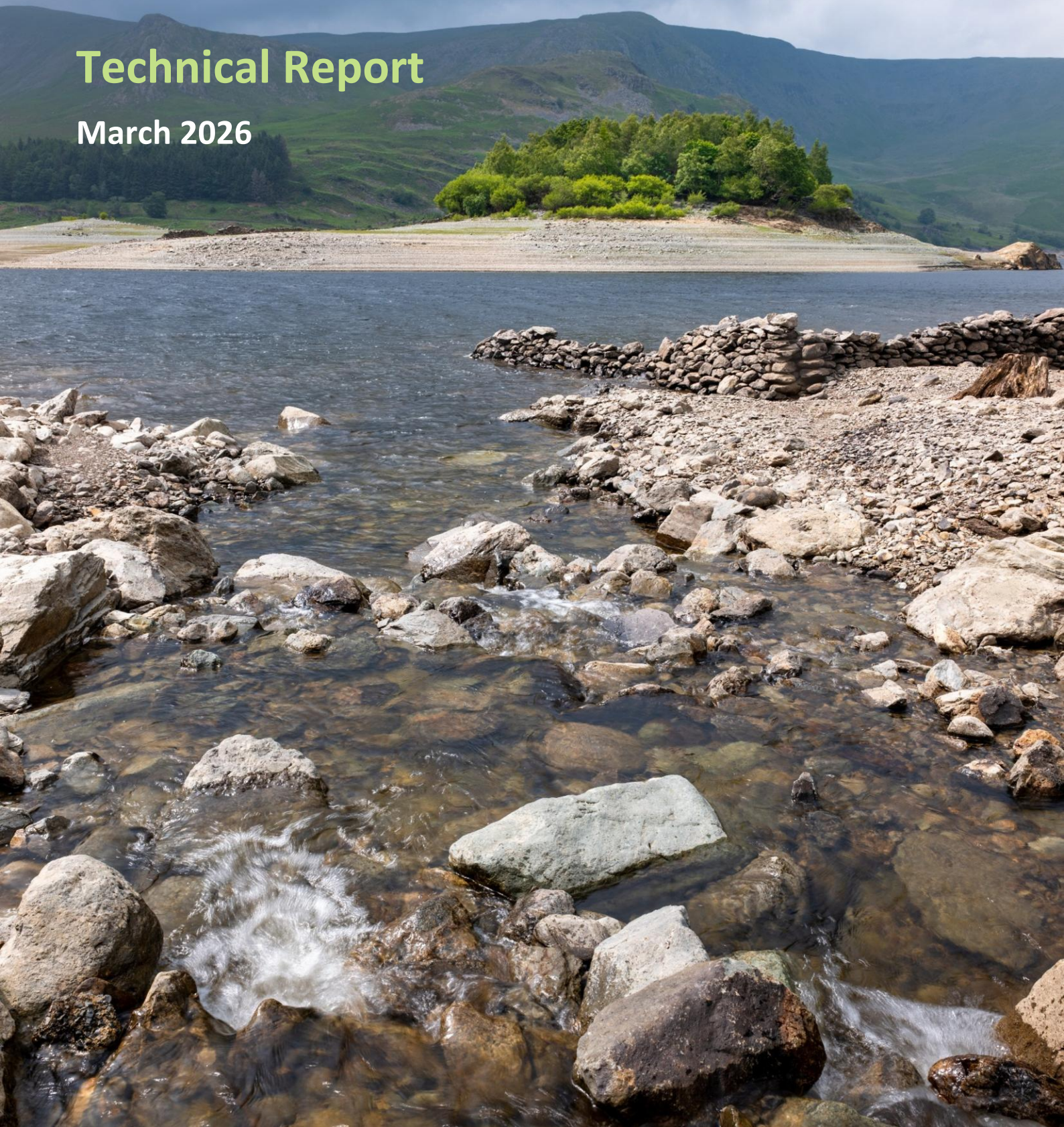


Draft Drought Plan 27

Water Resources West

Technical Report

March 2026



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1. Introduction

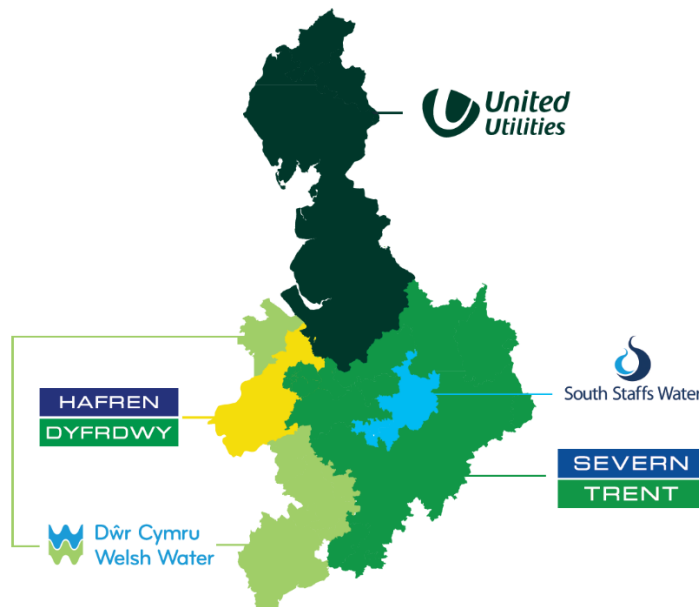
United Utilities is an active core member of the regional water resources group Water Resources West (WRW). WRW is a multi-sector group including water companies, New Appointments and Variations (NAVs) and organisations which represent many abstracting sectors, and their regulators. We work together to ensure the sustainability of water resources, considering wider societal needs, environmental improvement and working across sectors. This document sets out how WRW members have worked together to address drought planning guidance and regulatory requirements, including the production of a regional Drought Statement of Intent.

The five core water company members of WRW (Hafren Dyfrdwy, Severn Trent Water, South Staffs Water, United Utilities Water and Dwr Cymru Welsh Water) have worked together in developing the WRW Final Regional Plan, published in June 2025, and consistent Water Resources Management Plans. These are strategic plans to address the challenges facing the region’s water supplies and to ensure that the water resources in their catchment areas are sustainable. Through developing these plans, the water companies have adopted consistent data and assumptions including, for example, consistent planning assumptions on the import and export of water between companies. It is expected that, where appropriate, companies will also use these consistent data and assumptions for their drought plans.

Regional water resources groups are not required to produce drought plans but were asked to create a drought ‘statement of intent’ to improve drought management across their region. WRW published its Drought Statement of Intent in April 2025; the statement sets out how group members will work together, to benefit abstractors, water company customers and the environment during dry weather or drought conditions. Further details are provided in Section 3.

Figure 1 shows a map of the water company areas within the Water Resources West region. More information about WRW can be found at <https://waterresourceswest.co.uk/>.

Figure 1: Map of the Water Resources West region



2. Regional drought planning guidance

There are several government expectations and regulatory requirements relating to regional aspects of drought planning and management. As a group, WRW agreed to work together to meet these requirements. Table 1 outlines how they have been incorporated into and/or influenced our own drought plan.

Table 1: Summary of expectations and requirements relating to regional aspects of drought planning and how they have been met

