South West Water’s 1,300 employees are responsible for maintaining the drinking water, sewerage systems and bathing waters of South West England to the standards set by the UK and the European Union. Advancing their IT systems has been a part of this evolution. They continue to provide high-quality water and waste water services to the region.

Their IT department is responsible for projects like making the workforce more mobile, adapting the ERP system to task field engineers and bringing information from the field back to their servers. When adopting industry standards of governance for project management and embracing ITIL in their service delivery, they chose ServiceNow and implementation partner Focus Group Europe to support the transformation.

Governance and consolidation

South West Water’s previous system for IT management combined Microsoft Project and SharePoint for project management and governance, and FrontRange HEAT for help desk. But a more integrated, coherent solution was needed to help consolidate disparate processes.

Main goals included better reporting on – and more insight into – the hundreds of IT projects in progress at any one time. Managers lacked adequate portfolio governance to see danger levels, location, costs and workflow.

“We needed a tool for the overarching governance that tells us who the customers are on a project, what the budget is, which documents have been authorized, and how far along the project has progressed,” says Mike Walton, process change consultant at South West Water.

Transformation and customization

South West Water transformed IT in two phases:

- **Process transformation** – Over the years, IT had not spent much time fleshing out or agreeing upon standard processes. Walton worked for eight weeks with department stakeholders, like project managers, to discuss ITIL governance standards. While one the more time-consuming and difficult phases, this was the necessary first step.

- **Customization** – South West Water then engaged Focus Group to develop a custom project governance application on the ServiceNow Service Automation Platform. From workflows, Focus Group captured processes that automate email notifications and approvals. They also implemented reporting.

“This ServiceNow case study is based on an interview with Mike Walton, process change consultant at South West Water Limited.
“Focus Group brought valuable experience to the project,” says Walton. “They would look at our requirements and quickly say, ‘Actually, let’s build this workflow first and then the email alerts, and we’ll look at reports later.’ They guided us in ways we wouldn’t have known about because we were new to ServiceNow. Once they understood the processes we’d agreed upon, they worked tirelessly to build the workflow and hone it. They applied themselves very well to the project and did a good job. We’re as proud of what they’ve built for us as they are.”

Results
With the project governance application now in place, South West Water enjoys three noteworthy benefits:

- **Immediate visibility** – Projects are much more visible to business managers and executives, who can now see how each project is going and how each project manager is handling it. Says Walton, “The head of IT came up to me the first week we’d gone live and said, ‘This is brilliant, Mike! I can see what’s actually going on with all the projects, and I can select and search and sort things in a way I’ve never done before.’ So he was very pleased even from Week 1.”

- **Standardization** – The tool provides structure for IT and reinforces the newly established processes.

- **Workflows** – Most important is the accountability the app has brought, through workflows that not only notify project managers about their next task but also maintain a trail of document authorizations. Automated workflows execute processes consistently, reduce human error, and thus make results more valuable to the business.

Walton is especially pleased with the workflows that Focus Group implemented – some with 20 to 25 steps – for tasks related to project initiation, design sign-off and testing. They prompt for approvals from relevant managers in the department throughout the life cycle of the project. Building on the Service Application Platform, Focus Group was able to develop these workflows from scratch with no additional tools required.

“In the near term, with project governance,” says Walton, “workflows have been the most important feature of ServiceNow for us. In the long term, though, I think the most important factors will be the flexibility and the ease with which users can modify criteria, change their personal view and make their own reports look good.”

By communicating the IT’s successes to the business, Project Governance increases visibility and provides real value. No longer do the IS teams lack transparency – anyone in the company can see the portfolio of current projects.

Next steps
With a custom project governance application in hand, South West Water looks ahead to using ServiceNow for incident, problem and change management. Before implementing each application, the company will go through the same exercise in defining processes, as it did for project governance.

"In my experience,” says Walton, “the most difficult part was in getting all the stakeholders to agree on the processes. Once that was behind us, Focus Group built out the ServiceNow platform to give us what we need. And that’s part of ServiceNow’s strength: its flexibility and speed to implement something.”

“Since go-live, we’ve found that we can improve our ServiceNow-based application quickly because it’s so easy to change a report and rearrange a screen in a way that we wouldn’t be able to with more clunky tools.”