



INTRODUCTION

HELLO FROM HEIDI

Innovation Festival 2025 was the best yet. And I don't say that lightly.

It was an unforgettable experience, and we have created this handy recap in order to give you a flavour of all that was achieved.

Beginning in 2017, and now approaching our tenth year, it's hard to believe that we started off with just six sprints in a small section of Newcastle Racecourse.

This year's event saw 53 activities sprawling across the site, with over 500 organisations from 45 different sectors involved.

3,300 people came together for an environmental extravaganza all under the theme of 'Regeneration'.

It was an action-packed week, and this year's theme really helped to set the tone for our most sustainable event to date - from the small details of reusable coffee cups and bio-degradable glitter, to having a fully hydrogen-powered event and tackling some huge environmental challenges impacting our industry.

This year, we focused not only on how we can help improve the way we work, but also how we can do that while creating a better world for generations to come.

In this executive summary, you'll hear some mind-blowing facts and figures how this festival surpassed all expectations – but first, there are some important people I would like to thank.

Firstly, a huge thank you to the people who help make our Innovation Festival dreams a reality every year, our amazing sponsors and partners.

Your valued support and expertise each year helps us to develop, create, inspire and have fun along the way. We truly couldn't do it without you.

Secondly, a thank you to all of our wonderful volunteers and crew. Every year, I am blown away by your commitment and enthusiasm to make sure our delegates have the best experience. Thank you.

Next, and I know this will be touched on again later in this document, but I must say a personal thank you to Nigel Watson, the creator and brains behind this fantastic event, who retired shortly after IF25.

Finally, and most importantly, thank you to YOU, our amazing attendees. Without you, there would be no festival. This year you brought the sparkle, finesse and energy that made this fantastic week unforgettable.

And so, as we look towards our tenth anniversary next year, we want to remember everything we learned during IF25: to be sustainable, to be mindful, and to always strive to make things better for our children's children.

Come along and join us next year – with it being the tenth one, I can only begin to imagine what the team have in store.

So, once you've finished reading this make sure you sign up to our Innovation Connect newsletter, which will keep you up to date on how you can get involved in next year's event.

See you there!



HEIDI MOTTRAM

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER
NORTHUMBRIAN WATER GROUP

THE TIMELINE

OUR FIRST FESTIVAL: 939 attendees gather for the first time at Newcastle Racecourse.

The first Innovation Festival project was brought to life as the moss tree is put up in Newcastle.

BRIGHT IDEAS FOR A BETTER TOMORROW: The festival literally doubles in size.

The idea for the National Underground Asset Register (NUAR) is born.

2017

2018

Entries into the Ofwat breakthrough challenge are drafted and won.

BUILDING BACK BETTER: Covid sees the Innovation Festival go completely digital for the first time.

The festival inspires Innovate East, which takes place with Anglian Water.

GREAT NORTH BY NORTH EAST: The festival officially goes global for the first time, with sprints running through the night.

2020

2019

THE BRILLIANT GET TOGETHER: The first hybrid event sees a record-breaking number of attendees and the most extensive celebrities line-up ever!

The UK Government announce they will be rolling out NUAR across the country.

UNTAPPED POTENTIAL: The grand return to Newcastle Racecourse, incorporating all of the above.

No-Dig trials taking place across the North East.

2021

2022

REGENERATION: Our largest and most sustainable event yet, with zero-waste and hydrogen powered-generators helping the festival and two young citizen events took place.

SPEED AND SCALE: NWG's biggest festival in size, number of sprints and on site attendees. Also our first ever Young Citizens Work Experience Festival.

CITIZENS: 2023 saw the festival grow to the next level, with citizens gathering from all over the world.

2025

2024

2023



OUR FESTIVAL

Since our first Innovation Festival, we have taken around **300 ideas** back into the business and the potential ideas are worth approximately **£50m per year**.

Some projects have proven more successful than others with the output each year getting stronger now we have honed the festival formula.

As we look back across the nine years of festival-ling, with around **23,500 attendees** in total, the resulting projects are testament to the effectiveness of this formula.

We have had over **80 high-value projects** flowing through our innovation pipeline and beyond.

Some of our biggest projects are now living and breathing out in the real world, such as the National Underground Asset Register worth an estimated **£3.2B** to the UK PLC and has been adopted by the UK Government.

