

United Utilities Water

Drainage and Wastewater Management Plan 2028

Annual Progress Report

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Disclaimer

Cautionary statement: This document provides an update on progress towards producing the Drainage and Wastewater Management Plan (DWMP). The updates provided within this document reflect knowledge and information available at the date of preparation and may be subject to change.

1. Purpose

The purpose of this document is to provide an overview of our approach to developing the Drainage and Wastewater Management Plan 2028 (DWMP28) for the North West. The document provides a high-level overview of the aims of the DWMP and how the plan will be developed. The later sections introduce our Annual Progress Report, including details about what is included within the accompanying data table 'UW DWMP Annual Progress Report Data Table 2025'.

Following the commencement of section 79 of the Environment Act 2021, it is a statutory requirement under section 94A of the Water Industry Act 1991 for sewerage undertakers to prepare, publish and maintain a Drainage and Wastewater Management Plan (DWMP). In May 2025 Defra published guidelines¹ for developing a DWMP.

The outputs from DWMP28 will underpin our business plan for AMP9 (2030-2035), as well as providing a 25-year view to 2055. It should be noted that at the time of publication of this document, UK Government has yet to confirm in full which recommendations made by the Independent Water Commission it will be adopting. Future Annual Progress Reports will reflect the impact of any relevant adopted recommendations.

2. Creating a stronger, greener and healthier North West

We love the North West and we're proud to serve its towns, cities and beautiful landscapes. The North West is a diverse region, benefiting from a range of different natural and social environments, having some of the most remote and rural communities in England as well as some of its greatest cities.

Our purpose is to create a **stronger**, **greener** and **healthier** North West for all (Figure 1). Customer and stakeholder priorities are at the heart of what we do, and we listen to their views on what we should deliver and how we should deliver it, using this insight to inform decision making.

In October 2023, we published our Price Review 24 (PR24) business plan for the five-year period covering 2025-2030 (also referred to as AMP8). With over £13.7 billion of water and wastewater infrastructure investment in the North West, our ambitious business plan is focussed at delivering improved services for customers and the environment within each of the five counties in the North West: Cumbria, Lancashire, Greater Manchester, Merseyside and Cheshire.

Figure 1 Overview of United Utilities' purpose to create a stronger, greener and healthier North West



¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidelines-for-statutory-drainage-and-wastewater-management-plans-dwmps>

Each July, we issue an [Annual Performance Report](#) which describes our progress against the commitments we make in our five yearly Business Plan to deliver customer service and environmental improvements across the North West.

In the next five years, we will deliver the largest investment in the region's water and sewerage infrastructure in over 100 years. Figure 2 highlights some examples of what we will deliver to ensure that the North West thrives now and long into the future.

You can read more about our plan on our corporate website (<https://pr24.unitedutilities.com/>).

Figure 2 Overview of our commitments to create a stronger, greener and healthier North West.



Between 2025 and 2030 we will publish regular updates on our progress of delivering this investment, the first of which can be found in our [August 2025 Delivery Plan](#).

