



Water Efficiency Lab Launch Webinar Transcript

Introduction

Nicola Tulk: Welcome, everyone. Thank you for joining today's webinar about the Water Efficiency Lab (WEL). The first competition opened for entries last week, so we will be taking you through all the details.

The Water Efficiency Lab is delivered collaboratively by Ofwat, with the delivery team consisting of Challenge Works, Isle Utilities, and Arup. Several of us are on the line today to talk to you about the Water Efficiency Lab:

- **Jude Noro:** Policy Lead within the Water Resources team at Ofwat.
- **Nicola Tulk:** Design Lead from Challenge Works.
- **Alexandra Wu:** Assistant Programme Manager within Challenge Works.
- **Pranoy Dias:** Senior Consultant at Isle Utilities.

We will take you through an introduction to the Water Efficiency Lab and its objectives, the full details for this first competition, the theme, how you can enter, what will be expected of the eventual winners, how they will be chosen, and the support that is available throughout the process.

We will be taking questions. There's a Slido, where you can submit questions. Please do, join that. There's a number of ways you can do that. You can either scan this QR code with your phone, and then use this passcode, #WEL1Launch. You can also join via your web browser with the numerical code there, and we're putting these instructions into the Zoom chat as well. There should be a URL as well, so there's a number of different ways to join. Please do submit your questions, vote for the ones you most want to be answered, and we'll have some time at the end to cover those. For anything that we don't cover, we will be, answering that offline. And we're also recording this session, so we will be sharing that on the [website](#), and also via email at the end.

So, I think that's it on the housekeeping now, and I'm going to hand over to Jude to introduce the Water Efficiency Lab and the wider Water Efficiency Fund.

The Water Efficiency Fund and WEL Objectives

Jude Noro: Thanks, Nicola, and thanks everyone for joining. Really happy to see the numbers of participants in this call.

The Water Efficiency Fund is a new initiative launched by Ofwat this year to drive transformative, sustained, and measurable reduction in public water demand. This is the result of the realisation that England and Wales face quite a stark water shortfall – already to some extent now, but it's going to get worse and worse as we go on, and as climate and demand evolves. So, the idea of the Water Efficiency Fund is to build part of the response to that expected 5 billion litre deficit by 2050 in England.

We are hoping to help customers reduce their demand by 210 litres per day; we are currently around 137 litres per day, so there is quite a lot of margin there.

The Water Efficiency Fund is set up as two main sister projects:

- **The Water Efficiency Campaign (£75 million):** Allocated to a behaviour change campaign hoping to help people understand the value of water and how to use less of it.
- **The Water Efficiency Lab (£25 million):** A challenge-led innovation competition which focuses on technologies and processes.

So, it's a total of £100 million.

As part of this fund, the WEL aims to attract the most innovative solutions for each of its challenges. This year, the first competition of the WEL will focus on the challenge of providing water customers with actionable insights to help them understand and reduce their water use. There is up to £5 million available through this competition, which we'll talk a little bit more about how you can enter and get some of that pot. So, it's £5 million per year, it will be a total of £25 million over five annual rounds between now and 2030.

Theme: Actionable Insights

Jude Noro: let's talk a little bit more about the specific theme for this year. So, this year we decided to focus on **Actionable Insights**. The WEL drives reduction in water demand across both household and non-household customers, so we're hoping to use actionable insight as a way to activate this space. Actionable insights is all about using data to inform customers and change behaviours. We spoke to a number of stakeholders and engaged with our advisory panel, and this is how we decided this theme was the great starting point for the WEL, because data and understanding of water use is a massive enabler for

customer engagement and subsequent actions to reduce water use. So, helping customers to have a better understanding of their water usage will support future water efficiency interventions, and help providing a foundational awareness and enabling customers to see the impact of their actions.

I think that's the theme covered, mostly. I'll let Pranoy cover the details of the problem statement and how you can answer it now.

Pranoy Dias: thank you, Jude. Hi everyone, I'm Pranoy, and just to reiterate what Jude said, we did speak to a lot of stakeholders, like water companies, regulators, innovators, where we then prioritised this theme around actionable insights. And again, the idea is quite simple: it is important to understand what data is available first, and how we can make that more available to end customers so that they can drive down reductions.

