

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). I understand that you feel you have not received clear information regarding the event which impacted your water supply.

**Your request(s):**

I am writing to formally request full disclosure of all information, sampling data, and test results relating to the recent water contamination incident affecting my supply.

Although the repair work to the damaged infrastructure has now been completed, I have not received clear information explaining:

- How the contamination occurred;
- The date the issue first arose;
- The duration of the contamination;
- What specific substances were detected in the water;
- The concentrations recorded;
- Whether any prescribed limits under the Water Supply (Water Quality) Regulations 2016 were exceeded;
- What assessment has been made of potential short- and long-term health risks.

As a customer, I pay approximately £995 per year for the provision of safe and wholesome water. Under the Water Industry Act 1991 and the Water Supply (Water Quality) Regulations 2016, you have a statutory duty to supply water that is wholesome and to carry out appropriate monitoring. Transparency in matters affecting public health is essential.

Please therefore provide:

1. Copies of all laboratory test results and sampling data relating to this incident.
2. Details of sampling locations, dates, and methodologies used.
3. Any risk assessments conducted.
4. Confirmation of whether the Drinking Water Inspectorate was notified and, if so, when.
5. Any internal investigation reports or findings regarding the cause of the contamination.

If this request should properly be treated as a formal request under the Environmental Information Regulations 2004, please confirm and process it accordingly.

Given the potential public health implications, I expect a full and prompt response within the applicable statutory timeframe.

### **Our response:**

Properties in the Heath Charnock area were issued with precautionary Do Not Drink advice on 30 January 2025 following identification of a third-party connection to our network. The precautionary advice was issued because the water from the third-party connection was not supplied or treated by United Utilities and we needed to carry out tests to understand the quality of the water.

You requested information on a number of points; I have answered each of these individually below.

### **How the contamination occurred**

As mentioned above, we identified a third-party connection that was connected to our network. The water from the third-party connection was not supplied or treated by United Utilities. Therefore, precautionary Do Not Drink advice was issued until the third-party water source was disconnected, the water removed from our water mains via flushing and drawing fresh water through and sample results confirming the water met the required drinking water standards.

### **The date the issue first arose**

Our investigations were triggered following an increase in the number of customer contacts reporting a change to the taste, odour or appearance of the water on and around the 29 and 30 January 2026. These investigations included taking samples, checking our distribution network and visiting third party premises to understand what had caused the change. Our investigations have shown that there was no indication of an issue with the quality of the water supply prior to this time. The advice was issued purely as a precaution because the water in question had not been supplied or treated by us.

### **The duration of the contamination**

As mentioned above, we identified an increase in the number of customer contacts reporting a change to the taste, odour and appearance of the water in your area on and around the 29 and 30 January 2026. Prior to this date there was no indication of an issue with the quality of the water in the area. The third-party connection was identified and disconnected on 30 January 2026.

### **What specific substances were detected in the water and the concentrations recorded**

Multiple samples were taken at representative properties in the area every day from 30 January 2026 until 05 February 2026. Four samples taken on the 30 January 2026 identified elevated concentrations of iron and manganese and were prior to the third-party connection being disconnected. Elevated levels of iron and manganese, over a short-term period, are not harmful to health. All further samples taken were satisfactory, with the exceptions in the paragraph below.

Four samples taken throughout the event also detected elevated levels of lead at specific properties. There is virtually no lead in the water as it leaves our water main, and investigations have concluded that the lead exceedances reported are due to contact with lead pipework or plumbing at the specific properties. Where lead exceedances were reported, the customers affected have been informed, including being provided the appropriate advice to mitigate any risk from lead in drinking water.

There was also a single elevated nickel result at a property. Discussions with the owner confirmed that the property had recently been renovated including installing new kitchen taps in the previous 6 months. We concluded this was the most likely root cause for the single elevated nickel result.

Both the property specific issues are being dealt with separately and are not indicative of the quality of the water in the water network.

**Whether any prescribed limits under the Water Supply (Water Quality) Regulations 2016 were exceeded**

As mentioned above, there were exceedances of iron, manganese and lead. The iron and manganese exceedances may have been the result of the third-party water source entering our network. The lead exceedances are due to lead pipework supplying and or within the properties sampled. The nickel exceedance is associated with new taps in the property.

**What assessment has been made of potential short and long-term health risks.**

A public health risk assessment was undertaken on identification of the issue and remained under review throughout the event. The risk assessment concluded that the risk to public health throughout the event was low and please be reassured consumption of the water would not have resulted in illness.

**Copies of all laboratory test results and sampling data relating to this incident.**

A copy of the sample results relating to this incident accompanies this response titled 'Appendix 1'.

**Details of sampling locations, dates, and methodologies used.**

As mentioned above, multiple samples were taken at representative properties in the area every day from 30 January 2026 until 05 February 2026. We were also able to take samples from the water source that was connected to our network. Our sampling and testing methods align with the standards set out by the United Kingdom Accreditation Service (UKAS), which is the UK's national body responsible for assessing the technical competence of laboratories. All accredited methods for our laboratory are listed on the UKAS website at the following link: [https://www.ukas.com/wp-content/uploads/schedule\\_uploads/00002/1494Testing-Multiple.pdf](https://www.ukas.com/wp-content/uploads/schedule_uploads/00002/1494Testing-Multiple.pdf)

**Any risk assessments conducted.**

As mentioned above, a public health risk assessment was undertaken on identification of the issue and remained under review throughout the event. The initial risk assessment identified the need to provide precautionary advice to customers not to drink the water as we did not have any data on the quality of the water associated with the third-party connection. The risk assessment concluded that the risk to public health throughout the event was low and please be reassured consumption of the water would not have resulted in illness. Once we had received the results from the laboratory and were satisfied with the quality of the water, we were able to revoke the Do Not Drink advice.

**Confirmation of whether the Drinking Water Inspectorate was notified and, if so, when.**

The Drinking Water Inspectorate were notified of the event on 30 January 2026.



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**Any internal investigation reports or findings regarding the cause of the contamination.**

As mentioned above, we have been investigating the circumstances of the event, working with the third party involved in the connection, relevant Stakeholders as well as the Drinking Water Inspectorate. Investigations relating to the event have not yet concluded.

We concur that transparency in matters affecting public health is essential and we will continue to comply with our duty to provide environmental information where requested.

We hope that the information provides you with some reassurance regarding your concerns. Please let us know if you require anything further. If you're not satisfied with how we've handled your request, 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](mailto: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

[REDACTED]

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.