

Movers & Shakers Water & Utilities Leadership Snapshot

A data-led snapshot of senior leadership appointments and market trends across the water & utilities sector...





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Introduction

Leadership movement within the UK water and utilities sector continues to reflect a stable yet evolving market, driven by long-term regulatory cycles and sustained infrastructure investment.

As the sector transitions from AMP7 into AMP8, organisations are strengthening leadership teams to support delivery of an unprecedented infrastructure pipeline, operational performance and environmental commitments.

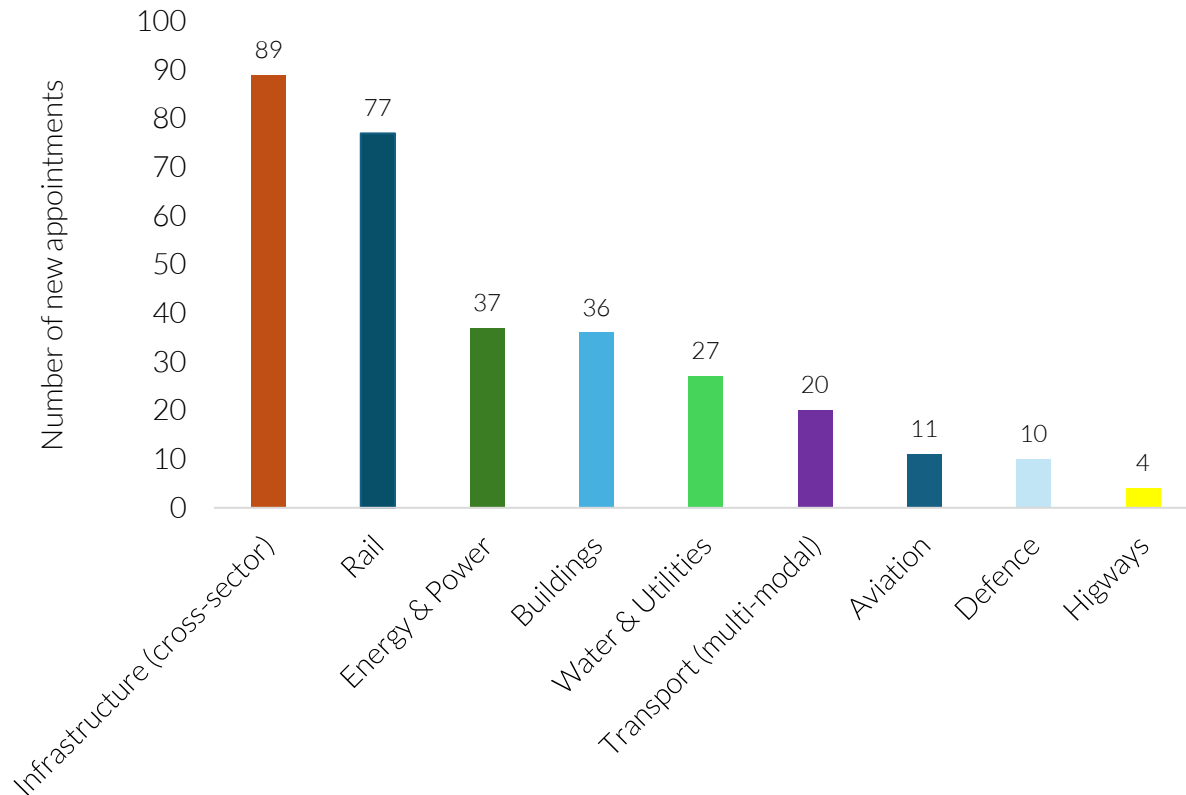
This report takes the data curated from our monthly Movers & Shakers updates, to provide a snapshot of the infrastructure talent market - with a specific focus on the water & utilities sector. Whilst the wider dataset spans transport and infrastructure, this version isolates water-related activity to provide a more targeted view of leadership trends.

Compared to other infrastructure sectors such as energy and rail, leadership activity within water is more stable and internally driven, reflecting the maturity of organisations and the long-term nature of delivery frameworks.



Overall Leadership Appointments by Sector

Appointments by Sector



Overall, rail stands out as the most active sector for leadership movement, representing the largest single sector for leadership movement. This may be due, in part, to the level of visibility of leadership activity across the sector within our tracking. This activity is driven by a mix of organisation types, including operators, asset owners, contractors, consultancies, manufacturers, and public sector bodies, reflecting the breadth of the rail ecosystem.

The AMP cycles in the water sector underpin consistent demand for leadership across asset management, capital delivery, and operational performance.

