

	Investing in our operations and improving our processes to progressively reduce our impact on river health	Being open about what we are doing and our performance, while improving the availability of information	Supporting biodiversity, sustainability and enhancing the water environment through programmes, campaigning and customer engagement	Engaging the public and partners in protecting, improving and enjoying our rivers
Delivered activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We are the industry leaders on reducing pollution incidents, having the lowest amount of pollution incidents of any Water Company in the Environment Agency's most recent Environmental Performance Assessment. We have reduced the number of serious pollution events substantially, our average numbers of pollutions from Storm Overflows (category 1-3 pollutions) have more than halved since 2016. Our overall environment investment and operational performance allowed us to achieve a 4-star company rating, the highest possible, in the Environment Agency's most recent Environmental Performance Assessment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We publish our annual Event Duration Monitoring data that relates to Storm Overflows on our website here. We have kept people informed on work surrounding Environmental Permit Compliance with an information page on our website. Our Beach Aware web-service is live all-year-round, giving near real time updates on when 78 individual SOs spill. Our senior leaders' bonuses are made up of stretching targets with our environmental performance directly affecting outcomes. This specifically includes measures such as pollution incidents, leakage and customer experience. We have an Water Environment Governance Group with external specialist membership which holds us to account on our performance. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Our <i>Bin the Wipe</i> campaign has led to an 18% decrease in blockages caused by wipes in the North East, and 49% in areas where we ran a hotspot campaign – helping to reduce the risk of discharges into a river. The Ripple Effect, our award winning water efficiency education programme, engages with school communities to get involved in our carefully developed education programme. It encourages everyone to learn more about water and make small changes to protect our water supply and resources. Our Water Environment Improvement programme, which focuses on locations where people can enjoy areas around water, via public rights of way, the company asked customers and environmental experts to suggest places that could benefit from biodiversity, access, and water quality improvements delivered improvements on 30.2km of watercourses in the first year alone. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We have a team of 67 volunteer Water Rangers who monitor 56 routes more vulnerable to pollution threats across the region. In 2018, we helped launch a statement of principles with <i>Blueprint for Water</i> that set out the opportunity for real partnership across water companies and environmental groups. At our Innovation Festival 2021, we had sprints focused on improving our rivers, such as Collaboration for a sustainable nation looking at more effective use of Drainage & Wastewater Management Plans. Our Branch Out funds have enabled more than £10 million of investment into the water environment from leveraged funding, with one project receiving a Royal Seal of approval in 2021.
Action underway	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In our Water Industry National Environment Programme (WINEP) and Water Framework Directive programmes we have more than 25 schemes, which will improve the status of more than 200km of our rivers. By the end of April 2022, all of our Storm Overflows will have Event Duration Monitors in place. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We publish our annual Event Duration Monitoring data that relates to Storm Overflows on our website here. We are working towards extending our Beach Aware to other designated inland areas, where there are current activities such as canoeing or recreational swimming. We are developing an improved data-portal to give improved public access to information on our rivers and operations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We are working with fellow water companies to take our award-winning <i>Bin the Wipe</i> campaign national, to create even higher levels of engagement – and protect even more homes and areas of the environment from sewer flooding. Our Water Environment scheme, Bluespaces, is continuing its partnership approach focusing on wide improvements to areas of water that customers can access. Over £500,000 is available to support partners to deliver water environment improvements up to 2025. We expect to have achieved another 41.5km of river improvements in 2022. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Our 2022 Innovation Festival will feature a range of sprints and workstreams focusing on improving our rivers. Our Branch Out fund for 2022 will shortly be issuing funding of up to £25,000 for a range of groups working to improve the water environment.
Future investments and work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We will be investing £25.5 million specifically to reduce the use of Storm Overflows up to 2025. Our WINEP programme consists of £61.6 million investment to investigate, improve and reduce spills from SOs, including increasing capacity at our treatment works. Building from an innovation idea from our employees, we will be completing a wetlands feasibility study to assess the potential for integrated constructed wetland treatment for phosphorous removal, and propose a plan for a trial site to allow us to test the effectiveness of this nature-based solution. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We are developing proposals for final effluent, in-river upstream and downstream monitoring to get a greater understanding of environmental impacts of treated water. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Our teams are working to support legislation to ban wet wipes that contain plastic and lobby for a ban on all wet wipes that are not 'Fine to Flush'. We are working to develop with The Rivers Trust a ground-breaking partnership to create a North East catchment planning hub to bring resource and expertise into the region to address our environmental ambitions. Our Water Environment Programme is planning for more than 250km of improvements in our rivers before 2025. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We are working up plans to enhance and expand our Water Rangers Programme to create more opportunities for citizen scientists. We are keen to engage interested groups in understanding the opportunity to create and promote inland bathing waters in the North East.