Driver	Requirement	How we have covered this in our plan
Government expectations for water company drought plans, operating in England, July 2025	“your plan must...show the wider role you play across your region, working with your regional water resources group”	Our drought plan technical report ‘Communication Actions’ outlines our communication strategy during prolonged dry weather and drought events. Co-ordinated communications across the sector, region and with other interest groups is important to maintain public trust and enhance transparency with customers. We will engage with our neighbouring water companies through WRW, and we have agreed to adopt consistent Level 1 to 4 definitions to categorise our drought actions. We have also agreed to align our drought communications wherever appropriate. WRW’s customer and stakeholder management group will support the members in the alignment of communications across the WRW region.
Drought Plan (England) Direction 2025	“a water undertaker must address in its Drought Plan any voluntary steps that will be taken to collaborate regionally on drought management or drought management measures”	<p>All water company members of WRW have taken several voluntary steps to collaborate regionally, for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Convene WRW drought group to monitor a drought situation and consider joint actions; • Mutual aid; • Code of practice on water use restrictions; • Consistent temporary use ban notice; • Consistent approach to restrictions; and • Consideration of possible resource sharing, data sharing and alignment of demand management campaigns if appropriate. <p>The members of WRW will seek to align their drought communications wherever appropriate. WRW’s customer and stakeholder management group will support the members in the alignment of communications across the WRW region. WRW is a large and diverse area, with differing hydrological characteristics. Therefore, at any time in a drought event, different parts of the region may be at different levels of drought response.</p> <p>In the regional water resources planning process we will continue to explore ways to collaborate on drought management actions and incorporate these into our future drought plans.</p>
Water Company Drought Plan Guideline, 2025	<p>“regional groups are being asked to develop a ‘statement of intent’ clearly setting out the role they will take in drought”.</p> <p>“you should ensure your drought plan aligns with the statement of intent written by your regional water resources group”.</p>	<p>WRW published its Drought Statement of Intent in April 2025. This document reflects the voluntary steps to collaborate on drought planning across the region, agreed between member companies. Our drought plan includes details of how we ensure alignment with this document, for example by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • adopting consistent Level 1 to 4 definitions to categorise drought actions; • aligning our drought communications where appropriate; and

Driver	Requirement	How we have covered this in our plan
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> adopting a consistent form of notice for Temporary Use Bans and a consistent approach to exceptions, in alignment with the UKWIR Code of Practice.
	<p>“you should collaborate with your regional group for the benefit of your customers, the environment, food production and other water users. If a regional water resources group’s statement of intent includes dry weather or drought actions that affect your supply area, you should ensure these are included in your drought plan”.</p>	<p>The WRW Drought Statement of Intent includes reference to three main areas of dry weather and drought actions: demand management campaigns, coordinated communications and water use restrictions. All these actions are included in our drought plan.</p>
	<p>“your drought plan should include...regional alignment on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How you will share water resources with neighbouring undertakers How you will operate sources to benefit other water users during dry weather or a drought while minimising risk to your supplies Any joint communications, including customer restrictions such as temporary use bans “ 	<p>Along with the other water company members of WRW we adopted consistent data and assumptions during the development of our latest Water Resources Management Plans (WRMP24) and the 2025 Regional Plan. This included consistent data and assumptions on the import and export of water between companies, which have also been adopted in the development of this draft drought plan. Our plan outlines that we will liaise with other water companies as appropriate with respect to bulk supply arrangements or actions that could affect them during dry weather. If we introduce water use restrictions, we will inform neighbouring water companies and liaise with our regional group.</p> <p>Our communications plan, detailed in our technical report ‘Communication Actions’ reflects the UKWIR Code of Practice (2023) recommended actions for effective drought communications including working together and coordinated communications. Our strategy includes early and structured engagement with New Appointments and Variations (NAVs) and business retailers to foster a shared understanding of service expectations, drought restrictions, and communication roles, which is focused on aligning messages across parties to ensure consistent and timely information reaches customers.</p>

3. Regional collaborative working

Ongoing collaboration with our regional group, Water Resources West (WRW), takes place on a regular basis through monthly senior group meetings and other forums.

Regional water resources groups are also well positioned to support collaboration across all sectors during droughts and have been required by government to produce statements of intent to formalise these activities. Water Resources West published its [Drought Statement of Intent](#)¹ in April 2025. The document sets out how members will work together, to benefit abstractors, water company customers and the environment during dry weather or drought conditions. It reflects Water Resources West's role as a multi-sector group whose role is to enhance collaboration and ensure the sustainable use of water resources across our region.

