooding, improve rivers, and mitigate the impacts of climate change.
- **Strategic approach to our partnership framework:** We work to create wide ranging opportunities and ensure robust governance to mitigate risks effectively. We utilise a robust partnership framework, implemented as part of our decision-making processes to pursue partnership opportunities systematically to test and deploy where partnership solutions can deliver more value than traditional approaches.
- **Building on a strong track record:** We have a successful long-term track record of partnership working which efficiently delivers greater social and environmental value for the North West. From our award winning sustainable catchment management programme (SCaMP) in 2005, evolving into the Catchment Systems Thinking Approach (CaST), then leading us to work in partnership through Natural Course and the creation of the Integrated Water Management Plan (IWMP) for Greater Manchester. Our strong focus on nature based approaches and working in partnership at a catchment scale helps us to protect and improve water quality, enhance and protect the natural environment and attract leveraged funding and resources from others to keep costs low.
- **Building capability for the future:** We continue to reduce barriers and uncertainty, pursuing opportunities, and driving collaboration to continue growing the benefits of future partnership working possibilities. Our £8.9 million 'Mainstreaming nature based solutions' project working with over 20 multi-disciplinary partners to inform policy and future guidance, part of the Ofwat Innovation Fund is a great example of this.

## 1.2 Structure

1.2.1 This document is structured as below:

- **Section 2** outlines our ambitious plan for partnership working in AMP8, providing details of our strategic partnerships and key partnership delivery schemes with levels of funding and proposed leveraged funding
- **Section 3** outlines our strategy and long term ambition for partnership working, setting out our capability and governance approach including benefits, risks and challenges – this is the context in which we've developed our AMP8 plan
- **Section 4** provides a summary of our industry leading track record of partnership working, to give confidence in the deliverability of our plan – this is the record and strengths on which we've expanded in developing our AMP8 plan
- **Section 5** outlines our partnership action plan to support our continual improvement.

1.2.2 We have included footnotes throughout, with links to further information on our partnership programmes.

## 1.3 Overview

1.3.1 We can only achieve our purpose to provide great water for a stronger, greener and healthier North West through collaboration and partnership working. Co-creating, co-financing and co-delivering partnership solutions are core capabilities for us already, and growing further in AMP8 and beyond. Our

partnership plan for AMP8 stems from our mature and long standing partnership strategy, builds on our industry leading track record and continued evolution of our strategic partnerships.

- 1.3.2 In AMP8 we expect to invest at least £344 million pursuing partnership working and target a further £267 million through leveraged funding. This has enabled us to benefit bills in our plan for AMP8 by £95 million. In addition to the direct outcomes of the partnerships, there are multiple additional benefits including climate change mitigation, societal impacts, job creation, knowledge development, community engagement and many others.
- 1.3.3 Our six priority themes for partnership working are:
- **Working with and for communities** - supporting customers with affordability and vulnerability through partnerships such as the Hardship Hub and delivery of affordability summits;
  - **Restoring and maintaining source catchments** - protecting water quality and supporting resilience through our catchment management partnerships delivering projects such as the Swindale Valley restoration project;
  - **Collaborating to reduce flooding and pollution** - tackling flooding through partnerships delivering rainwater management solutions and protecting rivers and coasts;
  - **Maximising the value of our bioresources** – through agricultural partnerships and collaborations such as our proposed phosphorus recovery from sludge liquors;
  - **Co-creating for research and innovation** – delivering innovative partnership projects such as the £7.1 million Ofwat innovation funded Catchment Systems Thinking Co-operative (CaSTCo) and working with partners through our innovation lab; and,
  - **Partnering in our approach to commercial supply chain** – strengthening relationships with suppliers through our United Supply Chain approach.
- 1.3.4 Core to our approach is how we build strategic partnerships. Strategic partnerships help us deliver value at scale and speed, enabling us to grasp opportunities as they arise. We and the partners want to take even further these long-standing relationships that have a track record of co-developing substantial value and opportunities to meet shared goals. Many of these strategic partnerships have the potential to set the tone of partnership approaches nationwide as the UK looks to overcome social and environmental challenges through collaboration. A great example of how this works in practice is our trilateral partnership for integrated water management with Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) and the Environment Agency, supported by the Mayor of Greater Manchester, Andy Burnham. You can read about this and our other strategic partnerships in section 2.3.
- 1.3.5 Our strategy creates a wide-ranging partnership opportunity pipeline, continuing to develop our capability, and overcoming inherent challenges in order to maximise value and deliver more for less. This means we pursue partnership opportunities across the North West and beyond, with a variety of partners, delivering a range of outcomes for customers. We seek opportunities to access funding through these partnerships to support affordable delivery of solutions and wider benefits.
- 1.3.6 Underpinning our approach is our important role as part of the North West community. We recognise that we can deliver more value for customers by understanding the environment we operate in, and the role of other organisations operating in the same geography or with shared goals.
- 1.3.7 Our strategic approach has been informed through our long history of delivering successful partnerships. Over the past 40 years we have delivered a large range of partnerships with a variety of different organisations covering the whole of the North West. You can read more about this in section 2.3.
- 1.3.8 We continue to evolve our partnership approach in response to customer priorities and adapting to the changing external environment. We will be agile through delivery in AMP8 to get the best results, and we will cyclically review and update our approach to continually improve into the long term.

## 2. Our partnership plan for AMP8

2.1.1 In AMP8 we are setting out our biggest ever partnership plan to deliver social and environmental value.

2.1.2 The following section outlines our ambitious partnership plan that has resulted from our experience, extensive planning and engagement activities. We have structured this section around the key features of our plan which are:

- **The scale of our partnership ambition** – we have set out a bold ambition for partnership working, illustrated through the level of expected investment in pursuing partnership solutions and the estimated leveraged funding, details provided in section 2.2
- **Our strategic partnerships** – we will continue and strengthen these partnerships as a cornerstone of our approach for AMP8 partnership delivery, details are provided in section 2.3
- **Proposed partnership delivery schemes** – potential partnership schemes included in our totex build delivering a wide range of benefits through partnership solutions, detail in section 2.4
- **Six priority areas for partnership delivery** – delivering in partnership across our price controls and cross cutting enablers of research, innovation and supply chain, detailed in section 2.5

2.1.3 This plan has been developed through our long term strategy for partnership delivery and builds on our long track record of partnership activity. The AMP8 plan, summarised in Figure 1 is a result of the work we have completed to ensure our partnership plans are well governed, align to strategic objectives and support wide ranging diverse partnerships.

2.1.4 Central to our AMP8 plan and ongoing partnership strategy, we have been working hard to create a strong partnership opportunity pipeline. This builds on our internal capability, strengthening our relationships, developing strategic partnerships and influencing the external environment to enable partnership solutions to thrive. We detail this approach and provide an overview of our partnership strategy in section 3.

2.1.5 Our plan is agile to evolve to the latest opportunities and needs to maximise the potential of partnership working. We detail all these elements throughout this section.

**Figure 1: Summary of the key features of our AMP8 partnership plan**



Source: UUW proposed AMP8 partnership plan

Figure 2: Key partnership scheme map



**Value delivered:**

- Engagement
- Financial
- Innovation
- Performance
- Water environment
- Wider social and environmental

Region-wide	<b>Hardship Hub</b> Online customer portal for affordability support across multiple sectors	
	<b>The Rivers Trust</b> Transformation and protection of river environments	
	<b>Natural Course</b> Multi-stakeholder project improving rivers and water quality	
	<b>Catchment partnerships</b> Working with catchment based approach (CABA) partnerships to improve the water environment	
Cumbria	<b>Love Windermere</b> Multiple partner project working to improve water quality in England's biggest lake	
	<b>RSPB Haweswater</b> Improving recreational access, nature, water quality and tackling downstream flood risk	
	<b>River Petteril</b> Natural capital interventions to improve river water quality through phosphorus reduction	
	<b>Wild Ennerdale</b> Wildland partnership enhancing the natural environment and connecting people with nature	
Lancashire	<b>RSPB Bowland</b> Enhancing upland biodiversity with a focus on re-establishing hen harrier habitats	
	<b>Fylde Hub</b> Multi-stakeholder approach focused on tackling water quality and quantity challenges	
	<b>Wyre Natural Flood Management (NFM)</b> Delivering natural flood management through innovative finance mechanisms	
Greater Manchester	<b>GMCA trilateral partnership</b> Delivering the Integrated Water Management Plan for Greater Manchester	
	<b>RSPB Dove Stone</b> Improving the visitor experience and habitat restoration at catchment scale	
	<b>Moors for the Future</b> Large scale multi-stakeholder upland restoration programme delivering water and wider benefits	
Merseyside	<b>Crosby coastal protection</b> Working with Sefton Council to protect the coastline, improve resilience and improve amenity	
	<b>LCRCA partnership</b> Creating an integrated plan for water management for the Liverpool City Region	
Cheshire	<b>Cheshire Hub</b> Multi-stakeholder approach focused on tackling water quality and quantity challenges	
	<b>Quarry Bank Mill</b> Working with the National Trust to prevent flooding and reduce storm overflow spills	
	<b>River Dee Catchment</b> Addressing water quality through catchment management across national boundaries	

## 2.2 The scale of our partnership ambition for AMP8

- 2.2.1 Our bold plan for partnerships aims for well over half a billion pounds of investment in partnership approaches that will ensure lower costs and greater benefits for customers in the period 2025 to 2030.
- 2.2.2 UUW expects to invest at least **£344 million** in exploring partnership solutions across our enhancement programmes (assuming relevant programmes are supported in the Final Determination).
- 2.2.3 UUW will seek to leverage total co-funding of at least **£267 million** from third parties, of which:
  - **£95 million** will directly support our core duties and has enabled us to benefit bills for customers in AMP8, and
  - **£172 million** will deliver additional funding for wider social and environmental benefits for the North West.
- 2.2.4 Based on our track record of delivering in partnership and accessing various sources of co-funding, our ambitious co-funding target separates:
  - **Leveraged funding for direct benefit** – helping to benefit bills by reducing the cost of delivering our core duties. This amount has already been locked into our financial proposals to guarantee the saving for customers. This approach is taken at our risk as the leveraged funding is hard to plan this far in advance, and far from guaranteed.
  - **Leveraged funding for wider benefit** – providing even more social and environmental benefits for customers, communities and the environment in the North West. The benefits are beyond, but still complementary to, our core duties, and therefore are appropriately funded outside the bills of water customers.
- 2.2.5 The leveraged funding has been split into two categories as we believe it is important to distinguish between the leveraged funding that can provide a cost efficiency versus the leveraged funding which is providing wider benefit for society.
- 2.2.6 We propose that for every £1 we invest in partnerships, we will leverage 78p from third parties. We expect this to consist of a combination of leveraged funding from partners, third party funding sources and the innovative use of markets.

**Figure 3: Overview of our partnership funding and leveraged estimates**



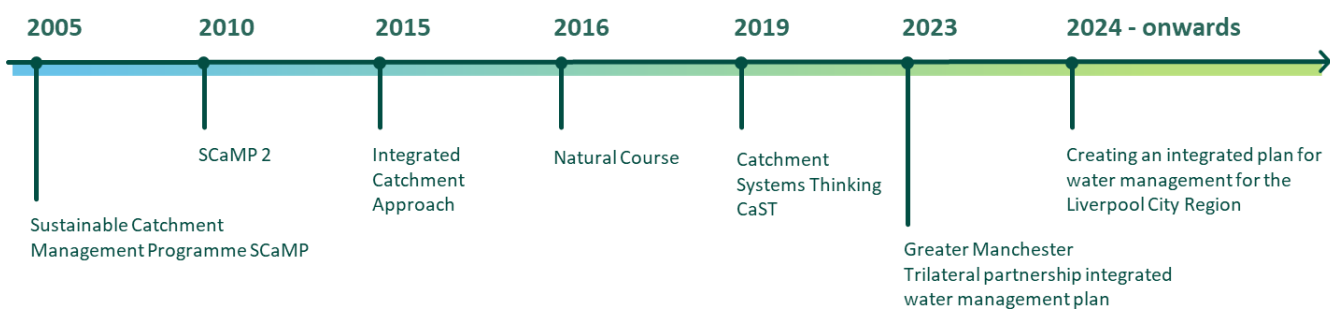
2.2.7 In addition to these financial costs and benefits, our partnership plan will also unlock a wide range of benefits in kind from third parties, including extensive volunteering resources, technical expertise, engagement activities and access to specialist networks. We provide more information on the overall benefits and value later in this section.

## 2.3 Continuing and developing new strategic partnerships

2.3.1 We have a number of established strategic partnerships, delivering mutual benefits, which are helping us lead the way to unlock value at scale and speed, and grasp opportunities more quickly. Strategic partnerships will continue to form the cornerstone of our approach for AMP8 delivery and we will seek out new strategic partnerships where we have mutual objectives.

2.3.2 Our strategic partnership approach has evolved over a number of years building upon learning gained from experience of delivering in partnership. For example, the IWMP for Greater Manchester to be delivered in AMP8, has been informed and influenced from AMP7 partnerships such as Natural Course, which has been running for nearly a decade. Delivery has helped to inform best practice across the sector for integrated multi-agency approaches for water priorities, pushing forward and breaking the boundaries of collaborative working. The timeline in Figure 4 below provides an overview of the story of our evolution of partnership working at a catchment scale.

**Figure 4: Timeline of partnership working at catchment scale**



- Greater Manchester Trilateral Partnership** – We have been working with GMCA and the Environment Agency as part of the Greater Manchester Trilateral partnership for the last four years to drive forward the environmental, development and infrastructure priorities across Greater Manchester. Supported by the Mayor for Greater Manchester, Andy Burnham, it has launched an IWMP, the first of its kind. Find more details below.
- Natural Course** – Informing and implementing learning from delivery during AMP6 and AMP7 enabled by the €20m part funded EU LIFE Integrated Project, working with the Environment Agency, The Rivers Trust, Natural England and GMCA to deliver improvements to rivers and the water environment across North West England. Further detail about Natural Course can be found in below.
- RSPB** – Our partnership with the RSPB extends back to the 1960s. We have a shared understanding that what is good for nature is good for water and therefore recently refreshed our relationship through a memorandum of understanding, signed by both Chief Executives, to continue our strategic relationship in the long term. The RSPB help manage some of our sites for recreational access and nature, while ensuring long-term protection of essential sources of water and working to store water to tackle downstream flood risk.
- The Rivers Trust** – Working together for the last ten years, our work with the Rivers Trust established a leading approach to working in river catchments in an integrated way, to revolutionise national water environment data sets, and driving forward market-led opportunities for nature. Amongst other things, this partnership has led to two successful Ofwat innovation fund proposals which bring together many water companies and wider stakeholders in the sector to unlock catchment based approaches.



- **National Trust** – We have worked with the National Trust for a number of years as significant land owners in the North West on initiatives including: Wild Ennerdale, Moors for the Future Partnership, Pennine Prospects, High Peak Vision, Great North Bog and Kinder Peat Restoration. Both organisations have recently committed to developing a long-term strategic partnership to further progress shared goals.
- **Liverpool City Region Combined Authority (LCRCA)** – Through collaboration, alongside the Environment Agency, we are exploring opportunities to co-create an integrated plan for water management for the Liverpool City Region.

2.3.3 The following section provides more detail on each strategic partnership mentioned above.

### Greater Manchester Trilateral Partnership

2.3.4 As the population of Greater Manchester continues to increase we need to provide essential services to meet both current and future demands. Over the last four years UUW, GMCA and the Environment Agency have developed a productive partnership to drive forward the environmental, development and infrastructure priorities across Greater Manchester.

2.3.5 In September 2021 a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed to further strengthen and facilitate closer collaboration. With support from Andy Burnham, Mayor of Greater Manchester, we have jointly developed a UK leading IWMP<sup>1</sup>, which launched in June 2023. In support of our work in Greater Manchester and our proposed rainwater management programme focused on Greater Manchester we have received a letter of support from the Mayor of Greater Manchester (shared in supplementary document UUW14 – Consolidated letters of support).

