

Draft Drought Plan Consultation

Consultation Questions

1. Development of the draft plan

This is summarised in Section 1, 'How we developed the plan' technical report.

This plan represents a significant update from the previous plan published in 2022.

Do you have any comments on how we have developed this draft Drought Plan? In particular, are the key changes we have introduced clear and meaningful? Are you happy with the structure and format of the documents?

2. Experience of the 2025 drought event

This is summarised in Section 3, 'Lessons learned from 2025 drought event' technical report. Our review of lessons learned in 2025 has identified both areas for improvement and recognised good practice.

If you were affected by the drought in 2025, what was your experience? Please tell us anything you feel we did well, or could have done better, including any lessons that you feel are not reflected in this draft plan.

3. Customer agile communications

This is summarised in Section 6.1, 'Communication actions' technical report.

A key part of managing drought is engaging with customers. Our agile communications approach aims to encourage customers to reduce their water use voluntarily during dry weather. By helping customers reduce demand earlier, this approach is intended to delay the need for restrictions and reduce the likelihood that Temporary Use Bans will be required.

How effective do you think our current approach to communicating with customers during dry weather and drought conditions is? Are there ways we could improve how, when, or where we communicate?

4. Demand management actions

This is summarised in Table 1, 'Demand actions' technical report.

Our demand actions follow a phased approach and are considered within the range of the drought level. During drought events, activities to reduce demand are stepped up and are of critical importance to ensure water security and to protect the environment. The aim of these actions is to mitigate the impact of drought by reducing water consumption, to preserve available water supplies and minimise environmental impact. Demand actions are prioritised before seeking additional abstraction from the environment through drought permits or orders.

Do you have any comments on our demand management actions in our plan?

5. Drought permits/orders

This is summarised in Section 3, 'Supply actions' technical report.

Drought permits/orders are temporary changes to abstraction licences to increase the available supply of water by temporarily taking more water from specified sources. A map of potential drought permit sites is shown in Figure 1 of the 'Supply actions' technical report.

Do you have any comments on our drought permits in our plan?

Draft Drought Plan Consultation

6. Extreme drought management actions

This is summarised in Table 1, 'Extreme drought measures' technical report.

Since our previous plan, we have further developed and strengthened our approach to managing extreme drought by adopting a more adaptive and evidence-based planning framework. The updated plan significantly expands the range of supply and demand actions available to delay the need for emergency restrictions on household/domestic water use and non-household customers.

What are your thoughts on the extreme drought management actions in our plan?

7. Pennines drought levels

This is summarised in Section 3.3, draft Drought Plan.

To complement the existing drought levels at Haweswater and Dee, we have introduced new drought levels for the Pennines. The Pennines can experience drought conditions differently to other areas, so these new levels will help us better monitor local conditions and take the right actions at the right time, alongside our existing drought indicators.

Do you agree with our proposed new approach, which introduces drought levels in the Pennines?

8. Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)/Habitats Regulation Assessment (HRA)

This is summarised in the SEA/HRA environmental reports.

It has been determined that a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and a Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) are required for the development of the Drought Plan. In the context of drought planning, SEA assists in identifying the likely significant environmental effects of our drought options and determines how any adverse impacts might be mitigated.

Are there any comments you wish to make on the drought plan or the associated Strategic Environmental Assessment and Habitats Regulations Assessment Environmental Report?

9. Water Resources West

This is summarised in Section 1, 'Water Resources West' technical report.

United Utilities is an active core member of the regional water resources group Water Resources West (WRW). 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.

What are your thoughts on this approach?