

Communications Pack

The £40 million Water Breakthrough Challenge opens for entries on 6 May 2021, calling for ambitious, collaborative water sector projects which drive far-reaching and long-lasting benefits to customers, society and the environment.

We would appreciate your support in spreading the word within your organisation and through any relevant networks.

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# Background

* The £40 million Water Breakthrough Challenge aims to spark ambitious innovation and enable new approaches and ways of working to address the big challenges facing the sector.
* Entries are now open until Thursday 3 June 2021 with successful partnerships winning up to £10 million to develop and implement their initiatives.
* The Breakthrough Challenge is run by Ofwat and Nesta Challenges, supported by Arup, and is the second in a series of competitions funded through Ofwat’s Innovation Fund.
* The winners of Ofwat’s first competition – the Innovation in Water Challenge – include projects that turn ammonia in wastewater into green energy and use artificial intelligence (AI) and unexploited telecoms cables to detect leaks in the water network.

# Template Articles

These articles can be adapted for use either internally (e.g. intranet posts) or externally (e.g. newsletter). Please feel free to add to these articles and adjust as you see fit.

## Quick Brief

**£40m Water Breakthrough Challenge now open for entries**

The first Water Breakthrough Challenge is now open. The Challenge, delivered by Ofwat and Nesta Challenges, is calling for ambitious, innovative projects which can drive long-lasting benefits for customers, society and the environment.

Water companies in England and Wales can apply for between £1 million and £10 million in funding to deliver initiatives they would otherwise be unable to invest in or explore, and are actively encouraged to enter in partnership with organisations within and outside the water sector.

Entries close on 3 June. Selected entrants will be invited to submit further details from 28 June, with the winners to be announced in September 2021.

For more information, [register for the webinar on 13 May](https://nesta.zoom.us/webinar/register/5416196877195/WN_ifOJgU71TdCVEBG-mtsKuQ), or visit the challenge website:<https://waterinnovation.challenges.org/breakthrough/>

## Longer article

**£40m Water Breakthrough Challenge calls for new wave of innovation**

The first Water Breakthrough Challenge is now open, calling for ambitious innovation and new ways of working which can drive long-lasting benefits for customers, society and the environment.

The Challenge, delivered by Ofwat and Nesta Challenges, aims to equip the water sector to address the big challenges facing the sector, from achieving net zero, to protecting natural ecosystems, or reducing the impact of extreme weather. Water companies in England and Wales can apply for between £1 million and £10 million in funding to deliver initiatives they would otherwise be unable to invest in or explore.

The opening of the Water Breakthrough Challenge follows [last month’s announcement of the winners of Ofwat’s first innovation competition, the Innovation in Water Challenge](https://waterinnovation.challenges.org/news-updates/2021/announcing-the-winners-of-the-first-innovation-in-water-challenge/). Winning projects include green initiatives such as planting and restoring seagrass meadows on the Essex and Suffolk coastlines, a scheme to turn ammonia in wastewater into green hydrogen gas, and software that can monitor the degradation of wildlife habitats. Other ideas focus on the prevention of leaks in the water network through the use of AI, CCTV, and unexploited optical fibre strands in telecoms networks, as well as using behavioural science to better support vulnerable customers.

As for the previous competition, entries to the Water Breakthrough Challenge must be led by water companies, but entrants are encouraged to pursue partnerships with organisations within and outside the water sector. These could include universities and institutes, retailers, start-ups, or small businesses from any sector, such as energy, manufacturing, health, or financial services. Partners for the winning entries to the Innovation in Water Challenge included environmental charities, engineering and construction businesses, and consumer groups.

Entries to the Water Breakthrough Challenge close on 3 June. Selected entrants will be invited to submit further details from 28 June, with the winners to be announced in September 2021.

For more information, [register for the webinar on 13 May](https://nesta.zoom.us/webinar/register/5416196877195/WN_ifOJgU71TdCVEBG-mtsKuQ), or visit the challenge website:<https://waterinnovation.challenges.org/breakthrough/>

# Suggested social posts

Twitter

@Ofwat’s £40 million Water Breakthrough Challenge launches today! An exciting opportunity to win up to £10 million and develop that game-changing initiative you’ve been waiting to explore. Enter now: <https://waterinnovation.challenges.org/breakthrough/> @NestaChallenges @ArupGroup

Calling all innovators from any sector: the Water Breakthrough Challenge is officially open for entries – and you could win up to £10 million! Get all the information you need to enter today: <https://waterinnovation.challenges.org/breakthrough/> @Ofwat @NestaChallenges @ArupGroup

