

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

A summary of our Business Plan
for Greater Manchester
2025–30



Picture: Salford Quays, Manchester

Introduction

Welcome to the summary of our Business Plan for Greater Manchester

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 Greater Manchester. 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 Greater Manchester. 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 113,000 people who are struggling to pay their bills. Our support will double by 2030.

Reducing spills from 105 storm overflows and improving 82 kilometres of rivers along the Mersey, Irk and Irwell.

Spending £146 million to better manage rainfall and slow the flow into our sewers and reduce the need for huge storage tanks.

Employing 1,300 people across Greater Manchester. Our increased investment will create more green jobs.



Visit our microsite at
PR24.unitedutilities.com

Greater Manchester's unique characteristics

Flooding from rivers, sewers and surface water presents significant challenges for Mancunian homes and businesses. We will work with partners to deliver an integrated water management plan to minimise the risk of flood and disruption. Through using nature-based solutions we aim to deliver more green spaces.

River water quality in the Irwell and Mersey catchments requires significant improvement due to the legacy of the industrial revolution and the impact of transferring and treating wastewater from 2.8 million people. We will invest more than ever before to reduce our impact on rivers and drive improvements from others to protect the local environment and improve water quality.

We recognise that affordability is a challenge for many customers across Greater Manchester.

We will offer sector-leading support to customers who face difficulty when paying their water bill and have put in place extra support for vulnerable customers with additional needs.

Customers in and around Greater Manchester receive their water supply from Haweswater in the Lake District. This is supplied through a gravity fed pipe, the Haweswater Aqueduct, which is 110km long. We will invest in our water supply pipeline to secure a long-term resilient supply from Haweswater in the Lake District for future generations.

Greater Manchester



"A place for everyone"

This is Greater Manchester Combined Authority's (GMCA) vision for Greater Manchester. We want to support it to achieve this for its diverse population of **2.8 million people and over 120,000 businesses**

37% of the North West's storm overflows are here; that's **over 800 storm overflows**

Greater Manchester is a **trailblazer for devolution**

Most of the area's **drinking water** is transported by gravity from the Lake District, a feat of Victorian engineering

Growth: Greater Manchester is booming. Through partnerships, we will provide the critical water infrastructure to support growth and develop the green economy

Innovation: there's a proud heritage of innovation in the county and we need to harness this to meet future challenges

Affordability: we support **113,800** customers through help to pay schemes and **96,700** people with additional needs through **Priority Services**

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.

A plan that makes Greater Manchester Stronger, Greener, Healthier

STRONGER

Greater Manchester has a number of challenges and opportunities:

Affordability and supporting vulnerable customers:

Deprivation is an important issue for Greater Manchester, with significant variations throughout the city region.

Jobs and growth:

Greater Manchester is rapidly growing. An additional 2.8 million people are expected to live in the region by 2050. The city of Salford is the fastest growing metropolitan district in the UK, with the population growing by 15.4% since 2011.

To manage these challenges, we're:



Supporting over **113,000 people** who are struggling to pay their bills, and **our support will double by 2030**. We're helping **96,700 customers** with additional needs through Priority Services.



Investing over **£200 million** to improve Salford wastewater treatment works to meet fast growing demand and developing our cutting-edge, **low-energy carbon hub** at Davyhulme.



Investing over **£2 billion** to improve the river environment in and around Greater Manchester.



Employing **1,300 people** in Greater Manchester. Our investment will support the development of more **high-skilled green jobs**.



A plan that makes Greater Manchester Stronger, Greener, Healthier

GREENER

Greater Manchester has a number of challenges and opportunities:

Protecting rivers and catchments:

Greater Manchester's rivers are impacted by agriculture, industry, runoff from roads and sewage.

Above Greater Manchester, in the Pennines and Peak District, sits 18,000 hectares of catchment land, the quality of which impacts water quality and biodiversity.

The county receives an average of 1,047mm of rain a year, creating challenges for flooding from rivers, sewers and surface water.

Partnerships:

There are numerous organisations across Greater Manchester working to improve flood risk and water quality.

To manage these challenges, we're:



Protecting and improving **82km of rivers** along the Mersey, Irk, and Irwell.



Managing **58km² of catchment land** in the Pennine headwaters to improve biodiversity and raw water quality.



Investing **£740 million** to reduce activations of **105 storm overflows**. 24% of our action on overflows during AMP8 is in Greater Manchester.



Developing the **first city region Integrated Water Management Plan** through collaboration with GMCA, the EA and other local stakeholder groups.



Collaborating with the **National Trust and other landowners** to deliver improvements through partnerships across the Mersey Catchment.



Driving **£146 million** in sustainable rainwater management solutions to better manage rainfall.

A plan that makes Greater Manchester Stronger, Greener, Healthier

HEALTHIER

Greater Manchester has a number of challenges and opportunities:

Sustainable water supplies:

Some customers on the south east fringe of Greater Manchester are not well connected to the rest of the strategic integrated distribution network, increasing risk of supply interruptions.

Access and recreation

Manchester is largely urban. Green space provides social value and improves health and wellbeing.

To manage these challenges, we're:



Investing **over £1 billion** to improve the Haweswater Aqueduct, ensuring we sustain resilient water supplies for Greater Manchester. We're also **improving water supplies** from the Peak District, replacing water mains serving Wybersley and increasing available groundwater supplies.



Encouraging people to enjoy our **10 freely accessible sites**, including Dove Stone Reservoir, Jumbles Country Park and Davyhulme Millennium Nature Reserve.



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 Greater Manchester, 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