**Figure 5: Integrated Water Management Plan for Greater Manchester**



*“I am writing to offer my support for the United Utilities Advanced WINEP proposal for a rainwater management programme in Greater Manchester that will deliver £250m of investment. The Combined Authority has worked in partnership with United Utilities over many years including pilot projects such as IGNITION and Natural Course”*

**Andy Burnham, Mayor of Greater Manchester, May 2023**

2.3.6 The IWMP focuses on all aspects of Greater Manchester’s water cycle and brings together various strategic plans into an overall framework and ambition for Greater Manchester. The plan has been co-developed by the GMCA, Environment Agency and UUW, with the support of independent industry advisors and consultation with key stakeholders. It aims to ensure sustainable water management is applied holistically across Greater Manchester to enhance water quality, manage flood risk and increase biodiversity which benefits people, place and prosperity.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/what-we-do/planning-and-housing/integrated-water-management-plan/>

- 2.3.7 A key aim of the partnership is to reduce flood risk, improve water quality and water efficiency, enhance natural assets, and ultimately create more liveable, healthy places and developments. The partnership is also informing and supporting UUW investment planning in Greater Manchester by working together with partners and catchment stakeholders. The 'trailblazer' devolution deal for Greater Manchester enables us to take a nationally significant and different approach to ensuring water resilience in the city for the future.
- 2.3.8 The partnership has enabled the delivery of a number of tactical delivery schemes including IGNITION<sup>2</sup>, a €5 million EU Urban Innovation Action funded project, led by GMCA, supported by 11 partners (including UUW) to develop a business model which enables investment in large scale environmental projects which deliver urban resilience to climate change. Further details about this innovative project are provided in section 4.
- 2.3.9 One of the work streams of the Greater Manchester Trilateral Partnership focused on place based planning, specifically around the Upper Mersey catchment. A pilot approach has brought together key stakeholders with an influence over planning, development and management of water within the catchment. The work stream helped to build relationships, provided an opportunity to listen and share the activities, initiatives, opportunities and challenges faced in managing the water environment; ultimately informing the co-creation of a place based plan. Further details about the Upper Mersey place based planning pilot are provided in section 4. More information about UUW place based planning activities can be found on our website<sup>3</sup>.

### **Delivering with partners in Greater Manchester**

- 2.3.10 In 2020 Defra and the water sector regulators invited water companies to make proposals to help deliver a green economic recovery. These proposals looked to bring forward future investment to advance and accelerate new and innovative ideas which can leverage partnerships. As part of our "Accelerating Partnerships to Deliver Natural Solutions" publication<sup>4</sup>, UUW agreed circa £15m of accelerated investment, of which £9m was allocated to delivering SuDS and Natural Flood Management (NFM) in three strategic catchments, the Irwell, Fylde coast and Eden. Working in partnership with the relevant stakeholders, UUW was able to produce a number of Green Recovery funding applications through partnership engagement, within the city region.
- 2.3.11 Through the development and delivery of a number of partnerships within Greater Manchester, we took learnings which we are applying to future partnership delivery. These have already informed our Advanced WINEP rainwater management programme, for which details are provided in section 2.4.
- 2.3.12 Our partnership working in Greater Manchester began before the creation of the trilateral partnership described above. For example, the latest advances have stemmed from our work alongside GMCA, the Environment Agency, Rivers Trust and Natural England as part of the Natural Course strategic partnership which started in 2016 (see further details below).

### **Natural Course**

- 2.3.13 Natural Course<sup>5</sup> is a collaboration of public, private and third sector organisations working together to deliver improvements to rivers and the water environment across North West England.
- 2.3.14 Natural Course is a €20m part funded EU LIFE Integrated Project which has been running for nearly a decade. The objective of the project is to improve the water environment across the North West of England and to accelerate progress towards achieving good ecological status targets under the Water Framework Directive (WFD). The project is nearing the end of its current funding cycle (2024) and we

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/what-we-do/environment/natural-environment/ignition/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://collab-uu.co.uk/place-based-planning/>

<sup>4</sup> [https://www.unitedutilities.com/globalassets/z\\_corporate-site/about-us-pdfs/main-documents/gr0002---accelerating-partnerships-to-deliver-natural-solutions-redacted.pdf](https://www.unitedutilities.com/globalassets/z_corporate-site/about-us-pdfs/main-documents/gr0002---accelerating-partnerships-to-deliver-natural-solutions-redacted.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> <https://naturalcourse.co.uk/>

are in the process of planning to ensure benefits from Natural Course continue to be realised throughout AMP8. Natural Course has already informed our Catchment Systems Thinking<sup>6</sup> (CaST) approach, our place based planning and influenced the development of the IWMP for Greater Manchester and the emerging plans for water priorities in the Liverpool city region. Throughout AMP8 we will continue to engage with other beneficiaries of Natural Course to support the continuation of benefits to be realised across all organisations.

2.3.15 Natural Course is designing projects to better understand and overcome some of the biggest barriers to preventing the achievement of 'good ecological status'. Through collaborative working between organisations, investment is delivered in a more efficient way and multiple benefits are realised. Organisations include UUW, the Environment Agency, Rivers Trust, Natural England and GMCA.

2.3.16 The key aims of Natural Course are to:

- Find ways of reaching our ecological targets sooner by trialling new ways of working together;
- Establish more joined-up ways of making decisions that impact our waters in the future; and
- Line-up investments in the water environment so more money can be made available for improvement works at one time – meaning the bigger, more expensive issues can be tackled.

#### Benefits

- 719 volunteers trained
- 7 citizen science projects
- 191 new organisations engaged
- 226km waterbodies enhanced
- 291ha habitat created/restored
- 56 green interventions
- €228m funds influenced

2.3.17 Examples of projects which Natural Course has enabled:

- **Cheshire Hub**<sup>7</sup> – which is a centralised group with representatives from the Environment Agency, UUW, Natural England and others to better deliver catchment management and overcome key barriers. To date it has enabled the creation of Rostherne Mere wetlands, creation of Valley Brook Catchment Action Plan and has delivered SuDS Awareness training.
- **Fylde Hub** – The Fylde Hub consists of UUW, Natural England, Environment Agency, Wyre Rivers Trust and Ribble Rivers Trust. It is developing place based delivery plans to support water quantity and quality, with a focus on understanding the financial mechanisms for delivery. To date it has established four key task teams, each working toward developing catchment plans alongside innovative funding mechanisms.
- **Investigating microplastic pollution**<sup>8</sup> – UUW, alongside the Environment Agency and GMCA have jointly procured a two-year investigation to understand more about the sources, stores and movements of micro-plastics in the rivers of Greater Manchester.

2.3.18 More detail is provided on the Cheshire Hub, Fylde Hub and Microplastic pollution project in section 4.3.

#### RSPB

2.3.19 Our longest running, flagship, strategic partnership is with the RSPB; a relationship that goes back to at least the 1960s and further formalised in 2021 through a MoU signed by both Chief Executives. Both organisations have strategic ambitions to bring landscape-scale change to the North West. At the heart of the partnership UUW is driven to improve water quality, and RSPB to protect nature and increase biodiversity and, generally, what is good for nature is good for water.

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.unitedutilities.com/corporate/responsibility/stakeholders/catchment-systems-thinking/>

<sup>7</sup> <https://naturalcourse.co.uk/uploads/2021/11/Cheshire-Hub-case-study.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> <https://naturalcourse.co.uk/projects/understanding-and-taking-action-on-plastics-pollution-micro-plastics-pollution-in-greater-manchester-c-19-2/>

*“Together the RSPB and United Utilities have been harnessing the power of nature to tackle climate change in some of our most iconic landscapes. Once restored, these places can lock in huge amounts of carbon, give us clean water, provide homes for endangered wildlife and help protect our homes from extreme weather. None of us can work on this scale alone and it is through innovative partnerships such as this that we can make the biggest difference and help to revive our world.”*

**Beccy Speight, RSPB Chief Executive**

- 2.3.20 The RSPB and UUW partnership has won several awards, including the 2022 UK River Prize Award for the Swindale Valley Restoration Project, the 2018 Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM) award for partnership conservation and the 2016 international Natura 2000 award for landscape restoration.
- 2.3.21 These awards demonstrate how the partnership was instrumental in setting the national and international benchmark for partnership working in catchment management to deliver multiple benefits. Our award winning sustainable catchment management programme<sup>9</sup> (SCaMP) was the original scheme that launched catchment based approaches in the sector in 2005. The RSPB played a critical role in helping to influence the regulatory regime to support funding for catchment interventions. We work in partnership with the RSPB along with others across three key areas; Haweswater in Cumbria, Dove Stone in Greater Manchester, and Bowland in Lancashire. These are all areas of importance for the water environment, as well as for many local, regional and wider community interests.

#### **Haweswater estate<sup>10</sup>**

- 2.3.22 Haweswater is a crucial part of the North West water supply, and a site of international importance for nature, recreation and heritage. Our relationship with RSPB on the Haweswater estate initially focused on species protection, primarily the protection of England’s only breeding pair of Golden Eagles. Over the years our relationship has expanded into a range of areas, in particular the management of ancient woodlands at Naddle forest. Today and in the future, our partnership activity at Haweswater, under the Wild Haweswater banner, is supporting efficient delivery, improving water quality, enhancing nature and offering recreation activities. We have co-created a future landscape vision for Haweswater demonstrating what change will look like by 2050<sup>11</sup>.
- 2.3.23 In 2012, the RSPB took on a 45 year tenancy to manage Naddle and Swindale Farms. We launched a joint project to deliver nature friendly farming across a large area of around 3000Ha of the Haweswater estate. One of the key aims of the ongoing long-term project is to better understand the economics and sustainability of upland farming. RSPB have produced a number of valuable reports looking into these areas which have gained real traction with policymakers and government. Their interest in the benefits of this approach is demonstrated by some of the visits we have hosted in recent years including Tony Juniper (Chair of Natural England), Richard Benyon, Trudy Harrison (DEFRA Ministers) and Sir James Bevan (then CEO of the Environment Agency).

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.unitedutilities.com/corporate/responsibility/stakeholders/catchment-systems-thinking/catchment-management/>

<sup>10</sup> <https://wildhaweswater.co.uk/>

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zjpOAI56EPE>

**Figure 6: Haweswater**

- 2.3.24 RSPB are engaged in diversification opportunities alongside the farm business around eco-tourism and most recently the development of a new tree nursery in partnership with UUW. This new nursery is providing local employment and volunteer opportunities. It has created three full time jobs, and will supply specialist upland trees, shrubs and arctic alpine plants to help us to deliver ambitious restoration projects across our catchment land, including supporting our pledge to plant one million trees in the region by 2030.
- 2.3.25 As part of our partnership, we have delivered large scale restoration projects for long-term improvements for water, nature and people. One example is the award winning restoration project which re-meandered Swindale Beck to slow the flow and provide benefits to wildlife, water quality and reduce the risk of downstream flooding.

**Figure 7: The re-meandering of Swindale Beck (shown before, on the left, and after, on the right)**

- 2.3.26 The partnership also has a key focus on delivering social benefit, connecting people with nature and engaging local communities about what's happening at Haweswater. The partnership has recently leveraged funding to support this aim, through a successful joint funding bid for a new indoor community facility at Haweswater.

### **Bowland**

- 2.3.27 The Bowland Fells Special Protection Area is one of the most important sites in England for hen harriers. Until recently, Bowland has been England's last remaining stronghold for breeding hen harriers, with the majority of the nests located on land owned by UUW. Working in partnership with the RSPB since the 1990s, together with local partners and other landowners, we have delivered local actions to re-establish the hen harrier as a breeding species within the Forest of Bowland. UUW and RSPB jointly fund a wider birds of prey conservation and monitoring programme, including the employment of a dedicated Species and Habitats Officer who oversees the delivery and management of a strong 30+

volunteer cohort. Recent successes include the recording of 32 hen harrier chicks fledged, 11 merlin chicks and 3 short eared owl chicks from nests across the UUW Bowland estate in 2023.

### Dove Stone

- 2.3.28 Dove Stone is a dramatic landscape where land is owned by UUW and managed in partnership with the RSPB since 2010. Located to the East of Manchester on the edge of the Peak District National Park and within the Dark Peak Site of Special Scientific Interest. Drawing from the Greater Manchester and surrounding conurbations, it is an extremely popular site for visitors as well as being an important site for nature conservation and recovery. Over 4,000 hectares of land is managed with the prime focus on peatland habitat restoration and visitor experience.

**Figure 8: Dove Stone reservoir and volunteers**



- 2.3.29 Blanket bog is the main habitat on site and there has been significant investment to improve its condition. Work has included revegetating bare peat, raising the water table to rewet the peatland and returning Sphagnum moss – the keystone species. This provides multiple benefits such as improved water quality, natural flood risk management, carbon storage and increased biodiversity. Much of this work has been delivered by RSPB volunteers.
- 2.3.30 In addition to providing a great visitor experience, outreach activity raises awareness of the impacts of wildfires which damage the peat, impacts water quality and damages carbon stocks. Dove Stone is a high risk site for wildfires and a holistic approach is taken to managing and reducing the risk. Activities range from awareness raising with the public and partner organisations, building resilience into the landscape and close working with Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service.

#### Benefits

- Estimated for every £1 of investment UUW make at Dove Stone; a further £6 of value can be generated by RSPB
- Job creation
- Volunteer engagement (over 40,000 volunteer hours)
- AMP7 UUW contributed £400k attracted £1.4m grant funding

### The Rivers Trust

- 2.3.31 The UUW and Rivers Trust strategic partnership aims to build an innovative partnership model that aligns interests and delivers resilient catchments to meet society's needs. UUW has been a leading company on this with its approach to working in river catchments over the last ten years. This partnership is working at the heart of strategic priorities for UUW, the water sector and other stakeholders, in delivering the next transformation for the protection of river environments.
- 2.3.32 This partnership is unusually broad as it has set about designing a framework to bring together everyone with an interest in the health of rivers from source to sea. It is building competence for urgent action to tackle challenges that are increasingly important to society, such as pollution, flooding and water abstraction, mainstreaming the use of nature-based solutions and leveraging investment at landscape scale to help deliver adaptations and resilience to combat climate change.

*“Our strategic partnership with United Utilities has not only supported vital work with our member Rivers Trusts in the North West, but it has also led to two very significant, pioneering, national programmes of work: CaSTCo and Mainstreaming Nature Based Solutions. These have the potential to build a new paradigm in water management in the UK.”*

**Mark Lloyd, The Rivers Trust Chief Executive**

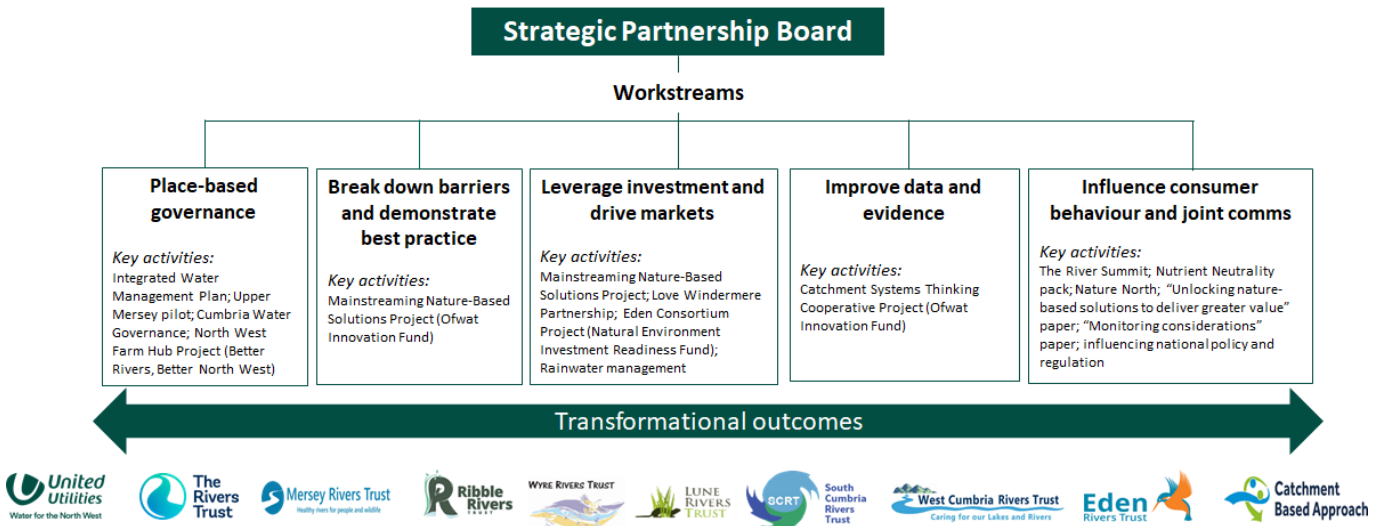
- 2.3.33 The structure of the strategic partnership involves a secondment of a colleague to The Rivers Trust as the Strategic Development and Stewardship Director, which has been in place since July 2020. This strategic approach brings a wealth of benefits, including securing over £20 million of funding so far, to deliver innovative approaches to environmental monitoring, catchment markets, nature-based solutions and partnership working, with significant opportunities to drive added value for customers, society and the environment.
- 2.3.34 The partnership extends to the highest levels in both organisations, supporting integrated and collaborative governance in pursuit of shared goals. Our UUW Asset Management Director is a board Trustee of The Rivers Trust. This integrated approach allows us to fully understand each other’s organisations and approaches to maximise the potential benefits of the partnership.

