



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](http://unitedutilities.com)

**Our ref:** EIR-570

**Date:** 12/11/2025

**Email:** [EIRRequests@uuplc.co.uk](mailto: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).

**Your request:**

I found a website called Sewage Map recently and have noticed it is reporting that United Utilities have been discharging sewage into the rivers and sea in Cumbria in recent days. I've since found your website which appears to suggest you are currently, as I type, discharging sewage into the sea at Workington.

I can't understand why this would be given that the weather for the past few days have been static, grey, with no wind and more importantly no rain.

Can you therefore provide details of all sewage discharges into lakes and sea in Cumbria from Monday 13 October until Saturday 18 October, please.

For the avoidance of doubt, please provide, date, length of time of the discharge, location into the river name, details of the source of the discharge, and the reason for it happening.

**Our response:**

Please see attached a copy of the data relating to all discharges in the Cumbria region, from 13-18 October 2025. This includes:

- Unique site ID
- Site name
- Spill date and time
- Receiving watercourse

When the sewer system is operating normally, sewage leaves our homes and businesses, sometimes mixed with rainwater, and is sent to one of our nearest treatment works. Sewers are typically only 15% full when it is dry.

If an area is hit by really heavy rain, like the kind we have seen in more recent summers, the sewers sometimes become completely full of water, and the sewage starts backing up. If there was no storm overflow in place, this sewage could enter homes and streets, as the wastewater

would force its way out of the network of pipes to the surface, often rising up through manhole covers. With a storm overflow in place, the rain water, mixed with sewage, will rise inside the sewer and eventually enter a separate pipe which runs off the main sewer and flows into a river or the sea.

Under strict conditions, and with the permission of the Environment Agency, water companies like United Utilities are allowed to spill wastewater into the river and sea because it is accepted there is a finite capacity inside sewer pipes. Even if a sewer is completely unobstructed and of the approved size, there could still be times when storm waters completely fill them. After heavy rainfall, groundwater can find its way into combined sewers, adding to the amount of water in the pipe and increasing the chance that a spill may occur.

Some storm overflows can serve extremely large catchments. In this instance, the overflows which were operating in Cumbria which discharge into the Irish Sea cover the large catchment of Allonby to Bootle. This means that whilst there may have been no rainfall in one part of the catchment, there could have been in another. Rainwater can also sometimes take a while to drain down through our systems, and reach the overflow, which is why an overflow may be spilling on a relatively dry day. Additionally, any surface water or river flooding that has occurred may continue to impact our drainage systems after rainfall has ceased. You will also observe some very short duration storm overflow discharges that may be symptomatic of a full drainage system in drain-down.

It is important to note that whilst we have a number of assets that discharge to the Irish Sea, there are also likely to be third-party discharge assets within the area, which United Utilities are not responsible for.

When reviewing the attached dataset, the following points are critical:

- Raw telemetry data should not be treated as validated regulatory Event Duration Monitor (EDM) due to the potential for sensor malfunctions, data transmission errors or environmental interference (which are rectified when this data is validated). There may also be gaps in the data resulting from instrument failure or maintenance, for example.
- Whilst error codes from sensors are captured and inspected, they may still appear as erroneous data in this raw telemetry dataset, as erroneous and anomalous data will not have been removed.
- As this raw data has not gone through data validation it will likely be different to what is reported annually in our regulatory EDM return.

If you would like to read more about our storm overflow performance, or view any historic data, please visit our website: [Storm overflow performance | United Utilities](#).

Additionally, the [Storm Overflows Data | Stream - Portal](#) is a source of open data on the operation of storm overflows in England. The data on this hub – produced via an Application Programming Interface (API) – provides near real-time data that comes from each water company's Event Duration Monitors. Companies aim to transmit data on a discharge within an hour of the outfall operating.

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](mailto:EIRRequests@uuplc.co.uk), addressing your request to [REDACTED]

[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.