

United Utilities Water Limited

Wonderful Windermere - annual progress report 2025/26

September 2026

Executive summary

As part of the Wonderful Windermere performance commitment, United Utilities Water (Uuw) will publish a report on annual progress. The purpose of this document is to report on performance and activity in the past reporting year; conflicts of interest; and to specify required changes to the methodology for 2026/27.

In the first year Uuw has successfully initiated delivery of the Wonderful Windermere performance commitment. We have completed the first phosphorus reduction intervention of 12.57kg/y for Year 1, exceeding the performance commitment level target of 9.5kg/y using adsorptive media at YMCA Lakeside within the Windermere catchment. A pipeline of projects has been established for Year 2 with no changes to methodology required. These early outcomes demonstrate meaningful progress toward reducing nutrient inputs and improving the ecological health and resilience of Windermere.

Contents

1. Wonderful Windermere overview 4

2. Delivery progress 2025..... 5

 2.1 Overview.....5

 2.2 Modelled values6

 2.3 Governance and conflicts of interest7

3. Reported performance..... 8

4. Future plans 9

1. Wonderful Windermere overview

Windermere is one of the most iconic and environmentally sensitive freshwater bodies in the UK, supporting a major regional economy built on tourism, recreation and natural heritage. UUW is responsible for managing wastewater infrastructure across the catchment with multiple initiatives to improve water quality with major investment to upgrade wastewater treatment works, increase storage capacity and raise effluent standards to reduce nutrient inputs. As part of UUW's action plan for Windermere, the company is a member of the Love Windermere¹ partnership, consisting of nine organisations supporting a science-led approach to address pollution from sewage, septic tanks and agriculture. Love Windermere plays a governance, assurance and strategic oversight role within the Wonderful Windermere performance commitment (PC).

Purpose of the Wonderful Windermere performance commitment

The Wonderful Windermere performance commitment is designed to incentivise improvements to water quality, long-term resilience and heritage of Windermere. Delivery is through the stewardship of catchment-wide solutions, taking a holistic approach to phosphorus (P) removal and looking beyond UUW's assets to reduce nutrient input from multiple sources into the catchment. The Wonderful Windermere Methodology was approved by both Ofwat and the Environment Agency. Delivery of this performance commitment aims to result in improvements to overall water quality, long-term resilience and heritage of Windermere.

Further information about this bespoke performance commitment can be found in the following links:

- [Performance commitment definition and parameters](#)
- [Wonderful Windermere Methodology Document](#)

The purpose of this document is to report on performance and activity for the past reporting year (2025/26); conflicts of interest; and to specify required changes to the methodology for 2026/27.

¹ [Love Windermere](#)

2. Delivery progress 2025

Throughout 2025, UUW actively engaged with potential sites for delivery of the PC. This included three domestic septic tanks and three permitted package plants. Sites were visited and assessed for their suitability, as per the [Wonderful Windermere Methodology Document](#). The domestic properties chose not to pursue the process beyond initial assessment. Of the three permitted facilities, two were identified for potential delivery in Year 2 (see Section 3, Future Plans), the remaining site, YMCA Lakeside, was identified as a suitable site for delivery in Year 1 and endorsed for delivery by the Love Windermere partnership.

2.1 Overview

YMCA Lakeside is located within the Leven Water Framework Directive catchment, discharging to a watercourse that flows directly to Windermere. The site is served by a permitted wastewater treatment facility that was assessed by the Environment Agency in Summer 2025. As outlined the methodology, the YMCA were informed of First Time Sewerage and confirmed that it did not want to pursue an application for this.

The Wonderful Windermere enabled project delivered at the YMCA was done so collaboratively with Lakes and Rivers Environmental Services (LRES), a trading subsidiary of South Cumbria Rivers Trust (SCRT). All parties involved in the project sought to deliver the greatest environmental benefit, and the delivered solution provided a nature-based system, designed to be sympathetic to the environment.

Figure 1: Picture of absorptive media bed with reeds after planting.



The solution consisted of three stages. Partial flows from the existing wastewater treatment facility are diverted onto the system, the first stage being a constructed wetland that helps with sediment removal. Effluent is then passed through to the absorptive media bed, as outlined in Figure 1, that is covered in reed beds which is the primary phosphorus reduction zone. The final stage in the process is an attenuation pond, which provides additional protection to the receiving watercourse. The whole system improves water quality going into Windermere, whilst also boosting biodiversity and providing an enhanced habitat for wildlife. The system was set up following pre-intervention assessments including flood risk, planning, and site layout.

