

# GETTING WATER TO YOUR HOME

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## HOW TO CONTACT US

By telephone:

**0345 733 5566\*** for billing and account enquiries. Monday to Friday from 8.00am until 7.00pm and Saturday from 8.00am until 1.00pm.

**0345 717 1100\*** for general enquiries about water and sewerage services. Monday to Friday, from 8.00am until 8.00pm, and Saturday from 9.00am until 1.00pm.

This number is also available 24 hours for emergencies.


\*Calls may be monitored and recorded in order to improve service quality and employee training.

If English is not your first language we offer a free telephone translation service. Let us know which language you require and we will arrange for an interpreter to join the call to assist. Deaf and hard of hearing customers can contact us using Text Relay – using the App, just prefix any of our listed numbers with **18001** and a Text Relay operator will join the call.

Alternatively you can let us know the name of someone you trust who has agreed to talk to us on your behalf.

Contact us by email through our website [www.nwl.co.uk](http://www.nwl.co.uk)

In writing:  
Northumbrian Water  
PO Box 200  
Durham  
DH1 9WG

Follow us on Twitter  
 [@nwater\\_care](https://twitter.com/nwater_care)

CCW the voice for water consumers represents customers' interests and offers free independent advice. It can be contacted at:

CCW  
23 Stephenson Street  
Birmingham  
B2 4BH

Tel: **0300 034 2222**  
Website: [www.ccw.org.uk](http://www.ccw.org.uk)  
Opening hours: Monday to Friday,  
8.30am until 5.00pm

## Ofwat

Ofwat is the economic regulator of the water and sewerage industry in England and Wales. It sets the price limits for each company, but also protects and monitors the standards of service you receive. It also expects companies to improve their services by becoming more efficient. The address and telephone number is:

Ofwat  
Centre City Tower  
7 Hill Street  
Birmingham  
B5 4UA

Tel: **0121 644 7500**  
Fax: **0121 644 7559**  
Minicom: **0121 644 7622**

Email: [mailbox@ofwat.gov.uk](mailto:mailbox@ofwat.gov.uk)

## MEETING YOUR EXPECTATIONS

Every day, Northumbrian Water customers use enough water to fill half a million baths, or to flush over five million toilets.

It's our job to make sure that this water meets the rigorous quality standards set down in the Water Supply (Water Quality) Regulations 2000 by the Government and European Union based on standards recommended by the World Health Organisation. It has for example, to meet standards for chemical and bacteriological quality, colour, taste and odour. Our aim is to exceed these standards wherever possible.

## THE SOURCE OF OUR WATER

Virtually all the water we supply comes from reservoirs and rivers. The remainder, about 5%, comes from water-bearing rocks deep underground, called aquifers.

There are two main types of reservoir, created by damming rivers or streams. Direct supply reservoirs store water and supply it straight to a water treatment works. Others, called river regulating reservoirs, store water during rainy periods so that the river can be topped up during dry spells. Kielder Water, our most famous reservoir in Northumberland, is a river regulating reservoir. It releases water into the North Tyne river, which joins the South Tyne river near Hexham. The water can also be transferred to several of the region's other rivers and water treatment works.

## MAKING YOUR WATER SAFE

Raw water is treated through a number of different processes to make sure it is safe for consumption. To demonstrate that the water supply coming into your home is safe to use, we take thousands of samples for testing. These samples are taken both from taps in customers homes and directly from our underground water mains.

Over 100,000 scientific tests are taken each year to ensure that drinking water quality standards are met. The results of these tests can be viewed in summary on our website, [www.nwl.co.uk](http://www.nwl.co.uk), in the section **In your area**. Alternatively you can call us on **0345 717 1100** and request a copy of the report that covers your specific area.

The Drinking Water Inspectorate (DWI) is the regulator for drinking water in England and Wales and makes sure that water companies meet more than 50 legal standards for drinking water quality. The DWI report is published each year and is available from the DWI website at [www.dwi.gov.uk/about/annual-report](http://www.dwi.gov.uk/about/annual-report).

Alternatively, enquiries can be made by telephone or email; call **0330 041 6501** or email [dwi.enquiries@defra.gov.uk](mailto:dwi.enquiries@defra.gov.uk). The DWI also provides consumer advice on its website, [www.dwi.gov.uk](http://www.dwi.gov.uk).

