Innovation in Water Challenge Webinar Transcript 21 January 2021

# Speakers

Harry Armstrong, Ofwat  
Caroline Wadsworth, Isle  
Caroline Pradier, Nesta Challenges

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Harry Armstrong, Ofwat 00:00

Well, thank you for joining us. I'm Harry Armstrong, I'm Director of Regulatory Policy at Ofwat. And again, I'm going to welcome you to this session, we launched our first innovation competition, the Innovation in Water Challenge as of Monday, and we're very excited about this, this is going to be a good opportunity for you to come and listen to some of the background, of what we're trying to achieve with the fund. Some elements of design and what you should be thinking about when reading through the materials and thinking about submitting proposals into the fund, we're also going to have an opportunity for you to ask us some questions. And we can go over where where information is, where information isn't obvious we can explain some of those questions that you have back to you in this session. But yes, but thank you again, for coming along. I'm going to hand back over to two colleagues, Caroline from Isle and Caroline from Nesta, which won't be confusing who are going to take us through some of the details and background on the competition.

Caroline Wadsworth, Isle 01:00

Super, thank you very much, Harry. And so just to quickly give you an overview of what we're going to cover. Harry has mentioned many of the areas but obviously, we want to introduce the Ofwat Innovation Fund as a whole. We want to run through the five key innovation, strategic innovation themes as set by Ofwat. And then we want to give you some more insights and details around the Innovation in Water Challenge itself. So we'll cover the timeline, what you can win, what we're looking for in the entries, how you can get involved. Importantly, obviously, how you can enter and the requirements for a successful entry. But alongside that, we want to give you more details of what kind of support's available along the way. As I've mentioned already, there will be a question and answer session at the end. So please do start logging your questions via Sli.do using the access code IWC as we go along.

Caroline Wadsworth, Isle 01:53

So next slide, please. Super. So as Harry's already mentioned, this year Ofwat has launched two innovation [competitions] to help the water sector in England and Wales to grow its capacity to innovate, and so that it's better able to meet the growing and evolving needs of customers, society and the environment. The fund itself is split into two parts, the first of which is the Innovation in Water Challenge. This is a £2 million pound fund and was launched this week on Monday the 18th of January. The second is the main competition, which has a total fund of £40 million for this round. Next slide, please. So as part of the fund development process, a range of innovation enablers have been identified that we believe are critical to grow the water sector's capacity to innovate. The fund itself will support entries that demonstrate and further strengthen those innovation enablers, including as we can see on this slide, but including collaboration. So we hope that the fund will help to build and strengthen relationships in the sector, and within the supply chain so that all parties can leverage the benefits that the fund presents. We also want to see openness through sharing of data and insights across the sector, as well as adaptability. In this particular instance, adaptability relates to the flexibility and openness to exploring new ways of working in the sector as we move forwards. Next on here is managing innovation risk. This relates to helping the sector move forward and manage risk together. And the Innovation Fund is a really big step towards helping to achieve this. The final two points on this slide are scalability and deployment and a long term view. We'd like to see initiatives that improve the ease of which solutions are scaled up. And that can take a longer term view. So looking at really what can we seed now that will help us to meet those big challenges that we know we face in the future. So that's it for me on this section. So I'm going to hand over to back to Harry to do the next slide, please.

Harry Armstrong, Ofwat 04:10

Thank you. And I think those points kind of touch on what we're going to discuss here. And this is the things the areas we want these innovations to focus on, so the big problems that the sector is having to deal with. And we've outlined five strategic themes in the previous documents. So things like responding to climate change in the net zero ambitions sector has, improved ecological status and pollution and impact of weather etc. as well as operational resilience. And the we're talking about as public value which is trying to deliver greater benefits for for a wider range of people through some of these activities or through businesses, usual activities that companies are doing. And then on the other side, we have using open data and being more open with regard to innovation, and customers is obviously a part of the operational resilience stuff. So when thinking about putting projects in, there needs to be a really clear line of sight for how they're going to have an impact on one or more of the innovation themes. And as Caroline was saying, this doesn't need to be short term impacts, necessarily, these can be longer term impacts. And but we want, we want definitely information around that how that scalability is going to have an even greater impact on on some of these themes. And so I'll leave it there, there's more information. But what we've covered both in in the documents outlined on the innovation fund page, and also in previous Ofwat documentation, so you can go and have a look about. So I'll hand over to Caroline, from Nesta now to talk you through a bit more.

