

ACO. we care for water



CEO Water Mandate

ACO COMMUNICATION OF PROGRESS 2024



CEO Water Mandate

The Six Commitment Areas

Direct Operations

- Water-use assessment
- Set targets water and waste treatment
- Invest in and use new technologies
- Raise awareness sustainability
- Include in business decision making

Supply Chain and Watershed Management

- Share sustainability best practices
- Analyse and respond to watershed risk
- Encourage suppliers to improve water conservation and report

Collective Action

- Ties with civil society organisations
- Work with local, regional and national governments
- Development and use of new technologies
- Engage in UN Global Compact's Networks
- Support existing water initiatives

Public Policy

- Contribute inputs and recommendations to government regulation
- Exercise 'business statesmanship'
- Partner with governments, businesses, civil society stakeholders
- Join and/or support policy-oriented bodies

Community Engagement

- Understand community water and sanitation challenges
- Support and be active members of the local community
- Undertake water resource education
- Work with public authorities

Transparency

- Include a description of actions and investments undertaken
- Publish and share our water strategies
- Be transparent in dealings and conversations

Who we are

ACO Technologies plc was founded in 1984 and is a leading manufacturer of award-winning surface water management and stormwater control solutions, designed to manage the flow of water in a safe, sustainable, and effective way.

At ACO, we recognise the urgent need to address the climate and ecological crisis. That's why we have received BES 6001 Responsible Sourcing certification, committed to Science Based Targets and CO₂netzero with a target to be Net Zero by 2045. ACO have been a signatory to the CEO Water Mandate since 2023, demonstrating our commitment to water stewardship. ACO have also committed to the UN Global Compact showing our commitment to managing Labour, Human Rights, Environment and Anti-Corruption.

As a responsible manufacturer, ACO is dedicated to reducing our water usage and improving water efficiency across our operations. To date, our facilities management team has implemented initiatives that have reduced water consumption by 46% since 2015. We are also working closely with our supply chain to understand and minimize the water usage associated with the materials and products we procure, ensuring that our high-quality products are sustainably managed from cradle to grave and used for maximum benefit now and in the future through educational programmes and working with industry partners.

Water and the built environment

ACO is a water-oriented business, and we understand the importance of protecting therefore enhancing the natural environment through water stewardship. We manufacture products and provide design support that facilitate integrated surface water management and building drainage solutions. We believe that sustainable water management is crucial to protecting ecosystem services and creating stronger communities, maximising the benefits of water.



Climate change will make flooding events more likely

The built environment has a significant impact on water usage in the UK, where large volumes of water are either consumed in the building or used to irrigate landscaped areas. This has a direct impact on the environment, particularly as demand for water is increasing due to climate change, population growth, and increased urbanisation.

Increased impermeable surfaces from urbanisation and infrastructure increases the volume and speed of run off, which in turn can increase the likelihood of flooding. Run off can lift sediment and carry it downstream where it settles, causing blockages, or restricting the carrying capacity of water courses and sewers, increasing the risk of flooding.

Furthermore, pollutants like heavy metals, hydrocarbons, chemicals, fats, and agricultural waste from human activity can get washed away into aquatic environments causing irreversible damage.

The way we operate our business and the products we design are focused on improving water quality before it enters the natural environment, aligning with UN SDG targets 3.9, 6.3, 6.4, 11.5, 12.4, 14.1, and 15.1.



Sustainable management of surface water (Collect, Clean, Hold, Reuse)

The effects of climate change will only intensify the water-related issues we face. More frequent and intense storms will cause flooding and damage to infrastructure, while longer and more severe droughts will create water scarcity and stress our water supply. This can lead to a vicious cycle where water is depleted from natural ecosystems, affecting biodiversity, and making it even harder for the natural environment to recover. Additionally, water treatment works may struggle to cope with these changing conditions, further affecting water quality and availability for human consumption.

