



Trial Reservoirs Initiative

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PRESS RELEASE

Trial Reservoirs Initiative Becomes Independent Not-for-Profit to Accelerate Water Innovation

New structure unlocks grant and philanthropic funding to scale trials of proven water technologies, with a 73% trial-to-implementation success rate

14 July 2025 – The Trial Reservoirs Initiative, an award-winning model accelerating water innovation, has officially transitioned into an independent not-for-profit organisation under the newly formed Tech Ascend Foundation. The change enables access to new funding streams, including grants, philanthropic donations and mission-aligned sponsorship, and dramatically expands the scale and speed at which high-impact water technologies can be de-risked and adopted globally.

Launched by Isle in late 2021 following frustration at the persistent under-representation of water in climate discussions, the Initiative has already funded 19 pilots addressing water usage for climate change and in utilities and industry. Its success rate – 73% – is nearly triple the sector average. By removing the barriers that often prevent innovation from taking off, the Trial Reservoirs Initiative has created a dependable pathway for de-risking proven technologies and helping businesses and utilities adopt emerging best practices.

“Water cannot wait,” said Dr Jo Burgess, Director of the Trial Reservoirs Initiative. “As climate pressures mount, the gulf between best practice and common practice is no longer a technical problem, it’s a time problem. Becoming a not-for-profit gives us the structural flexibility to move faster, allow us to secure and replenish the core funding reservoir, reduce barriers to entry and sponsorship, and scale our impact across the water sector.”

The Trial Reservoirs Initiative continues to oversee three dedicated evergreen funding pools: the **Climate Change Trial Reservoir**, supporting mitigation technologies for utilities and adjacent industries; the **Advanced & Industrial Trial**

Reservoir, targeting solutions in resource recovery, emerging contaminants, waste-to-energy, and decentralisation; and the **US Utilities Trial Reservoir**, supporting US-based trials in partnership with utilities led by individuals from underrepresented groups or serving underserved communities.

As a not-for-profit, the Initiative now offers expanded benefits to sponsors, including the potential for tax-effective donations, participation in the strategic advisory board, and secure access to detailed trial data and reporting.

To explore partnership, sponsorship, or trial opportunities, contact Dr Jo Burgess at jo.burgess@isleutilities.com.

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Notes to Editors

- 73% trial-to-implementation success vs. industry average of ~25%.
- By invitation from the World Economic Forum, presented the Trial Reservoir at the WEF summit in Davos in May 2022, where it was endorsed by G20 Finance Ministers for its innovative finance model.
- The initiative's creation in 2021 followed the IPCC Sixth Assessment Report and COP26, where water received minimal attention, underscoring the urgency of its mission.
- The Trial Reservoir has been nominated for and won international awards, including:
 - WEX Global 2022 Awards, Innovation in Decarbonising (Winner)
 - Water Industry Awards 2022 (Finalist)
 - edie Awards 2023, in the Net-Zero Carbon Strategy of the Year (Nominated)

Successful trials have included:

- **Pulp & paper mill effluent cleanup**: Bioaugmentation system cut treated chemical oxygen demand COD by over 30% in six months at **Canada's** zero liquid discharge pulp and paper mill, enabling uninterrupted water reuse.
- **Sustainable sludge management**: Energy efficient technique reduced sludge for disposal, halving tanker trips and cutting 120 tonnes of CO₂ emissions annually the **UK**.
- **Low-energy irrigation water treatment**: Magnetic particle system removed contaminants and reduced energy use by up to 50%,

outperforming traditional reverse-osmosis in a commercial farm trial in the **USA**.

- **Low-flush sanitation**: Nature-inspired toilets reduced water usage by 71% during a trial in **Botswana**, providing a more accessible hygiene solution to deprived areas.
- **Beverage manufacturing wastewater treatment**: Vortex aeration technology cut energy consumption (by 30%) and reduced maintenance costs (by 90%) while significantly improving health & safety at a beverage manufacturing plant in **Ireland**.
- **Clean water access**: Smart Taps in **The Gambia** delivered 1,400 litres of safe water daily while reducing carbon emissions and freeing time for education and work in rural communities.

About the Trial Reservoirs Initiative

The Trial Reservoirs Initiative is an independent not-for-profit that accelerates the uptake of emerging water technologies by funding real-world trials to de-risk proven technology. Through the use of evergreen reservoirs of funding, the Initiative partners with utilities, industrial users, technology vendors and funders worldwide to turn best practice into common practice. Successful trials are repaid with modest interest to replenish the fund; unsuccessful trials require no repayment.

About the Tech Ascend Foundation

The Tech Ascend Foundation is a mission-driven organisation established to support the global acceleration of climate and water resilience technologies. As the independent home of the Trial Reservoirs Initiative, it unlocks broader funding opportunities and empowers partners committed to delivering real-world impact through innovation.