## WATER QUALITY

Water quality is strictly monitored by ourselves and the Drinking Water Inspectorate. Minute amounts of minerals, metals and other substances are expected to be present in water and these must be below regulatory standards.

The quality of the water supply can be affected by how it is stored and piped within your property. The water industry has produced a booklet to make sure that you are aware of your responsibilities and how to maintain the high quality of the supply within your property. This is available from WaterUK at [www.water.org.uk/sites/default/files/wp/2019/06/Water-In-The-Home-2015-FINAL.pdf](http://www.water.org.uk/sites/default/files/wp/2019/06/Water-In-The-Home-2015-FINAL.pdf) or please call us on **0345 717 1100** and request a copy.

The most common enquiries we receive regarding water quality are:

### Chlorine

Chlorine is used in water treatment to make sure the water in your tap is completely safe to drink. The addition of chlorine to our water supplies is essential and there is no health risk at all associated with the very low and controlled levels of chlorine in your tap water.

In some areas, the use of chlorine may result in a slight odour. This can be stronger during colder weather as the chlorine dissipates more slowly at lower temperatures. If you notice a smell, simply leaving a jug of water in your fridge for an hour or so will allow the chlorine to dissipate.

### Iron and manganese

These are harmless metals found naturally in the environment. Although iron is used in water treatment, its level in water leaving the treatment works is very low. The most common reason for iron in drinking water is sediment from the corrosion of unlined cast iron mains.

This sediment can cause discoloured water and is easily removed by flushing water mains and running taps.

### Aluminium

This is a metal found naturally in the environment. It is used in water treatment but is effectively removed at the treatment works.

The levels set for iron, manganese and aluminium are due to their ability to colour the drinking water. However these levels are carefully controlled to make sure that we supply clear colourless water to our customers.

### Lead

There is virtually no lead in drinking water as it leaves our treatment works or our mains. Any lead in drinking water usually comes from lead service pipes or domestic plumbing, mainly found in older properties. If you are concerned about lead in your drinking water, please contact us on **0345 717 1100** for advice about replacing lead pipes or visit our website.

### **Pesticides**

The use of pesticides by farmers, amenity users, rail and road service providers and other sources all contribute to the presence of pesticides in the environment. These are subsequently detected at minute levels in drinking water and the levels detected are not a risk to public health. We have started a programme of work to make sure pesticides levels in our drinking water always meet the legal standards.

### **Nitrates**

These occur naturally in the environment and can also be attributed to intensive farming practices. However nitrate levels are below the current official standard.

### **Water hardness**

Some water supplies in our region are classed as hard water. This means that the water contains dissolved minerals of calcium and magnesium.

Hard water can lead to scale forming in kettles and storage cylinders. At temperatures in excess of 60°C, minerals are deposited within the vessel in which

the water is heated. However the actual build up of scale will not normally exceed one millimetre before it falls harmlessly away. The most common example of this can be found in electric kettles.

If you buy a dishwasher, you may need to know the hardness of the water to set the softening control correctly. You can find this information on our website under **In your area**, alternatively if you call us on **0345 717 1100**, we will be happy to confirm the level of hardness for your supply.

Domestic water softeners can use salt for regeneration. This can result in a high level of sodium, and these softeners should not be fitted to your drinking water tap.

### **If you're not happy with water quality...**

If you suspect something is wrong with the water supply, please let us know as soon as possible by calling us on **0345 717 1100**. We promise to contact or visit you within four hours of your call if we cannot provide appropriate advice at the time of the call.

If we take a sample as part of our investigation, we will provide details of the analysis within ten working days and help you compare it to the relevant quality standards.

If we identify that the water is unfit to drink, we will issue immediate advice, such as do not use it, or boil before using it for drinking or cooking. This advice will come to you through notices posted to you, local media news bulletins, personal visits, social media or by phone – whichever is the quickest and most effective way to get the message to you.

We can arrange to have bottled water delivered to you free of charge if you need extra care for a medical condition, which could be a problem if you are advised not to use your tap water. Please register your details with us by calling **0345 717 1100**.

## GETTING THE WATER YOU NEED

We make sure that you have enough water for daily use such as drinking, washing, cooking, central heating and sanitation. We also make provision for garden watering and car washing.

Occasionally, it may be necessary to impose some restrictions on hosepipes and garden sprinklers. In very serious conditions, we may have to apply for a drought order banning non-essential use of water.