2.1 Purpose of the Drainage and Wastewater Management Plan (DWMP)

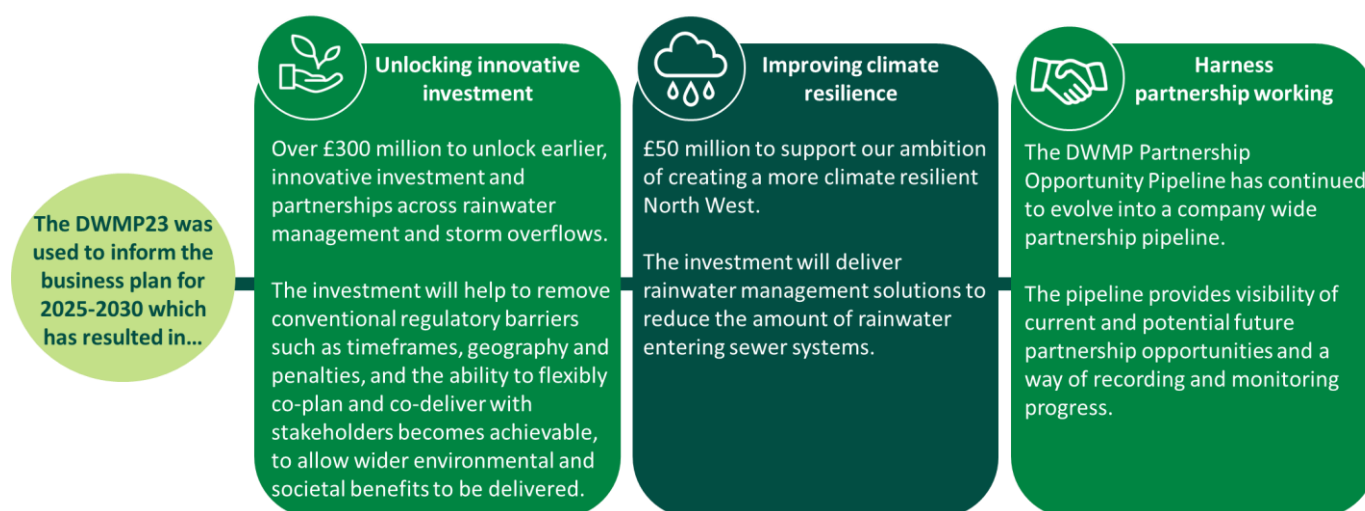
Our PR24 business plan set out our investment for the next five years. It is additionally important that we plan further into the future to anticipate the investment needs required to deliver a great service and provide affordable and resilient services in the long-term. For wastewater, we will do this through our Drainage and Wastewater Management Plan (DWMP).

The DWMP is a long-term, 25-year strategic plan that sets out how we will ensure that the needs of the environment, customers and communities are met now and in the future. We published our first iteration of the DWMP in May 2023 (referred to as DWMP23) which was well received amongst stakeholders, customers and regulators and this plan supported our PR24 Business Plan submission. You can read our DWMP23 on our corporate website (<https://www.unitedutilities.com/corporate/about-us/our-future-plans/Our-long-term-plans/dwmp-publication-may-2023/>).

The evidence from DWMP23, which underpins our PR24 business plan, is gathered from a combination of detailed modelling tools to understand future risks within the North West due to growth and climate change. We undertook this work as part of DWMP23 and used it to develop the evidence base for our 2025-2030 business plan. The plan focuses on delivering Best Value for customers.

The DWMP23 also marked a step-change towards embracing blue-green infrastructure such as sustainable drainage systems at scale to provide multiple benefits across the region, as highlighted in Figure 3 below. We're proud of what we achieved with the support of our stakeholders during the development of the plan. We recognise that moving away from traditional grey engineering solutions, such as storage tanks, towards more innovative and sustainable solutions, will take time however we are committed to delivering improved services for customers, the environment and our communities.

