

# United Utilities Water National Estate for Nature: Estate Management Plans April 2026



## Water and the natural environment sit at the heart of United Utilities' purpose and strategy.



As custodians of water and wastewater services across the North West, we recognise that the health of rivers, landscapes and habitats is inseparable from the wellbeing of the communities we serve. Nature underpins the essential services we all rely on, from clean water and healthy soils to resilient landscapes and thriving wildlife. This understanding shapes every aspect of our approach, from how we manage our assets to how we invest for the future. Our Environmental Policy reflects a clear and enduring commitment from our Board, colleagues and supply chain partners to protect and enhance the environment, helping to deliver a greener, more resilient North West for both current and future generations.

We are committed to doing the right thing by the environment, not simply through compliance, but through leadership and long-term stewardship. We have identified our impacts and dependencies on nature and set clear, measurable environmental targets, reporting transparently on performance to ensure accountability and continuous improvement. Across our land and operations, we actively deliver a wide range of ecosystem services, including protecting water quality, reducing flood and drought risk, supporting climate regulation, improving air quality and enhancing biodiversity. At the same time, we are creating safe, accessible spaces that enable people to connect with nature, recognising the vital role this plays in health, wellbeing and community resilience.



Across our estate, we are enhancing habitats, restoring degraded landscapes and investing in nature-based solutions that improve water quality, store carbon and boost biodiversity. This includes large-scale peatland and woodland restoration, river catchment improvements and species recovery work, all of which help reduce pressures on ecosystems while strengthening the natural assets we depend on. Through this investment, we are delivering nature-positive outcomes that support both environmental and operational resilience over the long term.

Partnership working is fundamental to how we deliver environmental outcomes. Through integrated water management, we collaborate closely with regulators, communities, land managers and supply chain partners to address shared challenges in a coordinated and holistic way. We believe meaningful environmental progress is achieved through openness, collaboration and shared ambition, and we are committed to working transparently with stakeholders to deliver practical action on the ground.



We are equally focused on ensuring that our ambitions are delivered in practice. We meet and exceed environmental regulations while embedding environmental considerations into decision-making across our organisation. Our approach prioritises catchment-based and nature-based solutions wherever possible, recognising their long-term value for both the environment and society. We continuously improve through a robust Environmental Management System, supported by clear monitoring, reporting and governance through our ESG Leadership Group and Committee.

We are also taking decisive action to protect and sustain the resources and systems we rely on. We are driving down leakage, promoting water efficiency and delivering sustainable abstraction to safeguard water supplies. Our net zero commitments, aligned with science-based targets, are accelerating the transition to low-carbon operations while increasing renewable energy generation. At the same time, we are investing in healthier ecosystems across land, water and air, supporting nature recovery, sustainable land management and biodiversity gain at scale.

Innovation and forward thinking underpin our approach. We actively invest in research, new technologies and best practice, while identifying emerging environmental challenges early and responding proactively. We work collaboratively to remove barriers to the wider adoption of nature-based solutions, ensuring environmental enhancement is embedded not only within our organisation, but across the wider system in which we operate. We also lead the Ofwat Innovation project Mainstreaming Nature Based solutions.

Through sustained investment in nature and a commitment to long-term stewardship, United Utilities is playing a leading role in delivering environmental improvement and nature recovery at scale, ensuring that our land, water and communities are resilient, thriving and sustainable for generations to come.



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# Our nature pledges



Reflecting on our growing understanding of the impacts and dependencies we have with nature, we have developed a set of nature pledges (baselined to 2020) that align closely with leading national and global frameworks. Progress towards our nature pledges will be published on our website and in our Taskforce on Nature-related Financial Disclosures (TNFD) publication within our 2026 Integrated Annual Report.

United Utilities Annual Report



**By 2030, we will exceed the government target and manage at least 30% of our land for nature**



**We will plant one million trees by 2030 to create 550 million hectares of woodland**



**We will protect and enhance 1,800km of rivers by 2030**



**7,000 hectares of peatland will be under Restoration by 2030**

# Our estate management plans



United Utilities owns and manages over 56,000 hectares of land across the North West, making us one of the largest and most diverse corporate landowners in the UK. Our estate spans some of the country's most iconic landscapes, from the rugged peaks and moorlands of Derbyshire and the rolling uplands of the Forest of Bowland to the lakes, fells and ancient woodlands of the Lake District. These landscapes are not only nationally significant in their beauty, but fundamental to the services we provide, supplying clean, fresh water to millions of customers while supporting rich and varied ecosystems.

Across our landholding, a diverse range of habitats underpin critical environmental functions. Peat-rich uplands store carbon and regulate water, helping to reduce flood and drought risk. Valleys support wetlands, rivers and species-rich meadows, while woodlands stabilise soils, capture carbon and provide vital habitats for wildlife. Our reservoirs are set within these natural systems, supporting biodiversity, recreation and local communities, while playing a central role in water supply resilience.

Our estate also supports a wide range of land uses, including farming, commercial forestry and major visitor destinations, all of which contribute to regional economies and community wellbeing. We take our role as custodians seriously, actively restoring habitats, improving water quality, tackling invasive species and managing land in a way that protects and enhances it for the long term.

