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Great Sankey
Warrington WA5 3LP

Telephone: 01925 237000

unitedutilities.com

Our ref: EIR-988
Date: xx/09/2026
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 2004 (EIR).

This response provides answers to your queries directed under this EIR reference (EIR-988) and your questions sent direct to Saphire Utility Solutions Ltd (SUS) who are working for United Utilities Water (UUW) [*RE: Formal information request – tanker movements associated with Northwich Wastewater Treatment Works*].

I have provided responses to your questions directed towards SUS in accordance with Regulation 3(2) of the EIR, whereby they, as our contractors, hold environmental information on our behalf. These encompass questions 12-26 (inclusive).

As your request contained a number of specific questions, this response, restates each part of the request (in bold) and then follows this with our response. I have provided all appendices in this folder (link here) and directly linked to the relevant file throughout my response. Please note that all links will expire on 26 October 2026.

1. **Records showing the number and timing of tanker vehicles entering and leaving Northwich Wastewater Treatment Works on each day from 28 August 2026 onwards, including arrival/departure times, vehicle registration numbers, contractor/operator and, where recorded, the origin, destination and purpose of each movement.**

Please see *Appendix 1 – Northwich Tanker Movements* (link here) for all records of UUW tankers entering and leaving Northwich Wastewater Treatment works (WwTW) from 28 August 2026 until 8 September 2026. This dataset consists of three tabs – 'Cover Sheet', 'Northwich Exports' and 'Northwich Imports'. Please refer to the tab 'Cover Sheet' which explains all the column names and what the information within them represents. 'Northwich Exports' contains all export movements from Northwich and 'Northwich Imports' contains all import movements to Northwich. Please note that for some movements we do not hold all the information, but we have provided what we do have. Therefore, in those scenarios, in line with Environmental Information Regulations 12(4)(a) we cannot provide any information that is not held.

2. **Any existing site access logs, gate-entry records, tanker booking or scheduling records, weighbridge records, vehicle movement logs, dispatch records, job sheets or GPS/telematics records relating to these tanker movements.**

We do not hold any gate-entry records, tanker booking or scheduling records, weighbridge records, vehicle movement logs, dispatch records, job sheets or GPS/telematics relating to these increased tanker movements beyond the information that is provided in the response to question 1. Therefore, in line with Environmental Information Regulation 12(4)(a) we cannot provide this information as it is not held.

3. **Information explaining the reason for the significant increase in tanker activity from 28 August 2026 onwards including when the increase began, why tankering became necessary**

Tankering activity into Northwich WwTW increased in response to a incident (New Warrington Road incident) that began on 16 August 2026. The incident was triggered by a burst on a wastewater rising main. A rising main is a pressurised pipe system used to move wastewater uphill, against gravity.

The rising main burst occurred under a river with significant access and safety issues, including a steep ravine and thick undergrowth. These access issues impacted the time needed for the safe implementation of a temporary over-pumping solution, to divert the wastewater back into the sewerage network upstream of the burst section.

Whilst work to implement the over-pumping solution took place, we instructed our partners, SUS, to transport the wastewater from the burst main via tankers to Northwich WwTW for treatment. This incident was raised as a high priority to prevent further detrimental impacts to our customers and the environment.

Tanker activity to Northwich WwTW further increased from 28 August 2026 due to increased rainfall and the upcoming summer bank holiday, resulting in higher flows in the wastewater network.

[…] who authorised or instructed the increased tankering,
The UUW on-call technician instructed the SUS on-call technician to instigate tanker activity in response to the above-described incident.

[…] the number of tankers required and the expected duration of the operation.
Please see below for a table summary of the tanker movements and key operational dates.

Date	Number of Tanker Movements in a 24h period	Reason for change in number of movements
16-27 August	12	Initial response to burst rising main
28-30 August	17	Increased rainfall causing increased flows
30-31 August	20	Bank holiday weekend causing increased flows (more people at home using more water e.g. more toilet flushes and washing)
1-12 September	17	End of bank holiday weekend

4. **Any information concerning an operational incident or "emergency" which has resulted in the increased tanker activity, including the nature of the issue, when it began, which asset or facility is affected, why tankering is required and the expected date for the situation to return to normal.**

Please see the response to question 3 for information concerning the incident which triggered increased tanker activity. Tanker movements related to this incident stopped on 12 September 2026.

