

# ACCREDITATION

## CASE STUDY



## **NORTHUMBRIAN** **WATER** *living water*

### Introduction

Northumbrian Water Group (NWG) operates in the north east of England where it trades as Northumbrian Water, and in the south east of England where it trades as Essex & Suffolk Water.

Northumbrian Water currently provides water and waste water services to 2.7 million people, and Essex & Suffolk Water provides water services to 1.8 million people.

The company is licensed to supply over 1,170 mega-litres of water per day which is drawn from reservoirs where it is collected and stored, and from rivers and groundwater sources. It is treated at our 64 water treatment works and delivered by a network of pipes to homes and businesses.

In the north east of England, waste water is then collected from properties via the sewer network and treated at

Northumbrian Water's 437 sewage treatment works before it is returned to the environment as either clean water or sludge which can be recycled as fertiliser or used to generate energy.

NWG is a multiple-award winner for reputation, environment, community, people and business performance, most notably receiving The Queen's Award for Enterprise: Sustainable Development, for 2009-2014 and 2014-2019.

The current awards list also includes:

- 'Big Tick' in the Sustainable Products and Services category at the Responsible Business Awards 2014 to add to the 'Big Tick' reaccreditations from 2012 in the Environmental Management and Workwell categories

- Five Stars by the British Quality Foundation's Recognised for Excellence Programme
- One Star in the Sunday Times Best Company to Work for Survey
- 2014 Robert Stephenson Award hosted by the Institution of Civil Engineers (ICE) North East for the Barkers Haugh sewage treatment works inlet in the project value under £4 million category
- Gold for Environmental Best Practice for Hanningfield Reed Beds and Silver for the Abberton Reservoir project in the Green Apple Awards for the Built Environment

NWG's vision is to be the national leader in the provision of sustainable water and waste water services, guided by the five values of being customer focused, results-driven, ethical, creative and working as one team.



## An essential element

The Investment Delivery team has a vital contribution to make in order to achieve the corporate vision through the effective and efficient delivery of the capital investment programme – an essential element in the drive for continued business success.

This professional project management department employs 160 project managers and project acceptance engineers across our three operating areas, primarily managing engineering and construction projects to build new assets and to repair existing ones working with external contract partners, consultants and contractors on many of these schemes.

The *APM Body of Knowledge 6th Edition* is the lead reference for Investment Delivery's project management activities, ensuring that processes are based on best practice. The department's Project Management Manual is directly aligned to it, outlining its application together with guidelines and 'Wikis' that detail procedures which are designed to be flexible in order to meet specific business objectives.

During the five year asset management period to 2015, NWG expects to invest £1.2 billion in new and existing assets through programmes that vary in value and complexity employing 10-year framework agreements with their supply chain partners.

A mandate from Chief Executive Officer Heidi Mottram to focus on personal and professional development has led to the company-wide initiative 'Our Way, Your Direction', identifying the development needs of individuals and providing support to help them be the best they can be.

A new company intranet area has been designed to be used by everyone in order to prompt ideas. Examples include:

- A range of development ideas with useful links
- Development opportunities you can do alongside your day job
- A function to advertise part-time projects that could offer development to people in other teams
- Ideas for what to do if you are 'happy where you are', are 'heading to retirement', 'want to manage a team', 'want to do something different'
- Questionnaires you can work through to get to know yourself and what you want
- Ideas for sharing your knowledge and experience

Books, CDs and videos are available to borrow from the Human Resources library for personal development.

Professional development in Investment Delivery is complementary to this process.

## Building competence

Regular independent assessments and reviews of project management activities help to build capabilities. An annual review of the department's training matrix of courses mapped to each job role ensures that requirements are current and relevant and that industry best practice is implemented.

A competence matrix – a group of 14 key competences taken directly from the *APM Competence Framework* – also helps to understand where training should be targeted and provides individuals with a tool to understand the competencies required for their current role and for any future progression.

By assessing themselves against the competence matrix, project managers can see exactly how they score. This in turn helps them and their line manager to target training and development as part of the appraisal process as well as proving a valuable contribution to the wider view of team requirements.

Ian Lumley, Investment Delivery Team Leader, explained: "We use the competence matrix for several purposes. Firstly, the assessments provide a holistic team view to identify team training and development needs which informs and validates the departmental training matrix. However, the individual views generated from the process have proven even more powerful as we are able to visually identify project managers' competence gaps with respect to their knowledge and experience."