The WRW Drought Statement of Intent sets out the following key actions to be considered when one or more members of the group declare a state of "prolonged dry weather" or "drought":

- **Organisational:** A WRW drought group to be convened to jointly monitor the situation and agree joint actions if appropriate; the nominated WRW drought officer to attend other relevant drought groups convened by stakeholders;
- **Resource sharing and operational coordination:** WRW to encourage its members to share data, consider whether resources could be shared and provide mutual aid to each other (see Section 3.1 below);
- **Demand management:** WRW to support members in considering whether to align timing of demand management actions, depending on circumstances, and if required, members will use the consistent form of notice for Temporary Use Bans (see Section 3.3) and a consistent approach to exceptions, in line with the Code of Practice (see Section 3.2);
- **Communications:** WRW to support members in considering whether coordinated communications may be helpful and possibly to lead on communication with stakeholders regionally and the development of shared evidence (e.g. rainfall statistics) to be used in communications; and
- **Post drought review:** WRW will encourage and support its members to share lessons learned through WRW, and to review and update the Statement of Intent if appropriate.

There are also several established initiatives where WRW is working closely together, and we have summarised these in the following sections.

3.1 Mutual aid

Water Company members of WRW participate in Water UK's Mutual Aid scheme. Mutual Aid is in place to facilitate inter-company borrowing of equipment or services to supplement each other's stocks during incidents. This may be used, for example, to support water supplies by road tanker in a severe drought.

Water UK Council agreed that all member companies of the water industry should formally adopt a protocol to share resources with each other, to support the affected company or companies during incidents, thereby enhancing the resilience and contingency options available to the industry. The protocol is set out in the Water UK Mutual Aid Manual.

Each company agrees to provide support to others in need due to an actual or potential incident affecting their ability to provide essential services if requested by another member, unless they are simultaneously managing an incident of their own where such equipment or labour is required, or where there is a credible threat of a similar incident to that company.

¹ Available at: waterresourceswest.co.uk/s/Drought-Statement-of-Intent-v10.pdf.

3.2 Code of Practice on Water Use Restrictions

Water company members of WRW are all signatories to the Code of Practice on Water Use Restrictions. The latest update to the code was in 2023 and incorporated lessons learned from the 2022 drought. The code includes recommendations that it should be updated every two years or after a drought event, when there is change in legislation, when water use restrictions have been implemented and/or when the outputs of ongoing aligned work and projects are available for inclusion. The responsibility of regularly updating the code rests with Water UK.

WRW members cooperated with others in the industry to develop the code. The objective of the code is to have agreed common standards and approaches to restrictions and exceptions that are consistent and coherent to customers, stakeholders, governments, regulators and the media. We have therefore signed up to the principles and practices set out in the code.

The Code of Practice provides guidance to water companies on the effective implementation of water use restrictions by way of Temporary Use Bans (TUBs) and Drought Orders (DOs) to help manage demand during times of drought. The Code is designed to be used by water companies when they are updating their Drought Plans and when they are evaluating whether and how to implement water use restrictions during a drought.

All WRW water company members have followed the code in preparing their drought plans and will also follow the code during a drought. They will also carry out a joint review of exemptions to water use restrictions.

By doing this, when considering or implementing restrictions, we will be consistent and aligned as far as possible, so that customers can be confident that their interests have been considered and they are not disadvantaged, or perceive a disadvantage, in comparison to customers in neighbouring water company areas.

3.3 Temporary Use Ban notice

Building on our prior experiences of dry weather events, the WRW water company members have developed a consistent form of notice for Temporary Use Bans. An example draft template of a formal TUB Notice, using the consistent wording which we continue to adopt, is included in our technical report 'Demand Actions'.

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Water for the North West