

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). As your request contained a number of specific questions, this response, restates each part of the request (in bold) and then follows this with our response.

- 1. In May 2024, approximately how many air valves did you have on water mains on your network?**

In May 2024, our records indicate that we had approximately 13,000 air valves installed on water mains across our network.

- 2. Prior to the cryptosporidium outbreak in May 2024 in Brixham in Devon, did your company have in place a programme to proactively inspect those air valves to ensure these did not pose a water quality contamination risk?**

Yes

- 3. If you did have such a proactive programme, when was it put in place and how often were you inspecting air valves under the proactive programme?**

A proactive inspection programme for air valves has been in place on our Large Diameter Trunk Mains (LDTM) for an extended period of time, with visual inspections being carried out on a six-monthly basis and a maintenance check on an annual basis.

With respect to the rest of our distribution network, during the Summer of 2023 we initiated an inspection of all our air valves, the findings of which will set the maintenance programme in the coming years. In addition, for planned work, we assess which assets may be affected and check any air valves to ensure they are ready for use.

- 4. Was your company ever contacted by the DWI prior to May 2024 with a recommendation, instruction or requirement to put such a proactive programme in place?**

Our records indicate that DWI has requested information on our approach to air valve inspections on two occasions, once following an audit in August 2020 and once following a small-scale water quality event in March 2023.

- 5. Have you changed your practices in relation to the inspection of air valves to avoid water quality contamination risks since the May 2024 cryptosporidium outbreak? If so, what**



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

changes have you made? Were these changes made a result of DWI intervention?

In October 2024, the Drinking Water Inspectorate requested information from United Utilities in relation to air valves. Recommendations and an improvement notice was issued in August 2025 with respect to air valve maintenance. Details of this improvement notice can be found on the DWI website by following this link: [United Utilities Water Limited – Air Valve Risk Management Improvement Notice - Drinking Water Inspectorate](#).

In line with the Improvement Notice referenced above, United Utilities is working towards enhancing its approach to the inspection, maintenance, and management of air valves across the water network. The notice ensures the continuation of existing inspection and maintenance programmes, alongside a series of improvements including a full review and revision of procedures, development of a comprehensive strategy for future inspection and maintenance, enhanced recording and tracking of maintenance activities, and the introduction of structured training for relevant staff.

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



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.