The project and stages completed are summarised in Table 1 below:

Table 1: YMCA Lakeside project stages

Project and location	Third Party asset type	Suitability confirmed	Intervention agreed	Project Delivery	Project assurance	Monitoring	Benefit agreed
YMCA Lakeside	Rotating Biological Contractor (private treatment works)	Regulatory compliance confirmed	Adsorptive Media	Nov 2025	Complete	Required samples taken, modelled data used	12.57 kg per year

2.2 Modelled values

In line with the [methodology](#) (Section 6.1 Table 1), sampling was carried out over a three-week period, with 12 planned spot samples taken simultaneously pre-intervention (effluent leaving the existing package plant) and post-intervention (final discharge point after the new, Wonderful Windermere enabled system).

Following capture of the initial 12 samples, the data was presented to the Love Windermere governance group for review. During this meeting in December 2025, the Love Windermere governance group confirmed that **modelled values** could be used for this project. As such, the overall benefit from the project has been determined from modelled values. Values are outlined in Table 2, Modelled calculation for annual phosphorus benefit of YMCA project. This model follows the methodology set out in Section 6.2.1 of the [Wonderful Windermere Methodology](#).

Table 2: Modelled calculation for annual phosphorus benefit of YMCA project

Calculation	Value	Unit ²	Source
Per Capita Phosphorus	0.00142	Kg/hd/d	STW Load kg/y (1.14) / 365 / average occupancy (2.2) = 0.00142 Kg/hd/d
Per capita water usage per day	150	l/hd/d	Customer water use – Ofwat
Expected crude concentration	9.47	mg/l	Derived from Per Capita Phosphorus and Water Usage Per Day (1.42g P in 150 litres of wastewater per day)
Removal efficiency of Reactive (adsorptive) Media	65	%	Removal rate – Table 3, Wonderful Windermere Methodology Document
Flow to Reactive (adsorptive) Media	6.61	m3/d	Expected average flow

Total removal per annum	12.57	Kg P/yr	Sum of the daily P Load removed (kg/d).
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This model follows the methodology set out in Section 6.2.1 of the [Wonderful Windermere Methodology](#). Values have been validated by the Independent Assurer through the governance process.

2.3 Governance and conflicts of interest

As per the Methodology, endorsement and sign-off was sought through the Love Windermere partnership. The timeline of key events was as follows:

Timeline

- **Dec 2024** – Performance Commitment confirmed
- **May 2025** – Initial governance endorsement
- **Aug 2025** – EA confirms compliance
- **Aug 2025** – Performance commitment final methodology sign off
- **Oct 2025** – Governance follow-on endorsement (post final methodology sign off)
- **Nov–Dec 2025** – Construction and sampling completed
- **Dec 2025** – Love Windermere sewage workstream governance of intervention completion
- **Mar 2026** – Independent assurance complete
- **Mar 2026** – Love Windermere sign off of the intervention and modelled values calculated
- **July 2026** – [Case study](#) published
- **Sept 2026** – Annual progress report published

Declared conflicts of interest

UUW worked in partnership with a trading subsidiary of SCRT, LRES, to complete the project at YMCA. As SCRT are members of Love Windermere, they did not participate in the sign-off or governance of the YMCA project. The same applies to the Love Windermere Chair, Nigel Wilkinson, who is a trustee of SCRT. Nigel Wilkinson did not participate in the sign-off or governance of the project. Both conflicts of interest were declared and managed throughout the governance process.

² Units: kg/hd/d = kilogram per head per day; l/hd/d = litres per head per day; mg/l = milligrams per litre; % = percentage; m3/d = metres cubed per day

3. Reported performance

Under Ofwat's PR24 final determination, the Wonderful Windermere Bespoke Performance Commitment is measured annually. This performance commitment is measured on a calendar year basis, e.g. for the Year 1 reporting year 2025/26 performance is measured from 1 January 2025 to 31 December 2025.

The [Wonderful Windermere Methodology Document](#) sets out the requirement that phosphorus reduction estimates are to be produced every year. Whether modelled or sampled data, all interventions will count for a full year in the year of installation. As the performance commitment is cumulative, annual reported phosphorus reductions will be reflected in subsequent years of the AMP.

The independently assured data for 2025/26 on the annualised reported phosphorus reduction achieved as per the Love Windermere governance process is **12.57kg per year**. This outperforms (exceeds) the performance commitment level target of 9.5kg/y for Year 1.

4. Future plans

Following our review of the methodology, it is concluded that no updates are required for Year 2, as no new technologies or approaches have been identified that would necessitate a change. However, should future developments create a need for revision, we will update the methodology in full accordance with the processes and requirements set out in the performance commitment definition document³.

Three projects have been identified for delivery in Year 2 within the catchment with further investigations being undertaken to assess their viability. The potential interventions are already included in the current methodology, therefore methodology changes are not required for Year 2.

³ Available here: [UUWR 66 Wonderful Windermere definition document](#)

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