

Board Paper Q1 Performance

Date of meeting:	29th July 2026
Title of Paper:	Business Plan 2026-27 Performance Report: Q1
Paper Reference:	26-07-B08
Paper sponsored by:	Prys Davies (Executive Director Strategy, Policy and Evidence)
Paper prepared by:	Sarah Williams (Head of Corporate Strategy and Programme Management Office) James Cornelius (Team Leader - Corporate Planning and Performance) Corporate Planning and Performance Team
Paper presented by:	Sarah Williams (Head of Corporate Strategy and Programme Management Office)
Purpose of the paper	To seek Board approval of the Business Plan 2026/27 Quarter 1 Performance Report and changes to the description of one commitment and one trend metric, note the associated internal performance and risk position.
Summary	Q1 performance: • Business Plan Commitments performance: ○ Q1 Actual: 0 Red, 9 Amber, 21 Green and 5 commitments unable to report. ○ Anticipated Year-end position (Q4) : 0 Red, 6 Amber, 29 Green • Business Plan Metrics performance: ○ Q1 Actual: 1 Red, 2 Amber and 10 Green and 8 commitments unable to report • Internal performance: ○ Q1 Actual: 1 Red, 1 Amber, 5 Green ○ Last Quarter: 0 Red, 2 Amber, 6 Green, 1 Grey

Introduction

1. This paper reports on our performance against the 2026/27 Business Plan for Q1, covering:
 - Progress against the 35 Commitments identified in the Business Plan.
 - Progress against 21 of the 42 trend metrics included in the Business Plan.
 - A selection of internal performance measures.
2. Performance is assessed against both the previous quarter's position and the forecast year-end position. This paper focuses on those Business Plan Commitments and trend metrics assessed as Red or Amber, together with the actions being taken to deliver their planned Pathways to Green.
3. The exception is planning and permitting, where performance is subject to a high level of public and political interest. For these services, the relevant metrics have been included in **Annex 4**, even where performance is currently reported as Green.
4. Changes are proposed to the description of one commitment and one trend metric from those published in the Business Plan. The first amendment updates the commitment relating to Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure (EVCI) to better reflect the work planned for delivery during the year. The second amendment updates the description of a trend metric relating to the planning service. These proposed changes are noted as:
 - Commitment title from "Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure: Increase EVCI capacity by 61 chargers across 16 sites to accelerate fleet decarbonisation in 2027/28" to "Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure: Improve the effectiveness and efficiency of our EV infrastructure and EV fleet by planning and initiating a programme of work"
 - Trend metric title from "Development planning process: maintain a 98% level of service for timely statutory consultee responses" to "Development planning responses"
5. The Board is asked to approve these changes.
6. The full suite of 42 trend metrics will be included in the Q2 report as data collection, processing and consolidation arrangements are aligned to the quarterly reporting cycle.

Business Plan 2026-27 Quarter 1 Performance Report

7. In Q1, 0 Commitment is assessed as Red; nine Amber; 21 as Green. Of the trend metrics reported this quarter, one is assessed as Red; two Amber and ten as Green. The full performance dashboard, including all commitments, is provided in **Annex 1**. A dashboard containing all trend metrics reporting for Q1 is provided in **Annex 3**.
8. At the end of Q4 2025/26, one Commitment was assessed as Red, nine as Amber and 18 as Green. As part of the year-end reporting process, we committed to monitoring the delivery of actions associated with those Red and Amber assessments to ensure that their planned Pathways to Green were being achieved

in the new financial year. For the nine related commitments this year, five are reporting green for Q1.