We aim to avoid all water restrictions through the efficient management of our water supply by:

- Managing demand through metering and reducing leakage.
- Developing additional resources for use in the medium and long-term.
- Encouraging the efficient use of water through education.
- Promoting the use of water efficient devices.

We are committed to promoting the wise use of water, and have a duty to do so in accordance with the Water Industry Act (WIA91). Leaflets explaining water conservation and water saving kits are freely available. These items can be requested from our website in the section **Saving water**, alternatively you can call us on **0345 717 1100** to order a kit or request a copy of the leaflet.

If we do need to turn off your supply due to emergency drought restrictions, you can claim £20 for each day, or part of the day that your home is without water (or £50 for each day or part of the day that your business is without water). Full details of this and all of our other guaranteed standards of service are available in a leaflet called **Our promise to you**. Please call us on **0345 717 1100** if you would like a copy. This information is also available on our website.

Information about our Water Resources Management Plan 2010-2035 is on our website, [www.nwl.co.uk](http://www.nwl.co.uk).



## UNDER PRESSURE

Our job is to make sure that water pressure is enough to reach the top storey of every building that we supply, with the exception of buildings that are too tall for water to flow by gravitation from the reservoir or water tower. Currently there are a few places where pressure does not meet minimum requirements, and we are investing in new schemes to increase pressure.

We are expected to provide water pressure that will normally fill a storage tank at second floor roof level, and enable the cold-water tap in a ground floor kitchen to fill a 4.5 litre container in 30 seconds.

In technical terms, this means ten metres head at the boundary of your property (a flow of nine litres per minute).

Pressure and flow rates can be affected by many things including:

- The height of the property above the water main, and its height relative to the reservoir or water tower.
- The condition of the pipe supplying a property and the plumbing inside it.
- The shared use of a service pipe with another property.
- Heavy demand upon the network at certain times.
- Essential maintenance work.

If you are considering the installation of an unvented hot water system in your home, ask your plumber to contact us for details of pressure in your area, as they need a relatively high pressure to operate effectively.

The pressure of water in your area is constantly measured and if it falls below seven metres static head for more than one hour, twice in any 28 day period, you are entitled to £25 from us.

This is an automatic payment as long as we know about it. However, if you suspect that you fall into this category, please let us know and we will investigate your claim straight away.

If you think your water pressure is too low, we will look into it. We will remedy the problem if it is our responsibility. If not, we will advise you on any action you need to take.

## KEEPING YOUR WATER FLOWING

Although we aim to provide you with a constant supply of water, occasionally a burst main, pump failure or electricity supply problem can disrupt the service.

Our priority is to restore the supply to all of our customers as soon as possible in the event of an emergency interruption to the water supply. If you need water due to a medical condition or to take medication, we can supply you with bottled water free of charge.

For further details, you can view or request a copy of our leaflet **Priority Services**, a guide to services for customers who need extra care, and register for this service on our website under **Your services**.

Alternatively you can call us on **0345 717 1100**.

Where local mains have failed, we aim to restore supplies within 12 hours. If we do not, we will provide an emergency supply

and pay you compensation. Repairs to our major trunk mains may take longer. If we fail to restore supplies within 24 hours we will pay you compensation.

At the time of the incident you can visit our website, **www.nwl.co.uk**, for the latest information available, or call us on **0345 717 1100** for further advice.

Occasionally, we may have to turn off your water supply to carry out essential planned maintenance work. We will give you written notice of this, letting you know the date, time and how long the interruption should last.

If we do not inform you or if the water supply is off for longer than planned, then you may be eligible for compensation. This will be sent to you automatically.

If we need to turn off the water supply to your property for between one and four hours, we will let you know in writing at least 12 hours beforehand. If we need to turn off the water supply to your property for more than four hours, we will let you know in writing at least 48 hours

beforehand and tell you when it will be turned on again. We will also give you a telephone number to ring for extra help if you need it.

As part of our regular programme to check for leaks, we occasionally need to turn off sections of the mains network. We try to do this overnight to cause minimum disruption and as it only lasts for about half an hour, we do not normally inform our customers. However if such an interruption is likely to cause you difficulties, please let us know so we can note this on our records. We will then let you know in advance if any work of this nature is planned.