5. **The names of all contractors or subcontractors undertaking tanker movements associated with Northwich Wastewater Treatment Works during this period, including whether Sapphire Utility Solutions is involved.**

I can confirm that that SUS were our primary contractor involved in tanker movements during this incident. We can also confirm that SUS utilised their own contractors to support them with this work. The contractors utilised by SUS were S J Gill Agricultural Contractors Ltd, WDF Demolition & Excavation Ltd and Lanes Group PLC.

6. **Any existing schedules, instructions or operational requirements relating to the timing of tanker movements, particularly movements taking place before 07:00 or after 22:00.**

Please see the table provided in my response to question 3 for the schedules of tankers.

SUS were given instructions by UUW on 16 August 2026 to provide tanker services to respond to a burst rising main on Warrington Road, Northwich. Specifically, SUS were instructed to operate tankers 24 hours a day until such time as a temporary over-pumping solution was implemented. As outlined in the response to question 3, this emergency measure was implemented to minimise impacts to the environment by preventing wastewater being discharged to water courses. As the sewerage undertaker for the area, UUW has a legal duty to prevent pollution incidents to watercourses. The management of our response to this incident prevented a serious pollution incident to local watercourses.

Instructions were provided by the on-call UUW technician to the on-call SUS technician on the day the incident started. For specific details of the schedules and number of tankers for this incident, please refer to the table in the response to question 3.

7. **Copies of complaints, enquiries or correspondence received by United Utilities from 28 August 2026 onwards concerning increased tanker activity, tanker traffic, noise, early morning/late evening movements or disturbance to local residents. This should include correspondence from residents, Cheshire West and Chester Council, Environmental Health, local councillors or other public bodies, with personal information redacted where necessary.**

Please see *Appendix 2 - Resident Contacts* (link here) for all copies of complaints, enquiries and correspondence directly received by UUW from local residents. Please see *Appendix 3a - Council Contacts* (link here) and *Appendix 3b - Council Contacts* (link here) for all copies of complaints, enquiries and correspondence directly received by UUW from local authorities. Please see *Appendix 4 – Other Contacts* (link here) for other copies of correspondence directly received from UUW from other public bodies. All information that could make an individual

identifiable has been redacted from these appendices in line with Environmental Information Regulation 13, UK GDPR and the Data Protection Act (DPA) 2018.

8. **Any existing correspondence, emails, incident reports, meeting notes or operational instructions concerning the increased tanker activity, including communications between United Utilities, Northwich Wastewater Treatment Works, tanker contractors, Sapphire Utility Solutions, Cheshire West and Chester Council and/or local councillors.**

Please see *Appendix 5 – Incident Reports* (link here) for all copies of incident reports concerning the increased tankering activity. All information that could make an individual identifiable has been redacted from these appendices. This is in line with Environmental Information Regulation 13, UK GDPR regulations and the DPA 2018.

9. **Any information identifying where the tankered material being brought to or removed from Northwich Wastewater Treatment Works originates from and where it is subsequently transported.**

Please see *Appendix 1 – Northwich Tanker Movements* (link here) for information about the destination and collection sites of the material being moved by the tankers. This information can be found in both tabs and the columns with the headers 'Collection Site' and 'Delivery Site'.

10. **Any existing information concerning how long the increased tanker operation is expected to continue and any measures being considered to reduce or manage the tanker movements.**

The additional tanker movements were in place from 16 August until the 12 September and this emergency activity has now concluded.

11. **For comparison purposes, any existing records showing the normal or average number of tanker movements associated with Northwich Wastewater Treatment Works during the four weeks preceding 28 August 2026.**

I have checked our records to assess UUW tanker movements in the four weeks prior to the 28 August 2026. There were an average number of 5 tanker movements (inclusive of both import and export) in the four weeks preceding 28 August 2026.

12. **Whether Sapphire Utility Solutions is currently undertaking, arranging or facilitating tanker movements to or from Northwich Wastewater Treatment Works.**

I can confirm that SUS was facilitating tanker movements to and from Northwich WwTW from 16 August 2026 to 12 September 2026.