9. Table 1: Red / Amber Business Plan Commitments and Trend Metrics at Q1

Commitment	Q1 Actual	Anticipated End of Year
WBO1 Nature is Recovering		
Resilient Ecological Networks (REN): Projects are established and underway across Wales.	Amber	Green
The commitment was Amber at the end of Q1 due to delays in completing the all-Wales Resilient Ecological Networks framework. It is forecast to achieve Green by year-end. A Task and Finish Group has been established, and an approach has been agreed for targeting the £210,000 funding allocation to achieve the greatest impact. Development of the national framework and supporting guidance for Place teams is underway. The Pathway to Green is to complete the framework and guidance through joint working across Place, Policy, Evidence and Digital, Data and Technology (DDaT). Governance is now clearer, and existing NRW evidence and expertise are being used to support delivery. This provides confidence that the commitment will return to Green in Q2 and remain Green at year-end.		
Sustainable Farming Scheme advice: Provide specialist advice to Welsh Government for the development of the optional and collaborative actions in the Sustainable Farming Scheme, including refresh of the forest management plan and scoping of a new woodland management scheme verification service.	Amber	Green
The commitment is Amber at the end of the quarter as feedback is still required on the remaining five batches of Capital Action specifications for the Sustainable Farming Scheme (SFS) Optional Layer, alongside ongoing assessment of the implications for permitting, licensing and consenting. During the quarter feedback was provided to Welsh Government on 11 batches of Capital Action specifications, and a triage process was developed for applicants requiring both a Designated Site assessment and a Woodland Management Plan. The commitment is forecast to achieve Green by year-end. The Pathway to Green is to agree key milestones with Welsh Government (WG) to agree our role in delivering the Woodland Management Scheme Optional Actions, complete the assessment of licensing, consenting and permitting impacts, and finalise the Service Level Agreement. Progress against these actions provides confidence that the commitment will achieve Green by year-end.		
Establish species recovery initiatives: namely (i) a Species Recovery Framework, (ii) WG/NRW beaver work programme	Amber	Green

The commitment was Amber at the end of Q1 due to delays in completing the Species Recovery Framework prioritisation process. It is forecast to achieve Green by year-end. A proposed approach for prioritising bird species has been shared with specialists and will provide a model for other species groups. The WG/NRW Beaver Work Programme is also progressing, with the NRW Lead Specialist Advisor recruited ahead of the Q2 milestone. The Pathway to Green is to agree the prioritisation method and apply it across other species groups. NRW is also working with Welsh Government to clarify any further requirements for species targets and indicators. With specialist engagement underway, there is confidence that delivery will accelerate and achieve Green by year-end.		
Trend Metric	Metric Reported	Q1 Actual
Number of SSSIs notified or renotified.	2 SSSI's Notified or renotified	Red
Two SSSIs—Wern Ddu Uchaf and Cors Cae Gweunydd, covering 18.58 hectares—were notified during Q1. While this represents progress towards the annual target of eight SSSI notifications or re-notifications, delivery is currently below the level required to achieve the annual target and is therefore rated Red. A phased delivery programme has been established for 2026/27 to support consistent delivery and manage approval capacity. Seven further notifications are currently forecast to progress through the pipeline, with two in Q2, three in Q3 and two more in Q4. Additional resource funded through Biodiversity Grant-in-Aid will further strengthen capacity and support improved performance over the remainder of the year. The pathway to green is challenging, the actions now in place are expected to strengthen delivery and improve confidence in performance over the remainder of the year.		
WBO2: Communities are Resilient to Climate Change		
Commitment	Q1 Actual	Anticipated End of Year
Act as facilitator for the Mid Wales Growth Deal partnership: to support decarbonisation opportunities for the round timber haulage sector, as a part of NRW's contribution to the Whole System Research for Innovation and Decarbonisation (WSRID) Welsh Government initiative.	Amber	Amber
The commitment was Amber at the end of Q1 and is forecast to remain Amber at year-end because the next phase depends on external funding and programme approval. The second stage of the Mid Wales Growth Deal bid has been completed and received positively by the Welsh Government WSRID Climate Change team. Feasibility work has identified a route to trial green hydrogen fuels in round-timber haulage and heavy sawmill equipment, providing a basis for future decarbonisation. The Pathway to Green is to maintain stakeholder support, strengthen the business case and prepare the next funding bid. Planned milestones have been achieved, but the timing of external decisions means that Green is unlikely during 2026/27. The longer-term route to Green remains dependent on securing funding to move from feasibility to a practical trial.		