To ensure we are making the right decisions across such a large and varied estate, we are undertaking a comprehensive land optimisation process. This includes a detailed assessment of risks and opportunities across every parcel of land and will result in over 30 Estate Management Plans, covering our full landholding by 2027. This process is central to ensuring that each area of land is managed to deliver the greatest possible value, with a strong focus on identifying where land can be enhanced for nature, climate resilience and wider environmental benefit.

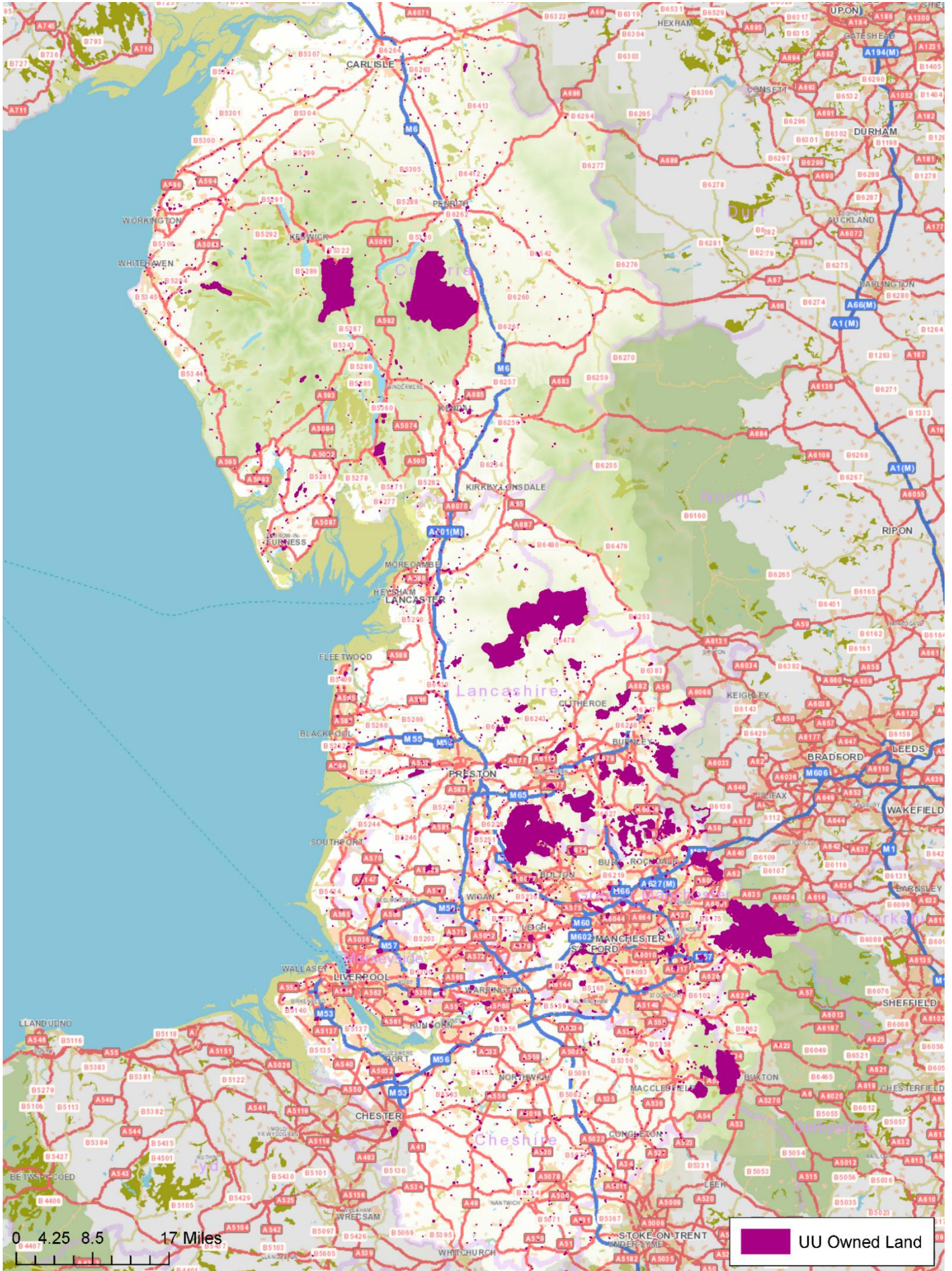
Alongside this, we are working collaboratively at a national level to support nature recovery. In 2025, we joined the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs' National Estate for Nature group, alongside other major UK landowners. This initiative supports delivery of the Environment Act targets, including the commitment to protect 30% of land for nature by 2030. As part of this work, we have assessed our estate against key delivery actions across five land use types.



Our analysis shows that 22,523 hectares of our estate already fall within the 'wildlife-rich' category, demonstrating the significant contribution our landholding already makes to nature recovery. The remainder of our estate has been categorised based on its primary land use, using a structured and consistent methodology to ensure full coverage. This provides a clear baseline from which we can track progress and target future improvements.

Through this combination of large-scale land stewardship, detailed planning and national collaboration, we are ensuring that our estate continues to provide essential services, support biodiversity and deliver lasting environmental value, while maintaining its role at the heart of the North West's natural and social infrastructure.