And once that foundation is laid, we can explore other aspects of water efficiency. So, when we were speaking to different stakeholders, what are some of the key issues that we highlighted? So, we were hearing from different customers that water customers lack granular, timely data about their own water use, so they don't really understand when and how they're using the water. Are they using more water in their gardens? Are they using more water in the kitchens? They don't really understand where they're using that particular water. They also lack useful insights and personalised suggestions to help them understand how they can reduce their consumption.

So we all know that different water companies are at different stages of smart metering rollout programmes, and smart meters provide a useful opportunity to provide insights to end customers, but again, there are issues that you cannot have, the smart meters don't really provide granular data, so they don't, again, customers don't really understand where and how they're using water. This is also coupled with the fact that different water companies at different stages of the smart meter rollout. Some water companies are quite far ahead, some water companies are quite far behind, which would mean that some households, a majority of the households and non-households would not receive a meter for the next 5 to 10 years.

There's another complexity around this, is that there are a lot of properties in England and Wales which cannot be metered, or they are hard to meter. So, for example, a block of flats, because they have a shared supply arrangement, it's difficult to meter these properties. So, solutions around such properties which cannot be metered would be quite useful to have as well.

We also heard that digital water services are fragmented. There are many tools out there, but they don't really provide fixture-level details. And often, they don't really show

combined savings across energy and water, so if you use less water, how does that translate into energy savings?

So really, innovation is needed in two aspects. One is to enhance the benefits of smart meter through better customer-facing solutions, and behavioural mechanisms. And also increase the availability of granular water usage insights, also properties that cannot be metered, for the next 5 to 10 years, or properties that cannot be metered in general.

The Challenge Statement: So, what are we looking for? So, we are calling on innovators to develop innovative solutions that can, develop or provide tailored usage insights to customers, and these are households and non-households, or both, which will help them drive down consumption, through behavioural mechanisms, in England and Wales.

Example Solution Types

Pranoy Dias: So, what are we looking for in terms of, these are a few examples of some solution types that we identified previously. So, I'll just take you through the different types of solutions.

So, the first one was, it could be a customer-facing solution, like an app or tool, which provides clear information on how much water customers have used, and also send helpful suggestions or rewards at the right moment. It could also, like, tell users to reduce water use during a heat wave, or showing how the usage compares to other households or businesses.

The next set of solutions could be, like, a granular monitor, monitors for fixture level usage, just to identify how much water they're using, maybe in the kitchen, in the showers, etc.

The third type of solutions we thought of could be a sensor, which is easy to install, doesn't really require an engineer, which can track water users, provide insights of how much water they're using.

The fourth type of solution could be, like, an alternative monitoring solution for properties that are hard to meter. So, again, if you think of block or flats, do we have solutions in place that can provide, granular insights for those types of properties.

The other one which we thought of is a combined leak detection or consumption tracking solution, which kind of does both with useful behavioural feedback to reduce waste.

And the last type of solution which you could think of is a unified platform that encompasses, everything, so different aspects like energy, utility, and also shows the linkage between, these different aspects.

So, this is not an exhaustive list. We're open to creative and innovative ideas from yourselves, but again, it has to meet the theme around providing actionable insights, to try to consumption reduction.

So that was a bit more around example solutions. Now I'll hand over to Nicola, who'll take us through the timelines and eligibility criteria.

Key Dates and Eligibility

Nicola Tulk: Yeah, thanks, Pranoy. So, in terms of key dates and milestones, for you to be aware of.

The, first WEL competition is already open for entries. It opened last week, and the deadline for submissions is the 10th of March. That's a 1pm deadline on the 10th of March. At that point, any entries received will be assessed by technical assessors and judges, and the winners will be publicly announced in June.

During this entry period, from now up until March, we do have a networking event, planned for the 15th of January, and we'll be giving a few more details about how you can register for that later on, so that's the other key date, to have in mind.

And moving on now, to, who can enter and how. So, the WEL is open to a range of different innovators. That can include water companies, but also, all sorts of other organisations, behavioural science firms, technology companies, software, hardware firms, consultancies, not-for-profits, universities.