One way to achieve sustainable water usage in the built environment is through the adoption of sustainable drainage systems (SuDS). SuDS mimic natural drainage systems by managing surface water runoff locally, allowing it to slowly infiltrate into the ground and recharge the water table. This approach reduces the amount of runoff that enters the sewerage system, decreasing the risk of flooding and helping to maintain water quality. Furthermore, SuDS can provide additional benefits such as enhancing biodiversity, improving air quality, and creating green spaces that benefit the well-being of people.



Sustainable surface water management using SuDS & nature based solutions

ACO work with the construction industry to deliver SuDS solutions. Helping implement water management solutions and affecting water usage. By promoting SuDS and other water-efficient practices, we help to reduce the risk of flooding, maintain water quality, and protect the environment for future generations.

Product solutions

ACO’s Water Management products follow the principle of “Collect, Clean, Hold, and Reuse.”



Firstly, they collect water from the surface to prevent local flooding and protect people. Secondly, they clean the water by removing pollutants to prevent contamination of watercourses and protect the environment. Thirdly, they hold water at the source to protect sewer systems and natural ecosystems from being overloaded. Finally, they promote the reuse of water on-site to create resilient surface water systems and prevent water stress.

Through the application of ACO products, we are committed to protecting the environment from the impacts of flooding and pollution, while also reducing our own water footprint and helping our customers do the same.

To support our customers ACO have launched the ‘Water Positive’ campaign. Supporting responsible water management practices, using innovative design and technology to manage surface water in a sustainable way to protect the environment.

By becoming Water Positive, we aim to prevent water-related risks and preserve this vital resource for future generations.



The six core principals of the CEO water mandate

At ACO, we recognize the importance of evaluating and complying with the six core principles of the CEO Water Mandate. Through compliance, we are able to measure and be transparent about our sustainable water management practices, water usage, and waste. We also aim to interact with and preserve natural ecosystems and habitats. By adopting a responsible and sustainable approach to water management, ACO Technologies plc is making a meaningful and positive impact on the environment, communities, and stakeholders.

In addition to the six core principles, we look to comply to as many UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as we can. The SDGs were created to end all forms of hardship using strategies aimed at improving health and education, providing equal opportunity for all, and delivering economic growth – whilst conserving natural environments and combating climate change. We believe by contributing to these goals we can make a better world for everyone.



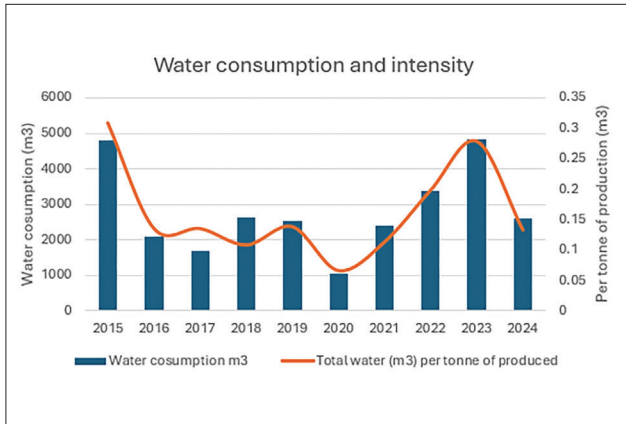
ACO aligning with the UN Sustainable Development Goals

Direct Operations

ACO are committed to reducing water usage and increasing efficiency across all our operations. Since 2015, we have reduced our overall water usage by over 46%. However, we saw a increase of 50% between 2021 and 2023. This was primarily down to the the expansion of our Shefford site, the contractor used our water supply for concrete and other site activity. However advanced water control measures have been installed in the new facilities.

To reduce water usage, we have implemented various water-efficient technologies in our operations. For instance, we have installed toilets and sinks equipped with sensors to reduce water consumption. ACO toilets and urinals are equipped with PIR which wash down every 15 minutes and automatically flush with movement to avoid excessive water usage.

ACO continuously work to identify and implement new water-saving measures as and when there are changes to the building fabric. These water efficiency measures align ACO with UN SDG target 6.4.



