

**If you have been reading the newspapers or watching the news** over the past few weeks, chances are it didn't exactly lift your spirits.

At least, it didn't lift mine.

geopolitical tensions, conflicts, inequality, biodiversity loss, climate change.

The list is long — and growing. And the scale of the challenges can feel overwhelming.

And then... it snowed.

Unplanned. Uncoordinated.

But suddenly something remarkable happened.

People slowed down.

They helped each other.

They became creative.

A small hill turned into a slide.

A plastic tub became a sled.

Without instructions, without leadership, collective action emerged.

### **Unorchestrated magic.**

**What struck me** was not the snow itself, but what it revealed:

the power of human connection,

the value of real relationships,

and the extraordinary things people can create together — with just a little help.

**And it also reminded me** that it is up to us how we choose to look at our world.

We can focus only on what is going wrong — and there is plenty of that.

The challenges are real. They are structural. And they will not disappear on their own.

But we can also ask a different question:

*What can I do?*

*What can you do?*

*What can we do together?*

Whether it's small or big,

Of course, we will not solve all the world's problems.

But as a sector, we **do** have a key role to play.

### **Water is rarely at the top of political agendas —**

until there is too little of it, too much of it, or it becomes unsafe.

Yet over the past year, we have seen something important:  
when we act together, our voice carries.

Through joint efforts, the Dutch water sector has made itself heard in Parliament.  
And we will do so again in the coming period, as a new government takes shape.

**Water is not a standalone issue.**

It is a foundation for food security, climate resilience, energy systems, public health and economic stability and trade.

**There is great risk in fragmentation.**

And collective action could be our greatest strength.

**At NWP, our members are at the heart of everything we do.**

Not as a slogan, but as a working principle.

Our members represent the full diversity of the water sector — public and private, large and small, established leaders and young professionals.

They are our eyes and ears, both in the Netherlands and internationally.

NWP does not replace that diversity.

We connect it.

Our role is to bring people together, to create focus where needed, and to help translate expertise into a shared action.

**Creating alignment without uniformity.**

And momentum without central control.

We will also introduce a **new membership category** this year, to better connect the knowledge and networks of the many freelance experts in our sector.

**Our direction remains clear:**

**Partnerships for a water-driven future.**

Water does not exist in isolation.

It intersects with agriculture, energy, nature, urban development and industry.

Over the past two years, we have deliberately strengthened partnerships beyond our own sector.

And at the end of December, we formalised a new collaboration with **Dutch Greenhouse Delta**.

This is not symbolic.

It reflects a strategic choice: to position water – not just where it is traditionally discussed – but where it creates leverage.

And this year, we will further invest in thematic and cross-sectoral approach – not to talk more, but to connect better.

In today's context, **alignment between sector and government** does not happen by itself.

That is why NWP has taken on the role to connect the expertise and ambitions of the sector with public institutions in a more focused and strategic way.

Not to speak for the sector,  
but to help the sector speak with greater clarity and consistency.

**This is not about uniformity.**

It is about coherence.

And coherence is what gives us all credibility — and impact — on the global stage.

**As many of you might know.. On 1 January, we started YEP Phase 3** — together with NFP & MoFA.

seven new years of investing in young professionals, with a strong focus on Water and Agro, and on the active and growing alumni network.

Because the future of our sector is not only about policy frameworks or technologies — it is about people, continuity and leadership.

**And our platforms also remain central in bringing people together.**

And throughout the year, we will continue to coordinate missions, lead Dutch pavilions at international events, and keep you and the international community connected through our channels.

There is much ahead — more than I can cover here.

So stay connected, follow our work, and know that you are always welcome at our office.

**Let me return to where I began.**

The snow reminded us that meaningful change does not always start with a grand plan. Sometimes it starts with a small interaction. A shared moment. A willingness to act together.

Yes, the current political climate is challenging.

The international landscape is uncertain.

But that is precisely why joint action — and also joint presence on international stages — is not optional. It is essential.

It is up to us — as a sector, as partners, as people — to choose collaboration over fragmentation, connection over isolation, and also.. action over hesitation..

When it comes to action it is good to realise that the future of water will not be defined by those who wait for consensus.

It will be shaped by those who are willing to take responsibility, make choices — and act together.

And if we do that, I am confident that this year, too,  
we will see moments of unexpected progress — and perhaps even a little magic.

I invite you to raise your glass with me.  
To a successful, connected, and water-driven 2026.