The key criteria is that the lead entrant must be a UK incorporated entity and must hold a UK business bank account upon entry. You'll also need to agree to the terms and conditions, and not have any conflicts of interest that can't be mitigated.

So, we do welcome partnerships and consortia of different organisations, joining together. That also means that international organisations are able to enter, but they would need to do so in partnership with a UK-based organisation as the lead entity.

So quite open to a broad range of different innovators, looking to support that broad profile of different innovations, and solutions.

Funding and Match Funding

Nicola Tulk: In terms of funding, entrants can request between **£150,000 and £1.5 million** for their individual entries. We will also accept entries between **£100,000 and £150,000** provided they are digital-led and will complete within 12 months. So, just those two extra conditions for the lower value entries there, between £100,000 and £150,000.

There is one requirement for match funding, so, entrants will be required to contribute match funding. A maximum of 90% of the total project cost is available from the WEL. And then at least 10% must come, from entry partners.

So, the Water Efficiency Lab is funded by charges to water customers in England and Wales, so this match contribution must come from a different source. What that means is we have some slightly different conditions for different types of organisations entering. So, any wholesaler water company, any contribution from a wholesaler water company must be, financial.

But other types of organisations, including water retailers, SMEs, universities, charities, they can either make financial or in-kind contributions towards the mandatory 10%. So that's just something to be aware of there.

In terms of, how that mandatory 10% is made up, it can be shared amongst the entry partners. As long as a total of at least 10% is contributed, and anything from a wholesaler water company is financial, it's up to entrant teams to decide how they share that contribution. And, there are some further details on the in-kind contributions, within the entrant materials. So, they must be auditable and must directly relate to the project cost and reflect actual costs and market rates and not be inflated. So that's the much fanning requirements.

IPR and Expectations of successful entrants

Nicola Tulk: Moving on now, with a note on intellectual property. Winners will retain full ownership of Intellectual Property Rights (IPR), both any background IPR they bring in at the start of the entry, and for any foreground IPR that's developed during the entry. There are no requirements to provide royalty-free licenses to any IPR.

And, in terms of other expectations and other requirements moving on to the next slide, please. If an entry is successful, if you're one of the winners, then you'll be required to sign a winner's agreement before receiving the funding, and then you may also be asked for extra information as part of due diligence checks.

Once winners are onboarding and developing their innovations, they'll be expected to participate in monitoring and evaluation processes. Monitoring will be proportionate to the size of the entry. One of the things that's really important for us on the WEL is understanding what works and what doesn't, and what can be shared that will further advance the sector's understanding in this area. So we will be looking to understand what teams are learning as they develop their innovations. And, some of the executive summaries of those learning reports may be shared and published, of course always, with discussion with the teams to make sure that nothing sensitive is shared. So learning will be an important part of the monitoring.

And on evaluation, there is an independent evaluation of the Water Efficiency Fund, so teams will be expected to take part in any data collection exercises. And will also be asked to develop evaluation frameworks once they start their projects, and there'll be extra guidance on that for winners at the time.

There'll of course, be communication opportunities for winners, and we'll expect teams to share any information needed for that and participate in that as well, which is also a good opportunity for the teams.

So that's all about what will happen if you're successful. So, moving on to the next section of our webinar, which is what are we looking for in successful entries? How will they be selected? And Pranoy is going to take us through this next section.

Assessment Criteria

Pranoy Dias: Yeah, thank you, Nicola. Yeah, so I'll be taking you through the assessment process itself, and what assessment criteria assessors we'll be looking at while evaluating the entries.

So just, a high-level overview is, once we receive an entry, we will be assigning some technical assessors to review those entries, who will evaluate the solution against four main criteria, which I'll come on to a bit in the next slide. So once they are reviewed against the four criteria, they will shortlist the top scoring entries, and they will pass it on to the judging panel, who will then review it, and then further shortlist it to send it to the Ofwat team, for decision making. The Ofwat team will be responsible for final selection of the winners. So that's just the high-level view of the process itself.

So, here we've highlighted the four main criteria which assessors will be using to assess the entries coming through. So, the first one is, Impact, which has the most weighting, which is 40%. Then we've got innovation, which is 15%, team capability and project delivery, which is 20%, adoption and implementation plans, which are 25%.

