



Water for the North West

United Utilities Water Limited

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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 (EIR).

Your request:

I am investigating how effective the surface water drainage rebate is for stimulating water company consumers to reduce surface water run-off from their properties. For the avoidance of doubt, the information I am requesting under the Environmental Information Regulations 2004 is purely focussed on the impact of the surface water drainage rebate as an environmental objective. I would like to request the following information: The rationale behind the rebate amount you offer. The number of households and businesses utilising the surface water drainage rebate, both in raw numbers and as a percentage of total customers. The number and percentage of households and businesses utilising the surface water drainage rebate within each local authority within your water area and, if possible, by parliamentary constituency. The company's estimation of how much surface water run-off is prevented from entering the sewerage system across their network because of the surface water drainage rebate. I would prefer to receive this information in electronic format, PDF or Excel format as is convenient for you. Please confirm receipt of this request.

Our response:

We have a number of mechanisms to incentivise customers regarding surface water drainage and provide three broad types of incentives and rebates for customers:

- Charges that reflect the consumption of this service – for example, we levy surface water drainage charges to non-household customer based on the area of the property that drains to our sewer network. Therefore, a non-household customer is incentivised to find ways to divert the surface water from their property elsewhere (e.g. to a soakaway or to a water course) and hence reduce their surface water drainage charges.
- Direct incentives – for example, housing developers can receive incentive payments if they build houses whereby the surface water is not connected to our sewer network, or if they install devices that 'slow the flow' of the rainwater that drains into our network.
- Rebates for certain types of non-household customers under our concessionary surface water drainage scheme.

We have different customer groups that we provide these incentives to:

- Household customers
- Non-Household customers
- Housing developers

In general, our charges aim to incentivise all these customers to fully or partially disconnect the surface water that falls on their property from our network, and to incentivise them to install devices that slow the flow of surface water that enters our network after it rains.

Our current charges and incentive schemes relating to surface water drainage are set out below.

Households

- Surface water drainage charges can be avoided if the surface water from a customer's property does not drain to our sewer network
- We currently operate a number of trials, which include prize draws and bill discounts, to encourage the take up by customers of installing 'slow the flow' devices at their properties, e.g. water butts, rainwater planters etc.

Non-Households

- Please note that we do not charge non-household customers directly, as we charge retail companies that provide retail services to the non-household market.
- In the North West, most non-household customers pay based on the size of the area of their site that drains to our sewer network. These 'site area' charges are arranged into 15 bands. We will recalculate the site area that is charged if a customer disconnects and diverts the surface water that drains from part of their site to elsewhere.
- We provide a discount to the site-area charge that we apply to a customer if that area drains to a SUDS (Sustainable Urban Drainage System).
- We have begun trials for non-household customers similar to those we have been operating for household customers, as described above.
- We operate a concessionary scheme which provides discounts to surface water drainage charges for some groups of customers. These mostly follow the requirements of guidance issued by Defra in 2010 - [Concessionary Schemes for Community Groups for Surface Water Drainage Charges](#). These schemes are set out below:

Concessionary schemes for non-household community groups

Section 3.1 of Defra's guidance states -

'The Government is clear that it does not want to see community groups facing unaffordable increases in their water bills as a result of site area charging for SWD.'

On our website ([Charges for community groups | United Utilities](#)) we explain how our concessionary scheme is designed to help not-for-profit community groups. The following customers may be eligible for the concessionary scheme if the principal use is as a:

- Place of worship
- Scout and Girlguiding hall
- Sea cadets unit
- Community amateur sports club (as defined by HM Revenue & Customs)
- Village hall or community centre
- Cemetery
- Local authority park

Concessionary scheme for schools

Our wholesale charges scheme ([Wholesale charges | United Utilities](#) Section 5.3.3) also includes a concession for surface water drainage and highway drainage charges for some educational establishments, where we base these charges on a chargeable area. These include establishments An educational establishment which:

- used exclusively or nearly exclusively for delivering education and tuition of students
- with any or all of Key Stages 1–5 or equivalent; and also
- with a playground facility attached.

Numbers of customers under each scheme

In summary:

- 110,000 household customers (3.4%) are not connected for surface water
- 7,100 non-household customers (1.7%) are not connected for surface water
- 2,500 non-household customers (6.4%) are partially disconnected for surface water
- 3,400 non-household customers (2.3%) are on the concessionary charge for places of worship etc.
- 3,500 non-household customers (2.3%) are on the concessionary scheme for schools

We are unable to provide the number and percentage of households and businesses utilising the surface water drainage rebate within each local authority and within each parliamentary constituency under Regulation 12(4)(a) of the EIR, as this information is not held. We are also unable to estimate how much surface water run-off is prevented from entering the sewerage system across their network because of the surface water drainage rebate under Regulation 12(4)(a) of the EIR, as this information is not held.

Developers

For developers, we operate a tiered environmental incentive scheme which is aimed at incentivising them to build homes that are more efficient for both water usage and for surface water drainage. Details of this can be found here - [Environmental Incentives Scheme](#). The areas where we provide surface water drainage incentives (per new household connection) are:

Installation of a water butt or raised rain planter with a capacity of at least 200 litres connected to the properties main roof drainage. or Rain garden the size of 2% - 4% of the properties main roof that drains to the rain garden. or Green roof installation.	£20
Installation of rainwater harvesting system with a capacity of at least 4,000 litres for rainwater harvesting or 100 litres treatment capacity greywater reuse. or Installation of grey water re-use system as the primary water source for all toilets, with a minimum treatment capacity of 100 litres per day.	£400
No surface water connection – Where the property has no direct or indirect connection for surface water drainage to our sewers.	£288
Installation of permeable surfaces to the properties driveway/parking areas.	£150

Since this scheme was introduced in 2024/25, 128 plots have received one of the incentives set out above.

Between 2018 and 2024, developers received incentives for plots that had no surface water connection. These incentives reduced infrastructure charges and around 58,000 wastewater development plots and around 85,000 water development plots benefited during this period.

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