CASE STUDY

A water-sector recruitment partnership across Design, Delivery and Commercial

SUPPLYING SPECIALIST TALENT TO ANGLIAN WATER'S @ONE ALLIANCE.

Murray McIntosh is a specialist water-sector recruitment consultancy, founded in 2015.

Our relationship with the @one Alliance started in 2022 and grew organically as a supplier to JN Bentley/Mott MacDonald Bentley and other alliance partners including Barhale, MWH Treatment and Balfour Beatty, working with Richard Lee, Engineering Director at Anglian Water. A Professional Services Contract (PSC) was established with Commercial Director Richard Langbridge in September 2025, enabling direct supply and allocation of contractor costs across the seven delivery partners.

The PSC resolved the friction and scaling bottleneck created by the alliance's previous two-tiered supply and review structure, unlocking higher-volume, faster deployment across the @one business units.

Murray McIntosh has now placed 65 contractors across all four @one business units: Clean Water, Place-Based Thinking, Water Recycling East and Water Recycling West, spanning Design, Delivery and Commercial functions.

Results

65
Contractors placed across all four @one business units

94.36%
Offer acceptance rate

35%
Reduction in days to hire

24 HOURS
To initial shortlist in Commercial (48 hours in Design)

16.7 MONTHS
Average tenure across the various models of supply

97%
Of placements stayed on assignment (63 of 65)

Disciplines placed

- Civil Engineers
- Commissioning Engineers
- Electrical Engineers
- Infrastructure Engineers
- Mechanical Engineers
- MEICA Leads
- Process Design Engineers
- Project Commercial Managers
- Project Design Managers
- Project Engineers
- Project Leaders
- Project Solutions Managers
- Quantity Surveyors
- Senior BIM Engineers
- Senior Quantity Surveyors
- Site Managers

Roles are located across the Anglian Region. All assignments are 12 months in duration.

THE CHALLENGE.

Most placements were new headcount rather than replacements, and often needed urgently.

Hiring took place shortly after the start of AMP8, during intense market competition, with few candidates immediately available for work. For example, the electrical discipline has an ageing workforce, and design and civil talent is scarce more broadly. With the AMP7 to AMP8 transition seeing a mass exodus of experienced professionals into other sectors, the core challenge was not sourcing candidates, but persuading experienced water-sector talent to return. This was at a time when every AMP8 alliance and Tier 1 contractor was mobilising simultaneously, driving up rates and shortening the window before strong candidates were secured elsewhere.

Murray McIntosh tracks project end dates of contractors so we can redeploy them fast. Placements have followed a pattern, bringing experienced professionals back into water rather than from those active in it. For example, these Commercial placements:

- A Project Commercial Manager persuaded back from nuclear.
- A Senior Quantity Surveyor brought back from highways.
- Another moved from consultancy into Tier 1 delivery.
- A further Senior QS on sabbatical from a refinery project.
- A QS persuaded back from building services.

EMBEDDED IN ANGLIAN WATER'S BUSINESS.

Murray McIntosh's water team works exclusively within the UK water sector, giving consultants sector-specific expertise to understand Anglian Water's needs. The account team comprises three dedicated 360 recruitment consultants, Leon Smith (Principal Consultant), Bradley Haworth (Senior Consultant) and Nile O'Meally (Consultant), supported by Ashleigh Macfarlane (Marketing) and David Andrews (Finance), and led by Managing Director Adam Cave, who works directly within the water team, bringing a decade of sector relationships and ties with industry regulators and trade bodies ahead of AMP8.

Murray McIntosh is on site at Anglian Water at least monthly for monthly review meetings, with 108 hours on site over the last six months. This includes site tours, and Murray McIntosh enjoyed taking part in Anglian Water's charity five-a-side football competition this year, reaching the quarter-finals.

Richard Langbridge and Richard Lee set out talent needs in monthly review meetings at Anglian Water, alongside Delivery Managers Dan Alderson and Nick Randall. Consultants obtain each role's responsibilities and essential/desirable experience, qualifications and authorisation directly from hiring managers, aligned to Anglian Water's Specification and Roles & Qualifications Matrix. Every CV is reviewed against relevant framework and project experience, with cultural fit assessed against known working styles.

Beyond supply: improving how Anglian hires

Murray McIntosh has challenged Anglian Water on how recruitment could be accelerated, helping cut wasted time from their own process; days to hire have since reduced by 35%.

We have also challenged candidates being required to have worked in the water sector within the last five years. Murray McIntosh proposed focusing on transferable skills instead: for example, a Senior Quantity Surveyor with no water-sector experience but strong highways and Tier 1 construction background was placed successfully, widening the pool when water-experienced professionals were scarce and commanded a premium.

SOURCING CANDIDATES.

Speed is central to the model, running through all of Murray McIntosh's candidate attraction and identification processes.

- Real-time tracking of candidate availability, with an automated flagging system two weeks before a candidate's current project ends, allowing rapid redeployment.