Just one thing to note here is when selecting solutions for funding, judges will be considering two aspects, because we also need to consider the portfolio approach, so judges will be looking at how the entry meets these criteria, and how the overall mix of funded projects fits together. So, what does this mean is that funding decisions would balance individual performance and the need to support diverse range of solution types, approaches to maximise the impact on the water efficiency challenge itself.

So, the first criteria itself is, around **impact**. So what we want to check here is how impactful your solution is in driving down consumption reduction, and also to sustain it over the long term. So what we'll be really looking for is five different aspects within this particular criteria:

- So the first aspect is, **actionable insight effectiveness** is what kind of insights are you providing with the solution? How can you tailor it based on the different needs of the customer, and are they easy to understand, and digest.
- The next one is more around **behavioural change pathways**, so what kind of mechanisms are you deploying through your solution, and how do these motivate customers to drive down consumption.
- The third aspect within this criteria is more around **water consumption reduction potential**, so we want to check what measurable savings can you deliver both for the customer and at scale. We also want to know what's your methodology and assumptions behind those estimations.
- The next one is more around **sustained impact**. So how will you ensure that your solution, sustains the change over the long term.
- And the last one is, again, **advancing the sector's understanding**, so we want to know what learnings you'll be capturing through the entire project delivery phase, and how you'll be sharing it with the water sector or the wider sector to understand or share the advancement, or share the understanding around how to build better efficiency solutions.

So, effectively, what we want to check with this criteria is we want to see a clear link between your insights, customer behaviour change, and long-lasting reductions.

So the next one is **innovation** and we've allocated 15% weighting. So what we'll be really looking at is two aspects in this criteria. The first aspect is how novel is your approach. And again, it's split out across 10% and 5%:

- So how **novel** is your approach? How different it is from existing solutions?
- And the next part is around **additionality**. So the main aspect we're looking for here is, why do you need the WEL funding to fund this project, and why can it not be delivered through other means.

So this one is around **team capability and project delivery**. We've allocated 20% of weighting here. We also want to check that you have a credible team to deliver the solution. So what are the different aspects we'll be focusing on while evaluating this criteria?

- So, things like **team capabilities and partnerships**. So, who's on your team, what relevant experience do they bring, how are you promoting EDI across your team.
- What is your realistic **project management plan**, what's your timeline, your milestones, your governance structure.
- So, things around **resource and budget planning**, how are you allocating your funds, and how you're efficiently making use of the public money.

- And the last one is more on **risk management** approach, so we also want to check you have identified all the risks in your project, and how you will mitigate those risks itself.

So that's more around the project, delivery and team capability.

So this is the last criteria, which is on **adoption and implementation**, and we have allocated 25% of weighting across this criteria. Really, we want to check what's the adoption potential and scalability potential for this solution. So, what we will be evaluating is:

- What's your **route to market**, how will you reach your target customers, do you need stakeholder buy-in. So, if there's a water company that needs to adopt this solution, do you have a letters of support for that particular solution.
- The next aspect is the **sustainable business model**, so we're really evaluating two things here is the business model viability is around, is your solution affordable, scalable, competitive. And the next aspect is the sustainability, is how will you minimise environmental impact across the solution's lifecycle.
- And the last one is more around **market readiness and barriers**. So here we really want to check what are the different market barriers you foresee, what's your maturity level of the solution, how will you overcome your barriers, and then progress from low maturity to high maturity solutions.

So those are the four different criteria that we will be evaluating against, and we've provided different weighting across each of these criteria as well. And you can find more information in the [Entrant Handbook](#) as well. I think I'll now pass on over to Nicola again. Oh, I think it's Alex, sorry.

How to Enter and Support

Alexandra Wu: No worries, thanks Pranoy.

So you've now heard lots about what we're looking for in the first WEL competition, the entry requirements, and how we'll assess entries. But how do you actually enter, and what support can you receive to help you enter?

