



NWG
living water

NWG BIODIVERSITY STRATEGY

2015

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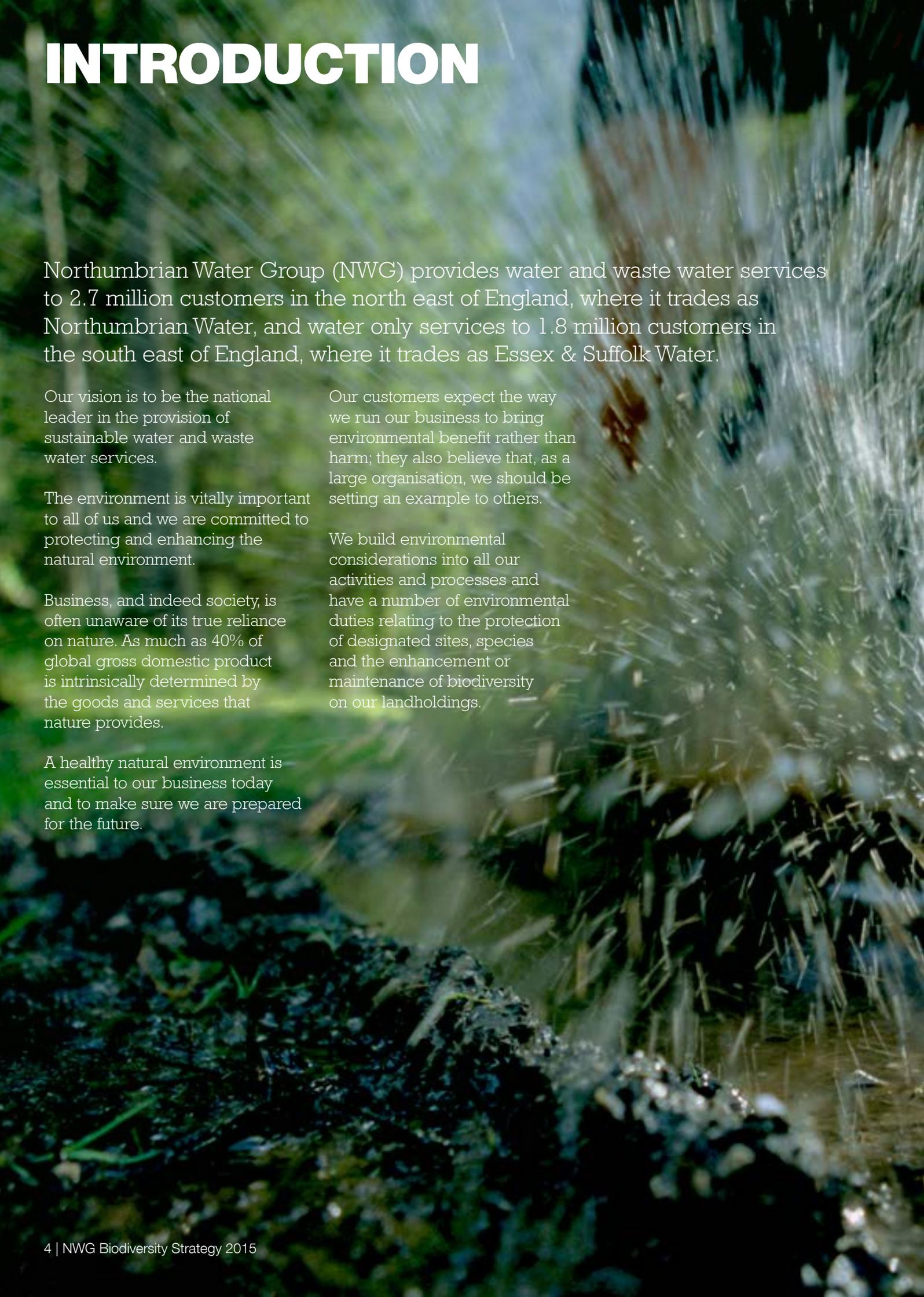


SUPPORTING NWG TO ACHIEVE ITS VISION

A photograph of a man and two young boys fishing in a pond. The man, wearing a light blue shirt, is leaning over the boys, looking at their catch. One boy, wearing a red jacket, is holding a fishing rod. The other boy, wearing a blue jacket, is holding a green net. The background shows a house and trees with autumn foliage.