Smart Sewers, a project which is helping to reduce storm overflows, is being rolled out across Tyneside and is seeing real environmental improvements across the region.

No Dig leakage solution is now being widely used across NWG and is estimated to save **£500K/year**.

And there are many more contributing to regeneration, economy and asset health from across our pipeline!

Find out more, [here](#).



FESTIVAL IMPACT AND IMPACT

The theme for Innovation Festival 2025 was Regeneration, and we took this theme seriously from the inside out. It helped to shape every aspect of the event. We wanted the sprints to take a special focus on how we can leave the world in a better place. To look at how we could restore damaged systems, renew infrastructure and ecosystems and to grow resilience for a stronger and more sustainable future. This theme wasn't just a tagline—it was embedded holistically across the festival:

- ★ The whole event was powered by hydrogen energy, using two generators pumping water from our networks.
- ★ Brains were also powered by locally sourced, health-conscious food.
- ★ Reusable drinks cups saved over **7,000** single-use items.
- ★ And there was also ZERO landfill waste, meaning all materials from the event were reused, repurposed, or composted.

Ideas that Brought regeneration to life included:

- ★ **HAPI** – a biodiversity trading platform likened to Vinted, but for land use.
- ★ **Build It** – a digital planning tool for local authorities.
- ★ **Smart Sewers** – AI-powered systems to prevent storm overflows.
- ★ **Coconut Filtration** – a nature-based solution from a Sri Lankan innovator who attended our event.



OFWAT FUNDING

The Innovation Festival is a hot bed for brilliant Ofwat Innovation Fund ideas.

Northumbrian Water Group (NWG) has submitted **19 winners** within the Ofwat Water Breakthrough Challenge. We are also taking part in **18 further Ofwat funded projects**, led by other water companies, as a supporting partner

After four rounds of the Water Breakthrough Challenge, NWG has won funding amounting to a total of **£38.7 million**, with **13 Catalyst projects** amounting to **£13.65 million** and **6 Transform projects** amounting to **£25.03 million**.

19 winners

within the Ofwat Water Breakthrough Challenge



Supporting (or have supported... some now complete) other water companies in **18 projects**



£38.7 MILLION

13 Catalyst projects



£13.65m

6 Transform projects



£25.03m

2025 IN NUMBERS



Attendees

3310



NW/ESW
Employees

20%



Countries

39



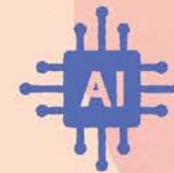
Sprint Leads

102



Sprints, hacks
and dashes

28



AI Tools
Applied

6



Years of work
completed at festival

54



Sectors

>45



Organisations

>500



Sponsors

87



Universities

22



Young People

>660



Guest Speakers
and Acts

11



Music Acts

7



Water
Companies

22



Reusable
Coffee Cups

3000



STEM Activities

WHOLE FESTIVAL!



