

Delivered at COWI and AvoVe premises in Derby.

# UK Junior Water Prize Work Experience 2026



## Period

20-24 April 2026

## Customer

Severn Trent

AvoVe

Dalcour MacLaren

## Staff involved

Shazna Khayam, Assistant Engineer at COWI

Matthew Viggars, Head of Sector at COWI

Joanna Middleton, Head of Talent Acquisition at Dalcour MacLaren

MJ Ajah, School engagement and work experience lead at Severn Trent

Fiza Shah, Apprentice Project Engineer at AvoVe

## What makes this interesting?

Severn Trent Water provides nearly two billion litres of drinking water each day to eight million people. In managing this vital resource, the organisation handles sewage treatment at over 1,000 facilities, safely returning it to the environment.

Severn Trent's supply chain partners COWI, AvoVe and Dalcour MacLaren collaborated to provide a work experience insight week into the water sector for eight young people from Bemrose School.

Bemrose School is one of COWI and Severn Trent's partner schools with 46.8% of pupils eligible for free school meals and 60.7% of pupils attend whose first language is not English.

## Social Value delivered:

The young people were encouraged to pick a topic related to the water sector and to use the work experience week to create a presentation on issues and how they can be solved.

The UK Junior Water Prize challenges young people in STEM to develop innovative yet practical solutions to our global water crisis and this inspired the brief for the week.

The brief is to develop an innovative yet practical solution to the water crisis on a local, regional, national or global scale, with the potential to improve quality of life by addressing water quality, water resources management, water protection or water and wastewater treatment. Competition entries can be based in natural sciences or social studies.

Over the course of the work experience week, colleagues from AvoVe, Dalcour MacLaren, Severn Trent and COWI spent time with the young people to share the challenges faced in the water sector. Severn Trent also organised a site visit to Derby Treatment Works.

As a result, the students gained an insight into water and an appreciation into the processes behind ensuring that we have a reliable supply of water, which many said that they had never considered before. They also gained experience working in different professional environments and collaborated with colleagues and fellow

students, developing skills that would benefit them in their future careers. Rotating through the different companies amplified this value.

The output at the end of the week was a presentation and as well as strengthening their presentation skills, they were also able to share their experiences with everyone who had supported them and their teacher from Bemrose. The students left with new knowledge, new connections and a sense of accomplishment.

**Who was impacted:**

Eight young people from Bemrose

**Quote**

*“Above were proud to be part of this year’s programme, working alongside Severn Trent, COWI and Dalcour Maclaren to give students a real insight into the water sector. The final presentations reflected not only their learning, but also their ability to think critically about real-world water issues. We hope the experience has opened their eyes to the variety of opportunities within the industry.”* **Fiza Shah, Apprentice Project Engineer at Above**

*“It was a pleasure to be involved in delivering this work experience week in collaboration with COWI, Above and Severn Trent. The students were really engaged with learning about the water industry and the challenges we face. We were encouraged to hear so many of them ask questions, be curious about careers in the industry and offer them the opportunity and exposure which they might not otherwise have gained. I would like to think a few of them will go on to look into the apprenticeship options available when they finish school.”* **Joanna Middleton, Head of Talent Acquisition at Dalcour MacLaren**

*“It was a privilege to be able to support such a fantastic group of students this week. We may have found some future engineers here! Working with Partners Above, Severn Trent and Dalcour Maclaren added a great dynamic and really elevated the week.”* **Matt Viggars, Head of Sector at COWI**

*“Severn Trent were proud to host students early in the programme and welcoming them to one of our wastewater treatment sites. The site visit played a key role in helping students contextualise the project, bringing the wastewater treatment process and real-world challenges of the water industry to life. It was great to see their curiosity grow throughout the day and week, and how confidently they applied what they had learned to the final project. We hope the experience has inspired them to explore the many pathways into the industry, including apprenticeships and early careers opportunities.”* **MJ Ajah, School engagement and work experience lead at Severn Trent**

*“Thank you for the week really enjoyed with you guys.”* **Junior, Work Experience Student**

*“Thank you for the 5 days we had. We enjoyed this and gained lots of knowledge and thanks for all your support and happiness.”*

**Alex, Work Experience Student**

*“Even if you are not interested in your placement, you can even just participate in the activities and trust me you will have the best time of your life.”* **Adedolapo, Work Experience Student**