Full details of our guaranteed standards of service can be found in the leaflet, **Our promise to you**, which is available on our website, **www.nwl.co.uk**, or call us on **0345 717 1100** to request a copy.



## GETTING YOUR NEW PROPERTY CONNECTED

If you are constructing a new property, our Developer Services team will advise you on the connection procedures and whether there is a need to install new mains in addition to the service connections required. The need to install new mains is usually only a requirement where there are a number of properties to be developed and there are no existing adjacent and accessible mains of adequate size available. Log on to our website at [www.nwl.co.uk](http://www.nwl.co.uk) to download a new connection application form, alternatively call us on **0345 717 1100**.

For service connections, once we have received your completed application form, we will provide you with a quotation for the work to be carried out. We will also provide advice to help you:

- Lay your part of the service pipe, including details of the specification for this.

- Comply with Water Supply (Water Fittings) Regulations 1999.
- Ensure supply pipes are laid correctly on contaminated sites.
- Correctly size the supply pipe and meter to the property.
- Obtain permission from other landowners who may be involved.

Our charge for service connections include:

- Making the connection and the disconnection of any redundant supplies to the site.
- Laying our section of the service pipe and installation of a meter and chamber.
- A contribution towards the overall cost of our making supplies available to new customers – known as an infrastructure charge.

Once a successful water regulations inspection has been carried out and all necessary payments have been received, we will connect the supply – normally within 21 calendar days. Please note this is subject to the local authority granting permission to excavate the public

highway. If you are building a development comprising of several properties and there are no water mains in the immediate vicinity, you may requisition water mains from us. For enquiries regarding requisition applications, please contact us at [newdevelopmentwater@nwl.co.uk](mailto:newdevelopmentwater@nwl.co.uk). Alternatively, we support developers who wish to construct their own mains. For information on this Self Lay option, including guidance and application forms, please take a look at our Self Lay policy on our website, [www.nwl.co.uk](http://www.nwl.co.uk).

If you need any further information or help, please contact the Developer Services team at the following address and contact number:

**Developer Services,  
Northumbrian Water, Leat House,  
Pattinson Road, Washington, NE38 8LB.**

Tel: **0345 609 4639**

You can refer the matter to Ofwat if you are dissatisfied with the terms and conditions of the connection or the amount you have been charged.

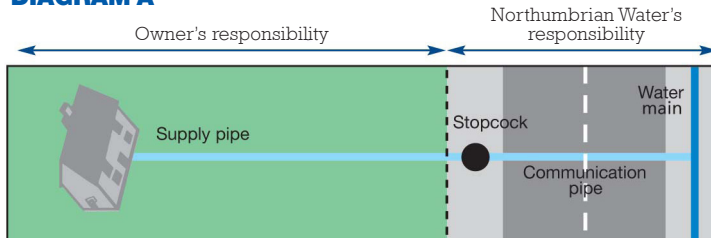
## GUIDANCE ON PIPE OWNERSHIP

In most circumstances, Northumbrian Water owns the pipes in the road or pavement. This includes the pipe connecting the water main in the street to the stopcock or meter (which we also own) outside your property. We maintain these pipes and pay for repairs.

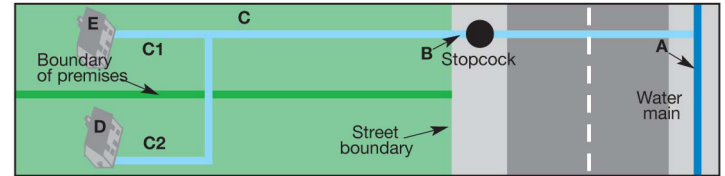
You (or your landlord) own all the pipes on your property. This includes underground pipes in your garden or driveway as well as the pipes inside the building. You (or your landlord) have to pay for any repairs to pipes and fittings inside the building, as well as repairs to any pipes outside. This includes pipework laid in private ground owned by a third party.

Diagram A shows which pipes belong to us and which to you. Diagram B shows an example of a shared supply. In some cases, properties share a supply pipe, where the private part of the water supply serves several properties.

