

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 the request contained a number of specific questions, this response, restates each part of the request (in bold) and then follows this with our response:

We are experiencing frequent pipe bursts and failures in this area. Following a breakage, the water quality is frequently compromised, resulting in highly discoloured (dirty) water for several hours. This is disruptive and raises significant health concerns.

Specific Concerns

- 1. Pipe Material:** Local knowledge and long-time residents indicate that the water main serving this area is constructed of Asbestos Cement (AC). Given the known risks associated with aging AC pipes, especially when they fracture, I request confirmation of the pipe material.
- 2. Failure Rate:** The pipe is clearly past its operational lifespan, indicated by the recurrent failure rate.
- 3. Water Quality:** I am requesting assurance that the water quality remains safe for consumption, particularly following a burst, and that the concentration of any potential contaminants, including asbestos fibers, is monitored and safe.

Action Requested

I formally request the following actions:

- Confirmation of Pipe Material:** Please confirm the material of the water main serving the [REDACTED] postcode.

I can confirm that the postcode area referenced is supplied via a 3" asbestos cement (AC) main.

- Prioritisation for Replacement:** If the pipe is Asbestos Cement, please confirm that this main has been flagged and prioritised for urgent replacement in the current or next Asset Management Plan (AMP) cycle due to the extreme failure rate.

Having liaised with our Network Team, I can confirm that the main which supplies your property

has been identified for this year's renewal programme. The remaining AC mains in the area will also be considered for renewal in the future.

• **Immediate Remedial Steps: Detail the immediate steps United Utilities will take to reduce the frequency of future breaks and mitigate water quality issues in the short term.**

We're currently looking to upgrade over 200km of water mains in Cumbria as part of our five-year plan for AMP8. We will be using a range of techniques, including slip-lining where new pipe is inserted into the old pipe, to minimise disruption.

The replacement mains are expected to last for more than 100 years and are built to withstand high pressure and temperature variations to help protect against bursts and reduce leaks – both of which will play a key role in safeguarding water supplies for millions of customers across the region.

As well as reducing interruptions in water supply, the project will play an important role in ensuring a resilient water network at a time when the population of the North West is expected to grow.

Regarding your concerns about the water quality in the area, it is important to note that there is no regulatory standard for asbestos in drinking water in the UK. Asbestos cement pipes were first laid in the North West in the early 1920s. Usage increased to a peak in the early 1950s when about 45 % of new mains laid were asbestos cement; since then, use has decreased, and it stopped altogether by the early 1980s. The number of asbestos cement pipes is gradually reducing as they are replaced through these replacement programmes.

The guidance provided by the Drinking Water Inspectorate (DWI), and the World Health Organisation (WHO) suggest that asbestos in drinking water is not a health concern. The health risks are associated with where asbestos exposure is to airborne particles through inhalation. Where we need to work on asbestos cement mains, we have the appropriate measures in place to reduce the release of any airborne particles.

We note that you have referenced discoloured water please see our website for further information regarding discolouration <https://www.unitedutilities.com/help-and-support/your-water-supply/your-water/water-quality/water-appearance/discoloured-water/>

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.