# Our estate management plans



# Case study | Pine Marten: the return



United Utilities manages tens of thousands of hectares of land across the uplands of northern England, including extensive areas of woodland, moorland edge, river valleys and remote upland habitats. These landscapes provide the key features required by the Pine Marten, including:

- Extensive woodland cover
- Rough terrain, crags and fallen trees
- Low levels of human disturbance
- Strong habitat connectivity, enabling individuals to move widely and link isolated populations

Pine Martens have now been recorded in parts of the United Utilities estate, particularly within and around large areas of semi-natural woodland and restored catchment landscapes. The Thirlmere estate is increasingly believed to function as a developing migration corridor, supporting the gradual spread of the species across the wider landscape.

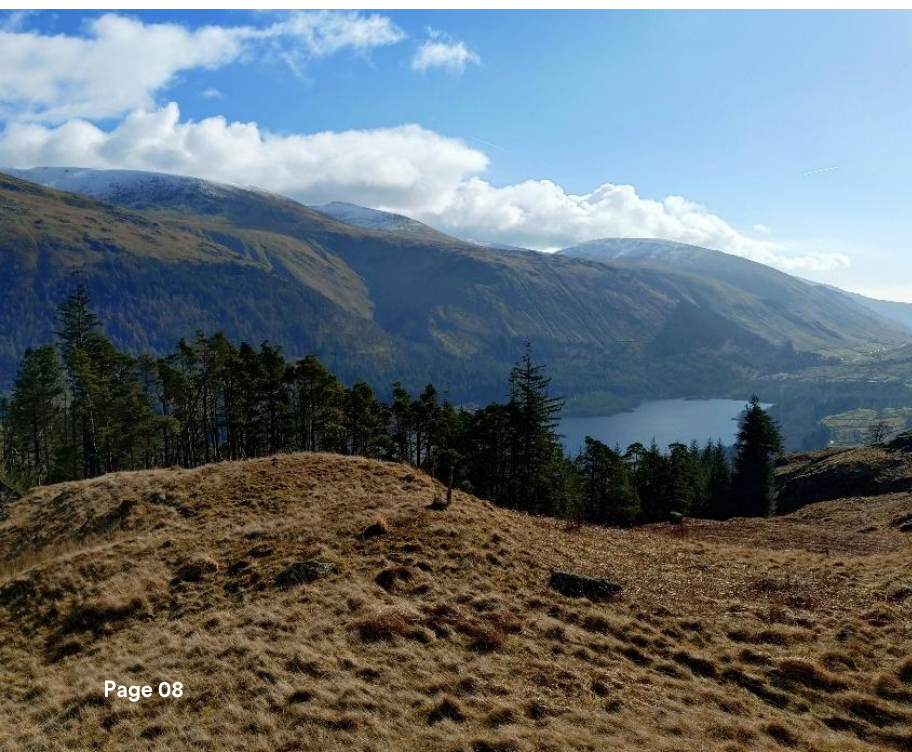
Ongoing restoration work across the estate, including woodland creation, woodland enhancement and peatland recovery, is expected to further strengthen habitat suitability and connectivity, helping to establish a more robust and resilient population.



Pine Martens are fully protected under UK law, making sensitive and informed land management essential. United Utilities' approach, which prioritises long-term habitat health, water quality and biodiversity, aligns closely with the ecological requirements of the species. Maintaining deadwood, veteran trees and structurally diverse woodland is particularly important, as these features provide critical resting and breeding sites not only for Pine Martens but for a wide range of woodland wildlife.

Due to their elusive nature, Pine Martens are rarely seen. Their presence is typically confirmed through remote camera monitoring, field signs such as footprints, and characteristic droppings, underlining the importance of continued monitoring and partnership working.

As woodlands mature and peatlands and river corridors continue to recover, the United Utilities estate has the potential to become a significant stronghold for Pine Martens in northern England. Protecting and enhancing these landscapes will not only support the recovery of this iconic species but also deliver wider benefits for biodiversity, water resilience and climate adaptation.



# Case study | Dovestone



Set within the dramatic landscape of the Peak District National Park, our Dovestone estate is a flagship site for nature recovery in the UK. Managed in partnership with the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, the reserve demonstrates how large-scale ecological restoration can deliver multiple benefits, strengthening climate resilience, improving water quality and enhancing community wellbeing. The site includes internationally important blanket bogs, upland moorland, woodland and reservoirs, providing vital habitat for species such as curlew and mountain hare.

Over the past two decades, Dovestone has evolved into a leading example of landscape-scale restoration, combining peatland recovery, biodiversity enhancement and meaningful public engagement. Central to this work has been the restoration of extensive areas of degraded blanket bog. These peatlands, which developed over thousands of years, were significantly damaged during the Industrial Revolution through air pollution and acid rain, which degraded sphagnum moss and other key plant species. This was compounded by historic overgrazing and burning, further reducing the bog's ability to store carbon, regulate water and support wildlife.

Recognising both the environmental importance of these habitats and the scale of degradation, a long-term restoration programme was initiated in 2007. Since then, Dovestone has become a nationally significant example of how degraded upland landscapes can be restored to functioning ecosystems, delivering lasting benefits for nature, climate and people.

