

How we engage with our stakeholders

Delivering water and wastewater services to 7 million people in the North West brings us into contact with a wide variety of stakeholders. Ensuring we build strong, constructive relationships with them is vital for the success of our business.

We approach stakeholder engagement in an inclusive way, taking time to understand which stakeholders are interested in which topics, holding genuine, two-way conversations with them and, through continuous engagement, working hard to understand any concerns or issues from their perspective to ensure a suitable response from the company.

Interactions with our stakeholders take many forms, from formal meetings to day-to-day contacts, and focus on a range of topics from the future direction of the sector through to everyday operational matters.

Customers – through continuous focus on improving service, we can help to build their trust and confidence in our service delivery.

Suppliers – by maintaining a good relationship and working towards the same goals, we can deliver projects on time, to budget and to the required quality.

Investors and analysts – to help them understand our business in order to assist them in making the right investment decisions for themselves, their investors and clients.

Regulators – to help shape the policy and regulatory framework within which we operate.

Third Sector and NGOs – through engagement with groups representing economic, environmental, social and governance interests, we can better understand their issues and seek solutions to what are shared problems.

Politicians – by maintaining good lines of communications with North West MPs and their local offices, we can help resolve water-related constituency issues as well as discuss national policy topics.

Devolved authorities – by engaging with the emerging devolved arrangements, such as new metropolitan mayors, we can better understand the needs of the region we serve.

Business insight

Public consultation for the West Cumbria Pipeline

Ennerdale Water and the River Ehen, in West Cumbria, are habitats for protected species. To avoid the risk of long-term damage to the wildlife that relies on these water sources, we need to stop using Ennerdale as a source of water by 2022 when the Environment Agency withdraws its abstraction licence. To replace the loss of Ennerdale as a water source, we will be linking customers in parts of Cumbria to our regional water network by constructing a major new pipeline from Thirlmere to West Cumbria, a new water treatment works, pumping stations, and underground service reservoirs. By tapping into the spare capacity at Thirlmere reservoir, and with careful planning, we can ensure enough water for West Cumbria's households and businesses, whilst playing our part in giving nature a helping hand.

This project is as much about where we are working as it is about what we are building. It required planning permission from three local authorities – Copeland, Allerdale and Lake District National Park Authority. The scheme received approval in November 2016 and all three planning decisions were unanimous. This is no mean feat considering the largest section will require a 40-metre wide passage through a number of designated areas in the Lake District National Park.

This result is the culmination of several years of detailed planning and consultation with our customers. We've worked closely with local communities, businesses and stakeholders to develop the scheme, ensuring we minimise traffic inconvenience and safeguard the environment during construction.

Since 2013 we have carried out four phases of public consultation resulting in over 50 public exhibitions held in locations across Cumbria, over 150 local and parish council meetings, and many other stakeholder consultations. The standard and level of detail was commended by all three planning authorities and helped them reach their decisions.

It also means we have now achieved the first four ODIs, which are applicable to this scheme, and all ahead of time. It is worth noting that these first ODIs were critical in achieving the remaining milestones.

Work on the new pipeline has now begun, with the project due to be in service by March 2022.

Pictured: Our partnership with the West Cumbria Rivers Trust supports environmental engagement with the local community as well as a visitors drop-in centre in Keswick.



You can find out more about our consultation by watching a short video online at unitedutilities.annualreport2017.com/strategic-report/our-business-model/how-we-engage-with-our-stakeholders