

**Part 1 On Tue, 12 Mar 2024 at 14:40, Keswick reminder printed this United Utilities press release:**

Hi Lynne

I just wondered if you wished to make a comment on the press release that I have been sent from United Utilities which I enclose:

**TUESDAY 12 March 2024**

**25-YEAR PLAN IN THE PIPELINE TO “RE-PLUMB” NORTH WEST SEWERS**

- ***£multi-billion investment will continue up to 2050***
- ***Dashboard published with plan for every storm overflow***
- ***437 storm overflows will be improved by 2030 – reducing spills by at least 50%***

United Utilities has today published a road map showing how it will deliver cleaner rivers, beaches and lakes across the North West – the biggest investment of its kind in the UK.

By 2050 the goal is to ensure that storm overflows, the relief points that prevent sewers from backing up and flooding homes and businesses in heavy rain, each operate less than 10 times a year.

The Storm Overflow Reduction Plan, expected to cost some £19 billion in the North West region alone, will meet the new requirements of the Environment Act 2021, bringing a massive reduction in sewer pollution entering the region’s waterways. Work has already started at some of the highest priority sites and by 2030 more than 430 storm overflows will be improved.

Jo Harrison, Asset Management Director at United Utilities, said: *“At United Utilities, our purpose is very clear – we don’t just supply water, we also want to make the North West greener, stronger and healthier.*

*“The multi-billion pound programme we are now embarking upon will see the biggest overhaul of the region’s sewer network in a century. Not only is this now enshrined in law, it is what our customers expect and it’s the right thing to do.”*

Today a dashboard has been published showing the locations of every storm overflow in the UK, with a timescale for achieving the target of 10 operations a year. The first phase of the Storm Overflow Reduction Plan will take place up to 2030, and will involve £914m of improvements at 158 sites across Cumbria.

**Progress is already being made and schemes have been completed at sites around Cumbria including:**

- Cargo in Cumbria, where temporary treatment and storage facilities have been installed. It is already showing results since it came online in August 2023, with the number of spills reduced from 343 a year to just one occasion since then. The temporary equipment will be replaced with a permanent installation over the coming months, and we expect to roll out a similar approach to other village treatment sites in rural Cumbria.

- Southwaite wastewater treatment works near Carlisle, where a new wetland has been created to clean the storm water before it enters the River Eden. The new reedbeds cover 1,500 square metres, an area the size of six tennis courts.

**Schemes are underway at other sites including:**

- Ambleside, Elterwater, Near Sawrey and Hawkshead all near Windermere where a £41m project will involve the construction of new storm water storage and natural soakaway solutions will be created to reduce the volume of rainfall entering the sewer network
- Staveley, where the capacity of the wastewater treatment works is being increased by 50% and United Utilities is working with the council and village residents to remove rainwater before it can enter the sewer system through the use of sustainable drainage systems and rainwater harvesting. By September 2024 this will reduce storm water spills into the River Kent by 35%

There are more than 2,200 storm overflows within the wastewater system across the North West region. Like the overflow on a bath, these are designed to prevent flooding and provide a route for water to take when sewers fill during heavy rain – automatically releasing a diluted mixture of sewage and rainwater into the environment.

Since December 2023 every one of these sites is now monitored, allowing United Utilities to build a picture of how often each site operates and which should be tackled first. Improvement work will be prioritised at the sites which operate most frequently or which discharge into bathing waters or environmentally sensitive locations.

Jo Harrison added: *“We are making a fundamental change to the way our sewer system has been designed, and change on this scale cannot happen overnight. We are re-plumbing our drainage systems, building storage tanks to increase the capacity, separating rainwater out of sewers, and harnessing the power of nature to treat storm water before it is returned to the environment. Work has already started and people are going to see much more of this over the next 25 years.”*

For further information, and to view the Storm Overflow Reduction Plan dashboard, visit <https://www.unitedutilities.com/better-rivers/>  
/Ends