Compared to sectors such as energy, where investment is concentrated in large-scale transformation programmes, water investment is more evenly distributed across long-term frameworks and maintenance-driven infrastructure programmes.

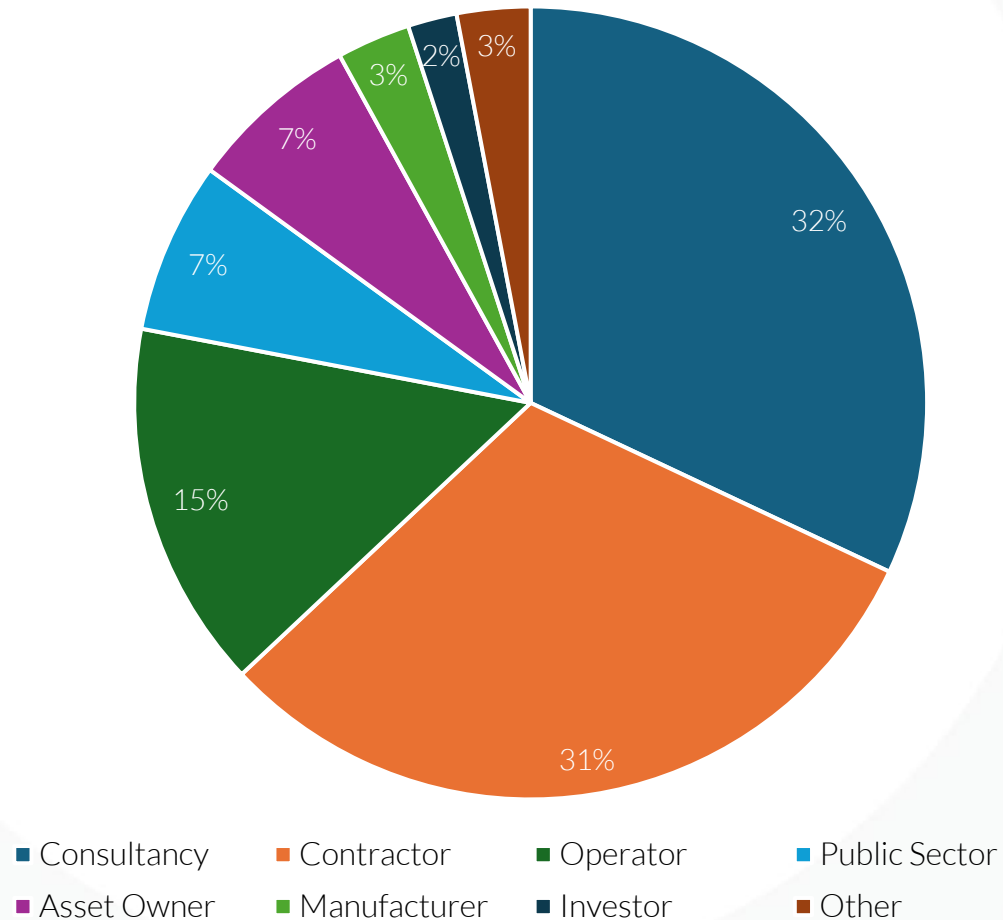
This creates a different leadership dynamic, with demand focused on programme continuity, operational excellence, and regulatory compliance rather than rapid scaling or transformation.

Notably, a substantial proportion of appointments sit within cross-sector or infrastructure-wide roles. These positions typically span multiple markets or sit above individual sectors, indicating demand for leadership with oversight across complex programmes and diverse portfolios.