## Historical issue

- Historic erosion has left large areas of peatland at Dovestone deeply dissected by extensive gully systems, which actively drain water from the bog. As the peat dries, it becomes increasingly unstable and vulnerable to further erosion, driving a cycle of ongoing habitat degradation, reduced carbon storage and increased carbon loss.
- Large areas of Dovestone were historically left devoid of vegetation, resulting in extensive stretches of exposed bare peat. This highly degraded surface was extremely vulnerable to erosion from wind and water and unable to support essential peatland functions such as carbon storage, water retention and habitat provision.
- Degraded and dried peatlands are highly vulnerable to wildfire, which can cause severe and long-lasting damage to peat soils, vegetation and wildlife. At Dovestone, historic drainage and the loss of protective vegetation significantly increased both the likelihood of fire and its potential severity.



# Case study | Dovestone



## Restoration work

- To address this, extensive gully blocking has been carried out across the site using leaky dams. Rather than stopping water flow entirely, these structures slow the movement of water through the peatland. This helps to retain water within the system, raising local water tables, encouraging sediment deposition and re-wetting the surrounding peat. Over time, this supports the recovery of peat-forming processes, creating a wetter, more stable and resilient bog system.
- Working in partnership, United Utilities has undertaken extensive planting and seeding of key moorland restoration species, including sphagnum mosses and cotton grasses. At Dovestone alone, over 1.5 million sphagnum plants have been established, playing a critical role in re-vegetating bare peat and restoring the bog's natural ability to retain water, store carbon and support wildlife.
- By combining leaky dam installation with moorland restoration planting, pools and wet features have been created across the bog surface. These wetter conditions help to lower surface temperatures, increase humidity and significantly reduce the risk of peat ignition. A well-wetted bog is also far less likely to sustain deep, smouldering fires, making the landscape more resilient to wildfire and the impacts of a changing climate.



We have several more case studies which we are happy to share.



NEN category (UU definition)	Hectares in UU land ownership in 2026
Wildlife-rich habitat <sup>1</sup>	22,523
Farmed land	23,280
Commercial forestry	5,240
Water	295km
Urban areas	5,328

<sup>1</sup> Defined to only include areas which benefit from a statutory nature designation (Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), Special Area of Conservation (SAC), Special Protection Area (SPA), Ramsar Site, Local Nature Reserve (LNR) and National Nature Reserve (NNR).

## SSSI information on United Utilities land holding

Statutory designations	Area (ha)	% of UU estate
Total area of SSSI	22,522	40%
Area of RAMSAR	1	0%
Area of Special Area of Conservation	10,980	19%
Area of Special Protected Area for Birds	14,363	25%
Area within National Parks	25,635	45%
Area with Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty	11,192	20%





Name	Area (ha)	UU area (ha)	% of SSSI owned by UU
Appleby Fells SSSI	10693.0	<0.1	<0.1
Armbboth Fells SSSI	2347.3	821.2	35.0
Arnside Knott SSSI	167.9	0.1	<0.1
Blea Water SSSI	102.7	102.7	100.0
Bowland Fells SSSI	16007.8	5705.9	35.6
Browgill & Stockdale Becks SSSI	26.5	<0.1	<0.1
Buttermere Fells SSSI	6144.2	<0.1	<0.1
Coniston Mines and Quarries SSSI	127.9	1.4	1.1
Dark Peak SSSI	31823.8	5818.5	18.3
Darwen River Section SSSI	6.3	<0.1	<0.1
Drigg Coast SSSI	1400.0	<0.1	<0.1
Duddon Estuary SSSI	6785.9	1.2	<0.1
Ennerdale SSSI	338.5	301.5	89.1
Esthwaite Water SSSI	158.5	<0.1	<0.1
Ewefell Mire SSSI	32.2	<0.1	0.2
Geltsdale & Glendue Fells SSSI	8059.0	1.7	<0.1
Goyt Valley SSSI	1332.6	1032.1	77.5
Helvellyn & Fairfield SSSI	2488.6	13.4	0.5
Kirkby Moor – 1006121 SSSI	779.9	<0.1	<0.1
Leek Moors SSSI	3970.8	167.3	4.2
Ludderburn and Candlestick Mires SSSI	142.7	13.2	9.3
Ludworth Intake SSSI	5.3	<0.1	0.3
Lytham Coastal Changes SSSI	24.9	<0.1	0.1
Mersey Estuary SSSI	6714.5	<0.1	<0.1
Morecambe Bay SSSI	26043.0	<0.1	<0.1
Naddle Forest SSSI	518.6	513.3	99.0
Pan Beck Fen SSSI	2.5	<0.1	<0.1
Pillar and Ennerdale Fells SSSI	1499.0	<0.1	<0.1
Red Moss SSSI	46.7	0.7	1.6
River Dee (England) SSSI	362.0	0.5	0.1
River Derwent and Tributaries SSSI	1209.8	7.9	0.7
River Eden and Tributaries SSSI	2448.6	11.9	0.5
River Ehen (Ennerdale Water to Keekle Confluence) SSSI	23.8	3.5	14.8
River Kent and Tributaries SSSI	99.4	7.9	8.0
Scandal Beck and Stone Gill SSSI	11.8	0.2	2.1
Shap Fells SSSI	2143.9	1085.0	50.6
Skiddaw Group SSSI	10384.6	3.3	<0.1
South Pennine Moors SSSI	20944.4	1635.7	7.8
Subberthwaite, Blawith and Torver Low Commons SSSI	1863.0	<0.1	<0.1
Swindale Meadows SSSI	8.3	8.3	100.0
Thirlmere Woods SSSI	45.9	45.9	100.0
Upper Solway Flats & Marshes SSSI	12950.2	<0.1	<0.1
Wart Barrow SSSI	25.9	0.4	1.6
West Pennine Moors SSSI	7615.5	5211.8	68.4
Wet Sleddale Meadows SSSI	4.2	4.2	100.0
Whitbarrow SSSI	1179.4	0.1	<0.1
Wybunbury Moss SSSI	23.1	<0.1	<0.1
Wyre Estuary SSSI	1481.8	<0.1	<0.1



