



Water for the North West

United Utilities Water Limited
Haweswater House
Lingley Mere Business Park
Lingley Green Avenue
Great Sankey
Warrington WA5 3LP

Telephone: 01925 237000
unitedutilities.com

Our ref: EIR-750
Date: 18/03/2026
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).

Your request:

You have just dumped sewage in to the River Rothay from the Ambleside plant for over 38 hours. All of this going downstream entering Windermere killing everything in its path. I know as I swim regularly amongst the sewage in the river. The river bed is black nothing lives.

- Is this legal
- Is the sewage treated or untreated

When will you stop this barbaric Dickensian practice use our money for investment purposes? When will you clean up the river lake that you have ruined? Is this at all possible? I don't know how you sleep at night?

Please answer me. Please don't lie In the 21st century we should have better ways to deal with this. My water bill has increased from £40 a month to £70 a month which is 75.

You owe us an explanation as to your plans for the future using this ridiculous amount of extra money.

Our response:

Firstly, I'd like to take the time to explain why the storm overflow at Ambleside Wastewater Treatment Works (WwTW) recently discharged for 38 hours. As you may be aware, between the 11 and 13 January 2026, Ambleside experienced exceptionally wet conditions. The sustained downpour pushed Ambleside WwTW to operate at flow to full treatment (FTFT), meaning it was processing as much water as the system could handle. As the incoming flows exceeded the site's treatment capacity, the works began to spill, resulting in an overflow event that lasted around 38 hours. Once the rainfall eased and inflows returned to normal levels, the site was able to regain control of volumes and the spill ceased naturally.

Under strict conditions, and with the permission of the Environment Agency, water companies like United Utilities are legally allowed to spill excess rainwater and wastewater into the river and sea because it is accepted there is a finite capacity inside sewer pipes. Even if a sewer is completely unobstructed and of the approved size, there could still be times when storm waters completely fill them. After heavy rainfall, groundwater can find its way into combined sewers, adding to the amount of water in the pipe and increasing the chance that a spill may occur. Spills can also come from storm



Water for the North West

United Utilities Water Limited
Haweswater House
Lingley Mere Business Park
Lingley Green Avenue
Great Sankey
Warrington WA5 3LP

Telephone: 01925 237000
unitedutilities.com

overflows in emergency situations, for example, if there are sewer blockages or equipment failures at a wastewater treatment works.

We absolutely understand the public concern there is about the use of 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 multi-billion 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 in the wider supply chain across the region, 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](#).

Those pipes are typically never more than 15% full with sewerage but when also filled with rainfall and at times of heavy downpours they can become overloaded. Storm overflows act as a safety valve to prevent them backing up and flooding people's homes and businesses.

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 too.

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.

In addition to creating more storage capacity at our treatment works and separating surface water run off from the sewers, we are also 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.

You can read more about what we're doing to tackle storm overflows here: [gr0004---tackling-storm-overflows.pdf](#), and what we're doing to protect and improve Windermere's water quality here: [Windermere | United Utilities](#).

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 EIRequests@uuplc.co.uk, addressing your request to [REDACTED], and explaining why you're unhappy with our response. We'll be very happy to review



United Utilities Water Limited
Haweswater House
Lingley Mere Business Park
Lingley Green Avenue
Great Sankey
Warrington WA5 3LP

Telephone: 01925 237000
unitedutilities.com

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



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.