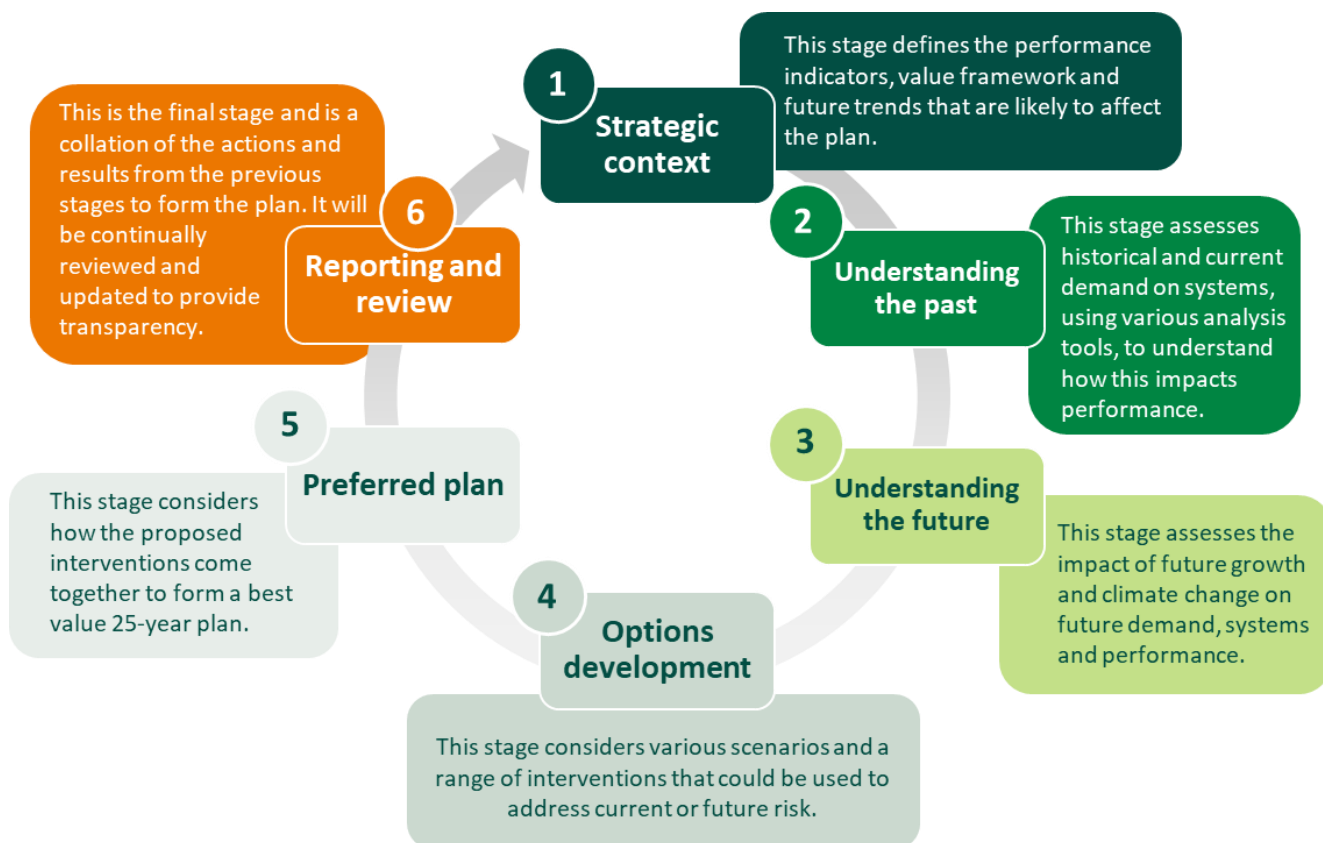
Figure 3 Summary of the successes that the DWMP helped to unlock as part of our business plan for 2025-2030 (AMP8)



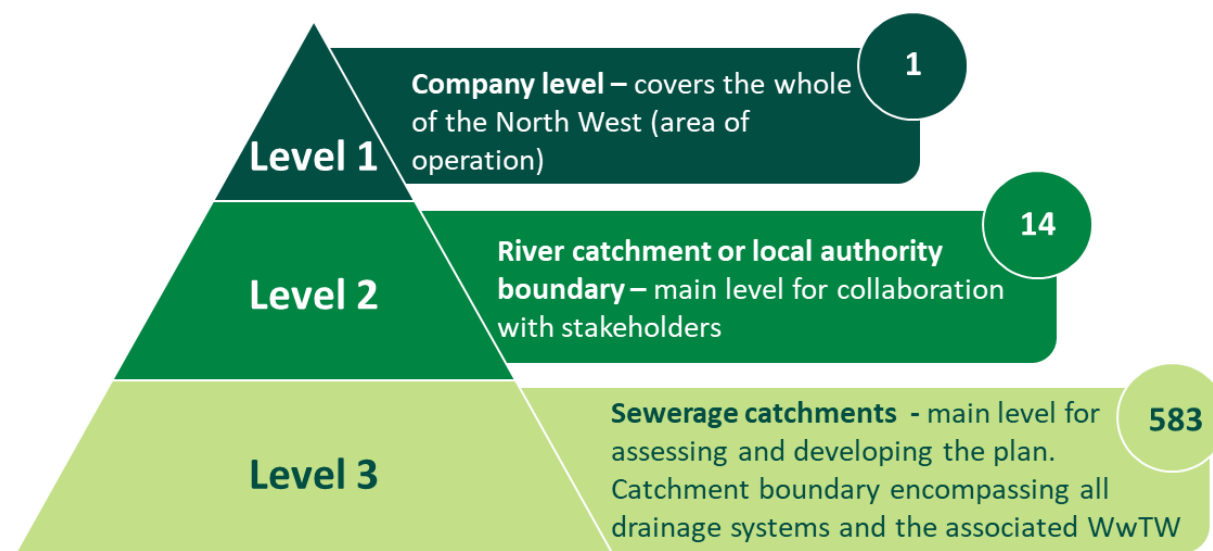
We are now starting development of DWMP28 ahead of draft publication in November 2027 which will be followed by a public consultation on the plan. We are committed to building on the knowledge gained from the DWMP23 and our PR24 business plan, to maximise its value in supporting the long-term needs of our region.

