

CANDIDATE BRIEFING PACK



Chief Executive

Water Management Alliance



Penna

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About Water Management Alliance

The Water Management Alliance (WMA) is a specialist water level management business that administers 7 Internal Drainage Boards operating within the public sector, dedicated to maintaining and improving water level and drainage infrastructure in a challenging and highly regulated environment.

As a key player in the Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management (FCERM) sector, the WMA also provides services to the Bedford Group of IDBs and a number of other Internal Drainage Boards, and works closely with local authorities, landowners, the Environment Agency, Natural England and other partners to ensure effective and sustainable water level management in a number of low-lying flood risk areas in England.



For further information click here: <https://www.wlma.org.uk/news/>

About the Role

We are seeking an entrepreneurial and dynamic Chief Executive Officer (CEO) to lead the WMA in an increasingly complex and constrained operating environment. This is not a conventional public sector leadership role—the successful candidate must bring a commercial mindset from previous experience while expertly navigating the intricate governance, legal, financial and democratic frameworks of public service delivery.

The CEO will be responsible for the strategic and operational leadership of the organisation, ensuring long-term sustainability by securing new income streams and expanding the Group's water management services. Success in this role requires the ability to thrive within the bureaucratic and regulatory challenges of the sector. The post holder must be adept at focussing on the key value enhancing activities without being distracted by initiatives that don't fit in with the objectives and values of the organisation.

This is a hands-on leadership role—while the CEO must think strategically, they must also be prepared and able to step in and directly manage all aspects of the business when required. The post holder will lead a small but highly competent technical management team, ensuring the organisation remains both efficient and effective in delivering tangible benefits for their IDB stakeholders and communities in high flood risk areas.

Key Responsibilities

- Strategic Leadership & Business Growth
- Drive the long-term strategy and growth of the WMA, securing sustainable revenue streams while operating within legal and financial constraints.
- Identify and exploit opportunities for efficiency and innovation, including digital transformation and technology-driven improvements.
- Maintain independence and resilience in decision-making, ensuring the organisation remains focused on practical outcomes rather than bureaucratic distractions.
- Operational & Financial Management.

- Oversee the efficient operation of water level management assets, ensuring regulatory compliance while maximising cost-effectiveness.
- Maintain robust financial oversight, ensuring sustainability and value for money.
- Lead on securing funding and commercial opportunities that enhance the resilience of the organisation.
- Stakeholder Engagement & Governance.
- Navigate complex governance structures and financial mechanisms to secure the best outcomes for the Consortium.
- Manage relationships with IDBs, local authorities, and stakeholders while resisting undue influence from those who add little value.
- Lead engagement with government bodies and regulators selectively, ensuring time and resources are not wasted on low-value interactions.
- Leadership & Team Development.
- Lead, support, and inspire a small, highly skilled technical management team.
- Foster a culture of practicality, accountability, and high performance.
- Be willing and able to roll up sleeves and take a hands-on approach when necessary.

Person Specification

Essential

- Business acumen with a track record of delivering commercial success.
- Deep understanding of public sector governance and finance, including the legal and regulatory constraints of the FCERM sector.
- Entrepreneurial mindset, capable of identifying and developing new income streams that deliver better outcomes for our partners and stakeholders.
- Practical, hands-on leadership style—a doer, not a talker.
- Proven ability to work strategically, yet operationally willing and able to step into frontline management and transactional work when required.

- Strong stakeholder management skills, able to navigate complex relationships without succumbing to unnecessary bureaucracy.
- Ethical and environmentally sensitive, committed to delivering real improvements in flood risk management.
- Professional qualifications in some but not all of the following: CIWEM, civil engineering, project management, accountancy, law or governance.
- Track record in managing small, high-performing teams.

Desirable

- Experience in software development or implementation, with measurable improvements in efficiency and productivity.
- Experience working with or within IDBs or similar public sector bodies.
- A demonstrable ability to drive digital transformation in asset or infrastructure management.



Advert

Flood, Drought, and Everything In Between

Be Part of the Solution!

Chief Executive - £Competitive

Water Management Alliance – King’s Lynn, Norfolk

The Water Management Alliance (WMA) is dedicated to maintaining and improving water level management across lowland environments. We provide flood and drought response services, surface water drainage, and water level management to safeguard communities, businesses, and the environment and reduce flood risk to people, property, infrastructure, and the natural environment. Through close collaboration with partners and stakeholders, we support sustainable land use, protect natural habitats, and ensure efficient water management across coastal zones and watershed catchment areas.

As our new Chief Executive, you will lead our operations delivery team and guide the strategic direction of our organisation and people working closely with a wide range of stakeholders, Management Authorities and regulatory bodies. The role is rich and varied from supporting emergency response efforts during flooding and drought conditions, collaborating with stakeholders, including landowners, environmental groups, and local authorities to advising on drainage and flood defence infrastructure and compliance with environmental and regulatory standards. We’re looking to raise the bar for the implementation of sustainable water management practices, and you will be passionate and ambitious about water management, engineering, and/or environmental science with a knowledge of flood risk management and drainage systems. Strong communication skills and the ability to work collaboratively with a wide range of senior stakeholders will be key.

If you are passionate about water management and want to contribute to protecting our communities from flooding and drought, we would love to hear from you. Join us in making a difference in sustainable water management!

To find out more, please contact our retained consultants at Penna: Pete John on 07701 305617 or Kelly Ridley on 07709 512415 or go to <https://execroles.penna.com/> to find further information and to apply.

How to Apply

This guidance contains important information to help with your application:

Please apply by submitting a CV and Covering Letter (no more than four sides of A4 in length per document aligned to the person specification). Please also include your contact details.

Please ensure your full employment history is outlined in your CV; and that where there are essential criteria, competencies and/or qualifications you make clear how you meet these. We may wish to verify this information during the recruitment process.

Please provide the details of two referees. Note that we will only approach referees for candidates proceeding to final selection and only with your permission. Please clearly indicate whether we can approach each referee before the selection date.

Please share with us in your supporting statement, the values, and behaviours that you bring to your leadership, and how you will transfer your skills and experience into this role.

Please complete the Equal Opportunities Monitoring Form when you upload your details.

Please return your application by the closing date – no applications will be accepted once the long listing process has begun.

Following long listing, you will be contacted directly by a Penna consultant to update you on the status of your application.

At any point throughout the process our retained consultants at Penna will be happy to help you with information, insight and guidance about the process and our clients.

The following timetable sets out the key dates in the recruitment process:

Date/ Timeline	Activity
16th May 2025	Closing date for applications
W/C 26th May 2025	Technical Interviews – (Microsoft Teams) Assessment
TBC	Shortlist meeting with Appointments Panel
18th June 2025	Panels, assessment and final Interviews (at WMA)

To apply for this role, please click the link below:

<https://execroles.penna.com/?type=1>

For further information or confidential discussion, please contact our recruitment partners at Penna: Peter John pete.john@penna.com or call 07701 305617 and Kelly Ridley kelly.ridley@penna.com or 07709 512415





Water Management Alliance

Defenders of the Lowland Environment



A Working Alliance

Protecting People & Property

The Developed & Natural Environment

Flood Risk Management

- 2,200 km of Maintained Channels
- 74 Pumping Stations
- 54 Employees
- Annual Turnover £6 Million

Working in Partnership

Meeting all of Defra's Requirements



Land within WMA - 121,601 Hectares

www.wlma.org.uk

