

PRESS RELEASE

FIRST UK WATER COMPANY-NGO PARTNERSHIP IS BLUEPRINT FOR GREEN RECOVERY

8 JULY, 2021

- ***United Utilities and The Rivers Trust announce North West partnership***
- ***Strategic model could signal transformation for all rivers in UK and Ireland***
- ***Innovative approach taps into green financing to deliver results and value for society***

United Utilities and The Rivers Trust have today announced a ground-breaking strategic partnership to tackle the big challenges facing rivers in North West England.

The partnership formalises the existing strong relationship between the water company and the NGO which is the umbrella body for one of the fastest growing environmental movements in the UK and Ireland, comprising over 60 member Trusts.

It builds on years of joint working between the two organisations, and the approach could be replicated throughout the British Isles to bring a brighter future for society's green and blue spaces.

It is the first time a partnership has set about designing a framework to bring together everyone with an interest in the health of our rivers from source to sea. It will build better competence for more urgent action to tackle challenges that are increasingly important to society, such as pollution, flooding and water abstraction and help deliver adaptations and resilience to combat the extremes of climate change.

The Rivers Trust CEO, Mark Lloyd, said: *"The challenges facing the water environment affect everyone in society and cannot be solved by any organisation on its own. We all contribute to the problems, but we can all be part of the solutions if we work together to develop a shared understanding, consensus about an action plan and agreement about how to meet the costs. We are delighted to have signed this strategic partnership with United Utilities that will be a major step to achieving systemic change in the North West. Hopefully this is the first of many such partnerships in the UK and Ireland."*

United Utilities CEO, Steve Mogford, said:

"This is one of the most ambitious partnerships United Utilities has ever embarked upon and it provides a blueprint for a new framework of environmental collaboration and investment. For too long our rivers have suffered from a fragmented management approach. Our water environment is at a turning point and by working with the Rivers Trust we can help set the agenda to deliver real change for the better. We bring to the partnership more than 15 years of experience in treating water catchments as a single complex system and leveraging skills, resources and funding to make a difference."

Since 2005 United Utilities, one of the biggest landowners in the UK, has pioneered catchment management strategies, culminating in its current Catchment Systems Thinking (CaST) approach. This approach looks beyond United Utilities' own catchment land, utilising partnership working to enhance the environment across the North West. Over the last 15 years more than 11,000 hectares of peatland have undergone restoration work and dozens of farmers have been supported to help improve landscapes and raw water quality. Using a CaST approach, successful projects, including those on the River Wyre in Lancashire and the River Petteril in Cumbria, have shown how partnerships with other landowners, businesses,

regulators, NGOs and volunteers can target issues at source and maximise benefits and value for society.

In another pilot scheme - the Natural Course partnership – United Utilities collaborated directly with organisations, including The Rivers Trust, to develop strategic plans to enhance natural capital in the North West. The water company hosted a secondment from The Rivers Trust to maximise knowledge and better understand how and where to prioritise investment into nature-based solutions for its 2020-2025 business plan (AMP7).

Meanwhile The Rivers Trust movement maintained strong progress during 2020, despite Covid disruptions. Member trusts around the country implemented 248 natural flood management schemes, restored 62 wetlands and planted over 300,000 trees. However, strong partnerships like this are now needed to make sure green infrastructure is not just part of the Green Recovery, but part of our 'next normal' as we build resilience together to adapt to the Climate Crisis.

United Utilities expects the new partnership will facilitate longer-term planning of investment priorities, beyond the current five-year regulatory cycle, allowing faster adoption of nature-based solutions and other collaborative ventures.

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Notes to editors:

The following case studies are referenced in the press release above:

River Wyre in Lancashire – Natural Flood Management

In Thornton, near Blackpool, United Utilities has been working with the Wyre Rivers Trust, Wyre Council and McDermott Homes to employ natural flood management techniques that will protect new homes against flooding and improve water quality.

Around 3.3 hectares of wetland has been created and 1,000 cubic metres of flood storage which, as well as reducing flood risk, has provided habitat for wildlife and blue/green spaces for the community to enjoy.

United Utilities funded the delivery of the scheme, the design of which was also supported by Natural Course.

River Petteril in Cumbria – Reducing pollution and building a more resilient rural economy

The River Petteril flows through the Eden Valley in Cumbria, surrounded by dairy farmland and small rural communities. It formed a pilot project which brought together a wide range of stakeholders including farmers, regulators and big businesses. United Utilities delivered enhanced monitoring for the whole catchment to identify the sources of phosphate pollution and collaborated with a steering group to identify the most cost effective interventions. United Utilities helped farmers improve their slurry handling facilities, and the partnership was also joined with funding from locally-based food manufacturer Nestle, for whom many of the dairy farms were part of the supply chain. Nature-based solutions were employed at some of the wastewater treatment plants to provide treatment improvements. The result was a greater improvement in water quality beyond United Utilities' own assets at a lower cost to customers. Furthermore, the collaboration allowed additional natural capital benefits to be incorporated at a catchment-wide scale, such as enhanced biodiversity, soil conservation and tree planting. Finally it helped increase the resilience of a major local business and its supply chain.

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United Utilities

United Utilities provides water and wastewater services for 7 million people in North West England. Between 2020 and 2025 it will invest £5.9bn running and upgrading services to customers, with more than 5,000 employees and another 17,500 jobs supported through its supply chain.

The company owns and manages 57,000 hectares of water catchment land in some of the most beautiful and environmentally sensitive parts of the country.

United Utilities' headquarters are in Warrington. Its shares are listed on the London Stock Exchange and the FTSE 100 Index.

The Dow Jones Sustainability Index (DJSI) ranks the sustainability approach of the top ten per cent of the world's biggest companies based on long-term economic, environmental and social criteria.

For 2020, United Utilities' overall performance was 79 per cent and the company retained World Class status for the thirteenth consecutive year. United Utilities was also awarded SAM Bronze Class in the Sustainability Yearbook 2021.

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The Rivers Trust are conservation experts with a wealth of data and expertise at our fingertips. Through our network of over 63 local Trusts in England, Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland, and with over 350 dedicated specialists, we work in partnership at a catchment scale to make our shared vision a reality: wild, healthy, natural rivers, valued by all. To find out more, [visit our website](#).