Caroline Pradier, Nesta Challenges 05:45

Thank you. So more practicalities about the challenge that just opened. So as we said before, it opened this Monday 18th of January. And you have until the 26th of February 2021 to six weeks at noon to submit your application. So as a reminder, the primary objective of the IWC is really to encourage new ways of working that go beyond business as usual. And that also work towards improving collaboration and building partnership from within and outside the water sector. So we're looking for ideas that looks at the Big Five strategic innovation themes, the big innovation principles, and the objectives of the UK and Welsh Government when it comes to the water sector. And so we're looking for ideas and initiatives that water companies wouldn't usually be able to explore or invest. And entries can be at all types of level, at all types of readiness, technological, any type of methodology, basically, just go for it. And then you can win between £50,000 and £250,000 pounds to support kickstart, or grow and grow or scale your initiative. Next slide, please. And so the timeline for the first round, so open on Monday, 18th of January, (you'll hear that a lot) then it closes on the 26th. Then in March, the applications will go through an assessment process by an independent judging panel that is currently being built. So you will hear more from who the judges are in a few weeks. And then by April 2021, the winners will be informed. And so what you can win. So each sorry, next slide each. So there's £2 million prize fund, and each entry will receive a share of this fund. We're hoping to award between 10 and 15 prizes, depending on the quality of the applications. And you we asked you to bid for £50,000 to £250,000 pounds. And then one requirement is that all winning entries must include a 10% match funding by the water company. And this is to ensure that customers do not bear all the risk of the initiative funded through the challenge, since they're the one funding the challenge itself. Just things are a bit more fair. Caroline, do you want to tell us what how the prizes might be awarded? Next slide?

Caroline Wadsworth, Isle 08:31

Absolutely. Super. Thanks, Caroline. So this slide really is to be used as an example of how those prizes might be awarded. And really to demonstrate that there is no fixed allocation plan. So whilst we've got some figures in here to demonstrate the different sizes of awards that could be available, it absolutely we're not stuck to this pattern. It's just as an example, only. So just to reiterate, the entries can ask for any amount between £50,000 and 250,000 pounds. They're not restricted to those examples shown on this slide, and will be allocated according to the type of project and the different amounts that they're actually asking for assuming that they meet all of the entry criteria. Next slide, please. And back to Caroline.

Caroline Pradier, Nesta Challenges 09:21

So our assessment criteria. So as we said before, innovation projects have to focus on one or more of the five strategic themes from Ofwat. And we also particularly anchorage entries that will involve a partnership or collaboration between two or more of the water companies and NAVs and also that go beyond the supply chain, beyond the usual suspects. Really look out for any partner that you want since you can have a partner from anywhere in the world from any sector. And but then we also have high level assessment criteria, which we'll use to review the entries and the details of these criteria are available on the website and in the Entrant's Handbook. But just as a reminder, first of all we will be looking at does this idea have a positive impact for consumers, society and the environment? Number two, does it showcase innovation enablers and innovative solutions. And number three, what is the capacity and the capability of the applicants to actually deliver their idea. Next slide. So who can enter so the lead applicant must be a water company or a NAV from England and Wales, the full list of who the lead applicant can be is available on our website and in the entrant handbook. And we strongly advise you to apply with a partner. And as I said before, you can apply with any type of partner from anywhere in the world, from academia from any type of technological expertise, just really go out of your business as usual thinking and look for innovative and new ways of working together. Next slide. So how to enter. And so there is an online application form that will be available for the six weeks of the entry period. To access this form, you need to log on to the waterinnovation.challenges.org website, I have the link here on the screen. And again, this application form has to be filled in by the water company who is the lead. Next slide. So the requirement for successful entries, one thing that we really want to bring your attention to are the Terms and Conditions for the challenge. There are a few requirements for this challenge. That's, yeah, please take time and read them. And if you have any questions then write to us. So it's about how to use the funds from the challenge, the 10%, mandatory contribution for the projects, the monitoring and reporting requirements, if your entry is successful, there is a clause around intellectual property rights, that is really important for you to be aware of, then how we expect you to work around publicity, should you be a winner, and then how we will manage any conflict of interest, and also the settlement arrangement. So what things are going to be put in place for you to be able to receive the fund as a water company, but also as a partner of a water company. So we're really trying to make sure that we receive also a really diverse range of entrants. So if you have, if you need any reasonable adjustment that would support you to enter, then please write to us. And if you have any further questions, just write to us at waterinnovation@nesta.org.uk. Please note that there will be no extension, that's the only thing we want to cater to. and Caroline handing back to you.

Caroline Wadsworth, Isle 13:16

Thanks, Caroline. So actually, this just about brings us to the end and wraps up the slides, and the information that we wanted to tell you. But the final thing that we want to share is about the support that's available as we go through this process. We've run a series of partnership brokerage sessions already and the last one of which has taken place on Monday the 25th of January at 4pm. And we have some really great solutions that are pitching at this event. So I would encourage you to sign up to attend and join us to do that you need to go to the website, which is waterinnovation.challenges.org and my colleague Catherine has kindly put that into the chat. So the link is there in the chat on Zoom. So use that to go to the to the website. There, you can also go to the find a partner page. And there's all sorts of other information available to help you and support you through that process. And and as has already been alluded to by both Harry and Caroline in their slides, there's a detailed Entrant Handbook on the website. And this should provide you with all the additional information that you might need as you go through that process. And we're really pleased to announce that as of next week, we're also launching a series of one to one surgery events where you can ask questions about the competition, the entry process or the best routes to engage with water companies, but it's really focusing those questions on the process itself and not the content of your entry. So I think that brings us to the end of the slides.

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