

How we provide great water for a stronger, greener and healthier North West

Our strategic priorities

- Improve our rivers
- Create a greener future
- Provide a safe and great place to work
- Deliver great service for all our customers
- Spend customers' money wisely
- Contribute to our communities

1. Collect and treat

Providing great water:

We collect raw water from open reservoirs, lakes, rivers and boreholes. We then treat it in one of our 86 water treatment works to ensure it is safe and clean for customers to drink.

For a stronger, greener and healthier North West:

We own and manage 56,000 hectares of land. We are optimising the use of this land to protect water quality, create natural carbon sinks by restoring peatland and planting woodland, and explore potential clean

energy development. We manage our land and water resources in a sustainable way, protecting and enhancing local habitats, and open our land to the public to enjoy nature and its health and wellbeing benefits.

Reservoirs are the biggest source of water in the North West, and we have more than any other UK water company. They are quick to fill when it rains, but are more vulnerable to periods of dry weather than ground water sources. They provide great tasting water, but have high maintenance needs and the raw water requires more treatment than some other water sources.

Relevant material issues

- Water resources and leakage
- Drinking water quality
- Climate change
- Land management, access and recreation

Relevant principal risks

- Water service
- Supply chain and programme delivery
- Resource

2. Store and deliver

Providing great water:

The treated water goes to one of our covered storage reservoirs, ready to be delivered to customers' taps when they need it. We deliver an average of 1.8 billion litres of water every day to 7.4 million people and businesses, using 43,000 kilometres of water pipes.

For a stronger, greener and healthier North West:

Our integrated supply network enables us to move water around the region as needed. Along with production planning and optimisation

of storage levels ahead of anticipated demand increases, and a fleet of alternative supply vehicles, this helps us to deliver a more resilient water supply. We use sensors and artificial intelligence, and have dedicated teams to detect and fix leaks across our pipes as well as helping customers identify leaks on their property, which can save them money on their bills as well as reducing water losses. Our Haweswater Aqueduct uses gravity to transfer water from Cumbria to Manchester, helping to reduce our carbon footprint from energy-intensive pumping.

Relevant material issues

- Water resources and leakage
- Customer service and operational performance
- Drinking water quality

Relevant principal risks

- Water service
- Supply chain and programme delivery

Retail

Providing great water:

United Utilities Water Ltd provides metering, billing and customer services for household customers in the North West. Business customers choose a water retailer, and our joint venture, Water Plus, operates in the competitive non-household retail market.

For a stronger, greener and healthier North West:

Our region has the most areas of extreme deprivation in the country. We have an extensive range of affordability and vulnerability schemes, and are helping more than 330,000 customers with £280 million⁽ⁱ⁾ of support in AMP7.

⁽ⁱ⁾ 50 per cent company funded

Relevant material issues

- Customer service and operational performance
- Affordability and vulnerability

Relevant principal risks

- Retail and commercial
- Security
- Resource

Generate

Providing great water:

We minimise waste from our operations, including by turning sludge byproduct into compost for farmers and capturing gas to generate renewable energy from bioresources.

For a stronger, greener and healthier North West:

Self-generation helps us to reduce our carbon footprint and save energy costs, and the remaining electricity needs that we purchase are 100 per cent renewable.

We are closely following the developments in the interpretation of Farming Rules for Water, and the impact this could have on our provision of compost for farmers throughout the year.

Relevant material issues

- Energy management
- Environmental impacts

Relevant principal risks

- Health, safety and environmental
- Supply chain and programme delivery
- Resource

4. Return

Providing great water:

Once the water is clean enough to meet stringent environmental consents, we return it through rivers and streams so that the water cycle can begin again.

For a stronger, greener and healthier North West:

We have a long coastline and 25 designated coastal bathing waters across the North West. We are meeting 24 of 25 standards for these bathing waters and we are industry leading in minimising pollution, with zero serious pollution incidents in three of the last four years.

We are going above and beyond our regulatory commitments to improve river health, with the commitments in our Better Rivers: Better North West programme and additional investment in the 2020-25 period to deliver improvements faster. We are recruiting a team of river rangers to help us look after the local rivers and streams in our communities, and exploring other new ways of working such as how we can work with farmers to reduce the impact of runoff, and the use of nature-based solutions and partnerships with groups such as The Rivers Trust, to ensure we are pursuing the best ways to improve the natural environment and river and bathing water quality across the region.

Relevant material issues

- Political and regulatory environment
- Natural capital and biodiversity

Relevant principal risks

- Health, safety and environmental
- Conduct and compliance

3. Remove and clean

Providing great water:

We operate 79,000 kilometres of wastewater pipes to transport wastewater from sewers to one of our 584 wastewater treatment works, where it requires separation and treatment before it is returned to the natural environment.

Combined sewers take a mix of wastewater and rainwater to be cleaned. In excessive rainfall, when sewer capacity is overloaded, storm overflows are activated, using a separate pipe to allow this heavily diluted mix to flow directly into rivers or the sea to help prevent flooding of streets, homes and businesses. Read more on page 22.

For a stronger, greener and healthier North West:

Urban rainfall in our region is 40 per cent higher than the average for the rest of England and Wales, and 54 per cent of our sewers take combined waste and rainwater, compared to an average of 33 per cent. This means more water runs into our sewers than other parts of the country, creating a much bigger challenge for reducing the use of storm overflows in the North West. We are already investing substantial amounts in AMP7, supporting our target of at least a one-third sustainable reduction in the number of overflow activations, improving 184 kilometres of rivers. Our ambitious plans for AMP8 target even more significant improvements.

Relevant material issues

- Recycling biosolids to land
- Customer service and operational performance
- Storm overflows
- Climate change

Relevant principal risks

- Wastewater service
- Political and regulatory
- Health, safety and environmental
- Supply chain and programme delivery