Well Being
Activities

19



Media Reach

1.5M



Social Media
Reach

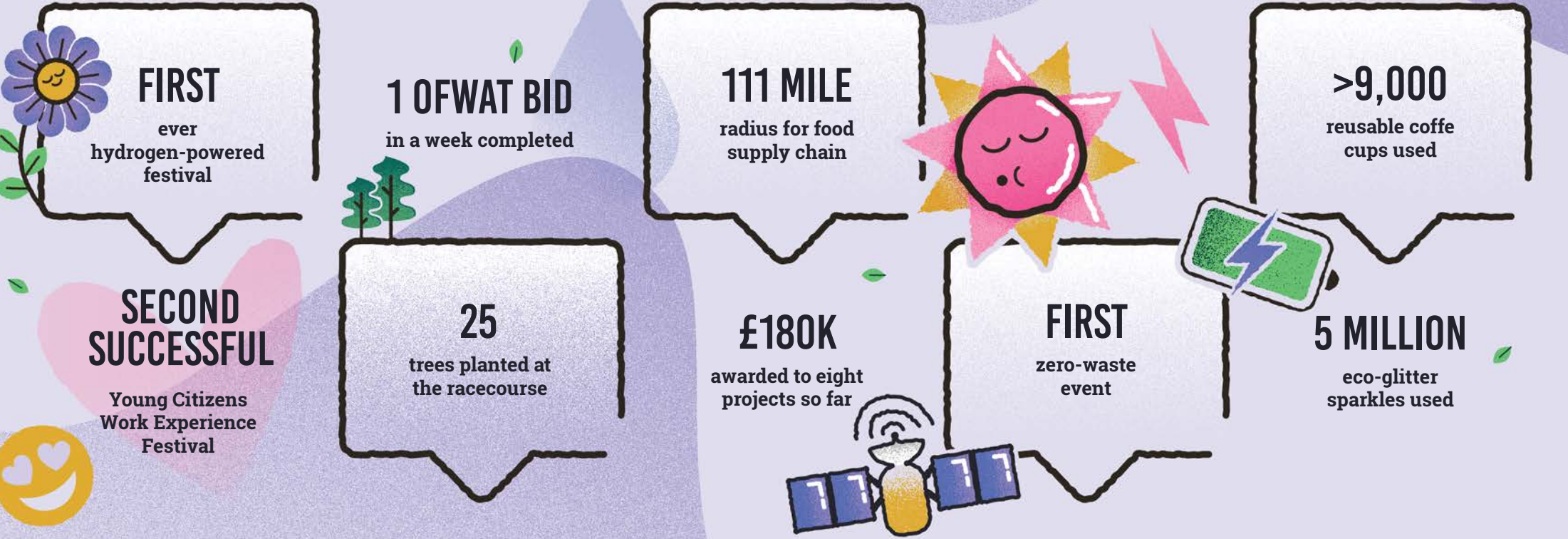
7.9M



Social Media
Engagement

12.8K

ENVIRONMENTAL FACTS



Across all 9 festivals we have had:



A SNAPSHOT OF INNOVATION FESTIVAL 2025

Without the invention of time travel, we unfortunately can't zap you back to relive or experience IF25...so the best we can do is share these incredible videos which give you a glimpse into each day...

DAY 1

Understand



DAY 3

Define



DAY 2

Sketch



DAY 4

Prototype and validate



FULL WEEK HIGHLIGHTS



STARS OF IF25

If you've watched the videos shared on the previous page, the more eagle-eyed of you may have recognised a few famous faces...

Our festivals are never short of special guests, and this year they really nailed the theme!

This year, we were delighted to welcome...

Monday: Emma Hardy, MP

The Water Minister joined us to open the event and reflect on some of the challenges the water industry faces. She inspired innovators and set the tone for an incredibly impactful week. She then explored some of the sprints as they started to unfold, from water quality-monitoring drones to the use of AI.

Tuesday: Simon Reeve

Famous explorer extraordinaire Simon Reeve then joined us on Tuesday, delivering a fantastic lightning talk on his global adventures, regeneration and how to innovate and make a difference.

Wednesday: George Clarke

Amazing Spaces broadcaster George Clarke inspired innovators on Wednesday, opening the day with a live chat all about his incredible career and his work with sustainable housing.

Thursday: Priya Lakhani, OBE

Serial entrepreneur and AI guru Priya Lakhani helped to close off the event with some inspiring words on what it takes to succeed. She talked about the importance of persistence when it comes to delivering real-world change.



ONES TO WATCH

More than **45 high potential projects** were born at IF25. They are now being evaluated and while not all of them will necessarily be progressed, these projects have the potential to contribute to a total value of more than **£100 million/year** for Northumbrian Water over the next five years.

These include:

TOP IDEAS FROM IF25



HAPI - HABITAT AND PROPERTY INVESTMENT

A digital marketplace for trading biodiversity credits and land use suggestions. Think Vinted for the environment—streamlining investment decisions and accelerating ecological progress.



BUILD IT – SMARTER PLANNING PLATFORM

A one-stop digital tool for local councils to plan infrastructure, housing, and environmental goals. It aims to modernise outdated systems and enable faster, more transparent decision-making.



SMART SEWER 2.0

An AI-powered interface to manage sewer systems efficiently. It helps prevent storm overflows and reduce environmental risks by using real-time data and predictive analytics.



TOTAL RECALL – AI EXPERT ASSISTANT

An AI chatbot that provides instant access to site-specific knowledge, helping field teams make informed decisions on the go.