So, as Nicola mentioned, entries opened last Tuesday, and the competition is open for 16 weeks, with a deadline to submit your entry at 1pm GMT on Tuesday 10th March 2026. The entry form is available through a third-party platform we use called Submittable, and my colleague is putting a direct link to the entry form in the chat now. You will need to set up a Submittable account in order to enter the well, and you can also share this Submittable entry with colleagues to collaborate on the entry together. We've also made available the full list of entry form questions in an editable Word document that you can use to draft

your answers offline, if that's helpful for you. This can be downloaded from the [entrant support page](#) of the website, and on that page, you can also find a list of [frequently asked questions](#), which might be helpful for you to help develop your entry alongside the [entrant Handbook](#) and the information on the website.

If you still can't find answers to the questions you have, feel free to email us, or book a 15-minute surgery session with the delivery team to ask your questions directly. These sessions will be available through the entire entry period, for you to use.

And we also have two exciting opportunities to support partnership formation for the competition, which I will talk about here.

So we know that for some types of solutions, partnerships will be vital for the solution to be implemented successfully, or to combine complementary expertise from different sectors and different types of organisations. For example, if you're already working in the water sector, but don't have that behavioural science expertise, you might be looking for partners in that space. Or conversely, if you're from outside the water sector and are looking for water sector or water efficiency expertise, you might be seeking a partner in that space.

How this translates to your actual entry is that assessors and judges will be seeking to understand the team delivering the solution through the team capability and partnerships assessment category, as well as the solutions route to market strategy in assessment criterion 4.1, which Pranoy just covered.

So, to support partnership formation through the WEL, we're delivering two types of activities:

- Firstly, our partnerships form is available throughout the entire entry period, and through this short form, you can register your interests to form partnerships. The form will ask for key details about your team's expertise, ask you to indicate the potential solution type you're looking to develop, if you know this already, as well as the key skills and expertise areas where you're seeking to form partnerships. By submitting the form, you're providing consent for your contact details to be shared with other organisations who are interested in forming partnerships. And once completed, you'll receive access to a document that contains the details of those other organisations who are keen to form partnerships, and it's your opportunity to directly contact those organisations who have the relevant expertise that's of interest to you. It's not mandatory to complete, but we do encourage you to fill it in if you are requiring partnerships to enter the well. The document's going to be continuously updated, so we encourage you to keep checking back for new organisations who've been added.

- The second opportunity that we're delivering that Nicola mentioned earlier is an in-person networking event taking place on the 15th January 2026, at our offices in London. This is a one-off event, and is an opportunity for organisations seeking to form partnerships to network in person and build those relationships with other organisations who are seeking partners.

The link to complete the [partnerships form](#), and also register for the [networking event](#) should be in the chat, and also available on our website for you to find more information.

Q&A Session

Nicola Tulk: We're now moving on to the, part of the webinar where we have time, for your questions. I can see various people have already started adding questions on the Slido, so thank you for that. If you have other questions, please do join, the details are there again, and upvote on the questions that you most want to be answered. Just for awareness, we will be sharing this recording and these slides after the session today, so that you can share with colleagues and also revisit yourself. And we'll also follow up with a written response to any questions we don't get to.

So, let's start with, the first question. So, first question will be for Jude, and the question is, **Q: Have themes for later years already been decided? Will bids be rejected if they fit a future theme better? I.e., what's the likelihood that bids will be rejected because they may be a better fit to future themes?**

Jude Noro: A: Yeah, that's a good question. The themes have not been decided yet, in part because the world of water efficiency changes quickly, and we don't want to set out 5 years of themes without being sure that they would be appropriate. We're not going to reject a bid if it's simply because it fits another theme, if it does fit this year's theme too, but it has to fit this year's theme. That's what should matter. So you know, themes will have some amount of overlap, I assume, year on year, but I don't think you should be taking that into consideration too much, because if your solution fits actionable insights, then it should be you should apply this year. The important information is that it should fit this year's challenge.

We will come back to everyone once we have a theme for next year. I think we'll probably announce the theme for next year around the time we announce the winners for this year. But yeah, we'll try to give people just like this year a little bit of insight into the theme before the applications open up for the next year's challenge.