**“TO BE THE
NATIONAL LEADER
IN THE PROVISION
OF SUSTAINABLE
WATER AND WASTE
WATER SERVICES.”**

INTRODUCTION



Northumbrian Water Group (NWG) provides water and waste water services to 2.7 million customers in the north east of England, where it trades as Northumbrian Water, and water only services to 1.8 million customers in the south east of England, where it trades as Essex & Suffolk Water.

Our vision is to be the national leader in the provision of sustainable water and waste water services.

The environment is vitally important to all of us and we are committed to protecting and enhancing the natural environment.

Business, and indeed society, is often unaware of its true reliance on nature. As much as 40% of global gross domestic product is intrinsically determined by the goods and services that nature provides.

A healthy natural environment is essential to our business today and to make sure we are prepared for the future.

Our customers expect the way we run our business to bring environmental benefit rather than harm; they also believe that, as a large organisation, we should be setting an example to others.

We build environmental considerations into all our activities and processes and have a number of environmental duties relating to the protection of designated sites, species and the enhancement or maintenance of biodiversity on our landholdings.

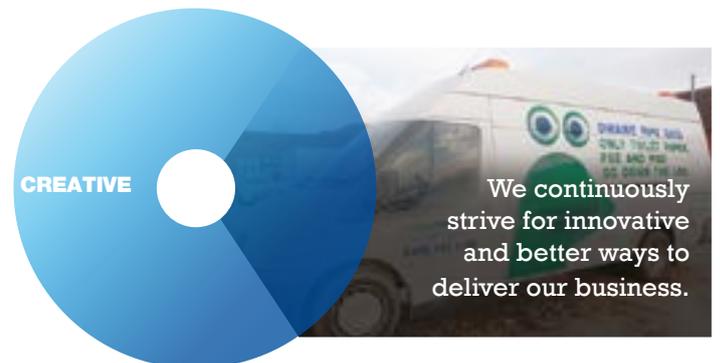
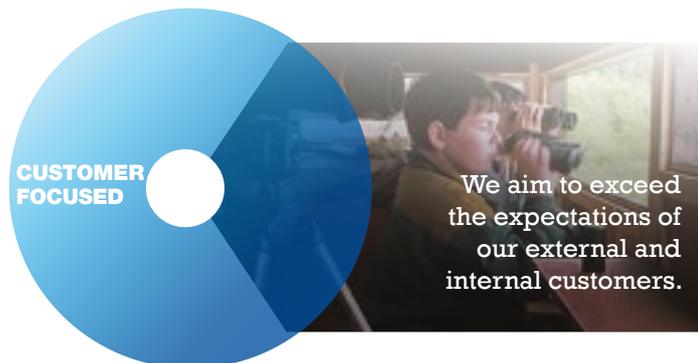
BACKGROUND

NWG has long been involved in conservation work and has a dedicated team providing ecological and biodiversity expertise.

This strategy represents an updated version of our combined Biodiversity Strategy for Northumbrian Water and Essex & Suffolk Water which also encompasses our duty under the Natural Environment and Rural Communities ([NERC](#)) Act to conserve, and where practicable, enhance biodiversity on our landholdings.

OUR VALUES

Our values describe our main principles, qualities and attributes and are embedded in our Biodiversity Strategy. They are the guiding principles which define who we are, what we do and how we do it.



Embedding these values in our Biodiversity Strategy provides a comprehensive approach to conservation across the whole range of the company's activities and sphere of influence. The result is an extensive programme of initiatives, projects and publications, but most of all action to protect and enhance biodiversity.

NWG'S BIODIVERSITY STRATEGY

Our strategy is based on our unique four-stage approach to biodiversity. We identified two major areas of focus and two supporting opportunities for involvement in conservation of biological diversity:

As a landowner and manager.

As an operator.

As a funder.

As an advocate, facilitator and champion.

Our approach in each of these areas is described overleaf. We have also included selected case studies to illustrate this approach in practice.



AS A LANDOWNER AND MANAGER

We recognise that the management of our water and associated landholdings provides an opportunity to conserve and enhance wildlife and habitats that occur or could potentially occur there.

We have developed a survey strategy and management programme to identify and conserve key local and national species and habitats of biodiversity importance:

Surveys

Habitat and species surveys based on our survey strategy, including detailed targeted surveys of key sites and species.

Identifying priorities

Based on Section 41 [NERC Act](#) list (see Appendix 1) and local priorities.