#### **The Rivers Trust Strategic Partnership is:**

- Supporting exemplar, place based plans for multiple catchments in the North West, which are owned by a broad range of stakeholders. This helps define our role and contribution alongside that of others, to facilitate a balanced, effective and efficient approach.
- Influencing development of the right governance, by bringing together top-down strategic planning, bottom-up planning and tactical delivery to manage long-term integration of catchment interests, thereby safeguarding the sustainable management of natural resources.
- Positively influencing consumer behaviour change and stakeholder engagement to increase awareness of the dependence on, and responsibility for the natural environment, and to improve long-term sustainability. This supports goals for water efficiency, water quality and flood and pollution management.
- Seeking to break down barriers and influence change in a constructive way, by demonstrating leadership, piloting new approaches, sharing best practice through local and national advocacy. This is helping inform effective national and local policy, and practical solutions.
- Seeking to improve the robustness and quality of environmental data and evidence, to support informed decision making so that we and others can target the most efficient and effective approaches to address priorities for the water environment.
- Building confidence in the multiple benefits of nature based solutions by demonstrating their effectiveness and their value to customers, environment and society.
- Looking to set up the mechanisms needed to leverage an effective blend of public and private investment by complementing market-led approaches. This is helping to ensure the most cost effective approach for water bill payers.

- 2.3.35 A strategic partnership board has been established to ensure the delivery of the partnership model.

Figure 9: Overview of The Rivers Trust strategic partnership



Source: UUW and Rivers Trust Partnership Board overview

- 2.3.36 Through the partnership, we have had a number of successful joint funding bids for leading innovative approaches. One example is the Catchment Systems Thinking Cooperative<sup>12</sup> (CaSTCo), a £7.1 million partnership innovation project aiming to revolutionise the way in which catchment data in England and Wales is gathered and shared. Funded through the Ofwat Innovation Fund, led by UUW, the partnership includes The Rivers Trust, 12 water and sewerage companies as well as academia and environmental charities.
- 2.3.37 Also supported through the Ofwat Innovation Fund, we are the lead company on the Mainstreaming Nature-Based Solutions project<sup>13</sup> looking to remove barriers to nature based solutions to deliver greater resilience and multiple benefits, whilst attracting investment at scale. This £8.9 million programme of work brings together diverse technical expertise from regulators (including the Environment Agency and Ofwat) to policymakers, water sector, eNGOs, academics and the finance sector. More detail on both projects is provided in section 4.

**Liverpool City Region Combined Authority**

- 2.3.38 We are building deeper relationships with the LCRCA in recognition of the scale of change that will need to be delivered to improve the sustainability of water management in the city region in light of rising demand and development, growing expectations and climate change. One of the most significant challenges we must address is the impact of having an extensive combined sewerage system, which for the Liverpool city area, makes up 84 per cent of the sewer network. The desire to work more closely to transform water management is shared at the highest level with Metro Mayor Steve Rotheram personally supporting our plans to deliver an ambitious investigation into the integrated management of water in the Mersey estuary area which is at the heart of the Liverpool city region. This support letter for this investigation, can be found in supplementary document UUW14 – Consolidated letters of support. It is recognised that the scale of change needed is significant and that the opportunity to deliver more for the city region by working in partnership is a priority for both UUW and the LCRCA.
- 2.3.39 We are aiming to set out a joint ambition with LCRCA outlining our shared goals and how we are going to work collaboratively to achieve them by 2024. By PR29 we will have developed integrated options in the city region to address the AMP9 investment drivers which deliver better value than we could do by working alone.

<sup>12</sup> <https://theriverstrust.org/our-work/our-projects/castco-catchment-systems-thinking-cooperative>

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.unitedutilities.com/corporate/newsroom/latest-news/united-utilities-to-lead-multi-million-pound-national-programme-of-nature-based-solutions-to-help-improve-water-treatment/>



- 2.3.40 Alongside this we will work closely to explore any short-term opportunities to align significant infrastructure investment such as LCRCAs sustainable transport and associated sustainable drainage options.

### **National Trust**

- 2.3.41 The National Trust is Europe's largest conservation charity and the organisation protects and cares for places so that people and nature can thrive. It is a major landowner in the United Kingdom, looking after more than 250,000 hectares of land and working with communities and partners to protect nature, beauty and history in towns, cities, villages and countryside.
- 2.3.42 In the North West of England, the National Trust is a significant land owner with 53,000 hectares of land, and in a number of locations its estates neighbour with our own land. Over the years both organisations have worked alongside each other as part of initiatives such as Wild Ennerdale, Moors for the Future Partnership, Pennine Prospects, High Peak Vision, Great North Bog and Kinder Peat Restoration, and co-operated on numerous land management practices and operational issues.
- 2.3.43 With increasing interactions between both organisations, a strategic liaison group has been established to explore the alignment of strategic objectives and how working together in partnership more systematically could bring benefits to both organisations. This has developed into a strategic partnership overseen by the National Trust Regional Director and our Asset Management Director with a MoU due to be signed in Autumn 2023. We have outlined a number of key areas for collaboration across the North West where we can work together to deliver mutual benefit for climate, nature and people.

*“Working in partnership between sectors is critical to tackling the many challenges facing society today, from climate action to halting the decline in nature and improving the environment for the communities we serve. We are really excited about the future partnership between NT and UU as two major land owners in the NW building on our already strong local collaborations. Seeking to work together on key areas associated with landscape restoration and community resilience feels critical for the region and both of our businesses.”*

***Mike Innerdale, National Trust Regional Director***

## **2.4 AMP8 proposed partnership delivery schemes**

- 2.4.1 In AMP8 we expect to continue to expand the number and range of partners. We will need to remain agile and will continue to evolve and iterate our approach as we work to maximise the potential benefits for customers and the environment in the run up to and during AMP8 and through subsequent delivery. It is important to note that outcomes are not solely in our control and depend on the programmes and resources being supported through the Final Determination. Further details on our proposed schemes are listed below and are summarised in Table 1.

Table 1 Our proposed schemes

Scheme	Partners	Benefits	UUW priority theme	UUW investment	Leveraged funding for direct benefit	Leveraged funding for wider benefit
Rainwater management solutions	Various – continued relationship with a large range of partners across the region such as local authorities, NGOs and community groups	Reduce frequency of storm overflow spills Improve river water quality, sequestering carbon, reducing flood risk, increasing biodiversity and public amenity	Collaborating to reduce flooding and pollution	[X ]	[X ]	£106m - £177m
Water catchment schemes	Environment Agency, Natural England, Natural Resources Wales, Non – Governmental Organisations (NGO), Rivers Trusts, Wildlife Trusts, Communities, Landowners	Provide cleaner source of raw water, resilience to short and long term impacts of climate change Withstand impact of wildfire, increase biodiversity, provide access to nature for people, reduce risk of downstream flooding and support landscape-scale recovery	Restoring and maintaining source catchments	[X ]	[X ]	£7m-11m
[X ]	[X ]	[X ]	Collaborating to reduce flooding and pollution	[X ]	[X ] <sup>14</sup>	£5m - £8m
Catchment nutrient balancing	Various (Rivers Trust)	Reduce phosphorus and improve river water quality	Collaborating to reduce flooding and pollution	[X ]	[X ]	£3m-£4m

<sup>14</sup> This figure not included in third party contribution data table

Scheme	Partners	Benefits	UUW priority theme	UUW investment	Leveraged funding for direct benefit	Leveraged funding for wider benefit
Net zero programme (peatland restoration and woodland creation)	Various including Moors for the Future	Restore eroding habitats to reduce GHG emissions through sequestering carbon dioxide and storing it  Improve water quality, flood resilience, wildfire resilience and SSSI condition (biodiversity).	Restoring and maintaining source catchments	£[ ]	[ ]	£8m-14m
<b>TOTAL</b>				[ ]	[ ]	<b>£129m-£214m</b>

Source: UUW data

### Rainwater management solutions

2.4.2 Delivering multiple benefit sustainable drainage solutions in communities alongside asset improvements to go beyond AMP8 storm overflow expectations and meet the requirements of the Government's national Storm Overflow Discharge Reduction Plan (SODRP) targets.

#### The need

2.4.3 Urban rainfall is 40 per cent higher than the industry average in the North West, posing a challenge due to our high proportion of combined sewer systems which will be further exacerbated as a result of climate change. To deliver a service that is resilient in the long-term we need to reduce the demand placed on the combined system by rainfall.

#### The solution

2.4.4 Our Advanced WINEP is a rainwater management programme working with partners to unlock solutions in the catchment areas of storm overflows. The rainwater management solutions will focus on overflow catchment areas which need to be improved to meet SODRP targets after AMP8 WINEP is completed, therefore making a head start on future WINEP phases. It has a focus on Greater Manchester, due to the strong strategic partnership, and includes flexibility to intervene in other urban areas such as Northwich, Warrington and Liverpool.

2.4.5 The programme will drive £247 million of investment of which £197 million will be enhancement cost allowance and the remaining £50 million from partnership funding for delivering wider social and environmental outcomes. A key element of the programme is to increase our partnership working through removing conventional regulatory barriers of timeframes, geography and penalties to allow us to co-plan and co-deliver with partners.

2.4.6 Stakeholders and customers have told us they want to see more sustainable drainage solutions in the places where they live and work, when they are assessed as best value and our strategic partnerships support this approach.

#### The benefits

2.4.7 Interventions delivered will benefit the environment and society in a range of ways including through:

- Improving river water quality;
- Reducing flood risk;
- Increasing biodiversity; and

- Improving access to amenity and recreation.

- 2.4.8 Conventional grey infrastructure solutions to storm overflows do not offer these added benefits. Our Advanced WINEP will provide an opportunity to demonstrate how we can change traditional administrative and regulatory arrangements so as to increase the co-funding of this element of the WINEP and in turn deliver wider benefits in addition to reduction in the frequency of storm overflow spills. Our Advanced WINEP will also provide the following benefits:
- Develop knowledge that will be shared with current and potential partners and stakeholders, as well as regulators (Environment Agency, Ofwat), Defra, local authorities and the sector more generally, to evolve future WINEPs and unlock greater value for customers;
  - Grow and share experience of delivering nature based solutions and natural capital markets to inform the water industry's approach to PR29; and
  - Unlock a flexible approach to delivery of opportunities identified through the Greater Manchester IWMP. This will help UUW to scale up activity on better rainwater management across the whole North West.
- 2.4.9 Full details of our proposed approach to partnership working through the Advanced WINEP can be found in our Advanced WINEP submission to Ofwat and the Environment Agency, submitted in August 2023.
- 2.4.10 In addition to the Advanced WINEP above, we are exploring opportunities throughout the North West.
- Rainwater management schemes across the North West**
- 2.4.11 We will work with partners to investigate and assess the feasibility and deliverability of schemes across the North West to protect and enhance the environment through reducing both storm overflow spills and catchment flood risk.
- 2.4.12 The Drainage and Wastewater Management Plan (DWMP) partnership opportunity pipeline is feeding into our rainwater management solutions for AMP8 and is continually being developed and refined. We are engaging with organisations such as the Environment Agency, Local Authorities and Risk Management Authorities to further investigate and scope out potential partnership solutions. As set out in our Rainwater Management Enhancement claim our total gross expenditure forecast to deliver proposed AMP8 SuDS schemes is £112.6 million and based on our leverage funding ratio we have included an estimated £9.6 million of third party funding to deliver these schemes. For more information please see supplementary document *UUW65 – Wastewater Quality Additional Requirements Enhancement Claims*, section Rainwater management.
- 2.4.13 There are several schemes at an advanced stage of investigation, including:

Millom and Haverigg– Combining Cumberland County Council's flood alleviation scheme and our statutory requirement to reduce storm overflow frequency in the catchment through rainwater management including, natural flood management, sustainable drainage and combined sewer separation.

**The benefits**

- Circa 200 properties and critical infrastructure protected from catchment surface water and fluvial flooding;
- Supporting the reduction of storm overflow spills;
- Protecting and enhancing the environment;
- Improving the local economy and amenity;
- Sewer flood risk reduction;
- Low carbon solution; and,
- Shared costs, supporting the delivery of a Flood Risk Management scheme.

**Shap flood alleviation scheme** – as part of one of our hybrid WINEP schemes we are working in collaboration with Westmorland and Furness Council and Cumbria Innovative Flood Resilience (CiFR), we are supporting the development of a flood alleviation scheme which aims to reduce the flood risk to circa 25 properties and the railway line in Shap village through implementing slow the flow measures and attenuation. Additional dedicated resources support via CiFR Catchment Sensitive Farming and the leverage of potential Countryside Stewardship funding.

#### **The benefits**

Reduce surface water and sewer flood risk to circa 25 homes, businesses, the West Coast mainline and the A6 main road:

- Supporting the reduction of storm overflow spills;
- Improving water quality;
- Protecting and enhancing the environment;
- Improving the local economy and amenity; and,
- Sharing costs, supporting the delivery of a flood risk alleviation scheme.

#### **Water catchment schemes**

2.4.14 Land management schemes delivered in partnership to protect and enhance water quality in catchments across the North West. The resilience and health of catchments is critical to the delivery of water services because they offer many services to society; they hold water and slow the flow to reduce flooding, provide land for access and recreation as well as benefits to human health. They intercept pollutants in the air, land and water environments, they are a significant carbon sink and sustain biodiversity. We will continue to work with partners to raise awareness of water quality and support measures to reduce risk and improve resilience within catchment safeguard zones.

#### **The need**

2.4.15 Prevent the deterioration of raw water quality and support more efficiency during the treatment process. Improve the resilience of catchments to address the susceptibility of upland catchment systems to significant high consequence but infrequent storm events.

#### **The solution**

- 2.4.16 Our first catchment resilience scheme was at Thirlmere, chosen due to its regional significance and susceptibility, caused by historic land management practices. Supported at PR19 by the Drinking Water Inspectorate (DWI), the Environment Agency and Natural England, the work being delivered in the period 2020-2025 demonstrates our approach to catchment systems thinking, supported by our previous successful approach of partnership working across water catchments. Co-created with stakeholders, the overarching purpose is to restore natural processes to improve the resilient functioning of the catchment hydrology and vegetation.
- 2.4.17 As part of the WINEP, by 2030 we will deliver a second phase of catchment resilience schemes related to improving the condition of habitat on our land holdings at Thirlmere, Haweswater, West Pennine Moors, Bowland Fells and South Pennine Moors.
- 2.4.18 We will go beyond the extent of our land holding to deliver catchment resilience schemes in Cumbria and Lancashire working in partnership with stakeholders at a landscape scale in the Lune (Lancaster), Wyre (Franklaw) Eden (Castle Carrock and Cumwhinton), Upper Duddon (Ulpha) and Poaka Beck catchments to improve habitat condition and the long-term resilience of raw water quality.
- 2.4.19 Through our experience of catchment management, we have estimated costs of the schemes of £18 million with an anticipated partner co-funding total of £5 million. We anticipate working with a large

range of partners including the Environment Agency, Natural England, Natural Resources Wales, eNGOs, Rivers Trusts, Wildlife Trusts, communities and other landowners.

**The benefits**

2.4.20 The partnership schemes will help improve raw water quality in the long-term by restoring the underlying ecosystems and natural processes, building on the legacy of long-term catchment management delivered at the sites outlined above since 2005. More resilient catchments provide multiple benefits including the prevention of deterioration of raw water quality. Working in partnership we can access advice, investment, incentive schemes and other benefits in kind (e.g. targeted hire of weed wipers to reduce pesticide use) which we would not be able to access acting on our own. In addition, a more resilient catchment:

- Provides a cleaner source of water;
- Is able to withstand short term events associated with climate change (e.g. drought) and adapt to long term changes (e.g. wetter winters, drier summers);
- Is able to withstand the impact of wildfire;
- Slows the flow of water and reduces the risk of downstream flooding;
- Increases biodiversity; and
- Provides access to nature for people

**Figure 10: Restored peatland on Haweswater catchment, Cumbria**



2.4.21 Further information about the proposed water catchment schemes is provided in the *UUW60 – Water Quality Enhancement Claims case Water Resources WINEP*.