Historic water consumption

Within the manufacturing process, we only use water to wash down the moulds, and this process reuses water for up to 8 weeks before being processed offsite to conserve water wherever possible. In 2021, we limited water use to 0.113m³ per tonne of manufactured product which increased to 0.198m³ in 2022. We managed to achieve our goal of reducing water usage to 2019 levels.

Our site collects and treats water from various sources. Surface water from hard-standing industrial areas and car parks is cleaned using oil separation devices, this prevents pollutants entering the watercourse aligning us with 6.3, 6.4 and 14.1 SDG targets. We hold the water on site to protect the downstream watercourse before slowly releasing it into the swales and ditches that connect with the larger watercourse to prevent overwhelming of the natural environment following the ACO Water Cycle; collect, clean, hold, reuse and being Water Positive with resources.

Water from toilets, basins, and showers is directed to a sewage treatment plant on site before being released into nearby watercourses. Our drainage systems are regularly inspected and cleaned to ensure there is no build-up, and we exclusively use eco-friendly products to minimize our impact on the environment, also in line with 6.3 and 3.9 SDG targets.

We have not set targets for future water usage due to the measures we have already taken, such as lowering water use in the office. However, we continually highlight the importance of water management through NewViews, our inhouse quarterly staff newsletter, to encourage all employees to use facilities efficiently. We also support our employees through the continuing cost of living crisis in the UK and allow them to use WASH facilities like showers more frequently, which is likely to increase water use against the average.

Supply Chain and Watershed Management

At ACO Technologies, we are committed to promoting sustainable water management practices throughout our supply chain. We have begun engaging with our suppliers to better understand their water usage and encourage them to adopt more sustainable practices in line with our policies and SDG target 12.6. While our efforts in this area are currently limited, we plan to set targets once we have a better understanding of water usage within our supply chain.

All our suppliers have undergone careful evaluation to assist with compliance for our BES6001 certification to which we scored very good. Over 75% have achieved ISO 14001:2015 certification, which is particularly important for identifying and managing environmental impacts, which include water management. ACO provide support and education to assist our suppliers in achieving higher standards of sustainability through Sustainability at ACO presentations and Supply Chain Sustainability School resources, in line with SDG target 12.6. We hope this encourages our supply chain to increase their reporting with regards to sustainability.



ACO Technologies plc parent company ACO Group, manufacture and supply Rainwater Water Harvesting technologies to store water and increase reuse. These products help to alleviate flood risk, increase resilience, and reduce water stress in urban environments. Globally, the ACO Group has produced a large number of these products and we plan to start distributing them in the UK from the end of 2023 to directly contribute to better water management.



Installation of a Rainwater Harvesting Tank

Additionally, ACO have a strong partnership with Aquality Trading & Consulting, a company that uses innovative weather forecasting, sensors, pumps, and control regulators to attenuate and reuse water, resulting in 721m³ of water storage and reuse in the UK and growing. We continue to evolve our relationship with Aquality to attenuate and reuse water providing educational content to raise awareness for the technology.

Moving forward, we aim to implement extensive monitoring systems at the ACO UK manufacturing facility and assess water usage throughout our supply chain, identify areas of water stress, and evaluate the risk to local populations. This monitoring will be in place by the end of next financial year to encourage those with poor water management to improve their practices.



Sustainable surface water management creating resilient systems

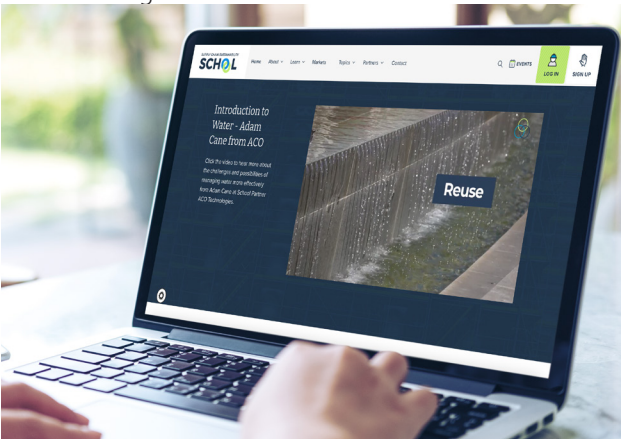
Collective Action

ACO recognises the importance of collaboration and partnerships in promoting sustainable water management. We work with leading organizations in the construction industry and beyond to share best practices and collaborate on water-related initiatives. Through this work we align with SDN targets 17.16 and 17.17. ACO are actively increasing the number of learners with relevant information as part of SDG targets 4.4, 4.7 and 13.3, this is an important part of our core message as a company.