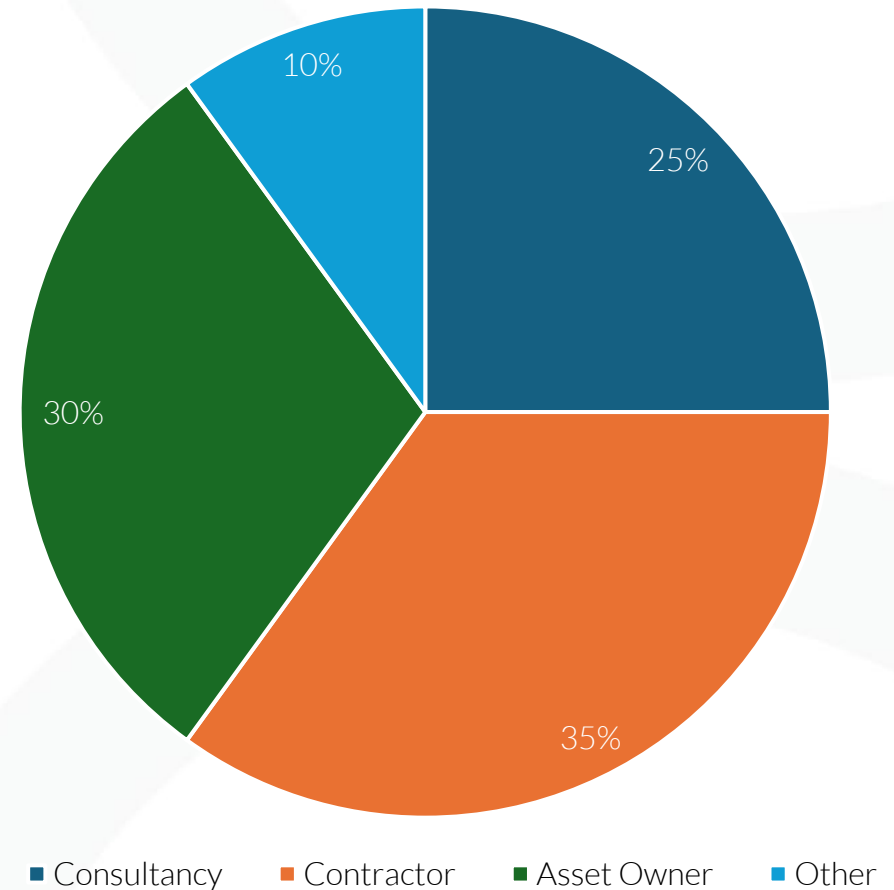


Leadership Appointments by Company Type

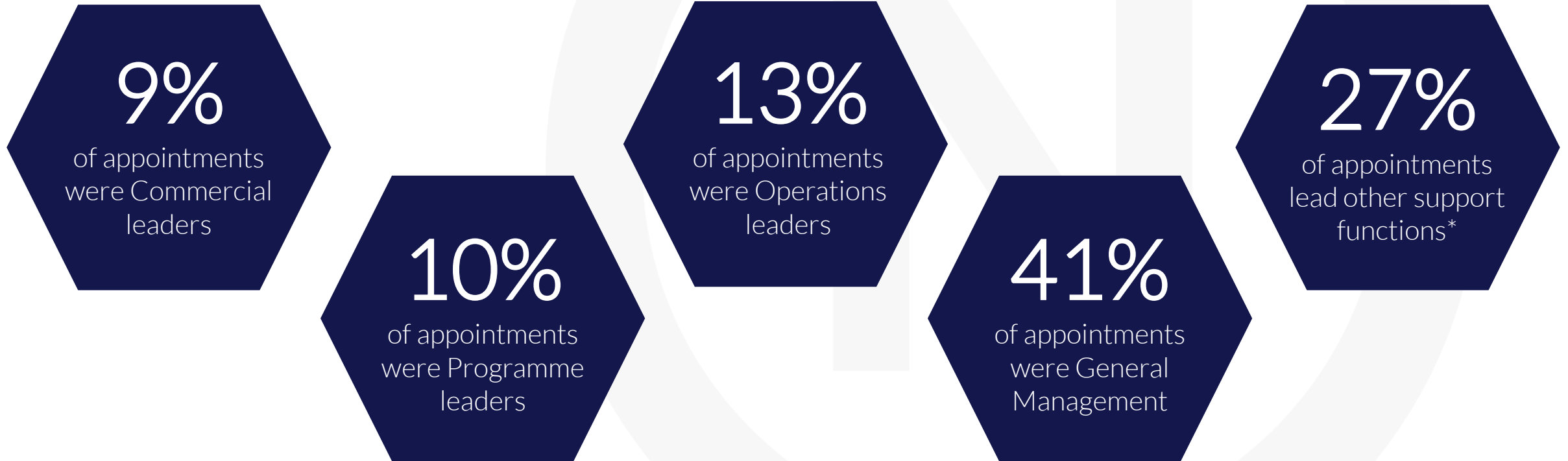
Appointments by Company Type (All Sectors)



Appointments by Company Type (Water & Utilities)