**Coastal erosion protection partnership (Crosby)**

2.4.22 [✂  
]

**The need**

2.4.23 UUW has identified a risk to important wastewater assets, Crosby Northern Rising Main (600 mm diameter) and pumping station, serving a population of 27,779 which sits circa 20m from the cliff edge along the coastline at its closest point. Erosion rates are accelerating and independent evidence suggests that without intervention, the asset is likely to be lost to erosion by 2030-35. Sefton Council has identified a need to protect 169 properties from this erosion risk, and restore a key tourism asset in the area.

**The solution**

2.4.24 The [✂] scheme will deliver protection to UUW wastewater assets, environmental zones and 169 properties via the implementation of rock armour and the replacement of existing defences with a

stepped retaining wall, as well as regenerating the sea front and creating intertidal habitats. We have proposed to contribute [£x ], with [£x ] confirmed from partner organisations.

#### The benefits

- 2.4.25 The partnership project will deliver greater value than if the individual organisations implemented schemes separately. From a cost perspective, UUW has investigated multiple methods of managing the risk, but costs were estimated to be in excess of £20 million, with potential solutions risking damaging sensitive dune ecosystems. By working in partnership, greater value can be achieved for efficient cost, limiting the impact on customer bills and delivering the following social and environmental benefits:

**Table 2: Overview of multiple benefits to be delivered through the coastal erosion protection partnership**

Type of benefit	Benefits to be delivered
Social	Increased amenity value
	Development of the coastal park and retaining wall, including the creation and protection of jobs
Environmental	Erosion protection for critical assets and properties
	Protection of 169 customer properties and a sports amenity
	Protection of Ramsar, SPA, SSSI and SAC and rare embryonic shifting dunes
	Creation of intertidal habitat for birds
	Stabilisation of contaminated land

Source: UUW and Sefton Council partnership data

- 2.4.26 Full details of the coastal erosion protection partnership can be found in the supplementary *UUW65 – Wastewater Quality Additional Enhancements section Coastal and River Erosion enhancement claim*.

### Wastewater catchment schemes

#### The need

- 2.4.27 To support the improvement of rivers in line with the requirements of the habitats regulations we need to deliver load reductions of phosphorus across multiple catchments in Cumbria. In order to deliver these in the most sustainable way, both economically and environmentally, we have sought to identify opportunities to deliver phosphorus reductions in the catchment and offset these reductions against treatment works permit limits. The outcome for the water environment is the same improvement, but the more relaxed permits allow for reduced grey infrastructure with lower costs and carbon impacts.

#### The solution

- 2.4.28 We have been able to identify nine sites in the Eden and Derwent catchments in Cumbria where catchment nutrient balancing (CNB) offers an alternative to solely investment at the treatment works, reducing the required onsite interventions, delivering wider benefit in the catchment and doing this at a reduced overall cost to the customer. The CNB approach builds upon the UK's first catchment nutrient balancing trial at Calthwaite treatment works in 2019, which achieved a 63 per cent reduction in phosphorus load in the catchment.
- 2.4.29 Integral to the approach is working with partners. It's too early to confirm specific partners but we are already working with the Environment Agency and the Eden Rivers Trust to establish joint working through a community interest company which will support the delivery of these interventions. We estimate £6.7 million UUW contribution with £0.7 million from third party contributions.

#### The benefits

- 2.4.30 Based on our experience of the achievements in the Petteiril catchment, there are wide ranging benefits including:
- Financial efficiencies through reduced costs and co-funding;
  - Phosphorus removal;
  - Additional natural capital benefits compared to traditional solutions; and,

- Further ecological benefits though the reduction of nitrate, sediments, nitrous oxide, and bacterial load.

2.4.31 Further detail of the catchment nutrient balancing schemes can be found in the supplementary document *UUW35 - Environmental Strategy* section 2.6.2.

### **Net zero programme (peatland restoration and woodland creation)**

#### **The need**

2.4.32 Peat habitats emit more greenhouse gas emissions if they degrade, therefore restoring these eroding habits can reduce emissions and store it. Creating woodland through the planting of trees removes carbon dioxide from the atmosphere through the process of photosynthesis, as trees grow each year they sequester carbon and also improve air quality. Creating woodland and restoring peatland also provides wider benefits to recreation for public health, biodiversity, flood resilience and water quality.

#### **The solution**

2.4.33 We aim to work with partners, such as Moors for the Future to undertake habitat restoration works across 1,494 hectares of peatland by 2030, verified by Natural England (or equivalent standard). With support from Ofwat, our programme aims to restore an initial 850ha of eroding bare peat, followed by 644ha modified peat types by 2030 at an estimated total cost of £40 million, of which UUW propose to invest £20 million, with the additional £20 million from partnership funding.

2.4.34 With support from Ofwat, we aim to work with partners to create 465 hectares of woodland from planting trees by 2030, verified by an appropriate body in line with the Woodland Carbon Code. A recent example from 2023 is our completed planting at Greenbooth delivered in partnership to create 19ha of new woodland. An estimated total cost to achieve the woodland creation is £5 million, of which UUW propose to invest £2.5million, with the additional £2.5 million from partnership funding.

2.4.35 These peatland and woodland projects are over and above similar work at other sites which is proposed in our WINEP for water quality reasons.

#### **The benefits**

2.4.36 As a result of these net zero projects, the expected long-term reportable carbon reduction benefit is 137,578 tCO<sub>2</sub>e from woodland creation and 277,767 tCO<sub>2</sub>e from peatland restoration by 2055.

2.4.37 Restoring peatland has many wider benefits, including water quality, flood resilience, wildfire resilience and SSSI condition (biodiversity). With different types of peat conditions delivering different scales of benefit.

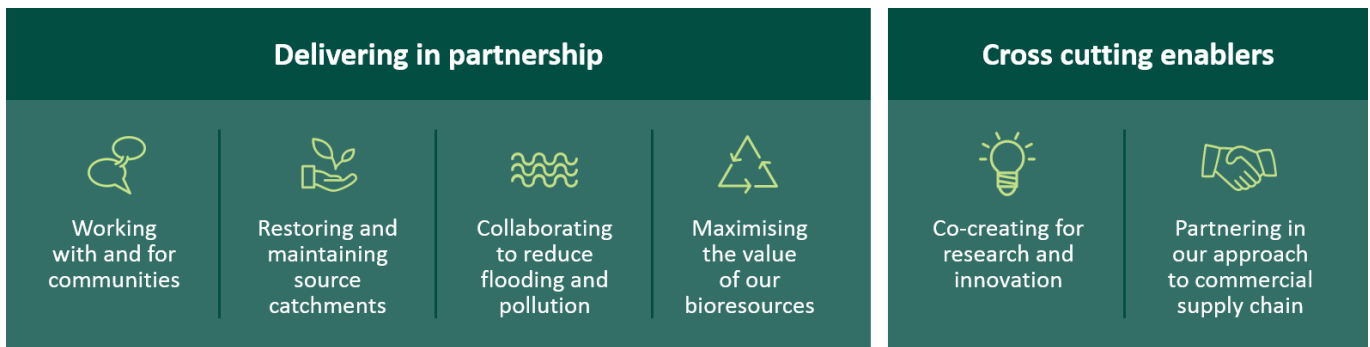
2.4.38 Woodland creation is an important part of contributing to healthy land and water based eco-systems, creating and enhancing habitats for wildlife and increasing biodiversity. Planting trees and creating woodland areas also have wider social benefits creating green spaces for customers and communities in the North West, supporting access for recreation and positively impacting health and wellbeing.

2.4.39 Full details of this programme of activity is detailed in the supplementary document *UUW67 – Cross Price Control, case 25 Net Zero*.

## **2.5 Our six priority areas for partnership working**

The following section outlines our plan for partnership working based on the six priority areas for partnership delivery as outlined in Figure 11.



**Figure 11: Overview of the six priority areas for partnership working across the organisation**

Source: U UW six priorities for partnership working

## 2.6 Working with and for communities

- 2.6.1 We work in partnership to improve the value we provide to customers, wider society and communities. This includes working in partnership to support customers struggling with affordability and vulnerable circumstances.
- 2.6.2 Practical steps we have already taken in partnership include sharing data with other essential service providers such as the three energy distribution network operators in the North West (Electricity North West, SP Energy Networks and Northern Power Grid), improving our effectiveness of identifying customers eligible for vulnerability and affordability support.
- 2.6.1 We will continue to improve our affordability support, informed by collaborative engagements with the charity sector, other sectors and customers. For example we are currently expanding access to our holistic debt advice portal, the 'Hardship Hub', which was co-developed with experts from the money advice community, to enable direct access to support within communities.
- 2.6.2 In addition, we have some new initiatives planned in AMP8, including:
- Better Together initiative, with the primary purpose of developing partnerships with organisations and influential community groups/leaders to work together and provide support to customers for example, National Energy Action who focus on tackling fuel poverty;
  - Developing a strategic partnership with mental health charities, designed to increase awareness of the Priority Services Register and affordability support available for customers living with mental health issues;
  - Evolution of events such as the North West Affordability Summit creating online events enabling communication with larger audiences collaborating with other organisations to provide holistic support; and
  - Continue and evolve our annual Customer Vulnerability Summit, targeting specific representatives from the customer vulnerability sector, with extensive experience of day to day issues faced by customers in the North West living with additional needs.
- 2.6.3 Chapter 4 and the supplementary document *U UW25 - Affordability & Vulnerability Operational Response* provide fuller details of our support for customers, including through partnership working.

## 2.7 Restoring and maintaining source catchments

### Restoring peatland in the North West

- 2.7.1 Throughout AMP7 we have worked with a number of partners to deliver a positive environmental impact at a catchment scale through a wide range of projects. By 2025, our AMP7 peatland restoration programme will have impacted 500 hectares, helping to restore this rare habitat for water quality benefits and helping to mitigate the effects of climate change. In AMP8, we will continue to expand our

peatland restoration work with the aim to carry out restoration through the WINEP for water quality reasons, and hopefully even more through our Net Zero Enhancement Programme, if supported by Ofwat. We will work with a range of partners to achieve this, including the RSPB, National Trust, Great North Bog and Moors for the Future.

### Working together at catchment scale

We are a committed partner of the Love Windermere<sup>15</sup> partnership which is working to better understand the factors affecting water quality at this iconic waterbody in the heart of the Lake District so that action can be prioritised in the coming years. The partnership has been formed with organisations including the Environment Agency; Lake District National Park; South Cumbria Rivers Trust; Freshwater Biological Association; National Trust; NFU, Lake District Foundation; Local Enterprise Partnership and Westmorland and Furness Council. The purpose of the group is to work collaboratively and to take a holistic approach to improve the water quality of Windermere and the surrounding catchment. Through this partnership, the board are working to develop a plan that will identify opportunities to improve the overall health of the Windermere ecosystem.

The action plan will be based on scientific evidence and it will consider the way land is managed across the catchment, as well as how rainwater drains from built-up areas, and the way sewage systems and private septic tanks are managed. Initiatives like this are key to realising the full value of our investment, as despite significant investment in assets on Windermere the outcomes that we seek can't be realised without addressing the issues across the catchment. Partnerships that can help mobilise other sectors to tackle their inputs are therefore key to realising best value from our own investment.

- 2.7.3 We will continue to be a part of this long term important partnership to ultimately improve the condition of Lake Windermere. This important partnership will support our proposed bespoke performance commitment 'Wonderful Windermere' to help make the improvements to Windermere and the catchment that customers, stakeholders and the community want to see there. *Chapter 5*, section 6 provides the detail of our proposed Wonderful Windermere bespoke performance commitment.
- 2.7.4 We will continue to take an active role in the North West catchment-based approach<sup>16</sup> (CABA) catchment partnerships and numerous sub-groups across our five counties, engaging with a list of partners such as The Rivers Trust, Groundwork, Environment Agency, Natural England and an extensive list of local authorities, landowners and other stakeholders to contribute to the development of long-term action plans to support the outcomes of improving water and land on a catchment scale.

**Table 3: North West CABA partnerships**

Catchment partnership	Catchment partnership host
Alt Crossens	Mersey Rivers Trust
Becks to Bay South Cumbria	South Cumbria Rivers Trust
Douglas	Groundwork
Eden	Eden Rivers Trust
Irwell	Groundwork
Lune	Lune Rivers Trust
Lower Mersey	Mersey Rivers Trust
Middle Dee	The Welsh Dee Trust
Ribble life	Ribble Rivers Trust
Tidal Dee	Cheshire Wildlife Trust
Upper Mersey	Mersey Rivers Trust

<sup>15</sup> <https://lovewindermere.co.uk/>

<sup>16</sup> <https://catchmentbasedapproach.org/>

Catchment partnership	Catchment partnership host
Weaver Gowy	Groundwork
West Cumbria	West Cumbria Rivers Trust
Wyre Waters	Wyre Rivers Trust

Source: UUW reflections of CABA partnerships

## Delivering water efficiency through partnership working

### Utility Together Audits

2.7.5 In AMP7, UUW in partnership with Electricity North West and Cadent Gas jointly funded a programme of Utility Together Audits, aimed specifically at priority service customers in the Manchester area. We offered 150 free water and energy saving advisory visits, carried out through the project delivery partner, Groundwork Greater Manchester. Through working collaboratively with other utilities and highlighting the link between water and energy use we are able to offer a better service to customers who need it the most. The results and experience of this programme have fed into the plans for the potential to develop this programme in AMP8.

### Water saving school visits

2.7.6 In collaboration with the Department for Education and Groundwork we have delivered 63 water saving visits to schools in Manchester and Sefton between April 2022 and March 2023. During the visits, leaks were identified and fixed and water saving devices were fitted. The take up rate for our schools proposition was high at 53 per cent. We believe the successful take up rate was due in large parts to the partnership element, with the joint branding and funding with the Department for Education and Local Authority support given to the proposition. The results from this pilot programme have helped to inform plans for the potential development of this partnership work into AMP8.

2.7.7 More information about our water efficiency partnership activities is included in the supplementary UUW61 – Water Supply Demand Enhancement Case, section Water Efficiency.

## 2.8 Collaborating across catchments to reduce flooding, pollution and improve resilience

### Improving and protecting rivers through partnership

2.8.1 In March 2022, we launched Better Rivers: Better North West<sup>17</sup>, outlining our four commitments to improve the health of the North West's rivers:

- Ensuring our operations progressively reduce impact to river health;
- Being open and transparent about our performance and our plans;
- Making rivers beautiful and supporting others to improve and care for them; and
- Creating more opportunities for everyone to enjoy rivers and waterways.

2.8.2 We have actively engaged with and listened to our stakeholders to demonstrate we are taking action, seek their support in the creation of our future plans and provide greater transparency of our performance and the issues to be addressed. We continue to engage with community groups who value access to water for recreation and will identify partnership working opportunities to meet the commitments.

2.8.3 We will continue to seek out opportunities to work in partnership to develop solutions which aim to reduce flooding and pollution. The types of schemes we will pursue, include: nature based solutions, such as natural flood management, sustainable drainage, developing community resilience and engaging

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.unitedutilities.com/corporate/responsibility/environment/reducing-pollution/storm-overflows/our-commitments-to-river-health/>

with wider communities to help them understand their impact and how they can have an influence on their local environment.

#### **Nature based solutions**

- 2.8.4 As we introduced in our strategic partnership section above, we have been working with the GMCA, alongside the Environment Agency, as part of the Greater Manchester Trilateral Partnership for the last four years to drive forward the environmental, development and infrastructure priorities across Greater Manchester. A key aim of the partnership is to reduce flood risk, improve water quality and water efficiency, enhance natural assets, and ultimately create more liveable, healthy places and developments. The partnership will inform and support UUW investment planning in Greater Manchester by working together with partners and catchment stakeholders. We will continue this activity into AMP8 and will actively engage with the future direction of the partnership through the implementation of the IWMP for Greater Manchester (a detailed overview of the GMCA trilateral partnership is provided in section 2 and our plans for rainwater management within our Advanced WINEP).
- 2.8.5 In AMP8 we are building on the work that we have completed in AMP7 piloting place based planning. We are rolling this out across our region through our county-led approach to planning. In AMP7 we are delivering a number of place based planning pilots, working with a wide range of partners, across our three strategic catchments; Upper Mersey, Eden and Wyre. They aim to provide a holistic and integrated approach to planning for sustainable water services, which puts communities and the places where people live and work at the centre of the approach. This ensures we consider and involve communities in the solution and supports preventative, cost effective responses by building resilient communities and targeting investment based on what works locally. We will build on the pilots into AMP8 and further develop our place based planning approach, working in partnership to further progress this approach.
- 2.9 By delivering rainwater management solutions, we will provide enhanced spaces of social, environmental and recreational value within the public realm for local businesses and communities. We aim to maximise the number of schemes we are able to deliver in partnership to deliver multiple benefits to create less disruption, more benefit and wider outcomes for the North West.