WBO3: Pollution is Minimised		
Embed changes to incident management approach and ways of working: to enable a prioritised response to incidents focussing resource to those which cause the most harm	Amber	Amber
The commitment was Amber at the end of Q1 and is forecast to remain Amber at year-end. Delivery is on plan, but fully embedding a risk-based approach to incident management is a multi-year Programme. The review of all 29 pollution incident management Standard Operating Procedures has started. It will use operational learning and existing guidance to support a consistent response based on risk and environmental harm. Work also continues on policies, incident plans, reporting routes and decision-support tools. The Pathway to Green is to complete the 2026/27 milestones and embed the revised approach across NRW. Planned outputs remain achievable, but Green will depend on wider organisational adoption and evidence that resources are being directed consistently towards incidents causing the greatest harm.		
Deliver the Tackling Waste Crime Programme: disrupting organised waste crime through intelligence-led, multi-agency intervention.	Amber	Amber
The commitment was Amber at the end of Q1 and is forecast to remain Amber at year-end. This reflects the growing complexity of organised waste crime and continued pressure on enforcement capacity. The U1 exemption desktop review is nearing completion, high-priority scrap metal sites have been reviewed, and joint operations have taken place with the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA) and Police. Some site visits were delayed because of limited numbers of trained officers and the need to prioritise higher-risk activity at End of Life Vehicle sites. The Pathway to Green is to increase trained enforcement capacity, expand intelligence-led activity and complete the planned site visits and construction and demolition waste campaigns. NRW will also work with Welsh Government and the Joint Unit for Waste Crime to manage emerging cross-border risks. Annual milestones remain achievable, but the scale and complexity of organised waste crime mean the wider commitment is expected to remain Amber at year-end.		
Commitment	Q1 Actual	Anticipated End of Year
Work with Welsh Government and DEFRA: to develop digital waste tracking and cross border data sharing, to understand waste flows and help identify illegal activity earlier.	Amber	Green
The commitment was Amber at the end of Q1 due to the phased rollout of the UK Digital Waste Tracking Service and NRW's dependency on the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra)-led delivery. It is forecast to achieve Green by year-end. Preparations are progressing as planned. A communications plan has been developed to encourage participation in the public beta, supported by a readiness questionnaire for waste receiving sites and new Citizen Space webpages.		

The Pathway to Green is to support implementation, increase participation and use data from the first phase to improve NRW's understanding of waste movements and identify illegal activity earlier. Preparatory milestones have been achieved, providing confidence that the commitment will achieve Green by year-end, subject to continued delivery of the Defra-led programme.		
Trend Metric	Metric Reported	Q1 Actual
Determine all permit applications received within statutory time frames or agreed service levels.	85%	Amber
Based on April and May data, performance is currently at 85%, resulting in an Amber status. June data was not available at the reporting cut-off and will be reflected in future reporting. Overall permitting performance has declined slightly compared with Q4. This reflects a modest reduction in waste permitting performance, alongside continued pressures within Installations permitting and Water Resources. However, performance in Installations permitting and Water Resources has improved since the previous quarter as mitigation measures have taken effect. While performance remains below target, the improving trend in these areas provides greater confidence in recovery during the remainder of the year.		
Incident Management: Repeat High category incidents in same location as % of substantiated High category incidents.	13%	Amber
The proportion of High category incidents occurring at repeat locations remains relatively stable. The Q1 rolling-year position is estimated at 13% compared with a three-year baseline of approximately 12%, resulting in an Amber status. During 2026/27, work will continue to refine reporting and analysis through Power BI enhancements, including heatmapping and spatial reporting. These improvements will provide greater insight into repeat incident patterns and locations, supporting more targeted interventions and a stronger evidence base for reducing such repeat High category incidents over time.		
WBO 4 – How we work for Nature and People		
Strengthen People Services by: • Implementing the Strategic Equality Plan and Anti-Racism Plan. • Completing the Health and Safety Training Needs Analysis.	Amber	Amber
The commitment was Amber at the end of Q1 and is forecast to remain Amber at year-end. The Strategic Equality Plan and Training Needs Analysis are progressing, but the Anti-Racism Action Plan is at an earlier stage. A permanent resource has been recruited to lead the technical Training Needs Analysis. Delivery of the Strategic Equality Plan continues through established governance, leadership oversight and workforce monitoring. Validation of training data has taken longer than planned, delaying its upload to the Learning Management System. Governance for the Anti-Racism Action Plan is in place, and staff networks are helping to shape its priorities.		