@Ofwat and @NestaChallenges have launched the Water Breakthrough Challenge today! Find a partner and enter for your chance to receive up to £10 million. You can find more info on the website waterinnovation.challenges.org, or register for a webinar on 13 May:   
<https://nesta.zoom.us/webinar/register/5416196877195/WN_ifOJgU71TdCVEBG-mtsKuQ>

LinkedIn

The £40 million Water Breakthrough Challenge launches today! Delivered by @Ofwat and @Nesta-Challenges, supported by @Arup, this is an excellent opportunity to pitch your most innovative ideas and win up to £10 million for transformational initiatives which can drive long-lasting benefits for customers, society and the environment. Find all the information in the link below and enter today! <https://waterinnovation.challenges.org/breakthrough/>

# Press release

**6 May 2021 *–*** A £40 million innovation competition – the Water Breakthrough Challenge – launches today to spark ambitious innovation and new ways of working in the water sector.

The [Water Breakthrough Challenge](https://waterinnovation.challenges.org/breakthrough/) aims to equip the water sector to address the big challenges facing the sector, driving far-reaching and long-lasting benefits to customers, society and the environment across England and Wales now and into the future. It encourages collaborative entries from other sectors and worldwide partners, and aims to fund initiatives which water companies would otherwise have been unable to invest in or explore.

Entries must demonstrate how solutions help the water sector deliver for customers, society and the environment, such as by achieving net zero, protecting natural ecosystems and reducing the impact of extreme weather, or using open data to improve customer service.

The winners of Ofwat’s first innovation competition – the £2m Innovation in Water Challenge – were revealed last month and include green initiatives such as planting and restoring seagrass meadows on the Essex and Suffolk coastlines, a scheme to turn ammonia in wastewater into green hydrogen gas, and software that can monitor the degradation of wildlife habitats. Other ideas focus on the prevention of leaks in the water network through the use of AI, CCTV, and unexploited optical fibre strands in telecoms networks, as well as using behavioural science to better support vulnerable customers.

**John Russell, Senior Director at Ofwat, said:** “Our innovation competitions are now in full swing and we are beginning to see a wave of innovation across the sector. Within the Breakthrough Challenge we are looking forward to seeing continued collaboration outside of the sector from a wide range of industries, and even more cutting-edge projects that tackle the greatest challenges facing our sector, and society as a whole.”

The Water Breakthrough Challenge is funded through Ofwat’s £200 million Innovation Fund, as part of the regulator’s goal to drive innovation and collaboration in the water sector, supporting it to meet the needs of customers, society and the environment in the years to come. It is being delivered by Ofwat and Nesta Challenges, supported by Arup.

**Arlene Goode, Associate from Arup added**: “This is a great opportunity for water companies and project partners. We're excited to see the transformative projects which can move the water sector towards meeting its long-term ambitions".

Entries must be submitted by water companies in England and Wales, but they can enter in partnership with organisations within and outside the water sector. This could include universities and institutes, retailers, start-ups, or small businesses in sectors such as energy, manufacturing, health, or financial services. Partners for the winning entries to the Innovation in Water Challenge included environmental charities, engineering and construction businesses, and consumer groups.

**Chris Gorst, Director of Challenges at Nesta Challenges, commented:** “The winning innovations from the first Innovation in Water Challenge show that the sector is ready to address the major challenges facing the industry, and society. A new approach is needed, including new ways of working and greater collaboration, but we have already seen the sector can rise to the challenge and deliver ground-breaking initiatives that change the status quo. We are very excited to see the trailblazing projects that the water companies, and their partners, put forward for the latest competition.”

After a first assessment period following entries received by 3 June, selected entrants will be invited to submit more details from 28 June, with the winners announced in September. Winning entries will receive between £1 million and £10 million to support their initiatives.

To find out more and apply visit [waterinnovation.challenges.org/breakthrough/](http://waterinnovation.challenges.org/breakthrough/).

**- ENDS -**

**Notes to Editor:**

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# Media assets

Jpg image [available here](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1MaJSlfbEsm5SACQbEPFUH_hZg2jlKBnk/view?usp=sharing)

Photo [available here](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1k2zDa2I5zUmwA67bGrV0TmYt_i1psWGR/view?usp=sharing) (Royalty-free thanks to Jong Marshes on Unsplash)

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| **Twitter Handles**  @Ofwat  @NestaChallenges  @ArupGroup    **LinkedIn Handles**  ofwat  nesta-challenges  arup | **Hashtags**  #BreakthroughChallenge  #WaterInnovation    **Website**  [waterinnovation.challenges.org](https://waterinnovation.challenges.org/) |

# Questions?

Email us at [waterinnovation@nesta.org.uk](mailto:waterinnovation@nesta.org.uk)