## **In line with the staged approach set out by Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs, this section assesses United Utilities' current position and future trajectory against the National Estate for Nature draft methodology from Defra.**

On the following pages we set out our position against each of the stages defined in Defra's most recent methodology. This provides a clear view of our current baseline and the direction of travel we have committed to as a business. We have highlighted in blue where we are today, and in yellow where we expect to be by 2030, based on programmes and projects that are already funded and underway.





# Wildlife-rich habitat

2026 position:  
22,523 ha

2026 position



2030 forecast

	Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3
<b>Creating and restoring new wildlife-rich habitat</b>	<p>LNRS are consulted to identify opportunities for creating/restoring wildlife-rich habitat on the estate, leading to development of specific projects for creation/restoration.</p> <p>LNRS-guided projects for creation/restoration will increase the total extent of wildlife-rich habitat to at least 20% of the area of the estate.</p>	<p>New wildlife-rich habitat is created/restored, informed by LNRS, with focus on expanding, buffering, joining up existing habitat.</p> <p>Habitat creation/restoration activities increase the total extent of wildlife-rich habitat to at least 50% of the area of the estate.</p>	<p>Large/r patches of continuous habitat (&gt;40ha), made up of a range of habitat types exist across the estate.</p> <p>Total extent of wildlife-rich habitat (including habitat being created/restored) exceeds 95% of the area of the estate.</p>
<b>Effectively managing new and existing wildlife-rich habitat</b>	<p>Wildlife-rich habitats and appropriate management are identified.</p> <p>LNRSs and other species recovery action plans are consulted to identify opportunities for managing habitat to support the recovery of threatened species.</p> <p>At least 50% of wildlife-rich habitats are managed appropriately according to best practice for their specific type, or are managed in a way that restores natural function and enables other wildlife-rich habitats to develop in a dynamic mosaic.</p>	<p>All wildlife-rich habitats are managed appropriately according to best practice for their specific type, or are managed to support specific recovery needs of threatened species, or are managed in a way that restores natural function and enables other wildlife-rich habitats to develop in a dynamic mosaic.</p>	<p>All wildlife-rich habitats reach and are maintained in 'good condition', whilst accepting habitats are dynamic and that extents and locations may change over time.</p> <p>Where habitats are impacted by offsite pressures, actions to address these are identified and implemented through partnership working. LNRSs, Protected Sites Strategies, and other relevant plans are used to support this process.</p>
<b>Securing long-term protections for new and existing wildlife-rich habitat</b>	<p>At least 50% of wildlife-rich habitat on the estate is protected by legal or other effective means (e.g. a Conservation Covenant) for at least 20 years.</p>	<p>At least 75% of wildlife-rich habitat on the estate is protected by legal or other effective means (e.g. a Conservation Covenant) for at least 20 years.</p>	<p>All wildlife-rich habitat on the estate is protected by legal or other effective means (e.g. a Conservation Covenant) for at least 20 years.</p>



# Farmed land

**2026 position:**  
**23,279.7 ha**

**2026 position**



**2030 forecast**

	Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3
<b>Monitoring</b>	Baselines audits of relevant factors are undertaken, and management plans are established to guide interventions.	Progress is regularly monitored using established protocols, and plans/interventions are reviewed according to results.	Progress and good practice are reported and shared externally.
<b>Nature-friendly farming<sup>2</sup></b> [ADD LINK]	Nature-friendly farming practices are implemented on >7% of the farmed land.	Nature-friendly farming practices are implemented on >10% of the farmed land.	Nature-friendly farming practices are implemented on >20% of the farmed land.
<b>Supporting species recovery</b>	One action is underway from each of the following resource categories: flowering nectar and pollen sources; winter seed sources; nesting and sheltering habitats; supporting habitats.  Local populations of threatened species and any special provisions needed to support their recovery are identified, using LNRSs and consulting local partners (e.g. NE).	More than two actions are underway from each of the following resource categories: flowering nectar and pollen sources; winter seed sources; nesting and sheltering habitats; and supporting habitats.  Any special provisions (additional to the above) needed to support the recovery of local threatened species are in place.	More than three actions are underway from each of the following resource categories: flowering nectar and pollen sources; winter seed sources; nesting and sheltering habitats; supporting habitats.
<b>Chemical use</b>	An Integrated Pest Management Plan is developed and implemented.		
<b>Spatial targeting</b>	Spatial patterns of land use/management change are consistent with LNRS.	There is increased connectivity and habitat patch size from changes in land use/management.	Partnership working is underway with adjacent landowners to spatially coordinate land management/use changes at the wider landscape scale.
<b>Nutrient management</b>	Nutrient management plan in place, demonstrating nutrient use in line with crop and soil need along with a water pollution risk map.	There is detailed nutrient planning, such as Nitrogen Use Efficiency (NUE), and whole-farm nutrient balances. This includes manure analysis.	Practices are introduced that help build natural fertility (e.g. clover in grass, green manures, legume fallow, etc.)
<b>Soil management</b>	Soil structure, soil organic matter, and earthworms are assessed.  The soil is kept covered and living roots are kept in the ground (e.g. cover crops or following crop).  Soil disturbance is limited.	Diversity of plants and crop rotations are increased.  Grass leys or herbal leys are introduced into the rotation, vegetated legume fallow is used, to improve soil organic matter, soil structure, and soil biology.	Arable: Arable land at high risk of erosion, run-off, and pollution is reverted to grass.  Grassland: intensity is reduced (e.g. reduced livestock density and artificial inputs).