The heart of the DWMP28 plan will be built around collaborative and innovative working whilst encompassing all activities relating to drainage, flooding and protecting the environment. In developing this plan, we will be working closely with other organisations, such as the Environment Agency and local authorities to ensure our plan is robust, fit for purpose, and incorporates the needs of our key stakeholders and customers.

There are six stages that we follow to develop the DWMP, shown below in Figure 4. Stakeholder and customer engagement will flow continuously throughout the development of the plan to ensure that we are constantly listening and implementing others' views into our DWMP.

Figure 4 Stages of the DWMP process

Additionally, the plan will adopt three geographical levels, shown below in Figure 5, which maximise the potential for partnership working and for effective engagement between regulators and stakeholders at both company-wide level and more locally.

Figure 5 Geographical levels of the DWMP

3. DWMP Annual Progress Report

The different stages that are followed in producing a DWMP are summarised in Figure 4, and our annual progress reports will enable transparency throughout the process and keep track of activity between now and when we publish our draft DWMP28 in November 2027.

In alignment with the DWMP guidance, our progress report is in the form of a data table and summarises the following information:

At a North West company level (Level 1):

- percentage of the total population covered by each stage of the plan; and
- percentage of the total population covered by a plan delivered in the last five years.

At a wastewater drainage catchment level (Level 3):

- catchment name;
- current and forecast population;
- whether a detailed planning study is required;
- whether a water quality impact study is planned;
- date of most recent revision of the full plan including dates from earlier DWMPs;
- date of most recent revision of the short-term plan including dates from earlier DWMPs;
- whether a revision is required due to performance or trend changes; and
- the current stage of study.

The following sections provide a high-level overview of what the metrics mean and where we are up to. These should be read alongside the Annual Progress Report. You can also read our detailed Annual Progress Report in Appendix A.

Table 1 explains some of the terminology we have used within the Annual Progress Report.

Table 1 Table of definitions

Defra DWMP Metric	UWU definition
The below metrics are applicable at the North West company level (Level 1)	
Level 1 catchment name	This is the North West region that UWU serves.
Population served by each stage of the DWMP28 (planned)	This is the domestic and tourist population served in each stage of the current DWMP process, expressed as a percentage.
Population served by the stage delivered in the last 5 years	This is the domestic and tourist population served in each stage of the DWMP process as part of the May 2023 publication, expressed as a percentage.
The below metrics are applicable for every wastewater drainage catchment (Level 3)	
County name	There are five counties that make up the North West, these are Cumbria, Lancashire, Greater Manchester, Merseyside and Cheshire.
Level 2 catchment name	These are the 14 river basin catchments within the North West.
Level 3 catchment name	These are our wastewater drainage catchments that encompass all drainage and sewerage systems in the local area. We currently have 583 across the North West.

Defra DWMP Metric	UW definition
Current population	This refers to the current estimated population equivalent served within each of the level 3 drainage areas. The population equivalent value is the sum of the current estimated domestic plus tourist population, plus the calculated trade population equivalent, in 2025.
Forecast population	<p>This refers to the future estimated population equivalent served within each of the level 3 drainage areas in the year 2050 (as per Cycle 1 DWMP forecasts, produced in 2020). It is the sum of the domestic and tourist populations, plus trade discharges. The estimated future domestic population is based on local authority housing plans and data provided by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) long-term annual growth, to the year 2050.</p> <p>It also incorporates projected growth forecasts for tourist population. This information is provided by an external company, Edge Analytics, to United Utilities. The 2050 figure is expressed as a percentage change compared to the current population equivalent (2025).</p> <p>The population forecasts are currently being updated. Future DWMP Annual Progress Reports will report to 2055.</p>
Whether a detailed planning study is required	Whether the wastewater drainage catchment has been identified as a priority area for further understanding or action during our risk assessment stages of the plan.
Whether a water quality impact study is required	Whether a water quality impact study is required as part of the AMP8 Water Industry National Environment Programme (WINEP). This includes investigations specifically attributed to wastewater treatment works and assets, that are being undertaken as part of WINEP, that we believe will have an output that may impact water quality.
Date of most recent revision of the full plan including dates from earlier cycles	Last publication date of the DWMP which was in May 2023. Any catchments marked as N/A were not included in the DWMP23.
Date of most recent revision of the short-term plan including dates from earlier cycles	Last publication of our business plan which was in October 2023.
Revision required due to performance or trend changes	A revision may be required where there have been changes that could significantly impact the plan such as updates to climate change, growth forecasts or regulatory requirements.
Current stage of study	Which stage of the DWMP process we are currently undertaking. The various stages are listed in Figure 7.

