



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-729
Date: 09/03/2026
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:

Over the past few months hundreds of circular "ponds" have been dug across the top of Winter Hill, near Bolton, and on The Flats on the hill's northern flank. Can you please tell me what they are for and what the long-term aim is for them?

Our response:

The work you have noticed on Winter Hill is work United Utilities is undertaking to restore the habitat on its land on the north side of Winter Hill. This work will be delivered over a number of years. The primary aim is to improve the condition of the habitats on the land, which is designated a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and in particular the areas of deep peat, also known as blanket bog. A key challenge with blanket bog is that over years it has been drained and dried out and so a core requirement is to re-wet this land. This work also has additional benefits for things like water quality, carbon capture, natural flood management and reducing the risk of wildfire.

This is something we are working on with the wildlife and nature regulator, Natural England, as well as number of other stakeholders.

The work aims to restore the hydrology by using a range of techniques. The most obvious of these is the bunding, or ponds, that can be seen on the flatter areas of the hill, where the peat is deepest. Traditionally peat restoration works have focused on areas where peat is eroding heavily, creating gullies, but bunding aims to try and keep as much water near the surface for as long as possible on areas where the peat mass is intact but relatively dry. This surface re-wetting creates a range of niches for different species of sphagnum moss, one of the keystone species for the health of blanket bog. The re-wetting also reduces the dominance of the purple moor grass that can be found across this area of ground. This grass produces large volumes of growth which is unpalatable to grazing animals, and which in winter dies off, leaving large volumes of potentially flammable material.

We will continue to work to restore the habitat on winter hill over the next few years and ultimately, we would expect this work to support the re-establishment of the key vegetation that should naturally be occurring in this habitat.

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



Water for the North West

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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



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.