# Commercial forestry

**2026 position:**  
5,239.7 ha

2026 position



2030 forecast

	Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3
<b>Planning</b>	Commercial forestry is mapped and a <a href="#">UK Forestry Standard</a> compliant management plan is in place.		Commercial forestry is considered in wider land use strategy, ensuring management enhances surrounding natural assets.
<b>Woodland creation</b>	A UKFS compliant woodland creation plan is created.  FC and NE advice is followed if considering planting on or near priority habitat.  Ancient woodland is protected and buffered using natural colonisation.	New productive woodland is created with no more than 50% of any one species, designed to ensure resilience from pests and disease.	New productive woodland is created using mixed planting and designed with site suitability as the building blocks for design. The woodland delivers multiple outcomes: long-term resilience, timber, nature recovery and carbon, and meets UKWAS criteria.
<b>Climate</b>	Woodland management plans take future climate scenarios into account, with a clear focus on climate related biotic and abiotic threats.	Management is being transitioned to deliver changes identified in woodland management plans which will include ensuring that the woodland is resilient and can support nature under future climate scenarios.	Woodlands are actively managed for future climate change scenarios, able to support nature today and in the future.
<b>Harvesting</b>	Management complies with UKFS for harvesting and restocking.	Low impact silviculture is used, which develops structural diversity such as CCF where possible. Where clear felling occurs, coupe size is minimised.	CCF is practiced where appropriate, minimising damage to understory and track-side habitats during forestry operations.
<b>PAWS restoration</b>	All PAWS on the estate are identified. Remnant features and their appropriate management are identified.	All PAWS are in active restoration, with effective management to improve and protect remnant features in line with <a href="#">Best Practice Guidance for Ancient and Native Woodland</a> .	All PAWS are actively managed on a trajectory to full restoration.
<b>Deer management</b>	Deer management plan (DMP) is in place.	Deer management activity is achieving the objectives set out in the DMP.	Deer management objectives are ensuring that deer from the estate do not have a negative impact on nature assets in the wider landscape and that the estate contributes to wider landscape management objectives (DMGs, etc.).



# Commercial forestry

2026 position:  
5,239.7 ha

2026 position



2030 forecast

	Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3
<b>Open habitat restoration</b>	Priority open habitats are identified and mapped.	Woodland management plans include restoration of all <b>designated</b> open habitats and those areas hydrologically linked to <b>designated</b> sites.	Restoration of all designated priority open habitats and those sites hydrologically linked to designated sites is underway, <b>unless</b> there is clear evidence that under future climatic scenarios those open habitats are unsustainable
<b>Woodland Condition Monitoring</b>	A Woodland Condition Assessment Programme is instigated, using the FC woodland condition assessment tool.	60% of woodland management units achieve a condition score to be confirmed by Defra in final guidance.	80% of woodland management units achieve a condition score to be confirmed by Defra in final guidance.
<b>Chemical use</b>	Use of chemicals follows strict adherence to both the requirements and spirit of UKFS.	Chemical reduction strategy is developed following FR guidance.	Woodlands are managed in line with the chemical reduction strategy.
<b>Drainage</b>	Drainage under commercial forestry is assessed.  Management plans include actions to bring all drainage into compliance with UKFS forest and water guidelines.	All forestry drains / drainage are compliant with UKFS and space for soakaways, etc., are integrated into woodland design.  Opportunities are taken to enhance water storage on site where this is consistent with good silvicultural practice.	Management plans consider how forestry can contribute to wider hydrological function and action is underway to ensure this.



# Water

2026 position:  
295km

2026 position



2030 forecast

	Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3
<p><b>Baselining and regulatory compliance</b></p>	<p>Water bodies are identified and mapped.</p> <p><b>Water quality:</b> The estate complies with Farming Rules for Water and develops nutrient management plans that significantly reduce any pollution from the estate.</p> <p><b>Water resources:</b> The estate understands the major sources of water use on their land and considers an efficiency plan.</p>	<p>Water quality, hydrology, ecological status are assessed.</p> <p>The estate implements nutrient management plan and contributes towards delivery.</p>	<p>Estate contributes to catchment-scale planning.</p> <p>Reductions in nutrient runoff are demonstrated and the estate catchment-scale water quality improvements.</p>
<p><b>Creating/restoring fringing, transitional, and riparian habitat</b></p> <p><i>Establish/maintain at least 20m wide riparian marginal habitat around all waterbody types and restore mire/headwater transitional habitat.</i></p>	<p>Applied across at least 50% of the water bodies on an estate.</p>	<p>Applied across at least 70% of the water bodies on an estate.</p>	<p>Applied across at least 80% of the water bodies on an estate.</p>
<p><b>Addressing physical modifications</b></p> <p><i>Remove/have no physical modifications at waterbody margins to reactivate floodplain and enable natural flood regimes.</i></p> <p><i>Remove/have no artificial in-water structures interfering with physical habitat form and function, natural hydrological regimes, and biological movements from source to sea.</i></p>	<p>Applied across 25% of the water bodies on an estate.</p>	<p>Applied across 35% of the water bodies on an estate.</p>	<p>Applied across 50% of the water bodies on an estate.</p>