- Monitoring the AMP cycle to forecast supply and demand, identifying shifts in availability before they hit, as with the AMP7 to AMP8 transition, ahead of the market.
- **Geographic talent mapping across the UK:** candidates in areas of lower AMP8 demand willing to relocate, candidates becoming available from other UK water frameworks, and searches extended into infrastructure hubs outside the water sector such as rail, highways and energy.
- Active membership of British Water, AquaFed, the Institute of Water and Future Water, plus Murray McIntosh's own Water Industry Labour Report, cited in the Cunliffe Review. These networks keep Murray McIntosh visible to water-sector professionals and aware of who is moving before roles reach the open market.
- **Sustainable talent pipeline:** this is an always-on system, not a per-vacancy exercise. Many roles are evergreen, so Anglian Water opportunities are raised with many candidates, and new candidates are submitted to the Anglian candidate portal every week regardless of whether a specific vacancy exists. Weekly meetings with Anglian Water flag which candidates have been submitted, so Anglian Water can interview someone now even if the need is months away, and submissions are timed around Anglian Water's own internal schedule for a smooth process.

Since this project began in September 2025, this mix of tools has produced a clear sourcing pattern: 91% of candidates submitted to the Anglian candidate portal came through Murray McIntosh's Bullhorn CRM, 5% via referral, and 2% each from job boards/social media and LinkedIn Recruiter (enhanced licence).

Many candidates placed were passive, settled in existing roles; Murray McIntosh's skill lies in persuading them out of settled roles, often from adjacent sectors.

ASSESSING CANDIDATES.

Delivery of high-calibre candidates is governed by SLAs agreed with Anglian Water and shared in the Monthly Status Report, part of Murray McIntosh's responsible recruitment framework. Screening verifies candidates meet the skills, experience and regulatory standards in the Specification and Roles & Qualifications Matrix, alongside motivation.

- **Screening** (by the dedicated consultant, immediately on receipt of a brief, before submission to Anglian Water): CV and application review, skills and competency matching against the Matrix, agreed assessment criteria, behavioural fit and Right to Work checks.
- **Interview** (same consultant, once screening is cleared): competency-based interview covering technical expertise and problem-solving, including two structured examples (taking a project from concept to completion, and turning round a failing project), plus soft-skills and IR35/compliance checks.

Structured interviews are scored against CIPD-aligned criteria on a 4-point scale (1 Not Demonstrated, 2 Partial, 3 Acceptable, 4 Strong Demonstration), with lead criteria pre-sifted against a minimum pass mark of 4, then 3 for remaining criteria.

Murray McIntosh also uses Disability Confident Committed Employer status to adapt testing and interviews.

How we know a candidate is the strongest

- **Essential technical competence:** candidates must deliver full lifecycle design, from concept and feasibility through to handover, including calculations, outline/detailed design and site surveys. Murray McIntosh qualifies candidates against this full scope through structured questioning, using an “I” technique to isolate individual contribution from team output when candidates default to “we”.
- **Software/systems competence:** Anglian Water's design environment relies on AutoCAD, Civil 3D, Autodesk BIM 360 and Revit; genuine hands-on proficiency is confirmed directly during screening rather than assumed from a Tier 1 background.
- **Qualifications and professional accreditation:** verified directly, covering a degree-level engineering background (often with a master's) and progression towards or achievement of Chartership where required.
- **Collaborative working:** cultural and organisational fit reviewed from the outset, drawing on Murray McIntosh's understanding of hiring managers' working styles; candidates briefed on how each business unit operates, including its collaborative environment.

Example screening questions

Murray McIntosh also builds bespoke screening questions specific to each client. By way of an example, the following are just some developed for Anglian Water:

- **Design:** Can you talk us through a project where you delivered the full design lifecycle, from concept and feasibility through to detailed design and handover? Please be specific about what you personally delivered, rather than what your wider team delivered.
- **Process:** Can you describe your experience with MAS compliance, and translating regulatory performance requirements, such as phosphorus or iron limits, into process design?
- **Mechanical:** What experience do you have with mechanical plant used in water treatment, such as pumps, valves and rotating equipment, including installation and commissioning?
- **Electrical:** What experience do you have with MCC, ICA and telemetry systems, and instrumentation/control philosophy for dosing, flow or level monitoring?
- **Commercial:** What experience do you have administering NEC3 or NEC4 contracts, including compensation events and early warnings?
- **Software:** What CAD software are you proficient in, and how has this applied to water industry projects?
- **Culture:** Do you have experience mentoring junior or graduate team members?

Once an offer is agreed, a minimum of two professional references are taken plus security/background checks where required (e.g. DBS, financial screening). A final candidate cover sheet, developed with Joel Newton and Hannah Robson at Anglian, is posted to the Anglian candidate portal, with records logged on Murray McIntosh's systems for audit. Certifications with a defined validity period are monitored throughout the assignment, with Anglian Water notified ahead of any expiry.