## **2.10 Maximising the value of our bioresources**

- 2.10.1 The strategic challenge to optimise biosolids management, requires multiple parties to collaborate (private, public, charity sector and academia). To tackle this, we aim to build open collaboration across several sectors.
- 2.10.2 We think our collective approach to collaboration needs to embrace systems thinking principles, whereby we all consider bioresources as part of the wider, dynamic environmental system and the end-to-end wastewater treatment process. This approach is more likely to support transformational change for the sector which is endorsed by stakeholders and enabled through collaborative planning between environmental and economic regulators and companies. This will enable water companies and future market entrants to consider bioresources more fully, recognise interdependencies and deliver best value.
- 2.10.3 We are a thought leader in the sector calling for national collaboration. Our paper, “Unlocking greater value through a national bioresources strategy”, published in November 2021 was the first call for development of such an approach and was the impetus for developing the National Bioresources Strategy for England (2023)<sup>18</sup>. The strategy identified multiple alternative pathways for biosolids disposal, but there is a need to innovate and develop markets and technologies ahead of widespread deployment.

<sup>18</sup> Water UK, 2023, National Bioresources Strategy

- 2.10.4 Collaborative innovation will be at the heart of our transformation and we have identified and led several key innovation opportunities in the sector. In AMP7 we have successfully leveraged additional partnership funding of over £16 million, and approximately, for every pound we have invested we have successfully leveraged a further four pounds from external sources.
- 2.10.5 The key collaborations we aim to continue or develop in AMP8 are:
- **Agricultural partnerships with the farming community of the North West:** Access to agricultural landbank is reliant on biosolids acceptance by third party land managers and it is therefore essential that we work in partnership with our farmers, fostering good relations and delivering a high quality product. Our field staff are FACTS (Fertiliser Advisers Certification and Training) qualified and we offer free agronomy and nutrient planning advice to our farmers to support them in using our biosolids compliantly and with minimum risk of harm to the environment. Each year our biosolids supply nutrients, minerals and valuable organic matter to almost 20,000 hectares of agricultural land, delivering a financial value of almost £9 million.
  - **Collaboration in electric HGV trials with other sectors:** we have been successful in securing almost £1 million from the Zero Emission Road Freight (ZERFD) demonstration programme run by the Department for Transport, in partnership with Innovate UK. As part of a consortium, we are collaboratively working towards the development of a national HGV charging infrastructure which aims to accelerate and inform the rapid decarbonisation of the UK's long haul HGV sector.
  - **Production of new products from raw sludge:** we have been successful in securing £6 million from the Ofwat innovation fund to deliver a commercial scale pilot to produce biopolymers and recover cellulose from sludge at a wastewater treatment works in Cumbria.
  - **Phosphorus recovery:** At our largest wastewater treatment works, we will install a phosphorus recovery plant to remove 255kg of phosphorus per year from sludge liquors. This innovative solution forms part of the overall end to end improvements being delivered across the treatment works. We aim to work in partnership with inorganic fertiliser manufacturers to provide a feedstock for sustainable and low carbon products.
  - **Supporting the hydrogen economy in the North West:** We are progressing a partnership with Carlton Power to enable the development of the green hydrogen energy hub, adjacent to our largest sludge treatment centre. We are supporting development of the hub, which will produce green hydrogen fuel for industry, transport and heating. We are developing a solution to provide a guaranteed offtake of hydrogen to support the early development of the project, and use the fuel to displace fossil fuel use in our boilers, and help us to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions.
- 2.10.6 Alongside these partnership schemes we will continue to explore other opportunities in AMP8. Detail on our bioresources plan is provided in the *UUW58 bioresources business plan*.

## 2.11 Co-creating for research and innovation

- 2.11.1 Innovation is at the heart of how we plan for and invest in many of our future challenges. It allows us to continually evolve all business areas by exploring new technologies and ways of working that will improve how we take care of one of life's essentials. A key element of how we deliver innovation sees us working with others – experts, fellow water companies, grant and fund providers, academia and current and future supply chains. We have developed key long-term relationships over AMP7 and we will continue to further develop our collaborative working to support our innovation strategy into AMP8. We work with others to innovate in a range of ways in order to deliver specific outcomes for each relationship. Our innovation portfolio now sees us collaborating with others more than ever:
- Collaborating across the UK water sector to increase capacity and capability;
  - Collaborating globally through our water sector connections and out of sector innovation forums;
  - Closer working with regulators and direct with customers;

- Collaborating with academia working with the next generation of innovators; and
- Increased leveraged funding to lower the total cost of innovation and strengthening partnerships.

### Collaboration and partnership in AMP8

- 2.11.2 We plan to continue our collaboration and partnership working where they align with Ofwat's four strategic innovation themes and the sector's innovation strategy (Water 2050). We will retain cross-sector collaboration, strategic research, academic and industrial partnerships as they complement our open innovation model.
- 2.11.3 We will aim to share information, expertise and latest innovations with the wider community. Our strong relationship with innovation scouts and trend-watchers such as L Marks (global disruption of start-ups), Isle Utilities (water sector focus) and Frost & Sullivan (emerging trends) enables us to identify incremental and radical innovations at an early stage.
- 2.11.4 We will continue our work to access more innovative leveraged funds by working with our partners inside and outside the water sector. We intend to go further on leveraged funding and will bid to the AMP8 fund when opened for applications.
- 2.11.5 Detailed information on our innovation programme can be found in Chapter 8 and supplementary document *UW49 – Innovation framework and strategy*.

### AMP7 pilot projects to shape our AMP8 partnership plan

- 2.11.6 During AMP7, we have implemented a programme of 24 pilot projects testing innovative approaches to key business challenges, such as protecting water resources, improving resilience, water efficiency and reducing consumption. Ultimately, the results of these pilots have helped inform our business plan and supported the implementation of innovative projects for AMP8. In delivering the pilots, we have worked with more than 20 partners ranging from the Department for Education, local authorities, charities and other water companies. We have invested £5 million and we have successfully leveraged £0.9 million of third party funding.
- 2.11.7 The results of the pilots have helped to inform our plans for AMP8, contributing to future approaches and incorporating lessons learnt to support future delivery. The decisions taken following completion of the pilots have identified a number of partnership projects, which will be further developed in support of the AMP8 business plan. Some examples of these projects include:
- Integrated Water Management for schools** – which delivered integrated rainwater management solutions to six schools. Working with the Department for Education, it set out to test the most appropriate fair funding mechanisms applicable to a large number of sites for delivering SuDS and water re-use solutions to schools, alongside educational engagement around rainwater management and water efficiency.
  - Natural flood management with the National Trust** – this pilot aimed to test how far we can develop and work in partnership to address common issues in a geographical location. A strategic partnership was developed with the National Trust, targeting flooding and storm overflow spills reduction in the Quarry Bank Mill amenity area near Wilmslow. The pilot has created the opportunity to influence the approach to natural flood management across the National Trusts' estate in the North West. Further to developing a partnership this pilot has also identified a natural flood management opportunity which meets both organisations strategic drivers and is being progressed towards detailed design for AMP8.
  - Smart water butts trial** – A primary school in Forton, Lancashire, is now part of the UK's biggest hi-tech drainage community. The school and around 30 homes received smart water butts and are taking part in a 12-month trial aiming to reduce flooding and stop sewers becoming overloaded

**24 pilot projects**  
**20 partners**  
**UW contribution: £5m**  
**Partner contribution: £0.9m**

during periods of heavy rainfall. UUW worked with the supplier to install the water butts across the village. Since being installed, early findings have shown that the smart water butts were up to 75 times as effective as a standard water butts in providing water attenuation. It will help to increase capacity in our sewer network as well as delivering environmental improvements.

- 2.11.8 A number of the pilot projects aimed to test out specific partnership working approaches and have enabled knowledge, experience and lessons learned to be gained, helping inform our approach for the future.

## 2.12 Partnering in our approach for commercial supply chain

- 2.12.1 Through the development of our partnership approach and consideration of partnerships in the widest context, we have identified partnerships through our supply chain. We have challenged ourselves to think about how these partnerships can help drive efficiency and effectiveness.
- 2.12.2 We work with over 1,800 suppliers ranging from major corporations to sole traders. Within our supply chain operation, we develop commercial transactional relationships with these suppliers. As a purpose driven organisation, we strive to deliver services in an environmentally sustainable, economically beneficial and socially responsible manner. We have further developed our relationships with suppliers through our United Supply Chain (USC) approach. This is our strategic supplier engagement method aiming to generate collaborative, responsible supply chain management and deliver our Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) principles.
- 2.12.3 We are going further to address how social value and environmental priorities sit alongside financials in our commercial set up, from a stronger focus and weighting in tendering through to KPIs, requirements and incentives in contracts. A key element is finding the right partners who share our values and priorities to get the best results and continually drive innovation and efficiency to meet ambitious goals together.
- 2.12.4 Through USC, we are able to strengthen our relationships with suppliers to better collaborate to deliver environmental and social value. A great example is our engagement with Sapphire Utilities in relation to assessing the impacts of their vehicle fleet. This ultimately resulted in a change to the vehicle fleet used in maintaining our wastewater network which delivered a reduction in GHG emissions, improvements to air quality, and a lower operational cost. You can find out more on our website<sup>19</sup>.
- 2.12.5 USC is a key focus for AMP8, and as part of this we will continue to enhance our supplier collaboration approach to improve working relationships between UUW and our suppliers in order to achieve more environmental and social value. For more information on our supply chain approach, please see Chapter 8 and supplementary document *UUW50 - Ensuring value for customers through the use of markets*.

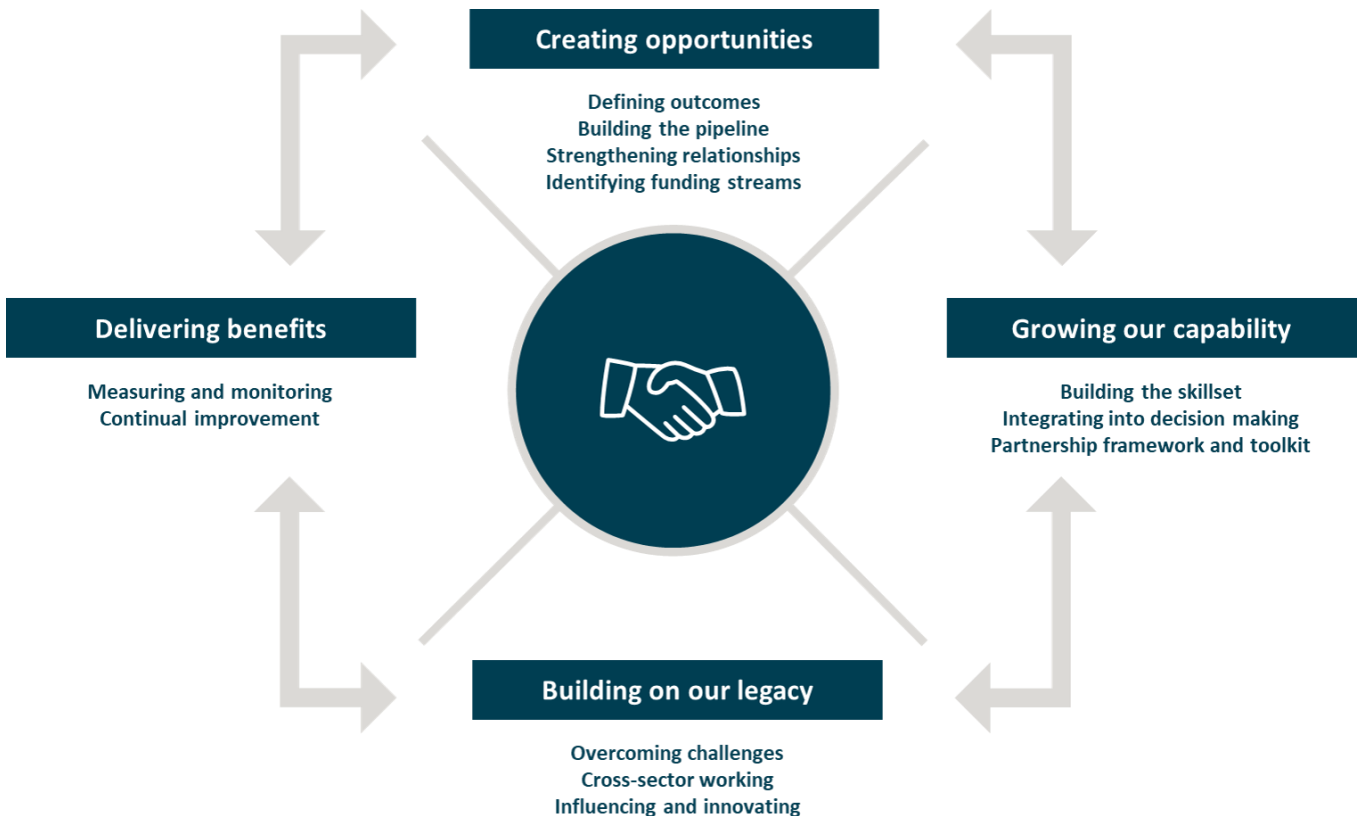
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<sup>19</sup> <https://www.unitedutilities.com/corporate/about-us/governance/suppliers/delivering-value/united-supply-chain/case-studies/>

### 3. Our partnership strategy

- 3.1.1 Our partnership strategy focuses on four key elements: proactively creating partnership solution opportunities, growing our capability to enable successful delivery, building on our legacy to overcome challenges and delivering benefits and more value through partnership working. We have summarised our approach in Figure 12 below, and further detail is described on each stage through the remainder of this section.

**Figure 12: Partnership strategy overview**



Source: UW partnership strategy

### 3.2 Creating opportunities







- 3.2.1 At the heart of our partnership approach is the ambition to deliver a wide range of benefits through collaboration. To do this we need to identify a breadth of opportunities across the North West to feed a partnerships pipeline. We are actively and continuously seeking and developing opportunities for partnership working guided by our organisational purpose and customer's priorities.
- 3.2.2 We are taking a proactive approach to the scoping and creation of partnership opportunities, exploring new and innovative ways to do this. This provides us with a pipeline of partnership opportunities across a wide range of themes and geographic areas, at every stage of scale and maturity.

#### Defining outcomes

- 3.2.3 Setting clear outcomes in agreement with our partners helps us to ensure that at the initial scoping stage of partnership opportunities development, we can clearly articulate our objectives, align goals with others, and create a synergy to deliver mutual benefit.
- 3.2.4 In Figure 13 below we have identified the following benefits we aim to deliver through partnership working.



Figure 13: Outline of benefits to be achieved through partnership working

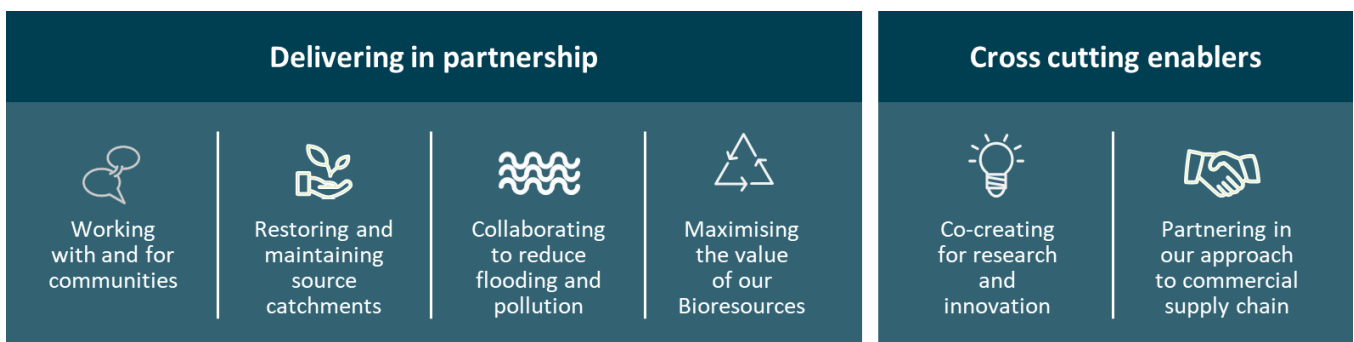
Category	Benefits
 <b>Engagement</b>	New ways to engage communities about issues and their role in delivering solutions
 <b>Financial benefit</b>	Delivering more for less, by being more efficient and leveraging funding from third parties and partners
 <b>Innovation</b>	Identify new ideas, solutions and enable data and knowledge sharing
 <b>Performance</b>	Deliver customer and stakeholder priorities, including Outcome Delivery Incentives (ODI) and Performance commitments (PC)
 <b>Water environment</b>	Improve water quality, enhance water storage, protect water resources and support flood management
 <b>Wider social and environmental</b>	Enhancing nature, reducing greenhouse gas emissions, promoting recreation and enabling skills development

Source: UUW partnership proposed benefits

### Building the pipeline

3.2.5 When considering partnership opportunities, we approach this from the widest context and are committed to investigating partnership opportunities across the whole of the organisation. We cover a wide spectrum of partnerships from traditional commercial contractual relationships to cutting edge innovative approaches such as the Ofwat innovation funded ‘Mainstreaming nature based solutions’ project. This is led by many teams across different functions in the pursuit of the business needs they are managing, with the support and governance of our Partnership Manager who continually promotes the overall pipeline. We have six priority areas for partnership working, which helps in responding to customer feedback and identifying the areas of most need and opportunity (summarised in Figure 14).