**DIAGRAM A**



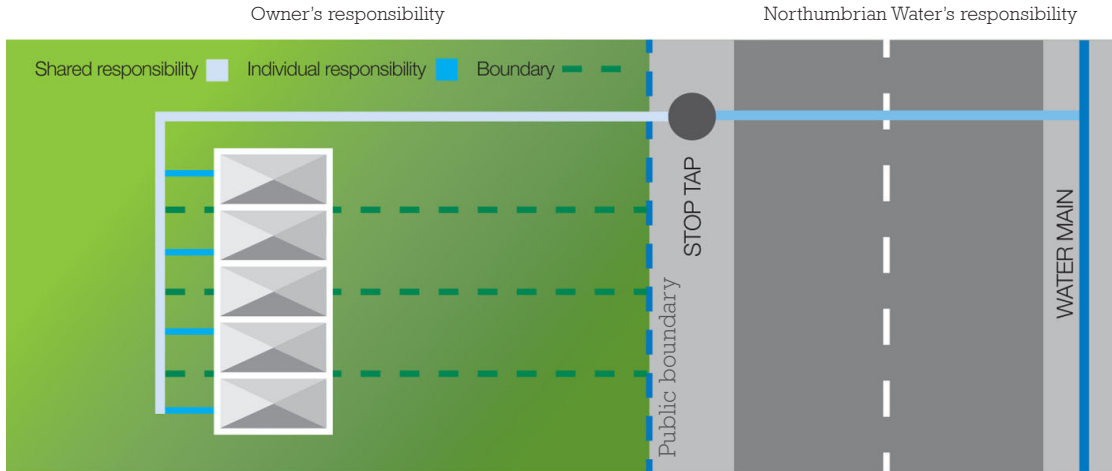
**DIAGRAM B**



This means it is jointly owned and if there is a problem, a number of customers may each have to pay a share of the costs to sort out the problem. Sometimes this may mean that although only one customer has reported a leak or noticed a problem, a number of neighbours are affected and have to share any costs. Customers should also be aware that shared supply pipes can sometimes experience changes in water pressure as a result of water being drawn by a neighbouring property.

Sometimes it is difficult to tell who is responsible for a pipe, but we are always happy to advise you. You can ring us on **0345 717 1100**.

# KEY TO PIPE RESPONSIBILITY



Service element	Responsibility	
	Water company ownership	Maintenance
A - B Communication Pipe Stopcock	Yes	The water company
B - C Shared supply pipe	No	D and E customers jointly
C - C1 and C - C2 Supply pipes	No	D and E customers individually (D with consent from E in order to carry out necessary work on E's premises)

In the following situations, we may insist that each property has a separate water supply:

- The properties are converted into a larger number of properties.
- The shared pipework has been tampered with.
- One of the properties is in arrears with payment.

If we cannot agree about separate pipes, the dispute can be referred to Ofwat.

## PROBLEMS WITH PIPEWORK

### Leaks

You are responsible for any leak on your section of pipework. If there is a leak on your pipe, we may ask you to repair or replace the damaged pipe. We can advise you how to get it fixed.

Further information is available in our leakage policy, **Dealing with leaks**, which is available on our website, [www.nwl.co.uk](http://www.nwl.co.uk).

You can check for leaks by looking for damp areas on the ground in dry weather, lush vegetation during hot weather, reduced water flow or noise on your water pipes. If you have a water meter, you can take a meter reading and make sure there are no taps or water using appliances running in your house. Wait an hour and take another reading; if the reading has increased, you may have a leak. Contact us on **0345 717 1100** for guidance.

To report a leak outside, ring our leakage hotline on **0800 393 084** (freephone from a landline 24 hours).

### Rust

Old iron pipes can become badly rusted which restricts flow and may discolour the water. In such a situation we would replace our part of the pipe and suggest you do the same.

### Lead pipes

If your home was built before 1970 it may have lead pipes. We have an obligation to make sure the water supplied to your property meets the current standard, but you may still want to consider replacing your pipework.

We have a policy called **Our water quality standards and replacing your lead pipes**, which explains how we will replace our communication pipe at no cost to you when you replace your lead supply pipe. (see previous page entitled **Guidance on pipe ownership** for details on where this is located).

You can download the policy document from our website, [www.nwl.co.uk](http://www.nwl.co.uk), or contact us for guidance on **0345 717 1100**.

### Electrical earthing

Never earth anything to your water supply pipe.

The safe earthing of electrical appliances in your home is your responsibility and you should consult your electricity company or an approved electrical contractor for any advice.

