

Stronger, Greener, Healthier: Our plan for the North West

A summary of our Business Plan
for Cheshire
2025–30



Pictured: Bollington, Cheshire

Introduction

Welcome to the summary of our Business Plan for Cheshire

The North West is an exciting and diverse region; it's where we live, work and play.

We've built a plan for the next five years which has been shaped by, and adapted to meet, the diverse needs of the region. Adopting this approach means we will deliver outcomes which are tailored for customers in the places where they live.

Because delivering locally is important to you and us, we've been working with stakeholders and customers to better understand the unique needs for each North West county so we develop plans that are more relatable to the communities we serve.

It's a hugely ambitious plan that will support 30,000 jobs across the region, and we've engaged with 95,000 people in Cumbria, Lancashire, Merseyside, Greater Manchester and Cheshire, to make sure we get it right, shaping our plans for each county to address the things that you've told us matter most. These include:

- Providing great quality water every time you turn on the tap
- Improving the region's natural environment and tackling storm overflows
- Doubling our financial support for those who need it, making sure nobody gets left behind
- Driving benefits for the North West's economy

In this document, we have summarised the challenges and opportunities in Cheshire. We hope that by setting out our plan this way, we make our investment programme and the benefits it delivers more meaningful to customers.

We call it place-based planning. It involves us working in partnership with other organisations to develop cost-effective investment and planning in local areas. This approach means we can identify the right solutions and develop tailored outcomes which deliver for local people and the needs of the environment.

At the same time as improving services and investing in the security of infrastructure to respond to the challenges of climate change and population growth, we are also able to deliver real opportunities for the North West too, a chance to drive inward investment, provide great quality skilled jobs and ignite a regional economy.

While we recognise that the plan necessitates an increase in bills, we also recognise the economic challenges facing our communities. That's why we're proposing an industry-leading support package of over £500 million, meaning that one in six customers will receive financial support so we reduce the risk of anyone being left behind by the costs of rising bills.

Now, more than ever, we need to rise to the challenge, deliver improved services for our customers, the environment and our communities in Cheshire. It matters to customers, to regulators, to shareholders and it matters to us, and we are determined to deliver the step change we all want to see. We look forward to the opportunity of delivering this ambitious plan.

Louise Beardmore
Chief Executive

Highlights from our ambitious plan

Supporting over 20,000 people who are struggling to pay their bills. Our support will double by 2030.

Reducing spills from 63 storm overflows and improving 24 kilometres of rivers.

Investing £151 million to improve 65 kilometres of the Vyrnwy Aqueduct so we can sustain resilient water supplies for people across Cheshire.

Employing 1,500 people across Cheshire. Our increased investment will create more green jobs.



Visit our microsite at
PR24.unitedutilities.com

Cheshire's unique characteristics

River water quality is important for Cheshire. We will work with partners, building on our innovative Cheshire Hub partnership, to identify opportunities to work collaboratively and deliver nature-based solutions to improve our rivers.

With farming a dominant industry across both the Cheshire environment and economy, it is important that we work closely with local farmers to ensure practices do not impact on water quality. We employ our Catchment Systems Thinking approach, also known as CaST, to collaborate with farmers to take a joined-up and holistic approach to farming and protecting water quality.

With an ageing population across Cheshire, we recognise how important it is to have a service tailored to customers' individual needs. We will offer sector-leading support for vulnerable customers with additional needs through our Priority Services schemes.

Many customers in and around Cheshire receive their water supply from Lake Vyrnwy in Wales. This is supplied through the Vyrnwy Aqueduct. We will invest in our water supply pipeline to secure a long-term resilient supply from Vyrnwy for current and future generations.

Cheshire



Traditional carbon-based energy production has been a strength in Cheshire for many years. This expertise has paved the way for green energy and now the **North West's hydrogen energy** production and storage is centred in Cheshire

We support **20,000** customers through **affordability schemes** and **34,000** people with additional needs through **Priority Services**

Due to the **flat nature of the region**, some areas are vulnerable to flooding

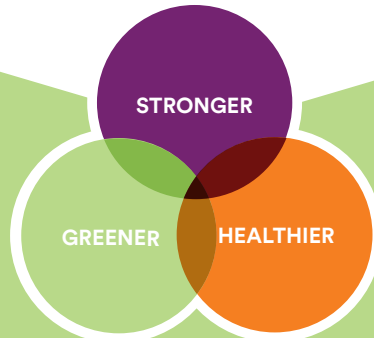
Agriculture plays a key part in the Cheshire economy. We'll collaborate with landowners and farmers to encourage **sustainable catchment management practices**

River water quality is important to Cheshire. The **river water quality** has transformed over the last 30 years, but there is still much to do

Providing great water for a stronger, greener and healthier North West

Our plan protects the health and wellbeing of communities and the environment and underpins the economy, enabling sustainable growth.

