



Water for the North West

United Utilities Water Limited
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Telephone: 01925 237000

unitedutilities.com

Our ref: EIR-375

Date: 20/05/2025

Email: EIRRequests@uuplc.co.uk

Dear [REDACTED]

Thank you for your request for environmental information. We appreciate your interest, and we want to let you know that your request has been carefully considered in accordance with the Environmental Information Regulations (EIR). Please see our comments, as follows:

I'd like some information on the three longest individual sewage discharges under United Utilities. I'd like the information to be broken down into:

- 1. Number of hours**
- 2. Start and end date (if it's still ongoing, please mention that)**
- 3. The location of the discharge**
- 4. What action has been/is being taken against each of them?**

Please see attached a copy of the three longest individual discharges. This dataset includes the number of hours, start and stop times, the name of the relevant asset, and also a brief summary of the actions following the spill. Please note, due to the scope of your request, we have searched for the longest three spills since 1st January 2024.

We absolutely understand the public concern there is about storm overflows and while we have made progress in reducing spills, we know there is much more to do. Changing the sewer system and the way the North West is plumbed can't happen overnight but we are committed to making the step change required.

We are now embarking on the largest investment programme in a century, investing £13 billion between 2025 and 2030 to upgrade the water and wastewater infrastructure across the North West. In addition, the plan is securing 30,000 jobs at United Utilities and across our supply chain, of which 7,000 are new job opportunities, helping to support the local economy.

We've already begun to reduce spills at 150 storm overflows across the region and more schemes are mobilising to improve nearly 200km of rivers. You can find out more about that [here](#).

Our five-year plan will cut spills by 60 per cent over the decade to 2030 and we're aiming to improve 75% of overflows discharging into and around every designated bathing water and priority nature site by 2035.

Over half of the sewer network in North West England is combined, which carries both rainwater and sewage in the same pipe to be treated at the local treatment works. Those pipes are typically never more than 15% full with sewerage but they can become overloaded when filled with rainfall at times of heavy downpours. Storm overflows act as a safety valve to prevent sewage backing up and flooding people's homes and businesses.

In the North West, there are more than 2,200 storm overflows and 54% of our sewer network is combined – which is above the average of 33% across England.

Reducing the need for storm overflows to operate means we must reduce the amount of rainfall getting into the pipes in the first place. United Utilities is working with others, such as local authorities and housing developers, on solutions to remove rainwater from the sewer network and slow the flow of water across catchment land, such as installing sustainable drainage on new build developments and limiting run off from highways.

In addition to creating more storage capacity at our treatment works and better managing surface water, we are improving the day-to-day operation of our sewer system. We're installing thousands of sensors to give us a real-time view of what is happening below ground. Already this is helping us spot problems early and take action to remove blockages before they result in flooding or spillages.

We are committed to being transparent about our performance. You can find data and information on how we are doing year-on-year here [Storm overflow performance | United Utilities](#). In addition to that we share real-time monitoring data via our storm overflow map. This shows all our storm overflow locations and whether they are operating or have done so in the last 24 hours, plus information on our plans to tackle them. [Storm overflow map | United Utilities - Better Rivers](#).

We hope that this response answers your request. However, if you're not satisfied with how we've handled it, you can request an internal review. To do this, please write to us at Environmental Information Office, Haweswater House, Lingley Mere, Warrington, WA5 3LP or email us at EIRRequests@uuplc.co.uk, addressing your request to [REDACTED], and explaining why you're unhappy with our response. We'll be very happy to review your request and ensure we've done everything we can to assist you.

Any request for an internal review should be made within 40 working days of receipt of this response, and we will reply within 40 working days from receipt of the request for internal review.

Many thanks
EIR Team

We'd love to hear your feedback on how we handled your request! If you have a moment, please complete our short survey [here](#) – your input helps us improve our service.