Nicola Tulk: Brilliant. Thank you very much, Jude. The next question, that looks like it's got the most votes, I think will also be for Jude to offer an answer first of all on. This question

is, **Q: will anonymised smart meter open data be available, such as via the [Stream platform](#)? Or will entrants need a water company partner for access to such data?**

Jude Noro: A: Yeah, I'm happy to pick that up. I think, this is something that is, covered a little bit in the FAQ number 4.8. Around data sets, we are talking to Stream, but there has not been a formalised agreement on any of the data that they don't currently have, so in terms of accessing smart meter data specifically, we would encourage you to partner with, a company that has that data already, so that is a water company.

In terms of other data sets that may be available and wouldn't necessarily have as much, GDPR-related constraints, then this is something that you can talk to Stream about, as they're working on developing their options, and, and you can also include that in your partnership form entry to explain what the type of support you might want and need from potential partners and what data they might have access to.

Once projects are funded, we may be able to help, work with stream to facilitate that. But at this stage, you should be, looking at what are the options that you can have access to. I think that covers it. I don't know if anyone else in the team has more information on that they wanted to add, if I've forgotten anything?

Nicola Tulk: I think you covered it, thank you, Jude. There are some related questions which we'll come onto perhaps in a minute, but just working through in order, of which ones are most popular. I'll take the next question. So there's a question about **Q: how long does the award last? Does it cover just one year?**

A: So, the funding is for the length of your project and innovation. There's no specific, restriction on the length of those projects, given the challenge statement and the focus that we have. We would expect projects to last somewhere in the range of 1 to 3 years, but they'll be selected based on their individual merits and against those assessment criteria that Pranoy, went through. But yeah, we're expecting around 1 to 3 years, given the focus that we have.

And I'm just looking at what's, the next question. So the next question here **Q: If wholesaler companies can only give financial contributions, how does that affect access to wholesaler data and other in-kind, type of resources for a project?**

A: So I think this is related to the point that Jude was just talking about, which is that if, there is an innovation that requires access to particular datasets, or particular kinds of in-kind resources, then we encourage you to form partnerships with the organisations so that you can access, those datasets and resources. We have got the partnerships form and the networking event to help facilitate formation of those partnerships.

If there was another aspect of that that I've not understood or answered, then feel free if anybody wants to come in, or if a follow-up question wants to be posted.

Jude Noro: so the question mentioned the financial contribution. The financial contribution is about the match funding aspect of the entry, but the partnership will obviously extend to other aspects, it's just that the part that will count towards the match funding, if it comes from a water company or retailer, this will have to be financial. But when it comes to creating partnerships and working with these companies, obviously, partnerships can and will go above and beyond just financial partnership.

Nicola Tulk: thank you, Jude, that's a good point to add. And perhaps just to build on that a little bit further, so, the 10% contribution is the mandatory amount, but anything, above that is very welcome and encouraged as well, which might include additional in-kind contributions.

Okay, looking, at, next questions that we have, so yes, related question **Q: If a wholesale water company is a project partner, but not the project lead, do they still have to provide a 10% financial contribution?**

A: So there's no requirement if there's a wholesale water company on a project to provide any specific amount of financial contribution. It's if they are contributing, then that contribution must be financial. So it's up to teams to decide who's the lead, who are the other partners, and how is the mandatory contribution shared amongst themselves, and as long as it respects the fact that it's a minimum of 10% in total, and that any contribution from the wholesale water company is financial, then that's fine. And, this is something that, we'll be monitoring, and looking at for future WEL design as well. But hopefully that clarifies that particular point.

The next question is, **Q: will there be visibility of who the judges are?**

A: Yes, there will be, before the end of the entry period. We're still confirming who the judges are at this point in time, so we haven't published that information yet, but we will be doing so, before submissions close. And that'll give people visibility just in case there are any conflicts of interest as well, so that will be available, yes.

The next question, this is, I think, one for Jude in the first instance. **Q: Please confirm whether water reuse is in scope for water efficiency?**

Jude Noro: A: Yeah, happy to pick that up. Water reuse is within scope for water efficiency, as long as you can prove that your project is, meets the criteria for actionable insights, so there is a key component, a key insight component to your project, and that it delivers reduction in water demand, then it would be within scope. I think that's the easiest way to answer that question.

Nicola Tulk: Yeah, absolutely, Jude. All, entries will be assessed against those, assessment criteria, so it's how well they meet the challenge statement, as determined by the assessment criteria.

