



Water for the North West

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Our ref: EIR-561

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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). 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:

How many sewage plants are there that cover the Whitehaven area (DSZ031)

Whitehaven and the surrounding area is served by Whitehaven Wastewater Treatment Works (WwTW) which currently discharges treated final effluent and storm water via a long sea outfall pipeline.

How many of these have been upgraded in the last 14 years

Since 2011, there have been 11 general maintenance projects at Whitehaven WwTW.

How many new ones have been built since privatisation?

Whitehaven WwTW existed at privatisation, so there have been no new WwTWs built, although there have been significant improvements made to the works since privatisation. For awareness, prior to the construction of the current Whitehaven WwTW, an outfall from the site was first constructed in 1976 by the contemporary Water Authority as part of water quality improvements along the Cumbrian coast, although this outfall was originally used as a sludge discharge pipeline to the Irish Sea, with a diffuser arrangement to provide dispersion.

Following privatisation, and the adoption of the Urban Wastewater Treatment Directive (UWWTD) in 1991, there were new significant investment requirements for sewerage companies, particularly those like United Utilities, with long coastlines.

The UWWTD laid down minimum standards for treatment of wastewater and disposal of sewage sludge and required secondary treatment of all wastewater as a minimum, for settlements of more than 2,000 or 10,000 for coastal discharges. The Directive also specifically required elimination of sewage sludge disposal at sea.

In response to these new requirements, the Environment Agency and North West Water (now United Utilities) launched the Sea Change programme, which was a £500 million coastal clean-up programme launched in 1994, to improve bathing water quality in the North West of England. The Sea Change programme involved improving sewerage systems, upgrading infrastructure like sewage

treatment works and addressing pollution sources from both urban and agricultural areas.

As part of the Sea Change programme, the Whitehaven wastewater treatment works was improved with the addition of secondary treatment at the works in 2000, and the conversion of the previous sludge outfall to a final effluent and storm water outfall. As part of the design of any major investment project like this, a detailed assessment of the current and potential future requirements for the works is undertaken. This assessment reviews potential future growth in population, and the treatment works is designed to be capable of accommodate this potential growth in demand.

Further improvements in quality standards then led to a new final effluent pipe being constructed in 2013, which comprises of a 1,000m long, 710mm diameter, polyethylene pipeline, terminating in an eight port diffuser.

How many times have united utilities upgraded the sewage plants as a result of new housing?

Because Whitehaven WwTW was designed to be able to accommodate anticipated future growth in demand, the works has not needed to be specifically upgraded because of new housing demand. Although as we set out in our answers above, we have continued to make regular investment at the works. The subsequent investment that has been made at the works, has been undertaken for a number of reasons, including but not limited to new permit or regulatory requirements, as well asset condition and asset performance needs, with any substantive upgrades to the works reflecting future growth and climate change forecasts.

United Utilities and other water companies, are also required to undertake long term planning processes to prepare for future changes in demand for both drinking water and wastewater treatment capabilities. We analyse the ability of our WwTWs to accommodate future population growth as part of the development of our Drainage and Wastewater Management Plan (DWMP) for the region. The DWMP is a 25-year holistic plan that covers all elements across drainage and wastewater. The latest version of our DWMP was published in May 2023 ([Drainage and wastewater management plan](#)) and the outputs can be viewed on the DWMP customer portal ([DWMP Customer Portal Environment](#)).

Specific information relating to Whitehaven WwTW is also publicly available and can be accessed through the "[SPA 10 South West Lakes](#)" document on the DWMP page.

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
[REDACTED]

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.