

SECTION 16 | LONG-TERM IMPACTS, BENEFITS AND ASSUMPTIONS

ORiW represents a once-in-a-generation opportunity to deliver a resilient, catchment-wide wastewater solution that addresses the environmental pressures facing Windermere while generating significant social and economic benefits. The engineering feasibility study has established a seven-year construction programme, providing a defined pathway towards eliminating sewage discharges into Windermere and its wider catchment.

A whole catchment solution

The benefits of ORiW extend well beyond Windermere by removing wastewater from Grasmere, Esthwaite Water, Elterwater, Rydal Water and other critical connected lakes, rivers

and tarns, such as Blelham Tarn, across the catchment. Several of these have protected status under the Ramsar Convention, or are designated as sites of special scientific interest, or National Nature Reserves. The catchment-wide approach of ORiW will help protect some of the Lake District's most valued freshwater environments for generations to come.

Resilient to emerging challenges

Consolidating wastewater infrastructure into a single treatment location would create a more adaptable system capable of responding to evolving environmental standards, future demand and emerging contaminants, including PFAS. It would also provide opportunities to relocate

assets vulnerable to flooding and reduce the complexity of upgrading multiple treatment facilities across the catchment.

Rather than making repeated upgrades across a fragmented asset base, ORiW enables investment to be delivered once for the whole catchment, accelerating environmental improvements while removing harmful inputs from the lake. Delivered through a single programme of works over seven years, it will minimise disruption to communities, strengthen long-term resilience and provide a lasting solution that supports Windermere for the next century and beyond.

The benefits of ORiW



Better for the environment

Delivers a step change in the management of wastewater impacts on Windermere, supporting a cleaner and healthier lake for people and wildlife.



Better for water quality

Delivers a lasting improvement in the management of wastewater across the catchment.



Better for communities and visitors

For the first time, approximately 12,800 people across the catchment could benefit from connection to a modern wastewater system designed to support long-term environmental improvement and resilience. It will also strengthen Windermere's position as a venue for both national and international sport, including a potential future Olympics bid.



Better prepared for the future

Creates a more resilient wastewater system capable of responding to future environmental, population and climate pressures.



Better for the local economy

Supports and protects the future visitor economy and regional prosperity.



Better for flood-risk management

Increases sewer capacity and uses surface-water separation and sustainable drainage measures to better manage rainfall and reduce flood risk.

SECTION 16 | LONG-TERM IMPACTS, BENEFITS AND ASSUMPTIONS

Doing nothing is not an option

Based on initial assessments, meeting future environmental and regulatory requirements through successive investment cycles could require approximately £2.5 billion of upgrades to existing public wastewater infrastructure. While these investments would deliver continued improvements, they would not achieve the fundamental transformation needed to eliminate wastewater discharges into Windermere and safeguard England's largest natural lake for future generations.

Furthermore, this approach would account for more than two-thirds of the long-term bill impacts associated with ORiW, without delivering its environmental, economic and cultural benefits.

ORiW offers an alternative: a coordinated programme of investment designed to eliminate sewage discharges, strengthen infrastructure resilience and deliver lasting environmental improvements, rather than continuing the cycle of upgrading a fragmented wastewater network.

A lasting legacy

With the ambition to commence delivery from 2030 and a construction

programme of seven years, ORiW can deliver a catchment-wide solution, offering an opportunity to accelerate environmental recovery and generate long-term social and economic benefits for communities and businesses across the North West and beyond.

The programme will also establish a dedicated technical training centre, creating opportunities for skills development, employment and career progression across Cumbria. Designed to serve the community beyond the construction programme, the centre will help develop the workforce needed to support the region's long-term infrastructure and environmental ambitions.



Key assumptions of ORiW

The following assumptions underpin the project and its potential to deliver long-term benefits for communities, the environment and the wider region. They will be refined and tested as the project progresses.



Energy resilience

The ORiW programme assumes the infrastructure upgrades underway across Cumbria are delivered to time to enable the solution to operate effectively.



First-time sewerage connections

The proposed solution is assumed to create opportunities for residents, businesses and community wastewater facilities, that are not currently connected to the public sewerage network, to connect for the first time. Enabling these connections will support the overall ambition of ORiW. Realising this opportunity will require an assessment of the legislative and regulatory mechanisms available to facilitate new connections, ensuring that the widest possible environmental and community benefits can be achieved.



Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP)

The project is assumed to have the potential to be recognised as nationally significant infrastructure due to its scale, complexity and the environmental, social and economic benefits it is expected to deliver. As the programme develops, the suitability of pursuing a Direction under Section 35 of the Planning Act 2008 will be assessed to determine whether the project could benefit from being considered within the NSIP planning regime. Securing this status could provide a more streamlined and coordinated consenting process, helping to support timely delivery, reduce planning risk and increase confidence in the programme's long-term objectives and outcomes.



Regulatory support

It is assumed that the project will receive the necessary support, engagement and approvals from relevant regulatory bodies throughout its development and delivery. Given the project's potential to deliver significant environmental improvements, enhance water quality, strengthen infrastructure resilience and provide long-term benefits for communities and the wider region, collaborative working with project partners and regulators would help identify the most effective pathways for implementation.



Costs and benefits

Costs and benefits are underpinned by a robust methodology appropriate to this stage of development of the project. Costs and benefits will be further refined and appropriately assured as the project continues and options are refined as further information becomes available. Costs, benefits, risks and uncertainties will be subject to ongoing challenge, testing and assurance through detailed design.