

Case Study Title: Building Faster, together: Collaboration Practices for Capital Project Delivery

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At VISION, we help organisations deliver complex capital projects and infrastructure programmes faster:

We have a strong track record of delivering projects within budget, ahead of schedule, and with all promised benefits. Renowned for our expertise in rapid mobilisation and Commitment-based Management™, we specialise in successfully delivering highly challenging, transformative projects at pace. Whether it's fixing fractured teams, breaking down silos and programme bottlenecks, or embedding project leaders on the ground, we keep projects moving and commitments met.

Based in Dublin, with offices in the UK, we operate globally and proudly celebrated 40 years in business in 2024.

Author



Holly Robinson

Holly Robinson

Holly is a Project Manager and Consultant with experience delivering complex programmes in the Utilities and Healthcare sectors. Since joining VISION in 2021, she has supported Scottish Water, Severn Trent, and MWH Treatment in embedding collaborative practices and Commitment-Based Management. She has contributed to Scottish Water's Flooding Programme, Improving Urban Waters, and the WINEP5 programme, introducing pull planning, daily huddles, and collaborative working days.

Holly is a certified Scrum Master and is highly skilled in stakeholder engagement, facilitation, and coaching, with a strong focus on building alignment and delivering measurable performance improvements.

Overview & Background to the Lean Initiative

As part of Ofwat's Water Industry National Environment Programme (WINEP5), MWH Treatment, working with Severn Trent Water and design partner Stantec, embarked on a £50 million programme to refurbish five critical wastewater treatment works across the Midlands. This programme aimed not only to modernise essential infrastructure but to set a new benchmark for efficiency and collaboration in the sector:

The challenge was clear: The water industry faces persistent resource constraints and an urgent regulatory mandate: Severn Trent Water's AMP8 ambition is to deliver significantly more projects with the same resources as AMP7. Traditional delivery methods would not suffice. To meet this demand, WINEP5 targeted a step-change in performance bringing projects to site 50% sooner, completing them 20% faster, and achieving at least 5% cost savings.

VISION Consulting was brought in to deliver this transformation. Through its pioneering methodology, Commitment-based Management™ (CbM), VISION helped create a culture of

accountability, collaboration, and pace, turning ambitious regulatory targets into tangible delivery outcomes.



Figure 1: Collaborative Planning on the WINEP5 Project

Lean Initiative Undertaken – Lean Thinking, Tools, Techniques

At the heart of WINEP5's success lies Commitment-Based Management™ (CbM). VISION's structured methodology that redefines collaboration by ensuring individuals and teams take

genuine ownership of their commitments. Unlike traditional task management, which often reinforces siloed behaviours, CbM focuses on making and keeping promises. This approach creates a culture

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Core Lean Practices Introduced

1. Collaborative Working

Weekly facilitated sessions brought together MWH Treatment, Stantec, and Severn Trent Water. These forums promoted openness, aligned decision-making, and ensured that blockers were resolved quickly. With senior decision-makers actively engaged, issues that might traditionally stall projects were dealt with rapidly, maintaining momentum.

2. One Shared Plan: Pull Planning

Using lean pull planning workshops, all stakeholders co-created a single integrated plan. Rather than top-down scheduling, this approach allowed those closest to the work to define milestones, sequence activities, and identify dependencies. This promoted shared accountability and eliminated the waste of rework from misaligned expectations.



Figure 2: Co-location Day at Edwinstone Site

3. Daily Huddles

Inspired by Lean's emphasis on visibility and flow, structured daily huddles ensured that teams remained on track. These short, focused sessions allowed rapid identification of challenges, immediate adjustment of priorities, and reinforcement of commitments. The effect was to keep projects on a forward trajectory without delays accumulating unnoticed.

4. Customer-Focused Mindset

VISION introduced the practice of assigning a 'customer' to each deliverable. This clarified expectations and created genuine dialogue about what was required, by when, and to what standard. The shift mirrored Lean's principle of "define value from the customer's perspective," ensuring work was always connected to real needs.

5. Rapid Issue Resolution

By embedding decision-makers directly into forums, WINEP5 reduced the traditional lag of escalation. Issues that previously took weeks to resolve were settled in days or hours. This agility reinforced trust between partners and removed one of the largest sources of waste in capital project delivery - waiting.