H2OH – WASTE-TO-ENERGY INNOVATION

Transforms wastewater treatment sites into clean energy hubs by converting waste gases into hydrogen or other green fuels.



INGRESS-CEPTION

A visual data platform to manage unwanted water flow (e.g., road runoff), paired with community behaviour change strategies.



ASSET RISK REGISTER

A digital tool to identify infrastructure at risk, helping prioritise maintenance and investment decisions.

KICKSTARTER FUNDING

30 sprints applying for KickStarter funding. Estimated **£225 million/year** in potential project value. **900+ NWG colleagues** participated—**20%** of the workforce.

WISTEM PRESENTS:

Regeneration

Kitchen

SERVING UP...

Lessons in
Chemistry



WISTEM EVENT

Regeneration Kitchen: Serving Up Lessons in Chemistry

The second WiSTEM event at Innovation Festival 2025 transported guests into a 1960s-inspired TV studio for an evening of storytelling, leadership, and cake. Inspired by *Lessons in Chemistry* by Bonnie Garmus, this year's theme centred on regeneration: rebuilding structures, careers, and leadership on new terms – not just for women in STEM, but for everyone navigating change.

Led by compere Angela Macoscar, the event blended food, fiction, and feminism, featuring a live panel with hands-on discussion, a themed networking session, and lightning talks from two trailblazing female founders. The result? A space where systems were questioned, stories were shared, and the future was reimagined – one recipe at a time.

★ 250 ATTENDEES

★ 2 CHEMISTRY THEMED COCKTAILS

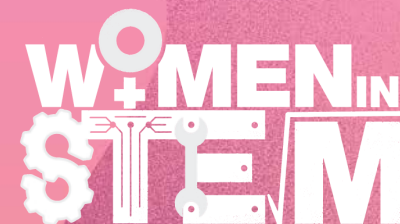
- *The Zottini*
- *The Supper at Six Spritz*

★ 3 REGENERATIVE RECIPES SHARED

- *Raspberry Cheesecake of Resistance*
- *Chocolate Brownie of Systemic Change*
- *Leading Lemon Posset Tart*

★ 5 PANELLISTS

Libby Allcock led a standout panel featuring Donna Rawlinson, Hayley Monks, Anja Eimer, Aarthi Kumar and Claire Eagle – sharing personal stories, professional insight, and yes... mixing bowls.



WISTEM EVENT

★ 100s OF BOOKS RECOMMENDED

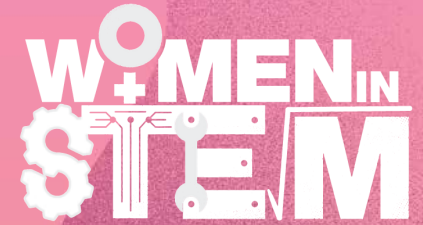
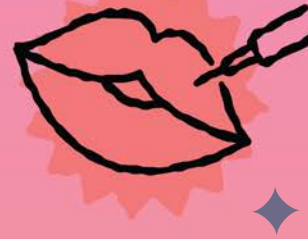
Via bookmarks and interactive segments, the WiSTEM community built a bookshelf together – shaping the next WiSTEM book club theme with suggestions such as Multipliers by Liz Wiseman.

★ 2 FEMALE FOUNDERS SPOTLIGHTED

- Natalie Wadley (Changemakers 3D)
- Pavlina Theodosiou (Metzero Technologies)

★ FUNDRAISING, PRIZES & POWERFUL REFLECTIONS

From booked themed raffles to leadership insights from Heidi Mottram, Louise Hunter and Monisha Gower – the event closed with energy, honesty, and inspiration.





YOUNG CITIZENS WORK EXPERIENCE FESTIVAL

The Young Citizens Work Experience Festival 2025 brought together 12 schools, 9 partner organisations, and more than 300 students, with an average of 150 students onsite each day.

Running alongside the NWG Innovation Festival, the event connected young people with employers from STEM, creative, sustainability, and leadership sectors to provide valuable workplace insight and career inspiration.

Students participated in interactive workshops led by industry partners, covering themes such as leadership, confident communication, teamwork, diversity, technology, sustainability, and digital safety.

These sessions offered practical, engaging opportunities for students to build employability skills including collaboration, resilience, adaptability, and problem-solving.