Next question, then, is **Q: if winners are to be announced in June, when is the earliest date that a successful project could start?**

A: It would be at pretty much the same point in time, in June. I think we've given guidance that we'd expect projects to start within three months of that announcement, and having, received the funding, so we're looking for projects to start, you know, promptly, so that we can see the impact and deliver results from the Water Efficiency Lab quickly. But yes, funding will be received in June, so obviously, if individual projects want to start before that, that would be their choice, but the funding will be in June.

Next question, again, I'll take this one to start. **Q: How broad is businesses, i.e., is this focused on smaller commercial properties, or does this also include large industrial users as well?**

A: It's all size of businesses.

The next question, looking at here that we've got is for Pranoy, **Q: is there any further guidance on whether bids need to focus on activities or topics that are different from existing PR24 funded water efficiency activities?**

Pranoy Dias: A: Yeah, I think one of the, assessment criteria is the additionality, so what we'll be assessing is, how is this different from the AMP8, plans. So that there's no duplication of funding, again, across this, so that you're not requesting for funding for the same solutions twice. So, if you have requested for funding for an app in AMP 7, ideally shouldn't really be coming again to the WEL to request for additional funding, so that's how we kind of look at it. So, water companies will need to, like, explain how does this... how is it this... how is this different from the normal AMP 8 plans, or AMP 7 plans as well.

Nicola Tulk: So the next question, looking at here is, about agriculture. **Q: Agriculture is a significant user of water. What's the potential for applications that enhance water use efficiency through recovered nutrients, and water reuse?**

A: So I think I'll just echo, what we've said before, that all entries will be assessed against the challenge statement, and those assessment criteria. We can't comment on, sort of, specific examples, but it's how well do they meet that challenge statement, and the assessment criteria. Jude, did you have anything that you want to add on this particular question?

Jude Noro: No, I think that's the main thing, it has to be focused on the insight piece, so it may or may not be that a solution for companies that are agricultural businesses, fits the criteria, if it's insight-oriented. If it's insight-oriented, then it might still fill the criteria, but it's a question of fitting that definition of the problem statement.

Nicola Tulk: Thank you, Jude. Okay, so, next question is **Q: the theme approach potentially limits the Water Efficiency Lab. Why not open up, the entire WEL to the things that will save the most water?** Jude, do you want to take that one?

Jude Noro: A: Yeah, I can take that. The WEL's aim is to kickstart specific problem statements that are not being met otherwise. A lot of the very large-scale demand reduction problems are being funded through the AMP, through the Price Review 24, and others will probably be funded through, Breakthrough at some point during the AMP, if big projects come through that way. But the idea of the WEL and the challenge statement for the WEL is to focus on issues that may be overlooked otherwise, or that are necessary to unlock the full benefits in the long term.

So, for example, we know that one of the barriers right now to doing water demand reduction is lack of insight, lack of understanding, lack of data, which is why we chose this, as a first-year Challenge, but yeah, it's just about being very strategic when it comes to, focusing that funding and making sure that we're unlocking all the possibilities.

Nicola Tulk: Next question, this one for Pranoy to, answer first. **Q: Is it a requirement that any project must include smart meter data, i.e. can other actionable data be used to support non-metered customers?**

Pranoy Dias: A: So again, not sure if I totally understand the question, but I guess in terms of, if you're looking at it from a solution point of view, if you're asking the question is, do we require smart meter data to validate and build existing solutions, then I guess it also depends on properties that don't really have smart meters. So, again, depends on really what the innovators want. They might really want other sets of data which you could use to build and validate the solutions for non-metered customers. So it's not really an absolute requirement that it has to be smart meter, but I guess that could be a starting point where we have it. And also, because there's a lot of different companies at different stages of smart metering, so a lot of companies might not really have smart metering data. So if there is any other way to provide actionable data for non-metered customers specifically, I think it's up to the innovators.