ACO sponsor Sustainable Infrastructure stage at FutureBuild

To reach a wider audience, we have partnered with the Supply Chain Sustainability School to produce short videos and advanced training courses. ACO have reviewed SuDS training courses to ensure that they can teach the industry how to design SuDS features in the built environment. These videos and training resources have gained traction and have been viewed hundreds of times, improving the understanding of SuDS and water conservation.



Supply Chain Sustainability School water resources

To further spread positive water sustainability practices, we have teamed up with FutureBuild to co-fund the collaborative space Colab. The website provides on-demand content, where experts from the industry, universities, and government officials share best practice. Through Colab, we have helped to reach 19,400 individuals.

ACO has worked collaboratively with 19 other organizations on the Habitat Matters program. Produced an eight-part webinar programme and sponsored a six-part podcast series leading up to COP26 in November 2021, looking at Biodiversity in the Built Environment. These educational resources are available for FREE on demand.

Our collaboration with industry has led to the creation of a mapping system to record urban wildlife habitats. The Habitat Matter mapping system connects the physical environment to the digital through QR codes and enable users to interact with the blue and green built environment infrastructure and record biodiversity observations.



Habitat Matters connecting people to the built environment and nature conservation



Ashridge Farm using tunnels to connect green infrastructure

This system contributes to national scientific record keeping and adds social value to projects connecting people to nature and water. ACO created Habitat Matters with the aim of reducing habitat degradation, creating inclusive green space, and ensuring the conservation and restoration of mapped areas by promoting sustainable management. Through this we believe we are playing our part towards SDG targets 6.6, 11.7, 15.1, 15.2, 15.5 and 15.a.



To help our customers ACO has created a world-leading CPDSO accredited CPD portfolio that focuses on Surface Water Management & Building Drainage with a specific focus on SuDS, Nature-Based Solutions, and water conservation within the built environment. Through this, since 2022 we have provided over 4,236 hours of CPD training.



Engaging local schools and expanding knowledge around sustainable water practices

ACO actively engages with the community through education, inspiring the next generation with STEM initiatives. We have visited local schools, delivering The Water Supply Challenge—an award-winning educational resource originally developed by Thames Water and later enhanced with Anglian Water. This interactive program encourages students to design and implement a sustainable water supply network, fostering skills in engineering and water management. Through these efforts, ACO supports SDG 4, target 4.4 while also promoting SDG 6, SDG 9, and SDG 11.

For our employees we allow access to WASH facilities, including showers and clean water. Water usage is frequently analysed to ensure water is used resourcefully within the offices and/ or the manufacturing process. Any perceived water challenges/risks are dealt with, ensuring ACO demonstrates water stewardship. ACO representatives are actively involved in leadership, hosting, and public consultation on water stewardship as well (see public policy section and community engagement).

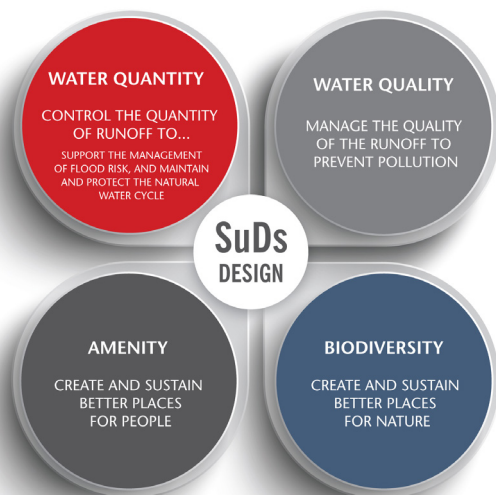
Despite ACO's extensive partnerships and support for campaigns within the water sector we are looking to become further involved in more collective action and work with the UN Global Compact on water related issues. We would like to increase our educational resources to reach as many individuals and companies as possible, helping drive sustainable water management forward and helping industry professional become more Water Positive by sharing their leading expertise.