Figure 14: Overview of the six priority areas for partnership working across the organisation



3.2.6 We have developed a pipeline of partnership opportunities which collates a range of potential partnership schemes identified by us and stakeholders to deliver environmental and social value. Partnership opportunities are at differing levels of maturity, scale and complexity which require tailored methods to develop them into deliverable partnership schemes. We manage an ongoing partnership

tracker which monitors maturity levels of existing partnership projects. Together, the pipeline and tracker provide a portfolio of existing and potential partnerships for consideration as possible solutions.

3.2.7 An explanation of the ongoing opportunity screening process and maturity levels is provided below:

#### **Opportunity screening stages:**

- **Opportunity stage** – Collated in the organisation wide partnership pipeline, opportunities derived from us and suggested by stakeholders, prospective partners, regulators and others. There are currently over 1,000 opportunities within this pipeline, identified from various activities such as our DWMP, Water Resources Management Plan (WRMP) and Water Industry National Environment Programme (WINEP).
- **Exploration stage** – Initial screening and feasibility exploration (including mapping priority geographic areas, project outcomes, specific requirements such as proximity to our assets/land). Includes identification and engagement with partners and potential funding sources.
- **Scoping stage** – Potential partnership project identified and scope outline agreed, including specific partners, funding sources, deliverables and objectives.
- **Delivery stage** – Partnership project commences for delivery including formal agreements (such as legal contracts), delivery plan, defined objectives and resources.

#### **Maturity levels:**

- **New** – Potential opportunities where we need to identify partners and develop new relationships
- **Continuing** – Existing partnerships that require ongoing support to continue delivering benefits
- **Growing** – Existing partnerships which have the potential to scale up to deliver even more value
- **Closing** – Partnerships which are coming to an end for a variety of reasons.

3.2.8 We assess opportunities in the pipeline through a clear and consistent process. This is helping us prioritise which opportunities are most able to support our priorities efficiently and effectively.

3.2.9 We aim to continue expanding the range of partners we work with and utilise different routes to attract new partners from other sectors, ensuring that we are gaining the greatest value for the delivery of our partnership programmes. We are committed to developing new partnerships where we have identified a clear need and where the partnership approach is best placed to meet the challenge or opportunity.

#### **Strengthening relationships**

3.2.10 We deliver partnerships of different sizes and scales, falling into three broad categories, defined as:

- (i) **Strategic** – High level commitment with a strategic influence and focus. An example being the development of the IWMP through the partnership with GMCA and the Environment Agency, which we provide more detail in section 2.
- (ii) **Tactical** – Partnerships with specific delivery benefits and a defined timescale and budget such as the Upper Mersey place based planning pilot, which we provide more detail on in section 4.
- (iii) **Knowledge share** – Partnerships with the primary purpose to share knowledge, expertise and skills, for example, the partnerships we hold through our innovation activity which we talk more about in section 2.

3.2.11 Depending on the category of partnership, engagement may take different forms, for example, strategic partnerships may involve engagement at a senior management level whilst tactical and knowledge share partnerships may require subject matter expert engagement.

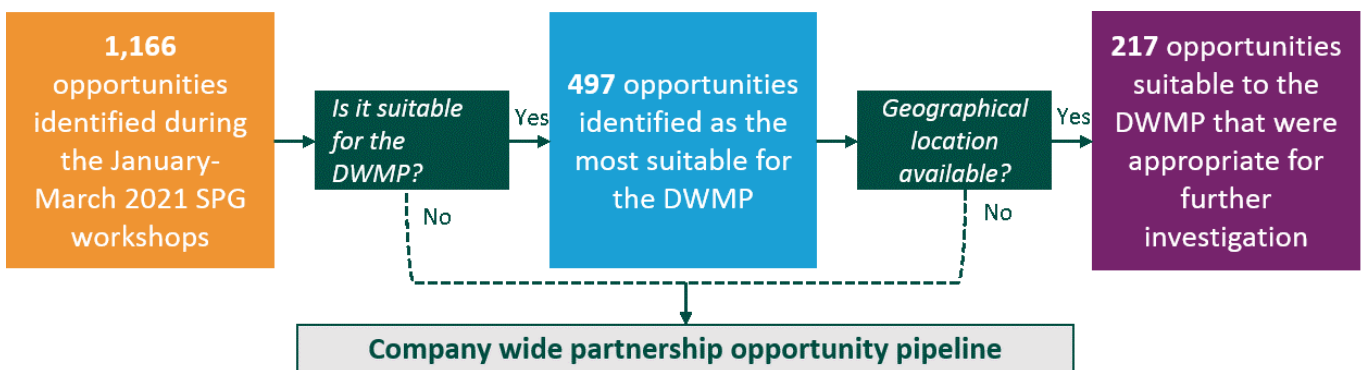
#### **Consultation in development of the AMP8 plan**

3.2.12 In the process of developing the AMP8 partnership plan, we have engaged with partners to help shape our proposals and inform the feasibility and deliverability of the partnership solutions. One example of engagement carried out is through the creation of our DWMP. Our DWMP was developed with the

support from stakeholders, regulators and customers from across the North West. Our Strategic Planning Groups (SPGs) have enabled a collaborative approach to planning.

3.2.13 In development of the DWMP, a wide variety of stakeholders have been consulted with including the Environment Agency, Natural England, Lead Local Flood Authorities, Local Planning Authorities, Combined Authorities, Catchment Partnerships, environmental organisations such as the Rivers Trust and Groundwork, National Rail and National Highways. As a result of the engagement the DWMP partnership opportunity pipeline was developed. The potential partnership opportunities were mapped and associated with a specific risk identified through Baseline Risk and Vulnerability Assessment (BRAVA) or our resilience assessments. These were also screened depending on the opportunities timescales, proximity to UUW assets and the level of detail. This refined list was presented back to the SPGs for updates, review and discussion. The outputs of these sessions evolved into the partnership opportunities pipeline.

**Figure 15: DWMP partnership opportunity process**



Source: UUW DWMP publication

3.2.14 The remaining opportunities that did not make it into the key DWMP partnership opportunity list were captured in our organisation-wide partnership opportunity pipeline, where they are collated and considered alongside other partnership opportunities from across UUW.

**Identifying funding streams**

3.2.15 A crucial element of partnership working is supporting and enabling co-financing to secure the most efficient and best value approaches for customers. We continue to assess cost effective solutions, collaborate to unlock co-funding and leveraging opportunities, ensuring a fair share of contributions from those benefitting and govern inherent risk to protect customers. We will continue to pursue new opportunities such as driving market-led approaches for nature and testing out new innovative financing models such as the Wyre NFM partnership. More information about this pioneering approach can be found in supplementary document UUW35 – Environmental Strategy.

**3.3 Growing our capability**

3.3.1 We have a bold ambition for partnership working. To realise the ambition, we continually develop our internal capability to support successful partnership working.

**Building the skillset**

3.3.2 There are a range of roles across UUW that actively engage with stakeholders to maintain and develop partnerships. For example:

- Our **catchment teams** have experience of leading long standing arrangements with environmental partners to protect and restore the water environment, including sources of water.

- Our dedicated **area engagement leads** work in each of the five counties across the North West; working to connect with key stakeholders to build strong, meaningful, long-term relationships and with an eye to potential collaboration.
- We have a growing team of **River Rangers** working directly with partners to support our collaborative ambitions of the Better Rivers Better North West programme.
- Our **place based planning leads** work directly with partners to collaboratively progress partnership working, for example, our lead for Greater Manchester co-locates with partners in the GMCA office as a key part of the IWMP team.
- Our **Priority Services partnership and engagement lead** works closely with charities and voluntary organisations in helping us to promote Priority Services amongst the most at need groups.
- Our **innovation team** are continually making contacts and seeking partners in the supply chain, start up and academic spheres.
- In 2021, we appointed a specific role, **Partnership manager**, in our Asset Management function to further advance our strategy and support the development and delivery of our partnership ambition to maximise the potential benefits for customers and the North West.

### Integrating into decision making

- 3.3.3 We strive to explore partnerships wherever such an approach is assessed that they are likely to deliver a business need in the most efficient and effective way. We are working to routinely consider a wide range of potential partnership options as a standard and systematic part of our decision-making and optioneering process, considered along and in combination with many other potential solutions, traditional and innovative.

### Partnership framework and toolkit

- 3.3.4 Our approach to partnership working is guided by our organisation-wide partnership framework, which we have collaboratively created to capture learning from others leading work, as well as building on our own learning and leadership over decades of partnership working. It sets out our partnership working approach, outlining a clear set of principles, providing consistency, support and guidance to those working collaboratively across our business, while recognising the unique nature of all partnerships and incorporating elements of flexibility.
- 3.3.5 Alongside the framework, we have created a partnership toolkit which aims to provide guidance and tools to support practitioners with the development and implementation of partnership working. The toolkit includes, amongst other useful items, a partnership health check, prospective partner assessment, and standard agreements and templates.
- 3.3.6 The toolkit helps to reduce a number of barriers and potential delays to partnership working, while helping reduce barriers for external partners who work with us. It is important to our effectiveness that we are a credible and effective partner.

### Governance

- 3.3.7 An important element of our partnership approach is ensuring we have clear governance in place, guaranteeing support, commitment and accountability from board and senior management. We have a clear structure in place, which ensures that partnership working is tracked and overseen by the UUW Corporate Responsibility Panel. Feeding into this is our organisation-wide partnership steering group, membership including owners and practitioners managing and delivering partnerships across the business.

Figure 16: Partnership governance



Source: UUW visualisation of partnership governance

### 3.4 Building on our track record

3.4.1 We have a successful track record of working in partnership to deliver greater value for the environment, society, customers and stakeholders. For example through the Green Recovery programme we received endorsement to invest £15 million in accelerating partnerships to deliver natural solutions to protect habitats, enhance raw water quality, improve drainage and reduce phosphorus in AMP7. Our approach has delivered a number of award winning projects where we have helped to set the standard for collaborative working, examples of these are included in section 4.

#### Award winning partnerships

3.4.2 We are proud to have been recognised externally for our partnership programmes – a selection of those awards from the last five years are highlighted below:

#### Awards

- **2023 SuDS champion award nominee** – collaborative working with developers to boost sustainable drainage levels
- **2022 SuDS Awards** – SuDS School programme
- **2022 UK River Prize Award** - Swindale Valley Restoration Project (a partnership between UUW, RSPB, the Environment Agency, Natural England)
- **2022 Environmental Impact Award (Water Industry Forum)** – Petteril catchment partnership project
- **2022 Warrington Disability Partnership Award** – UUW priority services team
- **2021 Prolific North Tech Awards** – North West Hardship hub website
- **2018 CIEEM award for partnership conservation** – UUW and RSPB partnership



3.4.3 Our extensive experience has informed our current and future approaches to grow even more value from partnerships in AMP8 and beyond. In section 4, we provide a detailed overview of our proud history of delivering in partnership.

#### **Overcoming challenges**

3.4.4 Delivering projects with multiple drivers through different organisations requires flexibility to maximise the benefits delivered in partnership. Whilst we strive to implement business processes and systems to reduce barriers to partnership working, due to the inherent uncertainty associated with partnerships there are still challenges to overcome:

- Difficulty aligning our funding cycle with partners' funding cycles as they are often more short term and more variable from year to year;
- Partnership schemes can take varying lengths of time to develop due to the engagement and coordination required among multiple third parties that have different goals and values;
- A degree of certainty (both in terms of funding and objectives) is often required before potential partners will engage with us to explore opportunities; and
- Partners' ability to deliver may limit the size, scale and timing of projects progressing.

#### **Cross-sector working**

3.4.5 We continuously improve our approach to partnership working over the short and long-term in support of our ambition for a stronger, greener, healthier North West. We will continue to share information and best practice to stimulate collaborative solutions and innovation, reducing barriers to partnership working across the sector and more widely. Examples of this include our shared learnings from the Petteril project, which we provide more detail on in section 4.

#### **Influencing and innovating**

3.4.6 We will continue to further our approach to delivering partnership solutions through proactively seeking innovative opportunities. For example through our Advanced WINEP proposal we aim to create the flexibility to unlock greater partnership delivery by removing conventional barriers such as timeframes, geography and penalties to allow us to flexibly co-plan and co-deliver with partners. More information is provided in our Advanced WINEP submission, provided to Ofwat and the EA in August 2023.

### **3.5 Delivering benefits**

3.5.1 Key to the success of partnerships is ensuring delivery of the benefits defined and agreed at the project outset and as things evolve over time. We take a proactive approach to having open and transparent communication to collaboratively review the ongoing value of the partnership with relevant partners and key stakeholders.

#### **Measuring and monitoring**

3.5.2 We will continue measuring and monitoring processes to track partnership benefit, helping to inform future partnership plans and actions. These include clearly agreeing expectations, setting key performance indicators and understanding what success looks like. We will continue to build in regular reviews agreed in partnership with clear steps to action learnings and formulate action plans. Decisions on sustaining, evolving or potentially exiting partnerships are also an important element and form part of the review process. Section 4 provides examples of the benefits achieved.

#### **Continual improvement**

3.5.3 An effective approach to partnerships is one which continually evolves to changing circumstances and understanding. We will continue to develop our approach for partnership working to enable us to grasp opportunities and seek out new approaches as they arise, work with existing and new partners and deliver innovatively.

- 3.5.4 We will continue to share our learnings and influence future partnership working approaches. For example, we recently published a case study titled “Transforming the River Petteril”<sup>20</sup> on our website to share our Petteril story with the wider industry. Subsequently showing sector leadership and initiatives, we further shared our experience by developing and publishing a catchment nutrient balancing guidance document. These documents provide information to enable other water companies to make appropriate choices when using a similar approaches.

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<sup>20</sup> <https://www.unitedutilities.com/Transforming-the-River-Petteril/>

## 4. Track record

4.1.1 We work with a large number of national, regional and local partners to deliver benefits across the five counties of the North West, as shown in Figure 17 below.

Figure 17: Some of our partners

### Some of our partners



4.1.2 We have and continue to deliver through the strategic partnerships described in section 2 Also central to our AMP8 plan is the continued development and deployment of our tactical partnerships. We manage over 100 of these relationships, delivering more targeted benefits and projects in a ‘task and finish’ approach. These tactical partnerships cover all stages of maturity from co-design to co-delivery, and the programme continues to evolve in response to business and partner needs. The following section provides a selection of tactical partnership projects we have recently delivered or which are ongoing.

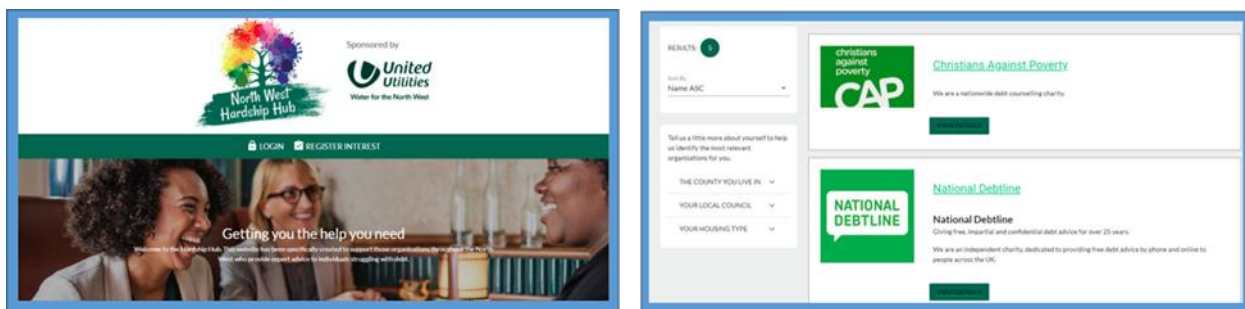


## 4.2 Working with and for communities

### Hardship Hub

- 4.2.1 Debt advisors in the North West that provide financial schemes to help individuals and families struggling with debt lacked a central resource to easily find and share knowledge. Working in partnership we co-created a digital Hardship Hub which provides money advisors with a 'one stop shop' for debt support schemes. Developed in conjunction with experts from the money advice community, including the Citizens Advice Bureau, it's been dubbed a 'trip advisor' for financial advice. Money advisors can use it to search for all the available help in their local area and can also rate schemes and recommend them to colleagues.
- 4.2.2 Working in partnership with other organisations has enabled us to broaden the reach of our help to pay schemes and made it easier for customers to seek help with bills. Working in partnership with other third party organisations to share data enables earlier identification of customers at risk of financial difficulty, and quicker intervention to free debt advice to support these customers.
- 4.2.3 The Hardship Hub website was launched in January 2019 to support those organisations throughout the North West who provide expert advice to individuals struggling with debt. The website contains information on the financial support schemes offered by suppliers across a wide range of sectors including gas, electricity, water, telecoms, housing associations councils and local charities. The site contains information on 559 schemes from 235 organisations and we continue to add to this. The website was given special recognition at the Prolific North Tech Awards, receiving a 'Highly Commended' award in the Technology for Good category. More recently, the Hardship Hub has been re-developed and newly launched for the use of all our domestic customers needing assistance.