3.1 Where are we up to?

In AMP8 (2025-2030) we will deliver our biggest environmental programme to date, and we will be doing this in new ways, seeking to promote more hybrid delivery combining natural solutions with conventional asset-based improvements to achieve the best outcomes for people and the environment.

The Water Industry National Environment Programme (WINEP) is developed in collaboration with the Environment Agency and Natural England to ensure that water companies are developing action plans to protect and improve the environment. Our AMP8 WINEP includes over two thousand individual actions, investing over £4billion to enhance and protect the environment in AMP8. This is a significant increase from previous AMPs. Actions include:

- spill reduction at 449 storm overflows;
- 888 investigation drivers (the majority of which, 767, are at storm overflows), including investigations in 3 strategic catchments, Merseyside, Irwell and Davyhulme;
- installing continuous water quality monitors at 633 sites; and
- monitoring 475 emergency overflows.

Since the start of AMP8 in April 2025, we have already been making a difference to the local environment, customers and communities as highlighted in Figure 6.

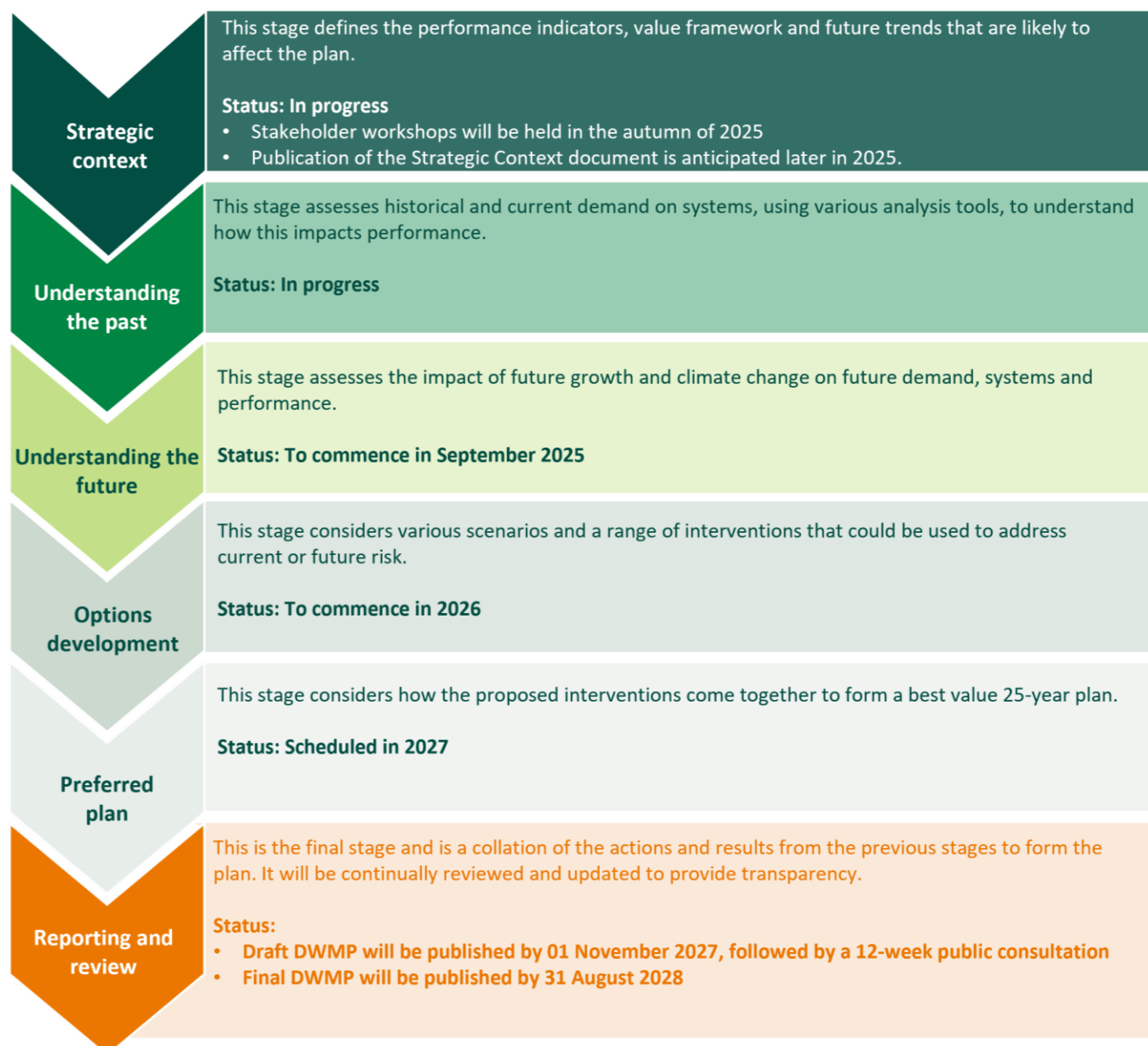
Figure 6 Benefits that have been delivered since the start of AMP8