Many houses built before 1966 rely on their water pipe as an earth, but the increasing number of plastic pipes reduces the effectiveness of such an earth. If in doubt please seek advice.

### **Curbing contamination**

There are strict regulations to prevent contamination, waste, misuse and undue water consumption. Free advice about the Water Supply (Water Fittings) Regulations 1999 and the use of approved fittings can be obtained from our technical representatives. Please call us on **0345 717 1100** for more information.

### **Preventing bursts**

Water leaking from a burst pipe in your home can cause significant damage. An uninsulated pipe can freeze overnight, even if it is inside your home. However there are several simple steps you can take to help avoid this happening to you.

If possible, set your heating to come on for short periods every day to help prevent pipes freezing.

Check for draughts around windows and doors, insulate where possible. If you are going away from home and cannot take any of these steps, you should turn off your water supply at the stop tap and drain your pipes and tanks.

If you are leaving your home empty over the winter, ask a neighbour or friend to visit your home regularly to turn your heating on and off.

Make sure all pipes and tanks in the loft are insulated. Do not lag under the tank as this will prevent heat rising from the house warming the bottom of the tank.

Check that your loft tank has a lid and that it is fitted properly and insulated.

Lag pipes in unheated outhouses and garages.

If possible, turn off the supply to your garden tap and drain the pipe.

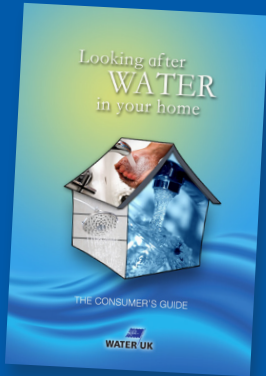
Replace the washers in any dripping taps or ball valves, otherwise the overflow pipe may freeze and cause flooding. Make sure taps are properly turned off before you go to bed at night.

Make sure you know where your stop taps are both inside and outside of your home, and that they work.

If you need help locating your external stop tap, please call us on **0345 717 1100**.



Water UK has produced a consumer's guide called **Looking after water in your home**, which you can view or request from the Water UK website, [www.water.org.uk](http://www.water.org.uk), or by calling us on **0345 717 1100**.



## **WATER MAINS RECORDS**

All water companies are legally bound to hold maps that show the approximate position of their water mains. Northumbrian Water's Geographical Information System (GIS) records detailed information relating to our water mains and you have a right to see our records. To arrange this, please contact **0345 717 1100**.

## **POWERS OF ENTRY**

We have statutory rights of entry to your premises or land to investigate compliance with Water Supply (Water Fittings) Regulations 1999, to take samples and to carry out surveys or work. Except in an emergency, we will call at a reasonable time and, if exercising our statutory right of entry, we will give you prior notice. If we fail to provide the appropriate notice you have the right to refuse us entry.

## **BOGUS CALLERS**

Please be aware of bogus callers (that is people who claim to be employed by Northumbrian Water or 'the water board', but are only interested in stealing from your property) who are known to operate in our supply area. If you are in any doubt about the validity of a caller claiming to be from Northumbrian Water, **DO NOT** let them into your property.

All of our representatives carry an identity card with the Northumbrian Water logo and a Braille strip. Ring us on **0345 717 1100** to confirm the caller's identity if you are still not sure.

The number of our Customer Centre is **0345 717 1100**. You can also ring this number to register a password with us for extra security. Genuine Northumbrian Water employees will not object to you checking their identification while they wait outside.

## FINDING OUT MORE

This leaflet forms part of our Code of Practice for domestic customers, which provides customers with essential information about our company. All our Codes are approved by Ofwat.

- **Our promise to you** (our service level and how we will compensate you if things go wrong).
- **Managing debt** (our Code of Practice on debt).
- **Dealing with leaks** (our Code of Practice on leakage, guidance on pipe ownership and our repair policy).
- **Getting answers** (our Code of Practice on complaints).
- **Priority Services** - Can we help you?
- **Your water meter** (a guide for domestic customers).
- **Our sewerage services.**

To order any Code of Practice leaflet in Braille, large print or on a CD, please call **0345 717 1100**.

We also offer information leaflets on water efficiency in the home and garden, sewer flooding and protecting the environment.



Northumbrian Water  
Abbey Road  
Pity Me  
Co Durham  
DH1 5FJ

[www.nwl.co.uk](http://www.nwl.co.uk)

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