Jude Noro: Yeah, I agree with what Pranoy said. It doesn't have to be smart meter data. we're really interested in seeing solutions that are at fittings level, or that are, that make some data available and some insight available to customers that are not metered, cannot be metered, or will not be metered in the short run, for many reasons, you know, it could

be that they're just leaving in a place that doesn't have good network connectivity and won't be able to be smart meters for that reason in the next 5 years. Any of these reasons are things that we have in mind, and so solutions that provide insights to either that are, that is more granular, or that, service, subset of the customers that are not able to get that data otherwise, is of a valid entry to the WEL.

Nicola Tulk: And perhaps, Jude, do you want to take this one first? This is about data centres. **Q: Data centres are the highest water consumers for cooling. Are you going to consider the technology applicable for data centre?**

Jude Noro: A: I think this is sort of the same thing as for agriculture, which is that if a solution is centred around insight and specifically for data centres, we'd be happy to receive an application like that. It has to meet the theme, like, it sort of comes back also to the question of why we focused on that theme, is the idea that there are other aspects that need to be addressed in terms of water demand reduction, but there are loads of other leverage to address these issues, and there is a lot of existing pressure for data centres to reduce their water use, so it's not, it's a question of making sure that we're spending that precious customer money into something that will really unlock some solutions that wouldn't be unlocked otherwise. So if the solution meets the criteria and is really additional, yeah for sure, you can work on something related to data centre. If it looks like it's something that would be funded, that is not, either doesn't meet the current criteria for the theme, so the actionable insight side. or would be funded by other sources of funding, then that would not be a good application for the WEL. I think that's the rule for any type of applications.

Nicola Tulk: Excellent, thank you. Next question, I'll take, **Q: can UK local authorities participate in the bid, either via a lead agency or as a partner in a consortium?**

A: Yes, both of those options, either as a lead or a partner are fine.

Next question, is, **Q: did we consider a Q&A session with the judges?**

A: So, there isn't a Q&A session with the judges, as part of the process for this. Perhaps some people may have been familiar that that's sometimes done in later stages on other competitions. It's not part of the process for the Water Efficiency Lab. The information that's needed will be collected through the entry form, and there's quite a lot of guidance, within there, if you do start to open up and complete it on what's needed.

Next question is, we'll take this and one more if we have time. I've just got a few more minutes left. **Q: would a solution that would be, suited for a water company to use, e.g. to tackle root cause of leakage bursts and contamination be within scope?**

A: So, as we keep coming back to, we're looking for the solutions that answer the challenge statement and assessment criteria. I suspect that things that are more focused on these root causes, are less likely to be able to answer the challenge statement, if it's, say, network leakage type of thing. If it was, about giving insights to customers to help them identify leaks, within the home, then that might be relevant. Pranoy, did you want to add anything?

Pranoy Dias: Yeah, just to echo what you said, I think it's more around operational leakage that I think the comment was on. So, I don't think that would really be within scope. So, as Nicola said, if it can be used within the households or the businesses and provide them with insights, then it could be within scope. But if it's more for operational network leakage, then it's not really within the scope of this competition.

Nicola Tulk: Time for one last question, and then we'll wrap up. And, next question is, **Q: how much of the total £25 million fund is allocated for this open call?**

A: So, for this one, it's up to £5 million, so approximately £5 million per annum, but the exact amount will depend on the entries received, exactly how much they're requesting, and also the quality of those and what the judges decide to award. But £5 million is the short answer.

So, thank you everybody. I know there are a few questions that we didn't get to, and we will respond to all of those offline. Thank you for your engagement in the Slido.

Please do, look on the website: waterinnovation.challenges.org/water-efficiency-lab. You'll find the [entrant handbook](#) there, with all the details, about the Water Efficiency Lab. And there are also a set of FAQs there which have answers, to various questions, including some that we've covered today. If there is a question that you have and you can't find the answer, please do feel free to contact us at waterinnovation@challengeworks.org.

You can also sign up for updates on, the Water Efficiency Lab. There's a link on the website, or the URL is here also: <https://mailchi.mp/challengeworks/wel>

So, just remains to say thank you very much everybody, for attending. We look forward to engaging with you throughout this entry period, and please do let us know if you have any questions and look forward to seeing the eventual entries.

Well, we're wrapping up now. When you leave, there will be a very short poll. We'd really appreciate it if you could leave any feedback for us, that would be helpful. But yeah, thank you everybody, and have a great day.