**Notes to editors:**

The Storm Overflow Reduction Plan in numbers

<b>£19 billion</b>	Planned investment to make sure all storm overflows in the North West region meet new environmental standards by 2050
<b>2,248</b>	Storm overflows in the North West
<b>437</b>	Storm overflows will be upgraded by 2030
<b>£3 billion</b>	Planned investment to deliver this first phase of work by 2030
<b>50%</b>	Minimum reduction in storm overflow operation by 2030

**£13.7 billion** Total planned investment by United Utilities between 2025 and 2030 – delivering cleaner and more resilient water supplies, less leakage, better customer service and increased affordability support, as well as a 50% reduction in storm overflow operation

**PART 2 Response by Lynne Jones (K F A G ) to Keswick Reminder request for comment on press release from United Utilities**

<https://goodlawproject.org/united-utilities-sewage-2022/>

As you will see in that link above UU have not had an epiphany. This planned investment is the result of (belated) government action PLUS there has been huge groundswell of public opinion with repeated articles in the national and local press over the shockingly polluted state of our rivers and lakes. In particular a very vocal group which has campaigned tirelessly, harnessing the names of some famous public figures to highlight the poor condition and algal bloom in Windermere

. [https://www.google.com/search?q=windermere+sewage+protest&rlz=1C1GCEA\\_enGB818GB818&oq=windermere+sewage&gs\\_lcrp=EgZjaHJvbWUqCAgDEAAYFhgeMgklABBFgDkYgAQyBwgBEAAYgAQyBwgCEAAYgAQyCAgDEAAYFhgeMggIBBAAGBYHjIICAUQABgWGB4yDQgGEAAYhgMYgAQYigUyDQgHEAAYhgMYgAQYigUyDQgIEAA YhgMYgAQYigUyDQgJEAAYhgMYgAQYigXSAQkxOTI1NGowajeoAgCwAgA&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8](https://www.google.com/search?q=windermere+sewage+protest&rlz=1C1GCEA_enGB818GB818&oq=windermere+sewage&gs_lcrp=EgZjaHJvbWUqCAgDEAAYFhgeMgklABBFgDkYgAQyBwgBEAAYgAQyBwgCEAAYgAQyCAgDEAAYFhgeMggIBBAAGBYHjIICAUQABgWGB4yDQgGEAAYhgMYgAQYigUyDQgHEAAYhgMYgAQYigUyDQgIEAA YhgMYgAQYigUyDQgJEAAYhgMYgAQYigXSAQkxOTI1NGowajeoAgCwAgA&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8)

It has always seemed incredible to KFAG that the EA has, with pollution at least, a significant amount of environmental regulation which it can use to deal with pollution and yet, along with all the other NGOs involved in our rivers' health, the situation has been allowed to go on unchecked for many years. Lack of staff/funding in the EA is certainly an issue but the relationship between water companies and their regulators has been too cosy, the tail has wagged the dog. Seeing the poor state of our water courses when regulation exists that *could* be acted upon, whilst knowing that there is no effective legislation to force water companies to operate their reservoirs to protect communities from significant flooding is not a happy place to be.

From the link you will see the most recent data 2022 UU topped the table for both the number of hours of sewage spills AND the actual number of spills. Both by quite a significant margin. Until they have been forced to do so, water companies have relied on neglected, ancient and inadequate infrastructure whilst operating profits, shareholder dividends - and executive bonuses have soared. No doubt it will be the public who end up paying for the many years of mismanagement. whilst all that continues.

Keswick's own upgraded sewage system, completed in 2012 at a cost of > £30million, generated a huge sense of relief to have repeated foul water flooding,

particularly in the Elliott Park area, finally dealt with. However, there was no significant long-term thinking. The system was only designed to (what was then considered) a 1:30 year storm event as that was *all that it was legally required to do*. A rain event beyond that and a mix of untreated raw sewage and rainwater flows from a bifurcation chamber in the field behind the Premier Inn. When we expressed some horror at this we were assured it was OK as, at that point, the Greta would have flooded the area further diluting it. We just hope that the proposed improvements are truly adequate to deal with forecasted increases in rainfall due to climate change - with some extra wriggle room!

Lynne Jones for K FAG