Public Policy

ACO actively participates in policy discussions and advocacy efforts to promote sustainable water management, meeting targets 13.2, 17.14, 17.16 and 17.17. We are involved in several forums, partnerships, and policy working groups to shape leadership at all levels.

Forum based involvement:

ACO representatives are active in the British Water Surface Water Management Focus Group, which produces Codes of Practice for proprietary devices to align with the CIRIA SuDS Manual. We actively participate in Susdrain steering group meetings and have contributed to CIRIA reports, particularly geocellular system design and the SuDS manual. The latter guidance is used throughout the design and construction of commercial and residential developments and is based around the four core principles of SuDS design: Quantity, Quality, Amenity, and Biodiversity.



CIRIA SuDS manual; Quantity, Quality, Amenity and Biodiversity



ACO has been influential in the Quantity and Quality sections of the guidance, helping industry professionals design and install high-quality SuDS to manage local flood risks, improve water quality, amenity value, and support ecosystem services with effective water use.

The British Plastics Federation (BPF) Pipes Group forums provide a base for members and companies to discuss issues faced by industry. This allows the promotion of sustainability credentials for products and systems produced by members. As well as our regular contributions to the forum-based discussions our ACO representative chairs TG4 (Technical Group on Surface Water Management).

On behalf of the BPF Pipes Group, our ACO representative is active in the European Plastic Pipes and Fittings Association groups working towards a circular economy and driving the removal of microplastics from the environment ('Operation Clean Sweep'). He also contributes to European and British standards on water, wastewater and surface water.

Policy influencing supply chain:

The ACO Water Management Technical Director is a director within the Future Water Association, supporting organizations to positively change the water sector. This role allows us to have direct input into Ofwat, as well as regular meetings with the Environment Agency on water-related matters. Through these relationships, ACO has a direct connection to drive forward policy changes for better water management.

Furthermore, ACO recently joined the Supply Chain Sustainability School task group to provide valuable insights on SuDS, biodiversity, and carbon by reviewing current policy documents within the supply chain school resources.



ACO achieve Supply Chain Sustainability School Gold membership

Government involvement:

ACO has an expert participant in the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG). Our involvement includes reviewing SuDS Planning (2016), which led to consultation on implementation of Schedule 3 of the Floods and Water Management Act in 2020, to which we also responded.

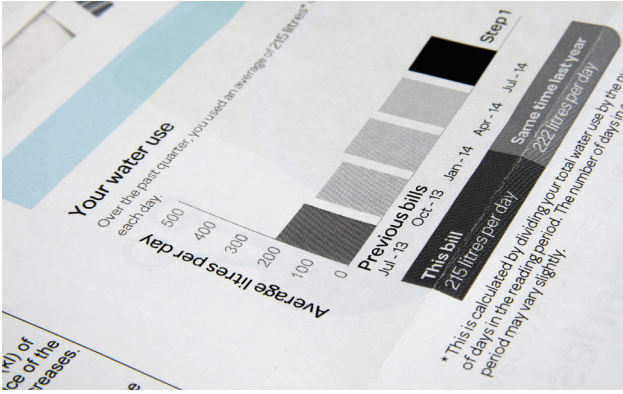
ACO has a key role to play in changing policy, as we work closely with our customers who are directly linked to the design, installation, and management of sustainable water projects. We will continue to support private and public initiatives to further water management. Our input to such discussions and efforts will likely increase as we strive towards becoming more Water Positive.

Community Engagement

At ACO, we believe that engagement with local communities to promote sustainable water management practices and increase access to clean water is important. We have established partnerships with various local organizations to support these efforts, through this work we are doing our part for targets 6.b, 11.6, 17.14, 17.16 and 17.17.