**Figure 18: Screenshots of the Hardship Hub**



### Affordability Summit

- 4.2.4 In January 2018 on "Blue Monday" - the third Monday in January when seasonal bills drop onto doormats - we held the first North West Affordability Summit in Liverpool with the aim of bringing together representatives from a wide range of different sectors and communities with the collective goal of identifying new opportunities to make a difference. This ground breaking event brought together representatives from organisations such as debt advice charities, food banks, Department for Work and Pensions, Credit Unions, Councils, Housing Associations, MPs and other utility companies attended the day. The day facilitated the exchange of ideas and co-creation of potential solutions.

4.2.5 On 16 January 2023 we hosted the fourth of our collaborative North West Affordability Summits. This time bringing together over 80 representatives from housing associations, charities and the debt advice sector to explore options for collaborative cross sector working for the first time since 2020 and the Covid-19 pandemic. The summit provided a great opportunity for us to share the extensive range of support we have available to help customers alongside guest speakers from National Energy Action (NEA) and Experian who shared their sector insight.

#### **Partnership working to provide holistic support to customers**

- 4.2.6 We work alongside a number of specialist third party organisations to ensure UUW customers obtain wider holistic help for their financial situation.
- 4.2.7 **IE Hub** – We partner with IE Hub which offer customers the ability to share their completed Income and Expenditure form with other creditors saving them time and often the distress of completing the process multiple times.
- 4.2.8 **Turn2us** – Working in partnership with Turn2Us, a national charity which provides practical help to people who are struggling financially, we have incorporated our social tariff and priority services information into their benefit calculator, this means our support offering is highlighted if they live in our post code area.
- 4.2.9 **Money Wellness** – We have partnered with Money Wellness to provide customers with a warm transfer option or alternative direct booking service enabling them to request a call back at a time that suits them to talk through their financial situations with a specialist advice agency. We actively promote Money Wellness as part of our early intervention campaign to our most at risk customers providing a support option to discuss their wider financial situation prior to falling into arrears.
- 4.2.10 For more information on our collaborative working to support customer affordability, please see the supplementary document *UUW25 – Affordability and Vulnerability Operational Response*.

#### **Delivering in partnership to help customers living in vulnerable circumstances**

4.2.11 UUW currently has over 300,000 customers registered for its free Priority Services scheme. Partnership and promotional working is integral to help provide the valuable service. We work in partnership with a number of different charities and vulnerability organisations to achieve this. By working with others we are able to access specific expertise in the relevant fields of work, for example working with specialist disability and chronic illness charities.

#### **Examples of working with others to access and share expertise**

- (a) **Warrington Disability Partnership** – We are principal sponsors of Disability Awareness Day, the world's largest 'not for profit' voluntary-led annual disability exhibition, held in the North West. The event:
- (1) Highlights what statutory, private or voluntary services are available to enable disabled people to stay independent; and
  - (2) Promotes equipment and aids that could maintain or improve independence, not just offered by statutory service providers.
- (b) **Guts UK** – Committed to fighting all digestive diseases, which are conditions that affect the gut, liver and pancreas. Collectively they are a factor in 1 in 8 deaths in the UK. Guts UK supports medical research that saves lives. Our partnership enables the joint promotion of Priority Services to all customers living in our region, Guts UK come into contact with.
- (c) **Kidney Care UK** – The UK's leading kidney patient support charity, that offer practical, emotional and financial help, and make sure no one faces kidney disease alone. We have a joint promotional agreement for opportunities to promote free services offered by both organisations for people with additional needs.

- (d) **All Together Now (publication)** – A printed free publication targeted at the disabled communities and their families/carers across Merseyside and parts of Cheshire and Lancashire which is available at hospitals, shopping centres and GP surgeries with a readership of 250,000. UUW have a full page advertisement in all six publications covering Priority Services, water efficiency and bill support schemes such as struggling to pay and just about managing.
- (e) **Rural Services Network** – An independent research, networking and information exchange across rural England. Realising the vision led by the Rural Services Network to challenge Government on a number of policy areas that affect rural communities. Our membership is targeted at providing news, information, innovation and best practice to those delivering and interested in rural health and care.

#### Examples of working with others to share data and best practice

- 4.2.12 In late 2021 following the water industry, UUW moved its legal basis to hold vulnerable customer data from 'Consent' to 'Substantial Public Interest'. This has opened up the ability of new data sharing agreements, helping ensure we can be there for customers requiring additional support.
- (a) **Data sharing (Energy)** – UUW has formal data sharing agreements in place with all three district network operators in the North West, Electricity North West, SP Energy Networks and Northern Power Grid. This carefully managed data sharing supports better customer service during supply interruptions for those with additional needs
  - (b) **Data sharing (Fire Support Services)** – We have recognised the important role the emergency services play in keeping vulnerable people safe in their own homes and by sharing data we can ensure we support those people if there's an interruption to their water services.
  - (c) **North West Utilities Together Group** – UUW chairs this group, which meets every two months, membership includes a vulnerable customer representative from each utility company in the North West (UUW, Electricity North West, SP Energy Networks, Cadent Gas and Northern Gas Networks). Projects include:
    - (1) Promotion of the Priority Services Register on pharmacy paper bags (with leaflet included) to 378 pharmacies around the North West;
    - (2) Utilities Together leaflet – promoting the Priority Services Register and water/energy efficiency (saving money);
    - (3) Mobile Advice Centre in association with Age Concern Central Lancashire – used during large scale incidents for customer communications and promotion of Priority Services; and,
    - (4) Water and energy in the home audits - pilot project to help customers (on Priority Services Register) with water and energy efficiency resulting in lower bills, from one home audit covering all utilities.
  - (d) **Collaboration Network** – An inclusive and dynamic community of professionals who work together to improve business practices and raise the level of support for consumers and employees across all sectors. The Collaboration Network covers subjects close to the heart of any organisation keen to enhance customer engagement, improve services for consumers and to raise standards in the support provided to their front-line staff.
- 4.2.13 In addition to the specific customer focused partnership schemes detailed above, we have worked closely with community focused organisations, such as Northern Roots, a project to create the UK's largest urban farm and Country Park on 160 acres of under-used green space in the heart of Oldham. A case study on our collaboration with Northern Roots is outlined below.

## Northern Roots partnership helps us create innovative community-led behaviour change

Our partnership with Northern Roots is an example of how we're working with organisations that are best placed to create an innovative model of community-led behaviour change that can be adopted by communities elsewhere across the UK.

Northern Roots is a project to create the UK's largest urban farm and Country Park on 160 acres of under-used green space in the heart of Oldham, in Greater Manchester. Developed for and with local communities, the vision for Northern Roots is to create sustainable economic, social and environmental benefits for those communities. This includes working to enhance the quality of the large volume of water that runs through the Northern Roots site and into the River Medlock.



We identified Oldham as an area with relatively poor performance in terms of sewer blockages and sewer litter impacting the receiving environment. We partnered with Northern Roots to create a unique new project, working with local communities in Glodwick to better understand practices and behaviours linked to non-flushable items, such as wet wipes and nappies being flushed down toilets, or fats, oils and grease being poured down drains. The project used creative activities to empower local residents to take simple steps to change behaviour – which is more cost efficient and sustainable than clearing blockages or resolving the problems caused by unsafe sewer behaviour.

In-depth discussions, focus groups and personal interviews were carried out with residents, with the research highlighting a fundamental lack of awareness of what constitutes unsafe sewer behaviour. Residents emphasised the need for simple, educational communication and recommended a tailored approach to resonate with different demographics. The research has given us a baseline from which the impact of future campaigns in the area can be measured, allowing us to produce effective campaigns for sewer safety in the future.

### 4.3 Restoring and maintaining source catchments

#### Examples of working at catchment scale

4.3.1 We have a long history of working at a catchment scale to deliver land restoration through multi-agency partnerships.

#### Moors for the Future Partnership

Since 2003, we have been a partner on the Moors for the Future Partnership, which brings together ten organisations, and was established to protect damaged blanket bog habitats across the Peak District and South Pennines. In October 2015 Moors for the Future Partnership began work on MoorLIFE 2020, an ambitious project that has seen €16 million invested in bringing life back to the South Pennine Moors Special Area of Conservation.

Blanket bogs are large areas of peatland, usually found in upland areas, where high rainfall and cool temperatures encourage the growth of bog mosses and plants that absorb water and capture carbon from the atmosphere. Other benefits of a healthy bog include reduced flood risk to communities below peatland areas, improved water quality, increased moorland biodiversity and protection against moorland wildfires.



The peat moorlands of the Peak District and South Pennines have experienced long-term decline, due to industrial pollution and other human-related factors. Amongst other adverse effects, this has resulted in carbon being eroded from the unprotected peat and released into the atmosphere. MoorLIFE 2020 has played a vital role in Moors for the Future Partnership's ongoing efforts to restore this huge area of blanket bog back to health.

The ambitious scheme, principally funded by the EU LIFE Programme and additional funding from three water companies: United Utilities, Severn Trent and Yorkshire Water, has been a resounding success, bringing life back to a vast area of active blanket bog and demonstrating how healthy peatlands can make a huge difference to moorland ecology, local communities and the environment at large.

Among its many achievements, MoorLIFE 2020 has seen:

- 54.5 hectares of bare, unprotected peat revegetated
- 2.9 million plugs of highly absorbent sphagnum moss planted by hand
- 3,500 hectares of invasive plant species removed
- Over 16,000 mini-dams, or gully blocks, built to reduce peat erosion and slow water run-off
- A 30% reduction in peak water discharge from restored moorland sites, reducing flood risk
- A significant increase in moorland biodiversity, including the first bats ever to be recorded on Kinder Scout
- 12,000 people made aware of the dangers of moorland wildfire in our Bogtastic Van

4.3.2 As part of our strategic partnership with the RSPB (outlined in section 2), we worked together along with the Environment Agency and Natural England on the multiple award winning large scale restoration project at Swindale Valley for the benefit of water, wildlife and people.

### Swindale Valley restoration project

As part of our relationship with the RSPB, the multiple award winning Swindale Valley Restoration Project began in 2016, working collaboratively with UUW, the RSPB, the Environment Agency and Natural England to restore watercourses, bogs, meadows and woodlands, transforming the valley for the benefit of water, wildlife and people. It recently won the 2022 UK River Prize Project Scale Award and is a CIEEM award winner.



#### Benefits achieved

- Re-meandering of Swindale Beck, slowing the flow providing benefits to wildlife, water quality and reducing the risk of downstream flooding.
- Restoration of blanket bog, blocking 29 miles of moorland, increasing carbon storage, raising the water table, naturally purify the water and providing home to a wide range of specialist wildlife.

4.3.3 As part of the Natural Course strategic partnership (outlined in section 2) three example partnership projects it has enabled are provided below:

## Cheshire Hub

During Phase 3 of Natural Course, catchment operation, enabled the development of the 'Cheshire Hub', a centralised group with representatives from the Environment Agency, UUW, Natural England and others, develop a joined-up, improved understanding of what is going on in the catchment and to start addressing some of the barriers presented in catchment management. By sharing data on the performance of the catchment and water quality sampling, the Hub aims to identify operational issues, decide on the likely cause and target interventions at the right locations to deliver the greatest benefit



A key outcome of the Cheshire Hub was the Valley Brook Catchment Action, detailing improvement work within the valley. This led to the development of the Valley Brook Partnership which engaged local authorities, water NGOs and local action groups to support the delivery of actions. The group secured £2.9 million of central government regeneration funding to restore a section of Valley Brook and provide a green transport route along Valley Brook Corridor.

Three natural capital farm plans across two key landowners (Tatton Estate and Grosvenor Estate) were developed. The farm plans successfully identified opportunities for greener farming methods and changes in land management that deliver environmental improvements.

The Hub also carried out trials to test innovative technologies to deliver water quality improvements. The trial took inspiration from technology which had been proven in sewage treatment, to understand if it can be used to remove nutrients from river water.

In the trial, a small proportion of the stream is redirected through a reactive media cell where the media absorb the nutrients. The project went beyond the expectation of the grant agreement by also delivering two wetland sites at the mere. These help to reduce nutrient loads in the mere through nature-based solutions. This will help us understand whether reactive media could be used in the natural environment.

### Benefits achieved

- Creation of Rostherne Mere wetlands.
- Creation of Valley Brook Catchment Action.
- £2.9m funding secured.
- Three natural capital farm plans.
- Trial to test innovative approaches.
- Delivery of SuDS awareness training.

4.3.4 The Cheshire Hub is being continued until at least 2024, and the principles of the Hub are being utilised and replicated to establish a similar hub structure in the Fylde area.

## Fylde Hub

The Fylde Hub consists of UUW, Natural England, Environment Agency, Wyre Rivers Trust and Ribble Rivers Trust. It seeks to develop place based delivery plans to address challenges presented by water quantity, as well as quality with a focus on understanding the financial mechanisms for delivery.

Members from each organisation have been identified and meet on a regular basis, supported by an independent facilitator. A number of task teams have been established including; Misconnections, Natural Flood Management (Inc. SuDS and Wetlands), Monitoring and Data and Agricultural Engagement (Inc. Sustainable Soil Management), allowing for work to continue in a more targeted approach.

### Benefits achieved

- Development of a place-based catchment delivery plan.
- Development of innovative funding mechanisms.
- Four task teams established.

4.3.5 In addition to the Cheshire and Fylde Hub partnership tactical projects above, an investigation into microplastic pollution is also underway, enabled through the Natural Course strategic partnership, working jointly with the Environment Agency and GMCA. It is hoped that findings from this investigation will prove useful in influencing, developing and designing policies and practices that tackle the emerging issue of micro-plastic contamination of water courses in the North West River Basin District and elsewhere.

### Investigating microplastic pollution

Microplastics are known to cause issues to marine life and their accumulation in our oceans is of growing concern. Research published in 2018 identified micro plastic accumulation in rivers as a significant contributor to the build-up in our oceans alongside problems it can cause to the river itself and the life within it.

UUW, alongside the Environment Agency and GMCA has jointly procured a 2 year investigation to understand more about the sources, stores and movements of micro-plastics in the rivers of Greater Manchester.

UK Centre for Ecology and Hydrology (UKCEH) have been commissioned to undertake the investigation and sampling will be consulted out to Aqua Enviro.

### Benefits achieved

- Two year microplastic investigation.
- Findings to help inform policy and practice.

### Wild Ennerdale

Wild Ennerdale<sup>21</sup> is one of the UK's largest wild land partnerships. It began over 20 years ago and has significantly improved nature recovery in the Ennerdale landscape contributing to Natural England designating it as a new National Nature Reserve, in November 2022. It will be the largest nature reserve in Cumbria and the 9th largest in England. This formal declaration is among the first 'Super NNR's' in England. Super NNRs are recognised for their landscape-scale approach to partnership working.

Established in 2002 Wild Ennerdale is a partnership with the Forestry Commission, National Trust and UUW working in partnership with the support of Natural England to enable the evolution of Ennerdale as a wild valley for the benefit of people, relying more on natural processes to shape its landscape and ecology.

It is widely recognised for its partnership working, future natural approach and for pioneering innovative ways of upland management which blur boundaries between forestry and farming.

The Partnership is focused on two principal activities:



<sup>21</sup> <https://www.wildennerdale.co.uk/>

- Reducing and removing features and activities that detract from the sense of wildness and inhibit natural processes.
- Ensuring that natural processes are operating at their most functional and introducing missing natural features where they are not represented already.

