

# YourVoice statement | 2023/24



## Who we are and what we do

We, the YourVoice Independent Challenge Group, have been operating for just over 10 years.

Our aim is to make sure that United Utilities Water (the company) consults its customers and stakeholders (those with an interest in the company) to understand and take account of their views and priorities.

We make sure that engagement activities, such as customer workshops, focus groups, surveys and research carried out by the company are clear and understandable to those taking part, and that the results are reflected in the company's business plans and in its day-to-day operations.

We monitor the company's actual performance against its published performance targets. We receive reports on the company's ongoing improvement plans, and continually review areas where its performance falls short of these targets.

Over the last year or so, we have monitored the company's research and engagement with customers and stakeholders in preparing the next business plan for the five-year period from 2025 to 2030. The business plan was widely discussed and the subject of extensive research and consultation with customers and stakeholders. In fact, over 100,000 household and business customers from across the North West were consulted on the proposed plan.

We have made sure that results from the research and consultation are reflected in the final business plan. We have commented to Ofwat, the water regulator, on the very good quality and variety of this customer and stakeholder engagement and on customers' views being included in the business plan. Our experience in monitoring the company's ongoing performance helped us to comment on and challenge the proposed performance targets included in the 2025 to 2030 business plan.

The YourVoice report is available at [yourvoiceicg.co.uk](https://yourvoiceicg.co.uk)

Our members represent customers, stakeholders, large and small businesses, regulators, the voluntary, charitable and environmental sectors, disability charities and groups, vulnerable customers, future bill payers, and money and community advice services.

We are not all industry experts and are fully independent of the company. We act as informed customers and challenge the company on that basis.

So that we can have meaningful discussions and monitor the company's work at an appropriate level of detail, we have four subgroups:

- customer engagement;
- environment and social capital;
- affordability and vulnerability; and
- stakeholder.

The company's directors and senior staff attend subgroup meetings and we have regular access to the company's Chief Executive and board members.



## Overview of performance for 2023/24

2023/24 is the fourth year of the company's current five-year business plan, which runs from 2020 to 2025. The company's performance shows many areas of good performance at or above target. It achieved 79% of its performance commitments for the last year. However, it did not meet 21% of its targets.

Some areas where targets have not been met are as follows.

- Having a reliable and high-quality water supply is a major priority for customers in the North West. All water companies use the Compliance Risk Index (CRI) to monitor water-quality standards, as required by the Drinking Water Inspectorate. The challenging target is a score of zero, but in year four of the business plan a major treatment works failure meant that the company scored 5.92. This is an area for improvement and is the subject of a continuing water-quality improvement programme, which the company is confident will address future issues and allow it to achieve this target in the future. The company has given us several updates on water quality, and recent reports have shown that the number of customer contacts about the taste, smell and appearance of water has reduced, partly due to work carried out to clean water network pipes, including 35 kilometres of the Vyrnwy Aqueduct in 2023/24.
- The target for reducing water-supply interruptions was not met. The time customers were without water averaged nine minutes and 39 seconds, a large improvement on the company's 2022/23 performance which was 38 minutes 45 seconds, but still below its current target of five minutes 23 seconds. The company's 'water on wheels' tankers have helped in achieving this reduction, but more work is needed.
- The amount of water used each day by each person in the region is called 'per capita consumption'. The company is working to reduce the amount of water used by customers and had a target to bring this down by 5.1% from the starting position in 2019/20. It did not achieve this target and per capita consumption showed only a 2.5% reduction. In 2023/24 the company achieved a performance of 138.1 litres per person per day, a reduction from the start of the five-year asset management plan (AMP) period, when per capita consumption was 151.2 litres. The company continues to use social media and advertising campaigns to encourage customers to save water. The improved metering programme and the lowest bill guarantee scheme, along with the company's commitment to provide water-saving devices, will continue. Saving water, saving energy and helping the environment have been continuing campaign themes, particularly in light of the current economic situation and the challenges of climate change. The company has found that its campaigning is now having a positive impact on how much water is used. Work to continue this trend is vital and we will be monitoring this important area for customers.