The Pathway to Green is to complete the training data upload, continue delivery of the Strategic Equality Plan and secure approval of the Anti-Racism Action Plan. The overall commitment will remain Amber until the plan is approved and there is evidence that priority actions are being delivered.		
Establish our approach to Green Finance: to identify investor-ready financial mechanisms and unlock new funding.	Amber	Green
The commitment was Amber at the end of Q1 due to the time required to establish governance and agree the Green Finance work programme. It is forecast to achieve Green by year-end. A working group has been established and has reviewed the first draft of the work programme and supporting approach. The Terms of Reference and work programme are due to be considered on 22 July 2026. The Pathway to Green is to secure agreement to these documents and begin delivery of the programme. This will enable NRW to identify investor-ready financial mechanisms and potential new funding sources. With governance now being finalised, there is confidence that the commitment will achieve Green by year-end.		

Internal performance report

10. For Q1 there is one Red, one Amber and five Green items. Table 2 shows those at Red or Amber for Q1 as well as Pathways to Green. More detail can be found in **Annex 2**.

11. Table 2: Red / Amber Internal performance reporting at Q1

Internal measure	Q1 Actual
Declarations of Interest	Red
Pathway to Green is through completion of outstanding declarations. As Q1 is typically the main period for renewing annual declarations, staff who have not yet completed their declaration will be prompted to do so, improving compliance and bringing performance back on track.	
Access to Information requests responded to within 20 days	Amber
Pathway to Green is through small operational changes within the team, including a revised approach to phone cover with other teams. As performance was only 0.2% below the 90% target this quarter, these changes are expected to bring the measure back to Green.	

Risks, Risk Appetite and opportunities

12. We have summarised the key risk themes identified in the returns from Leadership Team Reporters:
13. Capacity and resource constraints continue to be a significant risk across several commitments. Staff availability, recruitment, onboarding, training requirements and competing operational pressures are impacting delivery timescales, particularly in specialist areas where key expertise is limited. These factors are contributing to a number of Amber and Red commitments and slowing progress against planned milestones.
14. Dependencies on external organisations, funding decisions and wider governance arrangements are affecting delivery across several commitments which rely on decisions, funding allocations, approvals or inputs from Welsh Government, Defra, Ofwat, partner organisations or newly established governance structures. These dependencies are creating uncertainty over delivery timescales and limiting NRW's ability to fully control progress.
15. The time required to establish new partnerships, relationships, governance arrangements and ways of working is affecting delivery across some commitments. As many commitments involve developing new approaches rather than delivering established programmes, progress is dependent on building effective relationships and agreed ways of working before delivery can accelerate.

Next Steps

16. Leadership Team and Executive Team Wellbeing Objective Leads will continue to monitor delivery against the agreed Pathways to Green and take corrective action where progress deviates from the plan.

Recommendations

17. The Board is asked to
 - Approve the Business Plan 2026/27 Q1 Performance Report.
 - Note the Internal Performance Report.
 - Note the principal delivery risks and mitigations identified in the report.

Index of Annexes

Annex 1 – Performance table and charts for Business Plan dashboard

Annex 2 – Internal Performance Report

Annex 3 – Performance table and charts for Business Plan Trend Metrics dashboard

Annex 4 – Planning and Permitting Service

Approval / Consultation process

• Responsible	Sarah Williams (Head of Corporate Strategy and PMO) and Prys Davies (Executive Director Strategy, Policy and Evidence)
• Accountable	NRW Board
• Consulted	Leadership Team (Commitment Owners and Metric Owners) / Executive Team
• Informed	Leadership Team / Executive Team / NRW Board