



United Utilities Water Limited
Haweswater House
Lingley Mere Business Park
Lingley Green Avenue
Great Sankey
Warrington WA5 3LP

Telephone: 01925 237000
unitedutilities.com

Our ref: EIR-693
Date: 17/02/2026
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).

Your request:

Throughout the whole November 2025 Sewagemap.co.uk reported, using public information, that the waste water treatment facility at Cockermouth, Cumbria, was discharging sewage in to the River Derwent.

Therefore please provide details of the discharge of sewage from this facility including amounts of waste water each day, the number of hours of discharge every day, and reasons for the discharge.

Please also, if available, provide details of weather for each day in the area and recorded rainfall.

I've also note that on the same website, that the waste treatment outlet at Dubwath, Cumbria, appears to be currently discharging sewage into Bassenthwaite Lake. It has been doing so for several days despite there being minimal, if any, rain in the area.

Therefore please provide details of discharge into Bassenthwaite Lake from 28 January 2026 until the date of your response.

Include total amount of sewage discharge, dates, times and the reason for it.

I note your website says there is no emergency overflow discharge happening at this moment, so if you can explain the apparent contradiction in the data it would be appreciated.

Our response:

Please note that Cockermouth wastewater treatment works (WwTW) spill data for November 2025 is publicly available on [Storm overflow performance | United Utilities](#). To view this, on the 'download our data returns' drop down, select 'November 2025 EDM Data' and then filter the data by the site you are interested in. I have however attached a copy of the Dubwarth WwTW spill data in Appendix 1. This, along with all other spill data for January 2026 will be available on the storm overflow performance page in the coming weeks.

There is no requirement to measure volume of discharge under the environmental permits. We therefore do not hold this data and are unable to provide it in accordance with Regulation 12(4)(a) of

the EIR.

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. 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. There could also be some very short duration storm overflow discharges that may be symptomatic of a full drainage system in drain-down.

As explained in our previous email dated 3 February 2026, I checked the United Utilities [Storm overflow map | United Utilities - Better Rivers](#), and could see that Embleton WwTW storm tank overflow was discharging had been since 17:28 on Wednesday 28 January 2026. This is in line with the information shown on the sewagemap.co.uk website. I hope this clears up any possible contradictions.

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.



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Many thanks



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.