The full wastewater WINEP programme for AMP8 has now been mobilised, and our delivery teams are working to identify best value solutions that will meet our environmental drivers. We have a number of wastewater WINEP schemes that are now on-site and will be delivered within the next 12 months; some of these schemes have been brought forward, delivering environmental benefit earlier than planned. Between 2025 and 2030 we will publish regular updates on our progress of delivering this investment, the first of which can be found in our [August 2025 Delivery Plan](#).

With regards to the development towards the DWMP28, this is a step-by-step process and Figure 7 summarises our progress to date. We are currently in the first two stages of the process, strategic context and understanding the past, which will help to build the foundations of our plan, before moving onto the next stages of the process in due course. We will provide updates on how we are progressing across the stages of the DWMP process over the coming years in future Annual Progress Reports.

Figure 7 DWMP progress bar



3.1.1 Strategic Context

We are currently developing the strategic context component of the DWMP28 which is the first stage of the process. This stage is centred around defining our long-term vision and ambition for the North West, and is comprised of three key areas:

- defining our performance indicators that will allow us to assess current and future performance of drainage and wastewater systems, such as flooding and pollution;
- identifying future trends that could affect drainage and wastewater systems, for example climate change and population growth; and
- defining the value framework that will be used to assess the cost benefit of investment.

In the autumn of 2025, workshops will be held for our stakeholders to enable them to engage and inform our strategic context and the wider ambitions of the DWMP. We will be sharing the outcome of this stage in the form of our strategic context document which we aim to publish on our website later in 2025.

3.1.2 Understanding the past

This is the second stage of the DWMP process, and it allows us to understand the historic performance of drainage and wastewater systems and their assets. This will enable us to have a robust view of the present day in order to identify any priority areas, to understand how the risks and opportunities may change in the future when we progress onto stage 3, where we assess the impacts of growth and climate change.

This stage will assess all aspects of drainage and wastewater systems within United Utilities' control. As we move into stage 3, 'understanding the future', we will have the opportunity collectively with stakeholders to address shared responsibilities.

4. What's next?

As highlighted above, we are currently developing the strategic context and 'Understanding the past' components of the DWMP28. Over the next coming months, we will be working alongside our stakeholders and customers to understand what we want the future of the North West to look like, and how we can continue to plan to get there together. We will share this as part of our strategic context document later in 2025.

We are also revisiting our population forecasts and climate change assumptions that will underpin the development of the DWMP.

In July 2025, the Independent Water Commission published their final report² setting out a range of recommendations for reform to improve the water sector regulatory system in England and Wales. As we continue to develop the DWMP, we will ensure alignment with any relevant policy changes that may be implemented. We all have a part to play in the future of our region to ensure that we are doing the right thing for both the environment and the communities that surround us.

Get in touch at:

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Appendix A

Refer to Appendix A – UUW DWMP Annual Progress Report Data Table 2025.

² <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/independent-water-commission-review-of-the-water-sector>

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