

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

A summary of our Business Plan
for Merseyside (including Halton)
2025–30



Pictured: Salthouse Dock, Liverpool

Introduction

Welcome to the summary of our Business Plan for Merseyside (including Halton)

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 Merseyside. 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 Merseyside. 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 86,000 people who are struggling to pay their bills. Our support will double by 2030.

Spending £166 million to reduce spills from 20 storm overflows and improving 26 kilometres of rivers.

Investing £85 million across the Merseyside coastline to benefit shellfish and bathing waters.

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



Visit our microsite at
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Merseyside's unique characteristics

River water quality in the Mersey catchments requires further improvement. Liverpool has the highest proportion of combined sewers which means a high number of overflows. Reducing the frequency that these overflows operate requires re-plumbing the sewer system and we have a long-term plan for this.

Merseyside has a significant length of coastline, making parts of the coast vulnerable to coastal erosion and flooding which are forecast to become more frequent with climate change. We will invest to ensure assets are resilient to climate change and the impacts of coastal erosion and protect up to 169 homes.

Customers in Merseyside receive their water supply from sources in Cheshire and Lake Vyrnwy in Wales. We will invest in our water supply pipeline to secure long-term resilient supplies from Lake Vyrnwy for future generations.

Affordability is a real concern for some customers in Merseyside. There are concentrations of extreme deprivation and four of the ten most deprived areas in England are in this area. We will continue to 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.

Merseyside



The Mersey is an iconic part of this increasingly vibrant region. The river water quality has transformed over the last 30 years, but there's still more to do

Liverpool City Region has a rich **industrial heritage** and world renowned **cultural identity**

The **estuary and coastline** are dominant features of this area, so **water quality** directly impacts amenity value and the local economy

A high proportion of **combined sewers** causes **surface water management** challenges

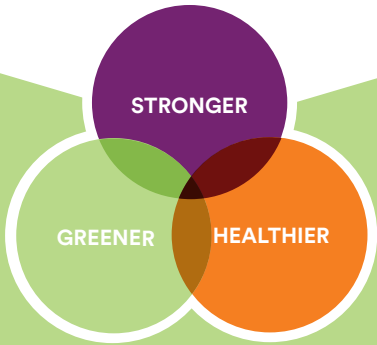
Our priority is to provide a **sustainable supply of quality drinking water** that is resilient now and for future generations

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.

The population and economy of Liverpool are growing, we understand that our **water infrastructure needs to develop** to support this growth

We support **86,300** customers through **affordability schemes** and **63,900** people with additional needs through **Priority Services**



A plan that makes Merseyside (including Halton) Stronger, Greener, Healthier

STRONGER

Merseyside has a number of challenges and opportunities:

Affordability and supporting vulnerable customers:

People in Merseyside are concerned about the cost of living, with two of the top five deprived areas in the UK being in Merseyside. They want to know how we're supporting those most in need.

Jobs and growth:

Formerly known for its rich maritime history, the present day economy of Merseyside is diverse and growing quickly. People in Merseyside want high skilled jobs and a greener economy.

To manage these challenges, we're:



Supporting over 86,300 people who are struggling to pay their bills, and our support will **double** by 2030. We're **helping 63,900 customers** with additional needs through Priority Services.



Employing more than **1,580 people** across Merseyside and this increased future investment will create more green jobs.



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GREENER

Merseyside has a number of challenges and opportunities:

Coastal erosion:

The coastal location of much of Merseyside makes the county vulnerable to flooding and erosion. Crosby in particular is at risk from coastal erosion threatening homes and infrastructure.

Protecting rivers and catchments:

Merseyside is a predominantly urban area and such a densely urban composition can have implication on water quality.

The nature of the sewer system across Merseyside and the rapid development of the Liverpool City Region presents substantial challenges in reducing the frequency of storm overflow operation to further improve river water quality.

People in Merseyside care about the environment, and want to know what we're doing about water quality in the Mersey and Dee Estuaries and the coast.

To manage these challenges, we're:



Investing **£12.7 million** in coastal defences at Crosby to protect vital sewer infrastructure from erosion by the sea. Our investment with partners will also protect up to **169 homes** from flooding.



Investing **£210 million** to improve the **26km** of river environment in Merseyside.



Spending over **£11m** in 'Cleaner Mersey' to investigate the best way to deploy the much larger anticipated investments required in the next 10 to 15 years.



Carrying out catchment management across **58km²** of the upland headwaters of the Mersey catchment to deliver river water quality benefits in the Mersey Estuary.



Investing **£166 million** to reduce activations of **20 storm overflows**.



A plan that makes Merseyside (including Halton) Stronger, Greener, Healthier

HEALTHIER

Merseyside has a number of challenges and opportunities:


Sustainable water supplies:

People in Merseyside want confidence that we'll continue to provide great quality drinking water and that we'll be able to meet future demand.


Healthier coastlines:

The coastal waters of Merseyside are important for the economy, in particular tourism and fisheries. However, the urbanised landscape and population size of Merseyside means that local bathing waters are increasingly at risk of storm overflow operation.


To manage these challenges, we're:



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



Investing **£85 million** across the Merseyside coastline to benefit bathing and shellfish waters.



Investing at two of our largest treatment works to protect the quality of drinking water for current and future generations.



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 Merseyside, 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