- Preventing flooding continues to be a priority for the company and customers, as sewer flooding is one of the worst service failures customers can experience. There were 1,509 flooding incidents inside homes and businesses (internal flooding) in 2023/24, which is considerably more than the company's target of 500. In terms of external flooding (flooding incidents outside homes and businesses) 7,063 incidents were recorded against a target of 6,106 incidents. The company has told us that 2023/24 saw prolonged wet weather conditions, including an increased number of named storms, and these put great challenges on its network. A variety of schemes are in place to reduce these levels of flooding. The Dynamic Network Management system monitors flows in the water network and alerts the company to issues before they arise. The company has had some success with its ongoing work to educate customers about what not to flush down their toilets or pour down their sinks as part of the 'stop the block' campaign. A dedicated blockage team now responds quickly to incidents and finds out what caused the problem, with the aim of reducing repeat issues. Work will continue in this area and should improve the company's performance. We will continue to actively monitor this.
- There was an increase in pollution incidents in 2023/24, partly due to severe weather and the number of named storms. The company's performance was 27.93 incidents per 10,000 kilometres of sewer. This includes one category-1 pollution incident but no category-2 incidents – these two categories are the most serious in terms of the environment.
- 98.97% of treatment works (384 works) met the conditions of their Environment Agency permits, against a target of 100%. Four treatment works failed to meet the conditions of their permits. Detailed investigations have been carried out to identify the causes of the failure and action plans have been put in place to prevent further failures in the future.



## Overview of performance for 2023/24

Some areas where performance targets have been achieved are as follows.

- Good customer service has been reflected in the company's performance against Ofwat's measure of customer service and experience (C-MeX). The company is expecting to be ranked sixth out of the 17 water and wastewater companies. The company offers 10 ways for customers to contact it, so customers can choose the method that suits them.
- Over 84,000 customers were lifted out of water poverty (where customers spend more than 3% of their disposable income on water bills) through the company's industry-leading dynamic range of affordability schemes.
- Following feedback from customers, the company improved its customer affordability schemes to make it easier for people to apply. Last year 180,950 customers received support on a discounted tariff, and a further 26,000 customers benefited from the company's payment-matching scheme, where every pound the customer pays towards their water bills is matched by the company.
- The company replaced 3,842 lead pipes at customers' properties.
- 79% of customers interviewed said the company provided value for money.
- Targets for reducing leaks were achieved for the 18th year in a row.
- The company's Priority Services scheme, which over 400,000 customers have signed up for, continues to help those who need extra support. The company successfully works with other utility companies and trusted partners, such as Mersey Care NHS Foundation Trust, to share information so that vulnerable customers can be enrolled onto each organisation's priority services scheme. This year this service has retained the ISO22548 kite mark accreditation to recognise its work in supporting vulnerable customers.
- Ongoing work to identify and bill as many people as possible who are receiving a water and wastewater service has been successful and the company has performed above target. This work helps to make sure bills are fairer for all customers.

Over the last 12 months, the performance of storm overflows has understandably been of considerable interest to customers, stakeholders, environmentalists and the media. The company met its target of monitoring 100% of storm overflows before the end of 2023. There were 97,537 spills in 2023. This was 41% more than in 2022, which was a much drier year. This performance is unacceptable and the 2025 – 2030 business plan includes £3.1 billion of proposed investment to improve storm overflows. This investment is the UK's biggest spill-reduction plan, targeting a 60% reduction in spills by 2030. The scale of work will be challenging for the company, its contractors and partners, and we will be monitoring all aspects of this plan, including delivery, performance and impact. The company is bringing forward 150 priority projects, which will be carried out between 2023 and 2025, before the new business plan is introduced.

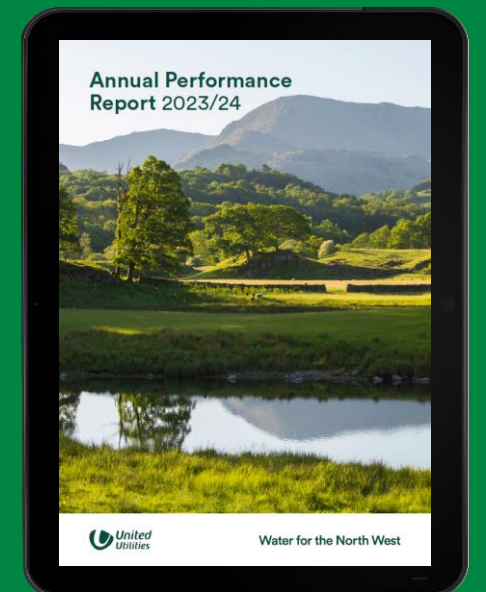
This year, the company has again produced an easy-to-read performance summary, which is available online and is accessible on mobile phones. It has received Plain English Campaign's Crystal Mark, showing it has been approved for clarity. The company continues to use social media to share key performance messages with more customers.

We are pleased to report that, in our opinion, the United Utilities Annual Performance Report accurately reflects the company's performance for 2023/24.

As ever, during the coming year we will continue to monitor and challenge the company on behalf of customers and stakeholders. If you would like to contact us about the company's performance or our work, please email us at [contactus@yourvoiceicg.co.uk](mailto:contactus@yourvoiceicg.co.uk)

### Bernice Law

Independent Chair, YourVoice  
July 2024



You can read our Annual Performance Report at [annualperformancereport2024.unitedutilities.com](https://annualperformancereport2024.unitedutilities.com)