SELLING ANGLIAN WATER WITH AUTHORITY.

Our entrenchment in the water sector strengthens our ability to represent Anglian Water to candidates. Murray McIntosh values the relationships held with every stakeholder on this account, from Hiring Manager to HR, Procurement, Finance and Talent Acquisition, alongside monthly Status Report Review meetings. This depth of relationship allows Murray McIntosh to represent Anglian Water to candidates authentically.

Job descriptions and Anglian Water's mission and values are shared with candidates ahead of submission, alongside Anglian Water's verified Flexa profile, so candidates understand the culture they are stepping into.

- **Speed of communication:** every contractor has direct 24/7 access to their consultant's mobile, so candidates are never left waiting during a competitive process.
- **Expectation management:** candidates are given a realistic view of process timescales, informed by Murray McIntosh's direct visibility of Anglian Water's review cycles, with consultants maintaining interest by discussing the technical substance of the role and live projects.
- **Rate benchmarking:** pay, benefits and incentives are benchmarked against current market data to keep Anglian Water's offer genuinely competitive.
- **Retention pull:** Anglian Water's 21-year alliance offers genuine longevity, evidenced by extension rates achieved, alongside real internal promotion (several contractors promoted internally, some now sitting on interview panels), plus a strong package, mileage, lodging, a daily food/drink allowance and flexible working.
- **Counteroffers:** Murray McIntosh cannot recall losing a candidate to a counteroffer where the role was inside IR35.

PROTECTING ANGLIAN'S DELIVERY AFTER PLACEMENT.

Onboarding is led by the contractor's dedicated consultant: check-in calls the week before start, day one, weekly through month one, then monthly, quarterly or annually. Murray McIntosh is an FCSA Recruiter Partner and works with approved FCSA-accredited umbrella providers which provides additional assurance over employment, payroll, Right to Work and labour supply-chain compliance.

Each check-in confirms arrival and suitability, gives workers a route to raise concerns, and checks near assignment end whether the role continues. Status Report Review meetings with Anglian Water directors provide ongoing oversight of placement performance.

Consultants are trained in responsible recruitment and modern slavery awareness, remaining alert to worker exploitation and risks within the labour supply chain.

Candidate feedback, gathered one week after a placement begins, has to date been consistently positive. As an example of performance monitoring confirming strong delivery, a SUDS Engineer placed by Murray McIntosh was nominated for Anglian Water's Core Behaviour Award, Always Exploring 2025.

Murray McIntosh maintains regular contact with placed contractors to understand how they are feeling about extending, so gaps can be identified and planned for in advance. Where a contractor becomes unavailable, Murray McIntosh draws on its wider talent pipeline to identify a replacement quickly. Account knowledge is not held by a single consultant alone: with three dedicated water recruitment consultants working across the account, alongside detailed CRM records, continuity is protected should the responsible consultant change.

Retention across this account has been strong: 97% of placements (63 of 65) stayed on assignment. The 2 who chose to leave did so for IR35 reasons and rates that exist in other infrastructure verticals.

RESULTS.

Since 2022 Murray McIntosh has delivered 65 contract resources. The KPIs below show how efficiently those placements are made.

32 (49%)	2.32:1 (43.2%)	2.98:1 (33.56%)	6.2:1 (16.13%)
% of extensions	**CV to Interview**	**Interview to Offer**	**CV to Placement**

The ratios show how few CVs it takes to reach each stage: fewer than 2.5 CVs per interview and about 6 per placement. Anglian Water's hiring managers review a small number of well-matched candidates rather than long shortlists, which keeps hiring quick and easy to manage.

Time from shortlist (submission to the Anglian candidate portal) to offer acceptance now averages 25 days in Design and 21 days in Commercial, with the shortest completed processes at 13 and 8 days. Murray McIntosh is working towards a target of 10 working days.

Of the 65 placements made, 34 are still in post.

Accreditations and compliance assurance

Murray McIntosh holds Achilles UVDB Silver accreditation, is an APSCo and BIoR member (all recruitment consultants complete BIoR training, including the Essential Law and Legislation module) and is progressing towards ISO 9001, ISO 14001 and Cyber Essentials certification, with a GDPR and Privacy Policy audited annually.

THE SPECIALIST ADVANTAGE.

A generalist agency sells access to candidates. Murray McIntosh sells depth of understanding, exclusive focus on the water sector, technical fluency in the disciplines we recruit for, and a network built specifically for this industry. The result at Anglian Water: 65 placements, a 94.36% offer acceptance rate and 35% fewer days to hire.

"Murray have been excellent in finding experienced and competent engineers to help us deliver our commitments, using their strong knowledge of the sector and market to proactively find quality staff for us."

Richard Lee, Engineering Director, Anglian Water

HOW CAN WE HELP YOU?

If you are planning your next AMP resourcing and want to see how this approach could work for you, we would be glad to talk it through.

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Most recruiters know engineering.

WE KNOW WATER

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