



3. The natural environment is protected and improved in the way we deliver our services

What do customers want?

Customers, stakeholders and regulators expect us to improve the quality of the environment. We are delivering a programme of environmental improvements and, where possible, achieving this in a more sustainable way which can be maintained over the long term and protects resources for future generations. We aim to run and maintain assets such as wastewater treatment works, water sources and pipelines in an effective way which avoids polluting the environment. We are also looking to adapt to the effects of things that are outside our control, such as climate change and population growth, and encourage customers to make changes to their behaviour so we can reduce the amount of water we need to take from environmentally sensitive sites where water is sometimes scarce.

We have made nine performance commitments about protecting and improving the natural environment through the way we provide our services. We have achieved our target, or are on track with delivery, for seven of these in year two.

What have we done?

We have continued to roll out our Pollution Incident Reduction Plan. This plan contains a number of strategic initiatives and targeted approaches for our staff, covering topics such as culture, systems thinking (understanding how individual parts of a system such as the wastewater network interact, in order to identify patterns of behaviour and so predict behaviour in different circumstances), training and maintenance. As a result of this effort, we have achieved 17.71 pollution incidents per 10,000 kilometres of sewer. This is our best ever performance and a reduction from 18.1 last year.

We have also continued with our overall improvement plan so that our wastewater treatment works meet the conditions of their Environment Agency permit, and have put in place individual intensive care plans for sites we consider to be at high risk of failing to meet these in the future. This year, 98.98% of treatment works met the conditions of their Environment Agency permit, against a target of 100%. This means that four treatment works did not meet all the conditions of their permit.

Our performance commitment on protecting the environment from growth and development measures the extra capacity that we build at our wastewater treatment works to allow for the future growth in population. This year we have delivered a single project at Greystoke Wastewater Treatment Works. With the agreement of the Environment Agency, the other projects we had originally planned to deliver in year two have either been delayed (for example, due to COVID-19 restrictions) and will now be delivered later in the AMP or have been stopped because the extra capacity is no longer needed. We expect to deliver the delayed projects by the end of the AMP.

We failed our target in year two, but the penalty or reward for this commitment will only be calculated at the end of AMP7 when our final performance level for the five-year period will be known. This is known as 'end of period' (see page 16).

This year we treated and successfully recycled all of our biosolids, which is the final product from our bioresources operations. This meant we delivered a 100% performance for the year. We put in place several measures to improve our processes and procedures to further reduce the risk of failures. These included improved training at our bioresources sites and a focus on sampling practices. As a result, we expect to maintain 100% performance over the rest of the AMP.

To improve air quality, we want to reduce the environmental effect of emissions from bioresources sites where we use sewage sludge to produce energy. We continued a programme of work which meant we released less nitrous oxide per unit of energy produced from our facilities. This programme of work, along with continuing to maintain our assets well, meant we were able to reduce the amount of nitrous oxide released per unit of energy produced to 1.19 NO_x/GWh (nitrous oxide per gigawatt hour), beating our target of no more than 1.42 NO_x/GWh.

7/9
measures
achieved