Action plans

Working with regional Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) groups, Local Nature Partnerships (LNP) and others to contribute towards England Biodiversity Strategy targets.

Implementation

Including reporting on activities through regional BAPs.

Key features of this process include:

- Working with local partners; particularly for surveying, identifying priorities and implementation.
- Key part of our Integrated Management System.
- Use of both programmed surveys and opportunistic data collection on wildlife by employees and volunteers.
- Reporting of results through local partnerships and our website.
- Development of ecological sensitivity maps for operational sites.
- All key landholdings have conservation management plans.



Bird counting at Bakethin Reservoir.

AS AN OPERATOR

(i) Direct impacts

We carry out a large investment programme in addition to our routine operational activities. Much of this is directed at environmental improvements which also benefit priority biodiversity species.

For example our £150 million investment in new sewage treatment facilities along the Tyne has resulted in it becoming the best salmon river in the country, with otters now being reported as far downstream as Newcastle.

To make sure that new projects not only avoid damage to areas of biodiversity importance, but also that we identify and take the opportunity to enhance biodiversity as part of new projects we:

- Screen all projects for their potential impact on biodiversity - using data available on our company GIS and regional records centre.
- Where we are unsure of impacts, we commission research to investigate potential implications for biodiversity.

- Take the opportunity for major biodiversity enhancement schemes – recent examples include local water vole habitat creation associated with construction of new water treatment works in the Wear Valley and habitat improvements at Abberton Reservoir as part of a major project to increase reservoir capacity.
- Integrate biodiversity design as part of our treatment processes – for example at Hanningfield where 4.3 hectares of new reedbed are used to treat sludge but also provide a valuable habitat for birdlife and insects.

(ii) Indirect impacts

- We recognise that our purchasing policy, transport, waste minimisation, water use, energy consumption and other activities can have real, though indirect impacts on biodiversity, albeit not readily apparent and often not local. We address these environmental impacts through targeted projects and initiatives, our Integrated Management System and our Corporate Responsibility Groups.

Recent examples have included:

- The Main Event leakage reduction programme.
- Energy management and renewable energy programme.
- Aggregate re-use and other recycling initiatives (including sludge recycling).
- Just an hour – giving employees the opportunity to get involved in environmental projects from erecting bird boxes, tree planting and working with environmental partners on habitat management.



Reedbeds at Lamesley.

AS A FUNDER - BRANCH OUT

- We support numerous individual species and habitat projects at both national and local levels through our [Branch Out](#) initiative. This fund is aimed at encouraging partnerships to reconnect habitats for the benefit of people and wildlife.

A major aim of this fund is to build resilience and adaption to our changing climate whilst bringing benefits to water, wildlife and communities. In line with our company wide Partnerships Strategy, Branch Out is an effective mechanism of providing grassroots support to a range of projects that enhance the local environment.

We will work as active funding partners, not simply as a source of finance.



Branch Out

BRANCH OUT CASE STUDIES

Past examples of support from Branch Out include:

Small pearl-bordered fritillary project (SPBF)

This is one element of a larger landscape scale project developed by Durham Wildlife Trust and known as the 'Heart of Durham.' The SPBF project aims to restore or create areas of wetland habitat to link up the existing fragmented populations of this increasingly rare butterfly.

Prestwick Carr Living Landscape

As one of the earliest Living Landscape projects in the north east of England, this Northumberland Wildlife Trust scheme aims to reverse years of drainage to restore a historic wetland which will also provide additional capacity for storm water storage.

BTO Cuckoo Project

Since 2011 we have been involved in a project with the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) to help learn more about the Cuckoo. NW's Branch Out fund has helped support this important project for four successive years.

The cuckoo is one of the UK's fastest declining migrants and one that we know very little about once it leaves the UK. Since 2011 the BTO have annually attached satellite-tracking devices to Cuckoos from the UK to learn more about their stop-over sites, on their way to and from Africa, and also about where they spend the winter in Africa.

RSPB Minsmere Project

The Branch Out fund helped the RSPB to deliver their Discover Nature Project at Minsmere. The fund provided a contribution to a £2 million project at Minsmere Reserve. The project involved enhancement works, including provision of a new disabled access bird hide situated in a reedbed, re-surfacing the car park, a new reception area, renovation of the toilets and linking them to the visitor centre, creation of a family discovery zone and a new educational facility. The discovery zone is a place where families and school groups can enjoy natural play and discover what makes Minsmere special.