# Water

2026 position:  
295km

2026 position



2030 forecast

	Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3
<p><b>Protect and restore native freshwater biodiversity</b></p> <p><i>Ensure water bodies are managed appropriately to support native aquatic plant and invertebrate assemblages.</i></p> <p><i>Restore/maintain balanced mixed fish assemblages. Do not stock, and remove previously stocked non-native fish species.</i></p>	<p>Applied across 60% of the water bodies on an estate.</p> <p>A fisheries management plan is developed.</p>	<p>Applied across 75% of the water bodies on an estate.</p> <p>The fisheries management plan is implemented.</p>	<p>Applied across 90% of the water bodies on an estate.</p> <p>A native balanced mixed fish assemblage is maintained.</p>
<p><b>Natural mitigation of flood and erosion risks in freshwaters and coastal areas</b></p>	<p>Flood risk areas in floodplains are identified.</p> <p>Areas of coastal tidal flooding and increasing salinity are identified.</p> <p>Areas of erosional risk are identified.</p> <p>Practices that artificially increase runoff or erosion are avoided.</p>	<p>Natural Flood Management (NFM) measures are implemented in line with the <a href="#">NFM manual</a>.</p> <p>Adaptation plans are developed and, where possible, implementation is underway.</p> <p>Revegetate areas of erosion risk as appropriate and ensure management does not increase erosion or runoff.</p>	<p>Catchment-scale flood resilience improvements are monitored.</p> <p>The estate ensures that NFM also considers appropriate attenuation and recharge opportunities.</p> <p>The estate ensures that other estate action in appropriate erosion risk areas is designed to aid reduction of sediment erosion risk.</p>
<p><b>Managing water-dependent wetlands, peatlands, and ponds</b></p>	<p>Water supply is assessed.</p> <p>Sites have appropriate buffers/transitional habitat.</p> <p>Damaging activities, such as drainage, infill, burning, and overgrazing are avoided.</p>	<p>Peatland restoration is underway across at least 60% of the estate's peat resource.</p> <p>There is good water quality and water supply, and buffers and margins are effectively managed.</p>	<p>Where previously impacted, wetlands and peatlands should have hydrological restoration.</p> <p>At least 95% of the estate's peatland/wetland resource is appropriately managed to ensure carbon, flood, and biodiversity outcomes.</p> <p>Existing ponds are maintained, and in all but the most pond-dense landscapes more ponds are created where they will receive clean water.</p>



# Urban areas

2026 position:  
5,327.7 ha

2026 position



2030 forecast

	Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3
<b>Green Infrastructure Planning</b>	The estate has a GI strategy aligned with the GI Framework Standards and relevant Local Nature Recovery Strategies.	Actions on the ground are implemented as identified in the GI strategy, such as prioritisation of nature-based solutions (e.g. green roofs, rain gardens, tree corridors).	The estate is contributing to a wider local GI strategy and supports <a href="#">Nature Towns and Cities accreditation</a> .
<b>Urban Nature Recovery</b>	Plans are in place to effectively manage urban habitats and support urban species.	There is an increased area of GI managed for nature recovery.  Existing areas are effectively managed.	Partnership working is underway across the urban environment to deliver urban nature recovery as part of a wider strategy to connect corridors and networks for habitats and species.
<b>Increasing accessibility to greenspace</b>	Using their GI strategy, the estate has identified the existing users of their greenspaces and any barriers to access.	Accessibility is increased across estate for staff, tenants, or local communities as appropriate through engagement and co-design process.	Partnership working is underway across the urban environment to increase opportunities for accessing greenspace and engagement with the natural environment.

United Utilities’ urban land is predominantly operational and secured behind fencing. However, we play a significant role in delivering blue-green infrastructure across urban environments. Our £230 million rainwater management programme enables us to work in partnership with organisations across the North West to implement sustainable drainage solutions, reduce surface water flood risk and enhance urban green space.

This includes targeted co-funding of schemes that deliver wider environmental and community benefit. For example, we have supported the integration of sustainable drainage features at Viaduct Park, a public park delivered on the roof of the Stockport Interchange. This demonstrates how operational investment can be leveraged to create multifunctional urban spaces that improve water management, biodiversity and public amenity.