Feedback from schools, partners, and volunteers highlighted the success of the festival in strengthening links between education and industry, building confidence in young people, and equipping them with the tools needed to thrive in their future careers.

The festival has established itself as an important initiative for nurturing future talent and developing the region's workforce.



Student
Attendees

319



Schools

12



Students
Onsite

>150



Partners

9



Sponsors

5

WELLBEING IF25

RECHARGE, REGENERATE, REVITALISE



Breakout
Games by
the Beach



Bee Hotels
with the
National Trust



Make a
Grass Head



Sound Garden -
Make Your
Own Music



Festival Face
and Body Art



Mind Mates



Meditation
sessions courtesy
of Heartfulness



Seated Acupressure
with Chris from
Body and Sole



Beekeeping
Information
Sessions

WELLBEING IF25

We had some wonderful Charities joining us throughout the week:

Monday 7 July:

Sightloss Council (Exhibition Hall)

Tuesday 8 July:

Heartfulness (Exhibition Hall)

Wednesday 9 July:

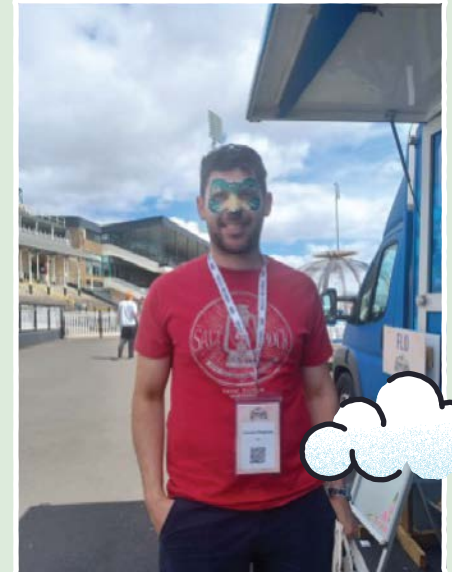
Sick Childrens Trust (Exhibition Hall)

Samaritans (Exhibition Hall)

Guide Dogs for the Blind (Pop up tent)

Thursday 10 July:

Royal Association of Deaf People (Exhibition Hall)



WE ALSO HAD...

Throughout 2025, we also had a series of different Innovation Festivals, including the Sydney Water Innovation Festival, OS Innovation Festival, Veitur Innovation Festival in Iceland and Essex & Suffolk Water's Innovation Festival. Each event brought together partners and experts to collaborate, share ideas, and explore creative solutions to key challenges across the water industry.

Sydney Water Innovation Festival
4/5 March 2025



Veitur Innovation Festival, Iceland
3-5 June 2025



OS Innovation Festival
26 March 2025 Digital Planning sprint



ESW IF25
10 June 2025 - 3 Sprints



THANK YOU

A BIG THANK YOU

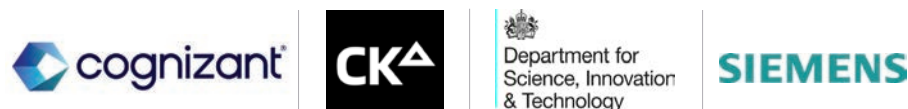
Northumbrian Water's Innovation Festival wouldn't be the event it is without our brilliant sponsors - a huge thank you to all of our sponsors who supported us with our incredible 2025 event.

Scan the QR code to register an interest in sponsoring the Innovation Festival 2026.



THANK YOU FROM
HEAD OF INNOVATION, ANGELA MACOSCAR

Platinum Racecourse Sprint Sponsors



Gold Racecourse Sprint Sponsors



Racecourse Sprint / Brought to you by Sponsors / Exhibitors / Dash Partners / YCWEF Ambassadors





SAVE THE DATE

for Northumbrian Water's
Christmas Innovation Festival 2025!

28 NOVEMBER

KEEP IN TOUCH

KEEP IN TOUCH

Stay up to date with the latest innovation news at innovationfestival.org.

Fancy signing up to our innovation newsletter?