Current engagement include:

PARTNERSHIPS	THEIR STANCE ON SUSTAINABILITY	OUR ENGAGEMENT
 <p>Green Business Network (GBN)</p>	<p>A membership organization helping businesses reduce their environmental impact through networking.</p>	<p>ACO is an active member of the GBN and attends seminars and webinars, gaining vital knowledge from others in the network. We also host network events at our facilities and undergo an environmental audit to identify areas for improvement.</p>
 <p>Bedfordshire Chamber of Commerce</p>	<p>Growing a peer network to help become enablers locally, regionally, and internationally</p>	<p>ACO attends events to understand district sustainability requirements and works with the Chamber to attain EUR1 or Certificate of Origin for shipping outside the EU for surface water management products.</p>
 <p>RiverCare Team (Grantham)</p>	<p>A community-led volunteer group helping to develop and support community groups in the Anglian region</p>	<p>ACO employees are members of the Grantham Rivercare Team, caring for a local stretch of waterway, actively cleaning, and testing the water monthly. We are also looking to expand our involvement to assist with the Bedford Rivercare Team too.</p>
 <p>Cranfield University</p>	<p>A university teaching the next generation of leaders in the green economy</p>	<p>ACO annually hosts a unit for international MSc students in the Advanced Water Management course, helping them understand how to apply knowledge to design surface water management systems and support ecosystem services using technology. (Targets 9.5 and 9.b)</p>
 <p>NCATI College</p>	<p>A college producing skilled engineers for Britain's future rail, transport, and infrastructure</p>	<p>ACO annually provides CPD learning and hosts workshops on our Shefford site, helping students understand how to apply knowledge to design surface water management systems and support ecosystem services using technology.</p>
 <p>Supply Chain Sustainability School</p>	<p>A collaboration between clients, contractors, and first-tier suppliers to build supply chain skills</p>	<p>ACO is a partner of the School and attends group meetings. We also deliver specialist lunch-and-learn sessions to the School's 60,000 members on sustainable water management, SuDS, nature-based solutions, and water conservation.</p>
 <p>The Institution of Environmental Sciences (IES)</p>	<p>Members institution with the aim to promote sustainability by providing information and education on environmental issues.</p>	<p>ACO work with IES to deliver specialist lunch-and-learn sessions to their members on sustainable water management, SuDS, nature-based solutions, and water conservation.</p>
 <p>STEM Ambassadors</p>	<p>Encourage young people to get involved in STEM pathways to inspire a passion for science, technology, engineering, and mathematics.</p>	<p>ACO have a registered STEM ambassador with an ambition to connect with local schools through our employee network. Educating young children on the importance of water conservation and surface water management, creating a connection with the local community.</p>
 <p>Global Compact Network UK</p>	<p>An independent not-for-profit organisation promoting charitable sustainable development, relieve poverty, preserve and protect the environment, and promote ethical standards and conduct within businesses and the private sector in the UK.</p>	<p>ACO plans to become an active member of the network, attend webinars, and deliver educational content.</p>



Transparency

We have publicly disclosed our water usage and management practices to promote accountability and transparency in yearly reports, government carbon reporting.

The latest year (2024) we withdrew 2,593m³ from the Anglian water supply. Most areas which Anglican water supply are classed as moderate water stress areas. ACO want to better understand the risk associated with supply chain water usage and extraction and if this poses a danger in water stressed areas. This information will be publicly displayed in the next Communication on Progress report.

Conclusion

ACO remains committed to promoting sustainable water management practices and enhancing water conservation efforts. We will continue to collaborate with stakeholders and partners to drive positive change and share best practices in the industry. Our investment in water treatment technologies and commitment to developing resilient water systems will further our efforts to minimize our environmental impact and improve water management.

Through our campaigns and the application of our products, we aim to promote water re-use and alleviate flood risk, increase resilience, and reduce water stress in urban environments. As we look to the future, we are dedicated to expanding our educational resources and increasing our involvement in collective action initiatives to further drive sustainable water management practices. By sharing our progress and leading expertise, we aim to encourage industry professionals to become more water positive and help drive sustainable water management forward.



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