"A further development has been the use of this information to allocate project managers to projects according to their competence level or provide them the ability to see the level of competence required to deliver more complex projects to assist with career development."

A formal project manager progression framework helps to guide individuals along their career path. It indicates what levels of experience, qualifications, performance and competence are expected at each of the three grades of project manager. Candidates for promotion are formally assessed and scored against this framework.

There is also a process for 360-degree feedback into appraisals for individual team leaders, project managers and acceptance engineers which has been extended to include input from the supply chain, giving individuals a better insight into the impact their actions have on others.

A skills/talent matrix is under development to identify the abilities and expertise of all project managers and acceptance engineers in the department. Once again, this involves a self-assessment for individuals to identify their specialisms and levels of experience in various technical and professional fields.

Training courses are regarded as an important element of professional development. A training course catalogue is available on the corporate intranet, including selected project management qualifications. It outlines the training and development that is regularly delivered within the business and identifies the audience, course objectives and relevant refresher periods for each course.

Investment Delivery expects all new starters and recent graduates to study for the APM Introductory Certificate, with examination fees paid by NWG. All delegates are issued with the electronic course text, 'Starting Out in Project Management', and are responsible for self-study using the learning resource as a workbook and reference text.

A Graduate Development Programme has also been developed, for which a two-year programme is agreed, including opportunities for placements in other departments in order to gain a broad understanding of the business.

Those who wish to study for a recognised national qualification can apply for a company qualification loan and, in Investment Delivery; this has enabled one project manager to achieve the grade of distinction in an MSc in Project Management. Project professionals are encouraged to be recognised by professional institutions and there is top level approval for all project managers to be members of APM.

Investment Delivery recognises the importance of continuing professional development (CPD) – for some roles, undertaking CPD activities is seen as more valuable than attending a course. All project management staff are expected to complete and record CPD activities and a dedicated intranet area advertises forthcoming professional events and seminars, including those run by APM.

John McGovern, Head of Investment Delivery said: "NWG has a long history of involvement with APM having first won the Project of the Year Award in 1997 and we see APM Corporate Accreditation as the latest step in our journey towards developing our project professionals."

"We have increased the opportunities for self-development with the launch of the 'Our Way, Your Direction' initiative, funding individuals' professional development requests for appropriate qualifications. We identified the APM Introductory Certificate for graduates and new starters and have recently taken our first cohort of 15 successfully through the qualification."

"During the application period for Corporate Accreditation, our project success scores have risen from 82 per cent to a high of 89 per cent and our approach to training and development has contributed to a continuous improvement in our project outturn costs."

"All of these elements are responsible for raising the standards of project delivery and contributing to our company vision of becoming the national leader."



**John McGovern,**  
Head of Investment Delivery



## Personal story

Ben Gilbert, Project Manager  
APM Student Member

Ben joined the investment planning team at NWG as an 18-year-old school leaver, achieving an HND in Civil Engineering within his first few years.

Working in an office with project managers, he was attracted to the profession because of the wide range of experiences, projects and people and being able to work on a project throughout its lifecycle.

"The company offered me an interest-free loan to study for my MSc in Project Management at Northumbria University. I was also allowed the time to attend lectures and I was able to base my research on NWG, using internal resources to access data, obtain opinions and conduct interviews."

He qualified with distinction, having already successfully applied for a project management role in the treatment team. Currently a Grade 3 project manager, he is working to move up the progression ladder.

"It's a very transparent way to progress," said Ben. "The competency self-assessment highlights areas that a project manager may need to develop before being able to progress."

"We are encouraged to do CPD as often as we can. For example, as I became more involved with municipal waste water treatment projects I attended a course at Newcastle University to ensure my theoretical knowledge of the subject was as current as possible. I also take part in APM seminars and take advantage of the help available through the internal knowledge centre."

"I am eager to develop myself and continue to balance my academic development and CPD with practical project management experience."



## Personal story

Dean Thompson, Project Manager  
APM Associate Member

Dean is a top level project manager with NWG, having progressed through the ranks after joining the company from Thames Water.