### Benefits achieved

- Increased catchment resilience - Ennerdale was able to withstand the effects of Storm Desmond in December 2015 with minimal catchment damage or change to water quality.
- Expansion of existing native woodlands through planting of over 40,000 native tree species.
- Reintroduction of Marsh Fritillary (Butterfly) now one of the UK's largest and most healthy populations.
- Watercourse restoration, restoration of Artic charr population (a cold water fish) and maintenance of red squirrel population.
- Cultural history mapped, shared and protected, through online photo archive, historic sites guide, archaeology management plan.
- Passionate and enthusiastic volunteer group contributing the equivalent of two full time staff per annum.
- Recognition of wildland in the Lake District World Heritage Status inscription.
- 1500ha Pillar SSSI in improving condition.
- Approach and lessons learnt at Ennerdale are being adopted at other locations, such as Haweswater and Thirlmere.

## 4.4 Collaborating across catchments to reduce flooding, pollution and improve resilience

- 4.4.1 We have an important role to play in improving river health across the region, engaging with local communities and interested organisations. Our river rangers and Future Rivers Forum are two ways in which we are working with others to respond to the challenge.

### Better Rivers: Better North West – working with others to improve river health

To protect our rivers and help to keep them healthy, we have recruited a brand new team of river rangers who are based across the region. The rangers work with teams across our catchments, forging close links and engaging with community groups and organisations and collaborating with them to improve the environment and river water quality in those areas. They are proactively patrolling the banks of rivers, checking assets to organise maintenance and cleaning litter and debris to mitigate against the aesthetic impact of our operations. The river rangers' work allows us to further understand the quality of rivers across our region and what more we need to do to protect their health and help them thrive. If successful, we plan to hire more rangers to support our activities right across the North West.



In partnership with the Rivers Trust, we hosted the North West's first Future Rivers Forum to drive awareness and address the challenges that face rivers across the region including climate change, population growth and pollution. The Future Rivers Forum brought together a cross section of people and organisations including local authority representatives, North West businesses, environmental bodies, water sector regulators and local community figures to encourage collaboration to improve the health of the region's rivers.



- 4.4.2 We have many industry leading partnership approaches, one example is summarised below, which instigated the UK's first catchment nutrient balancing trial in 2019 at Calthwaite wastewater treatment works.

### River Petteril – reducing pollution and building a more resilient rural economy

The River Petteril is a tributary of the River Eden, located in Cumbria. The Petteril is impacted from nutrient inputs which cause a failure to meet the Water Framework Directive (WFD) good ecological status. There are a range of phosphorus inputs into the river including wastewater discharges but also a significant amount of agricultural load.

In order to address the phosphorus issue in the River Petteril, we needed to not only look at our own processes but also work alongside partners and fellow contributors to transform the ecological status of the river. We applied the Catchment Systems Thinking Strategy (CaST) in the Petteril, with the aim of working with others to address specific catchment needs in a more sustainable and holistic way.



As a result, the UK's first Catchment Nutrient Balancing (CNB) trial was initiated at Calthwaite wastewater treatment works in 2019. This trial aimed to achieve 9 per cent phosphorus reduction through integrated catchment and treatment works solutions.

The three-year trial proved to be a success. In 2022, it achieved a 63 per cent reduction in the phosphorus level in the catchment. This evidences the enhanced benefit that can be achieved with the integrated catchment approach. We worked with other sectors such as agriculture, businesses, and environmental NGOs, to deliver greater value for customers, communities, and the environment beyond regulatory obligations.

Collaboration with stakeholders has been key to the success of the trial. UUW engaged with a wide range of partners in the catchment. Eden Rivers Trust, Carlisle City Council; Cumbria County Council; Lancaster University; Natural England's Catchment Sensitive Farming; The National Farmers Union, the Environment Agency, 3Keel, Nestle and First Milk Ltd were all involved, making joint decisions through co-creation and co-delivery of interventions.

#### Benefits achieved

- Over 60% Phosphorus reduction beyond the target.
- Circa £6.5m cost efficiencies across AMP6 and AMP7 in the Petteril catchment
- Additional £355k contribution through match funding (farmer contribution plus Countryside stewardship funding).
- Further £350k leverage funding in the catchment through food and drink company Nestle.
- Additional natural capital benefits of £0.037 million compared to conventional solutions.
- Further ecological benefits through the reduction of nitrate, sediments, nitrous oxide, and bacterial load.

#### Working in partnership to drive market-led opportunities for nature

- 4.4.3 A number of projects are already underway to develop innovative finance opportunities and leveraging funding to deliver sustainable solutions and environmental improvements:

## Wyre NFM innovative financing model

Initiated by UUW, Environment Agency, Co-op Insurance and The Rivers Trust, the Wyre NFM scheme developed a new business model which can attract private financing and innovative contracting structures to supplement public funding and address flood risk. The Wyre Catchment Community Interest Company has been established as an independent entity to deliver in excess of 70 hectares of Natural Flood Management features to reduce the frequency of flooding protecting properties within the Wyre catchment. .

### Benefits achieved

- Adopting this innovative approach to catchment issues delivers broader benefits for the community than delivering through a conventional solution. These benefits can only be achieved by working in partnership which was enabled through the innovative financing model
- We have shared this approach nationally through various dissemination events and it has been taken on by organisations across the country.

For a detailed overview, please refer to the supplementary document *UUW35 – Environmental strategy*.

- 4.4.4 Building on the success of the Petteril co-investment delivered through AMP7, discussed earlier, we have investigated opportunities to expand this approach into the Eden catchment, outlined below:

## Developing a catchment market in the Eden catchment

In the Petteril we were able to align our investments with those of Nestle which resulted in c£350k of annual funding being delivered in a way that also provided water quality benefits. As we were working through this we became aware of further opportunities to engage a wider range of beneficiaries across the Eden catchment and this aligned well with our requirements to deliver phosphorus removal across the Eden through the Green Recovery.

We have supported partners including the Rivers Trust, the Eden Rivers Trust and 3 Keel to develop a proposal for the Natural Environment Investment Readiness Fund (NEIRF). This proposal was successful and we have secured £96k to build and deliver the market mechanisms that will support engaging these additional beneficiaries. Following in the footsteps of the Wyre NFM project, the Eden consortium intends to build on the success of a trial to establish commercial governance and future nature trades for the Eden catchment. This builds on the existing work in the River Petteril in Cumbria, which is a tributary of the Eden catchment, to expand on the investment opportunities and delivery of greater environmental benefits.

4.4.5 As part of the Greater Manchester trilateral partnership, as discussed in section 2, one of the projects undertaken was IGNITION. This was an important project to help develop an innovative finance approach for investment in the natural environment.

## IGNITION – innovative financing for investment in the natural environment

The IGNITION project was a €5million EU Urban Innovation Action (UIA) funded project, which led by the GMCA supported by 11 partners, including United Utilities.

Working with partners across Greater Manchester to develop a business model which enables investment in large scale environmental projects which deliver urban resilience to climate change.

Working with key partners in local authorities, NGO's, risk management agencies and academia.

### Benefits achieved

- Evidence base of benefits from nature-based solutions.
- Delivery of a Nature-Based Innovation Centre at the University of Salford.
- Identification and testing of three potential funding streams.
- SuDS – co-investment in SuDS for improved urban drainage and water quality.
- Parks – Parks foundations, Trusts and small parks enterprises.
- Green roofs – Biosolar green roofs.

## Upper Mersey Place Based Planning Pilot

The Upper Mersey catchment was selected in partnership as a priority area due to the number of challenges it faces with regards to population growth and the impacts of a changing climate.

The partnership are working in collaboration with other stakeholders who have influence over planning, development and management of water within the catchment to develop a place based strategy by piloting a Place Based Planning approach.

An initial workshop was attended by 10 catchment stakeholders who agreed to pilot Place Based Planning within 5 sub-catchments of the Upper Mersey: River Tame, River Dean/Bollin, Micker Brook, Sinderland Brook and Poise Brook.

The aim of the sub-catchment pilots is to trial different approaches to partnership working with the aim of co-creating a long-term place based strategy which has a focus on the water environment and includes multiple benefits; including natural and social.

The pilots in these areas will test elements such as data sharing mechanisms, governance, and benefits and funding identification. The pilots have a variety of organisations taking the lead to facilitate the approach and capture lessons learnt.

#### Benefits achieved

- Co-create a long-term place based strategy for each sub-catchment.
- Capturing learnings from each pilot group which has representatives from different catchment stakeholders.
- Key learning so far can be categorised into four areas: integrated planning, data sharing, governance and engagement
- Continuation of the pilot groups post pilot phase

## 4.5 Co-creating for research and innovation

4.5.1 Through the strategic partnership with The Rivers Trust (discussed in section 2), we have had a number of successful joint funding bids for leading partnership approaches within and outside the water sector. One example of this is the Catchment Systems Thinking Cooperative (CaSTCo) secured through the Ofwat Innovation Fund, which is outlined in the case study below.

### Catchment Systems Thinking Cooperative (CaSTCo)

Catchment Systems Thinking Cooperative (CaSTCo) – a £7.1 million Ofwat innovation fund partnership led by United Utilities between the Rivers Trust, twelve water and sewerage companies, as well as academia and environmental charities bringing together over 30 partners, aims to revolutionise the way crucial data about England and Wales' water catchments is gathered and shared, in particular on the health of the nation's rivers. The objective is to build the first standardised monitoring and data management framework which is:

- Independent and robust.
- Easily accessible and widely shared.
- Open and transparent.
- Collaborative in its approach.



This project aims to empower local communities to collaborate with decision makers, customers and other stakeholders around catchment monitoring and data sharing, to enable evidence-based catchment management decisions. Starting in nine demonstration catchments, the project will be developing a national framework of standardised tools and training which can allow this citizen-led approach to be adopted at scale.

#### Benefits to be achieved:

- Over 15,000hrs of volunteering monitoring time per year.
- Over 1000km<sup>2</sup> of catchment area per year (across 9 catchments in England and Wales).
- A dynamic, cost-effective monitoring and data management framework that becomes widely adopted nationally as a single source of trusted information.

4.5.2 Most recently, through the Rivers Trust partnership, we have also been successful in securing further funding through the Ofwat Innovation fund. We are the lead company on the “Mainstreaming Nature-Based Solutions” project, looking to remove barriers to nature-based solutions to deliver greater resilience and multiple benefits, whilst attracting investment at scale. An £8.9 million project of which £8 million secured through Ofwat innovation fund and £900,000 through partner and philanthropic investor contribution. The project’s summary is outlined below:

**Mainstreaming nature-based solutions – Ofwat funded, multi-sectorial collaboration aiming to mainstream nature based solutions**

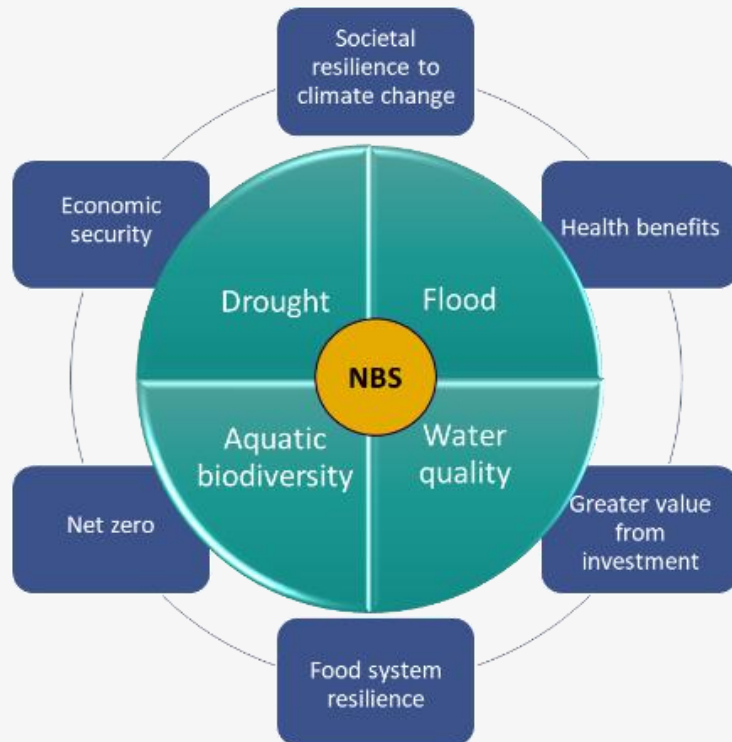
A multi-sectorial collaboration led by United Utilities, between The Rivers Trust, other water and sewerage companies as well as regulators, policymakers, finance sector, supply chain partners, infrastructure and local authority representatives, academia and environmental charities. An £8.9 million project of which £8 million secured through Ofwat innovation fund and £900,000 through partner and philanthropic investor contribution.

**Aiming to:**

- Enable adoption and transition of NBS into business-as-usual
- Drive a multi- million pound investment pipeline
- Create a common total value framework for assessing NBS
- Accelerate change through policy and regulation
- Standardise tools and processes to facilitate implementation at scale
- Provide a better deal for customers, society and the environment

**Benefits to be achieved**

- National cross-sectorial collaboration with over 20 multi-disciplinary partners.
- Real-life programmes across the country.
- Building on existing (global) successes.
- 5 year programme (2023-2028) with recommendations feeding into PR29 WINEP and the next business plan.



## 5. Our partnership action plan

- 5.1.1 Our experience of partnership working provides a solid foundation from which to scale up to maximise leverage funding opportunities and deliver long term solutions more efficiently. We recognise that any good partnerships plan is agile and continually improving, particularly in response to uncertainties inherent with partnership working and evolving external circumstances. And to be transparent and help steer our approach to get the best possible benefits for customers, we will undertake a series of reporting and governance measures.
- 5.1.2 In this section, we outline how we have developed an action plan to support the delivery of our ambitious partnership plan. This follows two key themes, those are; governance and maximising collaboration.
- 5.1.3 We are building on our experience, driving a culture of continuous improvement to maximise opportunities, build organisational capacity and minimise risks.

### 5.2 Monitoring and governance

- 5.2.1 The areas below are priorities for governing the effective and ongoing delivery of our partnership plan.
- 5.2.2 External monitoring and governance will include an update in the annual performance report (APR). This can benefit from the same quality standards and assurance regime as used in the APR. This can include an update on our progress towards our partnership ambition, and latest developments in our partnership approach and benefits delivered.
- 5.2.3 Internal monitoring and governance will include the following:
- (a) The ESG Committee will retain their overall leadership for the partnership plan and delivery progress will be reported through an annual review. Partnership progress will continue to be reported and tracked quarterly through the corporate responsibility panel;
  - (b) The partnership steering group will continue to meet bi-monthly to govern effective delivery of priority partnerships with required reporting and data provision, in alignment with the partnership framework and our strategic objectives; and,
  - (c) A monitoring plan has been developed to underpin the above reporting and governance measures and will ensure consistency of approach.

### 5.3 Maximising collaboration

- 5.3.1 An effective approach to partnership delivery is one which continually evolves to changing circumstances and understanding. We will continue to develop our approach for partnership working to enable us to grasp opportunities and seek out new approaches as they arise, work with existing and new partners and deliver innovatively and apply lessons learned to further our partnership approach.
- (a) We will continue to seek out partnership opportunities in the widest context, proactively identifying opportunities in areas where they may not have been identified before. We will continue to further our understanding of partnership working and seek to advance industry approaches and strive to offer thought leadership for the sector.
  - (b) We will develop and strengthen our network of internal partnership practitioners through the development of a partnership hub which will include tailored training, advice and support.
  - (c) We will implement new approaches for attracting new partners, such as developing our online collaboration portal to facilitate structured advertising of opportunities.

## 5.4 Continuous improvement

5.4.1 We know that partnerships evolve over time, they are agile and continually develop. We aim to create long lasting partnerships which deliver multiple benefits for all stakeholders. We will continue to routinely review the outcomes of the partnership projects to help inform future approaches and best practice within UUW and across the wider industry and other sectors. We will review the achievements and learnings from our experience to help to inform and influence future approaches. Some of the ways we will do this include:

- (a) Collation of lessons learned in accessible reports outlining key learnings and how they can be applied more widely;
- (b) We will share findings with other stakeholders across industry sectors through the creation of a range of publications, including case studies, reports and articles;
- (c) We will participate in cross industry collaboration to help inform consistent approaches to partnership working; and,
- (d) Through partnership projects such as 'mainstreaming nature based solutions' we will help to feed into the PR29 WINEP and next business plan.

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**Water for the North West**