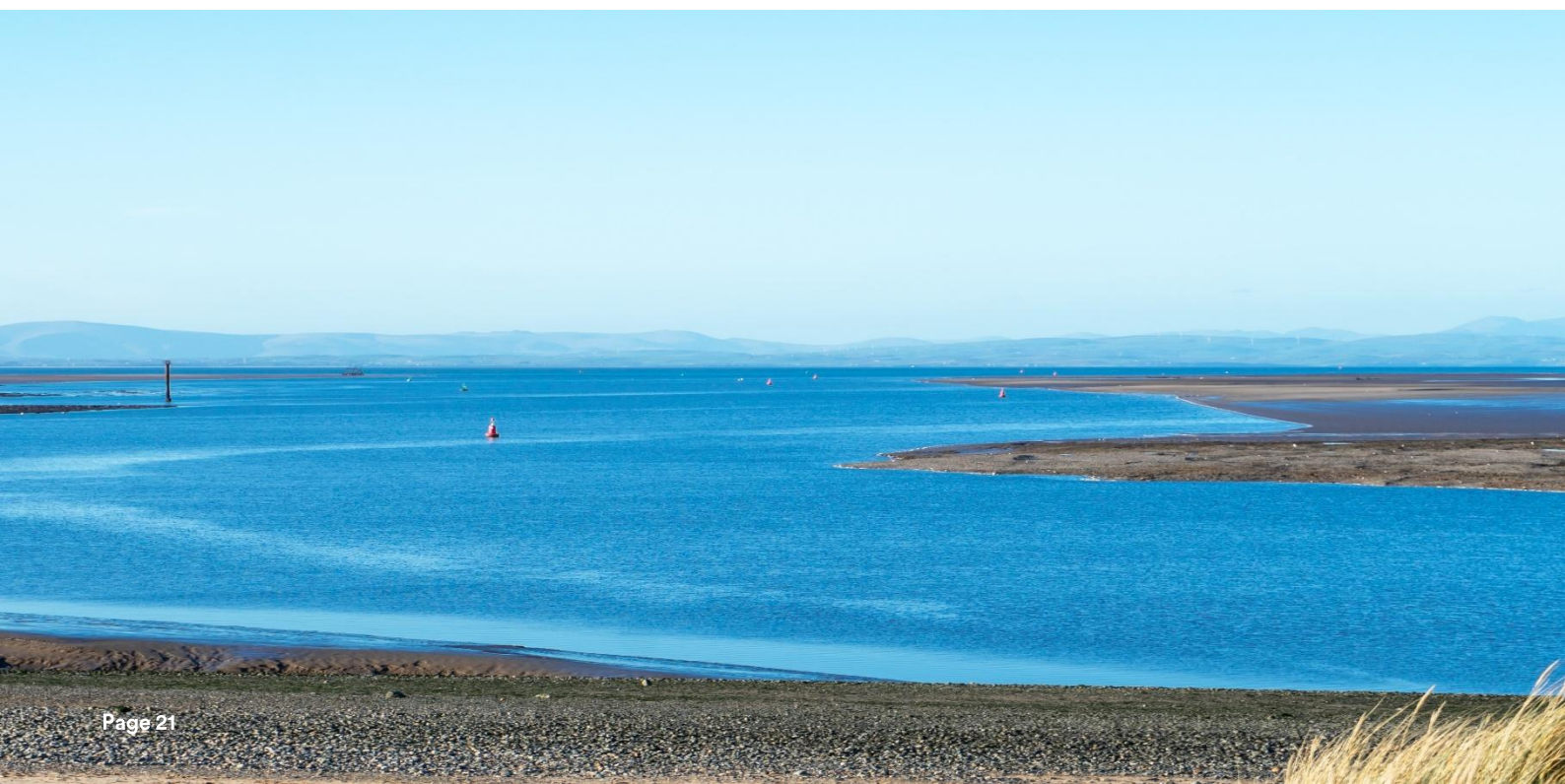
# Opportunities identified to improve areas for nature by 2030



Beyond our existing land management practices, we have identified further opportunities that could contribute to wildlife rich habitat restoration, creation, and improving the resilience of habitats currently designated as wildlife rich habitats across our estate.

Opportunities identified include:

- We are strengthening our environmental ambition by evolving our earlier carbon pledges and better rivers pledges to adopt a broader more integrated set of nature pledges. This evolution reflects a growing understanding that climate, water quality, biodiversity and community wellbeing are interconnected. By taking a whole ecosystem approach, we can deliver greater environmental resilience, support national policy goals and contribute meaningfully to nature recovery. The four pledges focus on peatland restoration, woodland creation, protecting rivers and nature recovery.
- We have identified 67 projects in our latest environmental investment programme that are designed to improve rivers, habitats and wildlife. Of these, 18 take place on land we own and are included in this assessment. Five of these projects are in areas that already have legal protection for nature. These projects focus on practical improvements such as protecting wildlife like eels, improving water quality for shellfish, and helping important habitats recover and return to good condition. For example; as part of our resilience work at Thirlmere, we are restoring a wide range of habitats including blanket bog, rare and threatened montane vegetation, supporting the successful reintroduction of pine martens to Cumbria and undertaking river restoration. In the Pennines we are focusing on significant SSSI restoration of blanket bog and improving our catchment's resilience to the impacts of climate change.
- AMP8 biodiversity performance commitment; we have identified areas to deliver significant biodiversity uplift across the United Utilities estate as part of the Biodiversity Performance Commitment. Opportunities currently under review include c.50km of hedgerow and c.250 sites for woodland enhancement across areas such as Haweswater, Thirlmere, Rivington and Macclesfield Forest.
- Potential landscape recovery schemes LRS, subject to Defra's approval across 11,554 hectares, c.50% of which is SSSI land. We are involved in four LRS schemes which include Penrith to Kendal, Eastern Fells, West Pennine Moors and Duddon which is not in our ownership.



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

[unitedutilities.com](http://unitedutilities.com)



**Water for the North West**