AS A FACILITATOR, ADVOCATE AND CHAMPION

We use our environmental and business networks to promote conservation and biodiversity issues to a wide range of audiences.

Nature Focus

- Every year we focus on a specific theme to provide a range of events and activities to raise the awareness of our own people about all aspects of biodiversity. These include guided walks, talks, wildflower giveaways and photographic competitions. We often work in partnership with our environmental partners to help with particular events.

Environmental partnerships

- Our customers have told us they want us to work in partnership towards common goals. Environmental partnerships is a significant area where we do this. Working in partnership with the Wildlife Trusts and the Land Trust we employ trust employees to help deliver management activity on our sites with volunteers. These trust employees are also able to deliver core activities for the trusts, including management of reserves and delivery of educational activity.

Sharing best practice

- Working in partnership with other biodiversity bodies we have used our business networks to promote biodiversity and encourage others to become involved.

For example:

- Exploring the use of biodiversity offsetting in our Essex & Suffolk Water operational area.
- Advising on Natural England's strategy.



Langford water
treatment works.

THE FUTURE

Our Biodiversity Strategy provides the framework for integrating biodiversity into all areas of our business internally, and more importantly with the many external stakeholders we work with. This is an ongoing process, subject to change and adaptation, but always focusing on the key element of working in partnership to maintain and enhance biological diversity.

Companies large and small are beginning to recognise that this natural capital needs to be accounted for in both their day to day operations as well as in investment decisions – declining natural capital represents a very serious business risk.

A plethora of studies and initiatives are now informing policy-making, providing a wake up call to make sure business factors in the real value of nature into its thinking. Business models will have to change as pressures on nature mounts.

Future business success will be directly linked to how nature and natural systems are accounted for and we want to be a leader in accounting for natural capital. We see this as integral to the provision of sustainable water and waste water services and believe that it makes good business sense to make nature economically visible.