Cheshire is home to internationally important **wetlands** and underground aquifers which are sensitive to nutrients



A plan that makes Cheshire Stronger, Greener, Healthier

STRONGER

Cheshire has a number of challenges and opportunities:

Affordability and supporting vulnerable customers:

Cheshire has an ageing population and, whilst average incomes are higher than other parts of the North West, pockets of deprivation exist, particularly in urban centres.

Jobs and growth:

Population growth is 1.5% lower than the UK average, creating challenges with skills gaps in the area.

Cheshire is the centre for the North West's planned hydrogen production and storage.

To manage these challenges, we're:



Supporting over **19,900 people** who are struggling to pay their bills, doubling our support by 2030. We're helping **34,000 customers** with additional needs through Priority Services.



Employing **1,500 people** across Cheshire and our increased future investment will create more green jobs. In addition, we're providing **award winning training schemes** to drive skills development.



Planning ahead, to ensure the North West can support the water requirements for hydrogen production, **enabling economic growth.**



Improving 65km of the Vyrnwy Aqueduct to ensure **resilient water supplies** for people across Cheshire.



A plan that makes Cheshire Stronger, Greener, Healthier

GREENER

Cheshire has a number of challenges and opportunities:

Protecting rivers and catchments:

Cheshire's rivers are impacted by many different activities including agriculture, industry and runoff from roads as well as sewage.

Partnerships:

Agriculture plays a key role in Cheshire's economy, and is important for North West food production.

Challenges of river water quality and flooding are complex and are impacted by the actions of many organisations.

To manage these challenges, we're:



Investing **£433 million** to improve **24km** of rivers in Cheshire, including removing barriers to **fish and eel migration** at one location.



Investing **£420 million** to reduce activations of **63 storm overflows**.



Working with the National Trust to trial leaky dams at Lyme Park, **improving water quality and slowing flows** to deliver natural flood management.



Partnering with local authorities to **reduce flood risk**, such as the Northwich flood defence scheme.



Collaborating with farmers and partner organisations to promote sustainable farming practices across the River Dee catchment to **protect drinking water quality**.



A plan that makes Cheshire Stronger, Greener, Healthier

HEALTHIER

Cheshire has a number of challenges and opportunities:

Sustainable water supplies:

Many customers in and around Cheshire receive their water supply from Lake Vyrnwy in Wales, this is supplied via the Vyrnwy aqueduct.

Access and recreation:

Whilst much of Cheshire is rural, we recognise the importance of green spaces for health and wellbeing for residents and visitors.

To manage these challenges, we're:



Investing in two water treatment works to ensure we continue to deliver **great quality water** into the future.



Delivering additional water from borehole supplies across Cheshire to ensure there is **sufficient water** in drier conditions.



Encouraging people to enjoy our **three beautiful sites** in Cheshire – Macclesfield Forest, Lamaload Reservoir and Errwood Reservoir.



Further information

We've been working with stakeholders and customers to develop our understanding of unique needs across the North West's five counties. This means we can develop plans that are more relatable to the communities we serve.



Visit our microsite at PR24.unitedutilities.com

Thank you . . .

We believe this plan reflects the priorities that customers and stakeholders have told us matter most to them. We are most grateful to people across Cheshire, who have given their time to provide us with their views and insight on the delivery of water and wastewater services across the county.

Listening to you isn't something we do just for our business plan – it's something we do all of the time. We have devoted a chapter of our business plan to explain how we gather your perspectives and opinions and we welcome ideas on how we can do this more effectively.

In November 2023, we are holding 'Your water, your say' sessions in each county to provide more details about our plan, in interactive meetings where the Chief Executive and her team will take questions from customers and stakeholders. Details can be found at unitedutilities.com/corporate/about-us/our-future-plans/listening-to-our-customers/your-water-your-say

The water industry's economic regulator, Ofwat, will now examine our proposals and feed back to us in the middle of 2024, a process which is called a draft determination. This is an assessment of our business plan and offers a view on whether the plan meets regulatory requirements.



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Water for the North West