With a BEng in Instrumentation and Control Engineering already under his belt, NWG gave him the opportunity to work for an MSc, obtain three charterships and make the move into project management.

"I was attracted to the variety that project management offered," he said. "I have benefitted greatly from the hands-on experience of managing projects and lessons learned and I'm now managing bigger capital investment projects, overseeing all stages from start through design and construction, to commissioning and handover."

"Being able to share lessons learned with colleagues through the knowledge centre is extremely valuable, especially at the start of a new project when you can check the database to benefit from the learning of others."

As well as benefitting from opportunities to further his own professional development, Dean has contributed to the development of Investment Delivery's project management procedures. This has included involvement in the production and testing of the Enterprise Project Management sponsor report and risk register – training all project managers in the use of the register – and in updating the Investment Delivery Handbook risk management guidelines.

An Associate Member of APM, he regularly takes part in activities such as APM technical webinars and seminars, as well as specific industry-related courses.

The support of the company has seen him achieve an MSc in Applied Instrumentation and Control Engineering through distance learning with Glasgow Caledonian University and become a Chartered Engineer, Chartered Environmentalist, Chartered Water and Environmental Manager and a Chartered Member of the Institution of Water and Environmental Management. That same support is now helping him work towards his next goal of achieving APM Registered Project Professional status.



Celebrating success – 15 candidates at NWG proudly display their APM Introductory Certificates

## What APM accreditation means to NWG

"NWG's vision to be the national leader is built on five strategic themes: people, competitiveness, customer, communities and environment and our achievement of APM Corporate Accreditation can be aligned to all five strategic themes. In relation to 'people', Corporate Accreditation demonstrates our commitment to the business's commitment for professional and personal development of employees. It also helps NWG to appeal to prospective employees as a company that is committed to the development of project management professionals."

"Building the capability of our project management staff will improve our 'competitiveness', increase professionalism and produce more consistent project outcomes in an increasingly demanding business and regulatory environment. Our focus on our 'customers', 'communities' and the 'environment' is reflected in ensuring that our projects are delivered in a way that minimises environmental impact, promotes positive interaction with the community and is based on sound ethical standards."



**Ian Lumley**, Investment Delivery Team Leader and lead for the Corporate Accreditation

## Association for Project Management and Northumbrian Water

NWG is a corporate member of APM, and currently 44 out of 73 project managers are individual members, with subscriptions reimbursable by the company. This number includes six Registered Project Professionals (RPP), and a further six are progressing applications for RPP status.

Investment Delivery has aligned its project management processes, practices and competencies to the *APM Body of Knowledge* and *Competence Framework*. All project managers have access to electronic copies of all APM publications, along with APM presentations covering the FIVE Dimensions of Professionalism.

The department actively supports APM North East Branch with six members of staff having served as local branch committee members, including two former Branch Chairmen. The benefits of becoming involved with the branch and of individual and corporate membership are also underlined to new starters.

Project managers are encouraged to attend APM evening events and have been funded to attend local branch paid afternoon events on Contract Law and Value Management. Investment Delivery has also provided volunteers to act as project management mentors for teams undertaking the Universities Project Challenge event.

## Association for Project Management

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### **FIVE**Dimensions of Professionalism

#### **APM Corporate Accreditation**

APM Corporate Accreditation will help you stand out as an exemplar in the development of project management professionals. It provides assurances to your customers and suppliers and allows you to attract and retain the best project management talent in the country.

APM Corporate Accreditation recognises the commitment of organisations and professional development services to the defined APM FIVE Dimensions of Professionalism, each of which is supported by an APM standard:

#### **Breadth**

The *APM Body of Knowledge* defines the knowledge needed to manage any kind of project. It underpins many project management standards and methods including the National Occupational Standard in Project Management.

#### **Depth**

The *APM Competence Framework* provides a guide to project management competences. It is part of your professional toolkit; mapping levels of knowledge and experience to help you progress your skills and abilities.

#### **Achievement**

APM qualifications take your career in new and exciting directions. They are recognised across the profession and aligned with IPMA's 4 level Certification Program.

#### **Commitment**

Continuing Professional Development helps develop your project management practice. A targeted development plan will enhance your project management career.

#### **Accountability**

The APM Code of Professional Conduct outlines the ethical practice expected of a professional. Becoming an APM member shows your commitment to the Code and sets you apart from others.