HABITATS AND SPECIES OF PRINCIPAL IMPORTANCE

SPECIES

AMPHIBIANS	Common toad Great crested newt
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BIRDS	Skylark Bittern Linnet Common cuckoo Yellowhammer Reed bunting Herring gull Spotted flycatcher Curlew House sparrow Tree sparrow Grey partridge Dunnock Bullfinch Starling Black grouse Song thrush Lapwing
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FISH	European eel Brown/sea trout
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MAMMALS	Water vole Hedgehog Brown hare Otter Dormouse Harvest mouse Noctule bat Soprano pipistrelle Brown long-eared bat Red squirrel
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REPTILES	Slow worm Grass snake Adder Common lizard
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LOWER PLANTS AND FUNGI	Earth-tongue Big blue pinkgill
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PLANTS	Alchemilla acutiloba (a lady's mantle) Flat sedge Juniper Pillwort Holly-leaved naiad
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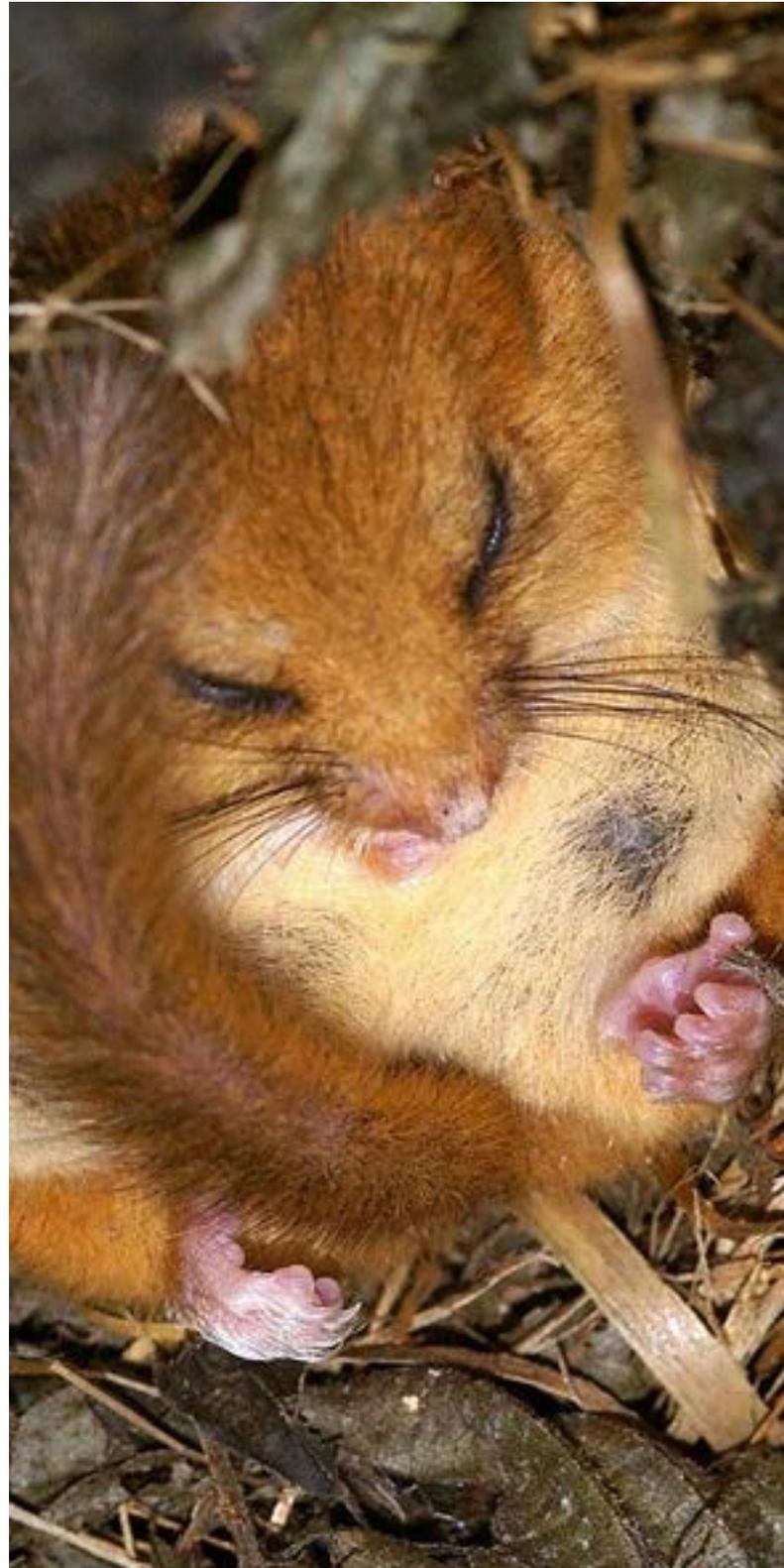
INVERTEBRATES	
BUTTERFLIES	Small pearl-bordered fritillary Small heath Large heath Dingy skipper Crayling Wall White letter hairstreak
MOTHS	Grey dagger Knot grass Brown-spot pinion Mouse moth Dusky brocade Deep-brown dart Garden tiger Centre-barred swallow Dark brocade Latticed heath Small square-spot Figure of eight Autumnal rustic Spinach Double dart Ghost moth V-moth Dot moth Broom moth Rosy minor Shoulder-striped wainscot Shaded broad-bar White ermine Buff ermine Anomalous Pale eggar Cinnabar Sallow Heath rustic
DRAGONFLIES AND DAMSELFLIES	Southern damselfly Norfolk hawk
CRUSTACEA	White-clawed crayfish
SNAILS	Round-mouthed whorl snail Desmoulin whorl snail
SPIDERS	Fen raft spider

HABITATS

BOUNDARY	Hedgerows
FRESHWATER	Ponds
GRASSLAND	Lowland meadow Lowland dry acid grassland Purple moor grass and rush pasture Upland hay meadow
HEATHLAND	Lowland heathland
WETLAND	Blanket bog Lowland fen Reedbeds Upland flushes, fens and swamps
WOODLAND	Upland mixed ashwood Upland oakwood Wet woodland Lowland mixed deciduous woodland

BIODIVERSITY STRATEGY – PRIORITY HABITATS AND SPECIES

The list of species and habitats shown here have been identified from a larger list published by the Secretary of State to meet the requirements of Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (2006). These are all deemed to be of principal importance for the purpose of conserving biodiversity and have been identified in consultation with Natural England. This places a regulatory duty on public bodies such as water and sewerage companies to take steps that are reasonably practicable to further the conservation of the species and habitats that are in the published list. Our updated Biodiversity Strategy will help us to meet these requirements as we aim to safeguard natural capital through our direct and indirect operational activities and by influencing others through our partnership and funding activities.



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For further information log on to
www.nwl.co.uk/conservation
or email conservation@nwl.co.uk

Branch out:
branchout@nwl.co.uk
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