★ SIGN UP HERE

Keep an eye on our innovations and sprint outputs by visiting our social channels:



@NorthumbrianH2O
@ESWH2O



Northumbrian Water
Essex & Suffolk Water



@northumbrianh2o
@eswh2o

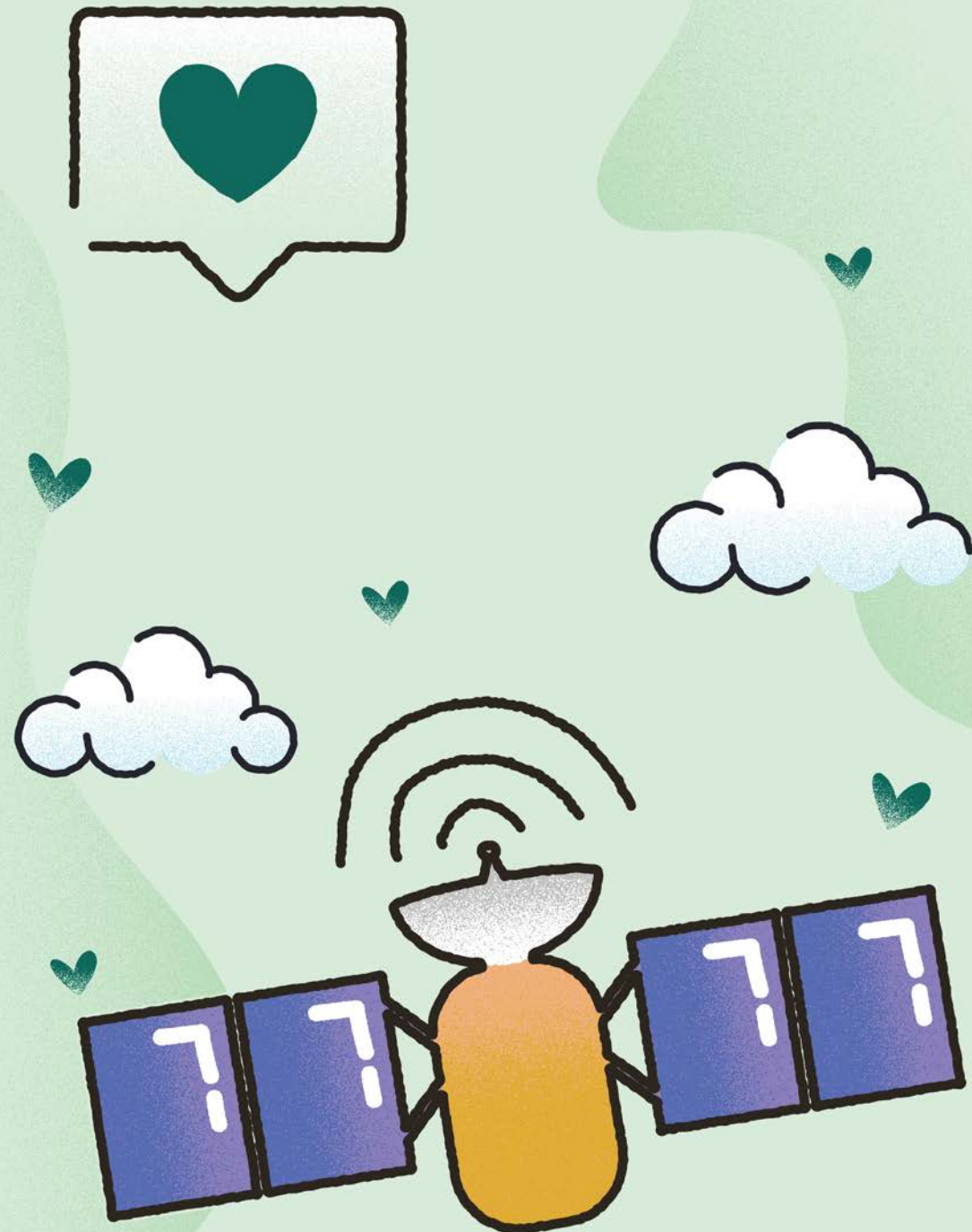


NWG (Northumbrian Water Group)
Essex & Suffolk Water



@northumbrian_water
@essex_suffolk_water

You can also find out more about the ideas and projects which came from **IF25** by joining our **Innovation Festive** sessions in November. Keep an eye out for more information to be shared about these.





SAVE THE DATE

for Northumbrian Water's
Innovation Festival 2026!

6-9 JULY