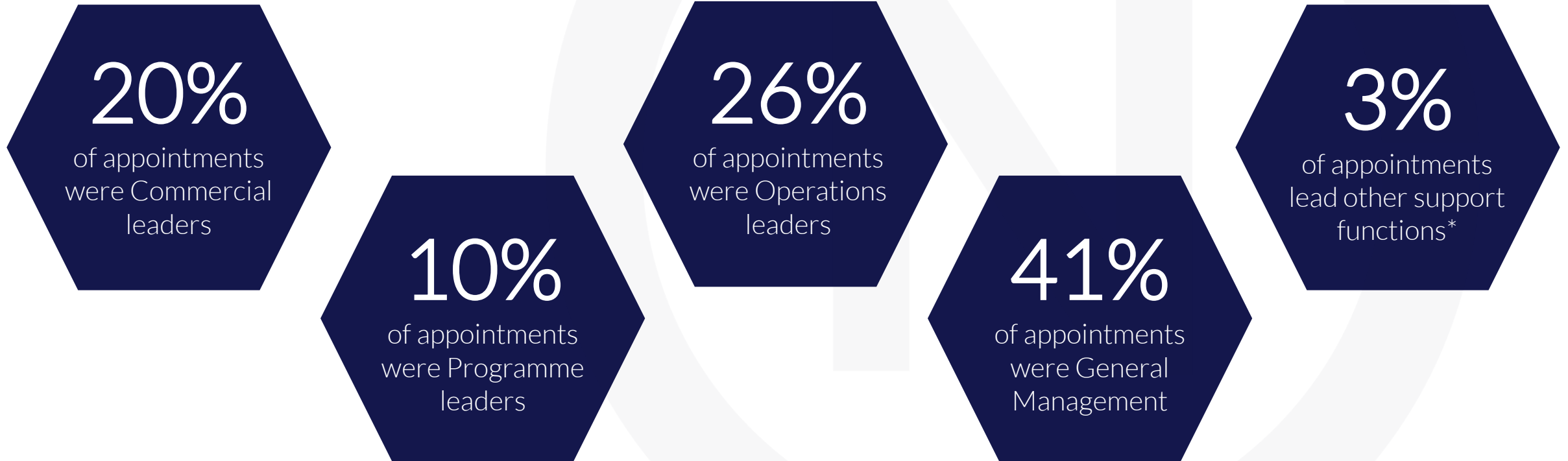


Leadership Trends (All Sectors)



*Support functions include corporate functions such as Strategy, Finance, HR, Legal, IT, Procurement and Business Development.

Leadership Trends (Water & Utilities)

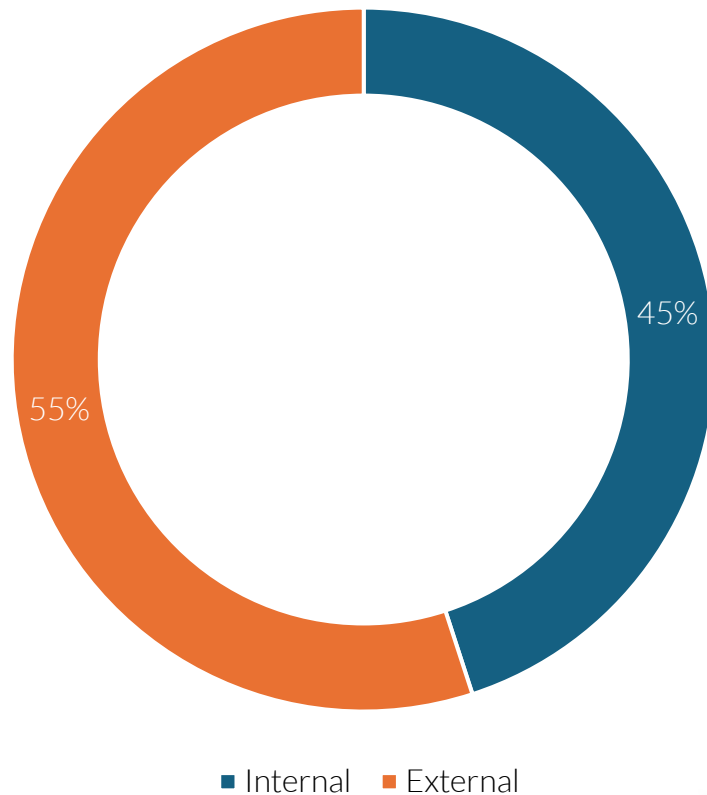


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Internal vs External Appointments

Hiring Movements



Internal appointments account for 45% of leadership moves within the water dataset, representing the highest proportion across the sectors we report on.

This reflects the stable and highly regulated nature of the water sector, where organisations prioritise internal progression, succession planning, and continuity of leadership from one AMP to the next. The presence of established asset owners with relatively low organisational churn supports the development of internal talent pipelines, enabling leadership roles to be filled from within. The flipside of this is it does not facilitate innovation with less ideas coming from other sectors.