13. **If so, the date on which Sapphire's involvement commenced and the reason for the increased tanker activity.**

SUS' involvement commenced on the 16 August 2026 in response to an incident concerning a burst rising main. Please see my response to question 3 for details of this incident.

14. **The number of tanker movements undertaken by Sapphire on each day from 28 August 2026 onwards.**

Please see the table recorded in my response to question 3 for numbers of tanker movements from 28 August 2026 onwards.

15. **The recorded or scheduled arrival and departure times of those tankers at Northwich Wastewater Treatment Works.**

The response from SUS was a major incident response which involved tankers moving wastewater effluent from the burst rising main to Northwich WwTW works 24 hours a day. This was done to prevent harm to customers and the environment. As the sewerage undertaker for the area, UUW has a legal duty to prevent pollution incidents to watercourses. The management of our response to this incident prevented a serious pollution incident to local watercourses.

SUS have informed UUW that they do not retain records of tanker movement departure and arrival times when responding to a major incident due to the additional complexities of managing additional sub-contractors who may not record such information. This is primarily because the tanker movements were from the rising main to the Northwich WwTW with no return to the depot. This resulted in no records of departure or arrival times as tankers were always waiting at one location or the other.

Therefore, in line with Environmental Information Regulation 12(4)(a) we cannot provide this information as it is not held.

16. **Whether Sapphire holds vehicle movement records, job sheets, dispatch records, GPS/telematics data or other records showing the movements of the tankers involved.**

Please see the response to question 15 for an answer to this question.

17. **The number of vehicles/tankers being deployed and, where possible, the vehicle registration numbers or fleet identifiers.**

Please see the response to question 3 for an answer to this question.

18. **Whether Sapphire has been instructed by United Utilities to undertake an increased level of tankering and, if so, when that instruction was received.**

Please see the responses to questions 3 and 6 for an answer to this question.

19. **Whether the increased tanker operation is connected to an emergency, operational failure, reduced capacity, maintenance issue, pumping station issue, wastewater treatment issue or other temporary operational problem.**

Please see the response to question 3 for an answer to this question.

20. **If the operation is connected to an emergency or operational problem, please provide a general explanation of the issue and why tankering is required.**

Please see the response to question 3 for an answer to this question.

21. **The expected duration of the increased tanker operation and whether Sapphire has been given an anticipated date on which tanker activity will return to normal levels.**

The tanker movements have now stopped as we have implemented the temporary over-pumping solution while the rising main is repaired. SUS were instructed to stop tankering and did so on 12 September 2026.

22. **Whether Sapphire has been instructed to undertake tanker movements during the early morning or late evening, particularly before 07:00 or after 22:00.**

SUS were instructed to operate 24 hours a day to prevent customer and environmental harm. The specific details of these movements are provided in the table in the response to question 3. Movements were required 24 hours a day because our wastewater network is in use 24 hours a day and will continuously have wastewater flowing through it. Decisions on how many movements were necessary were primarily dependent on rainfall and time of day, as these factors have the most impact on wastewater flows. Further detail on this can be found in the response to question 3.

23. **Whether Sapphire has received any complaints, enquiries or concerns regarding the tanker movements, including complaints about noise, early morning movements, late evening movements or disturbance to residents.**

This enquiry (i.e. questions 12-26) is the only enquiry received straight from a customer direct to SUS. For details of other correspondence please refer to the responses for questions 7 and 8.

24. **Whether Sapphire has received any instructions from United Utilities concerning the timing, routing or management of tanker movements in response to concerns raised by local residents, councillors or Cheshire West and Chester Council.**

Please see the response to question 3 for an answer to this question.

25. **Whether Sapphire is operating the tankers directly or whether other contractors/subcontractors are also being used. If so, please identify the relevant companies.**

Please see the response to question 5 for an answer to this question.

26. **Whether there is a normal or usual level of tanker activity associated with Northwich Wastewater Treatment Works and, if records are available, what the typical number of tanker movements was during the four weeks preceding 28 August 2026.**

Please see the response to question 11 for an answer to this question.

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.

Many thanks

[redacted]
Environmental Information Office

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.