Integration with Lean Principles

The WINEP5 programme was a live demonstration of lean's core philosophy: maximise value, minimise waste, and create flow. CbM provided the behavioural and cultural underpinning to ensure these principles were not just theoretical but embedded in daily practice.

- **Waste Reduction:** Collaboration waste (what lean refers to as 'unused talent') was directly addressed by improving listening, dialogue, and accountability.
- **Flow:** Pull planning and daily huddles ensured work packages moved through the system smoothly, reducing bottlenecks.
- **Respect for People:** Assigning customers to deliverables honoured individuals' roles and perspectives, fostering pride and accountability.
- **Continuous Improvement:** Teams reflected on performance, identified lessons, and rapidly incorporated learning into subsequent cycles.

Breaking Down Silos

Historically, capital delivery in the water sector has been fragmented, with contractors, designers, and clients operating in silos. WINEP5 deliberately dismantled this model. Integrated planning and regular cross-organisation dialogue enabled knowledge sharing across sites and projects. Lessons learned in Mansfield could be applied immediately to Sutton in Ashfield or Retford, amplifying efficiency gains.

Cultural Transformation

Perhaps the most profound change was cultural. At programme launch, scepticism was high. Could such ambitious targets really be met? Through CbM coaching and facilitation, VISION helped shift moods from doubt to confidence, building a collective belief that

Lean Initiative Improvements & Impact

The WINEP5 programme has delivered outcomes that are both measurable and transformative, redefining how infrastructure projects can be planned and executed.

Accelerated Project Timelines

Across the initial sites, projects reached site 37% faster than traditional methods, with the first two schemes achieving full design approvals (Gate 4) eight months ahead of schedule. Even when

unforeseen challenges arose, such as a complete redesign prompted by environmental considerations, the programme maintained an impressive 18% average reduction in time to site across all locations. On-site delivery phases have also shown the potential for up to 20% quicker completion, demonstrating that the programme's stretch targets are realistic and scalable.

"It's refreshing to come into this project; everyone is happy to help and respond quickly – VISION's help really moved power upgrades along." Project Manager, Severn Trent

Efficiency and Cost Savings

To date, WINEP5 has already achieved 5% cost reductions, with clear potential for greater savings as the methodologies are rolled out more broadly. The structured approach to planning and collaboration has minimised duplication of effort, improved resource allocation, and created efficiencies that directly translate into financial benefits for the client and supply chain partners alike.

"Collaboration is key – my eyes were opened to better client communication on this project." Senior Project Manager, MWH Treatment

Breaking Down Silos and Cultural Transformation

Teams that previously worked in isolation are now operating as a single, integrated delivery unit, sharing knowledge, lessons learned, and best practices across projects. This cultural shift has built trust and confidence, transforming scepticism into pride and ambition. The behaviours encouraged through Commitment-based Management making and keeping commitments, are now embedded, providing consistency and accountability across the programme.

"Colocation days make the world of difference – completely different to other projects." Project Manager, MWH Treatment

Setting a New Benchmark

The success of WINEP5 demonstrates that structured collaboration, underpinned by Commitment-based Management, represents a breakthrough for infrastructure delivery. By redefining traditional execution methodologies, MWH Treatment, Stantec, and Severn Trent have collectively set a new industry benchmark. The programme has already been highlighted by Severn Trent as an exemplar for AMP8 delivery.

Summary and Lessons Learned

The WINEP5 programme proves that combining lean construction practices with Commitment-Based Management™ is a breakthrough model for the water sector.

Key lessons include:

- **Commitments drive performance.** Projects succeed when individuals and organisations treat promises as the currency of delivery.
- **Collaboration is a discipline.** Integrated planning, daily huddles, and cross-organisation forums must be structured and facilitated to work.
- **Culture is the multiplier.** Shifting mindsets from scepticism to ambition is essential to unlocking the full

benefits of lean methods.

The tangible results achieved such as faster timelines, lower costs, and stronger collaboration are compelling. But perhaps the greatest legacy is cultural: WINEP5 has created a shared belief that accelerated, efficient, and high-quality delivery is not the exception but the new standard.

As MWH Treatment and Severn Trent Water expand these practices across their AMP8 portfolio, the industry has a blueprint for how lean and Commitment-based Management™ can deliver transformation at scale. For VISION, WINEP5 reaffirms our conviction: by making and keeping commitments, teams can achieve what once seemed impossible.