Compared to energy, where internal appointments account for only 25%, the water sector shows a significantly stronger reliance on internal promotion. This difference is driven by the pace and scale of investment in energy, where organisations are required to bring in external expertise to support rapidly expanding programmes such as grid upgrades and renewable integration.

In contrast to rail, which sits at 42% internal, water demonstrates a more consistent and structured approach to leadership development. While rail benefits from established organisations and internal pathways, it also requires a greater degree of external hiring to support operational complexity and service delivery across operators and public sector bodies.

Methodology

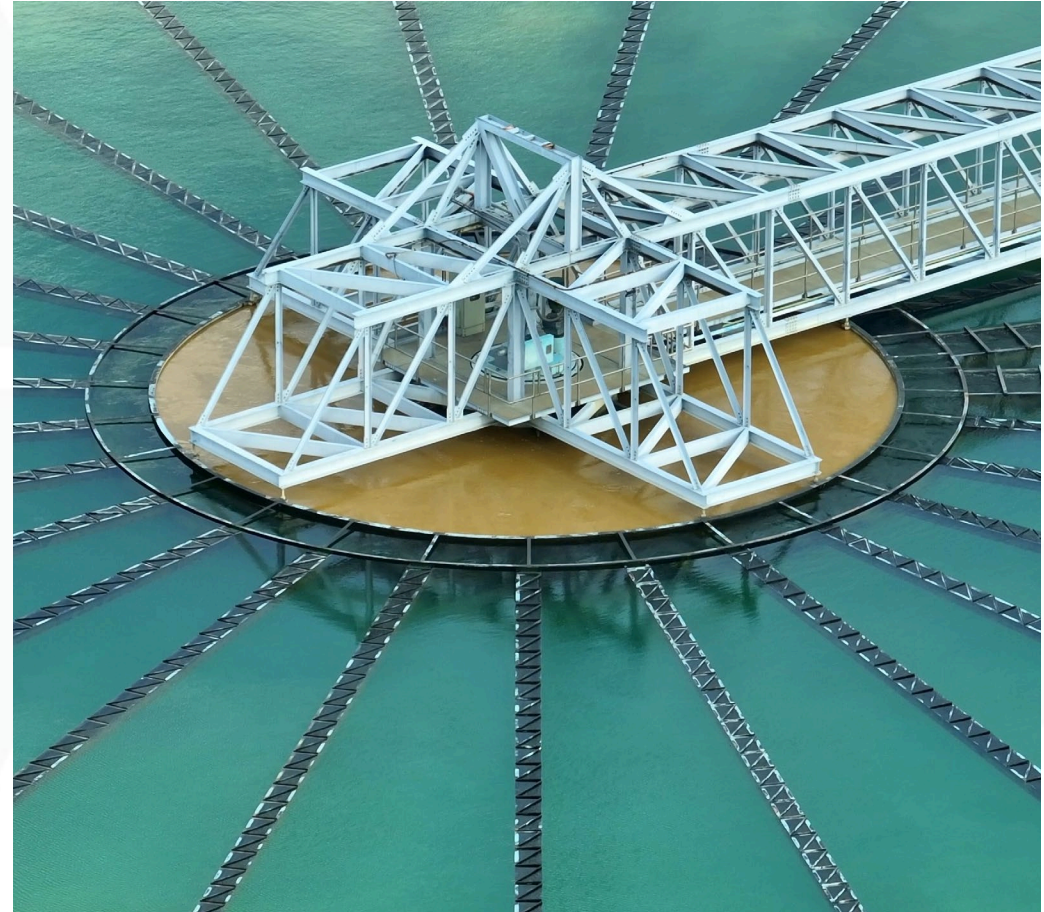
This report is based on leadership movements tracked through our ongoing Movers & Shakers updates, compiled throughout 2025 and early 2026. Readers can access the monthly blogs here: <https://www.newsomconsulting.co.uk/blog>.

Each leadership move has been recorded and categorised across a number of dimensions, including sector, organisation type, function, role title, gender (where identifiable), and whether the appointment represents an internal move.

Individual names and job titles have been manually reviewed and coded to extract consistent data points, with roles grouped into comparable categories (e.g. Commercial Director, Project & Programme Director, Operations Director) to enable meaningful analysis across the dataset.

Sector classification has been refined using both recorded sector data and contextual information from job titles and organisations, allowing for a more accurate representation of where leadership activity is occurring. Roles spanning multiple sectors have been identified as cross-sector positions, reflecting the increasing complexity of infrastructure programmes.

Whilst the dataset is not exhaustive, it is designed to provide a representative view of senior leadership activity across the transport and infrastructure sectors.





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