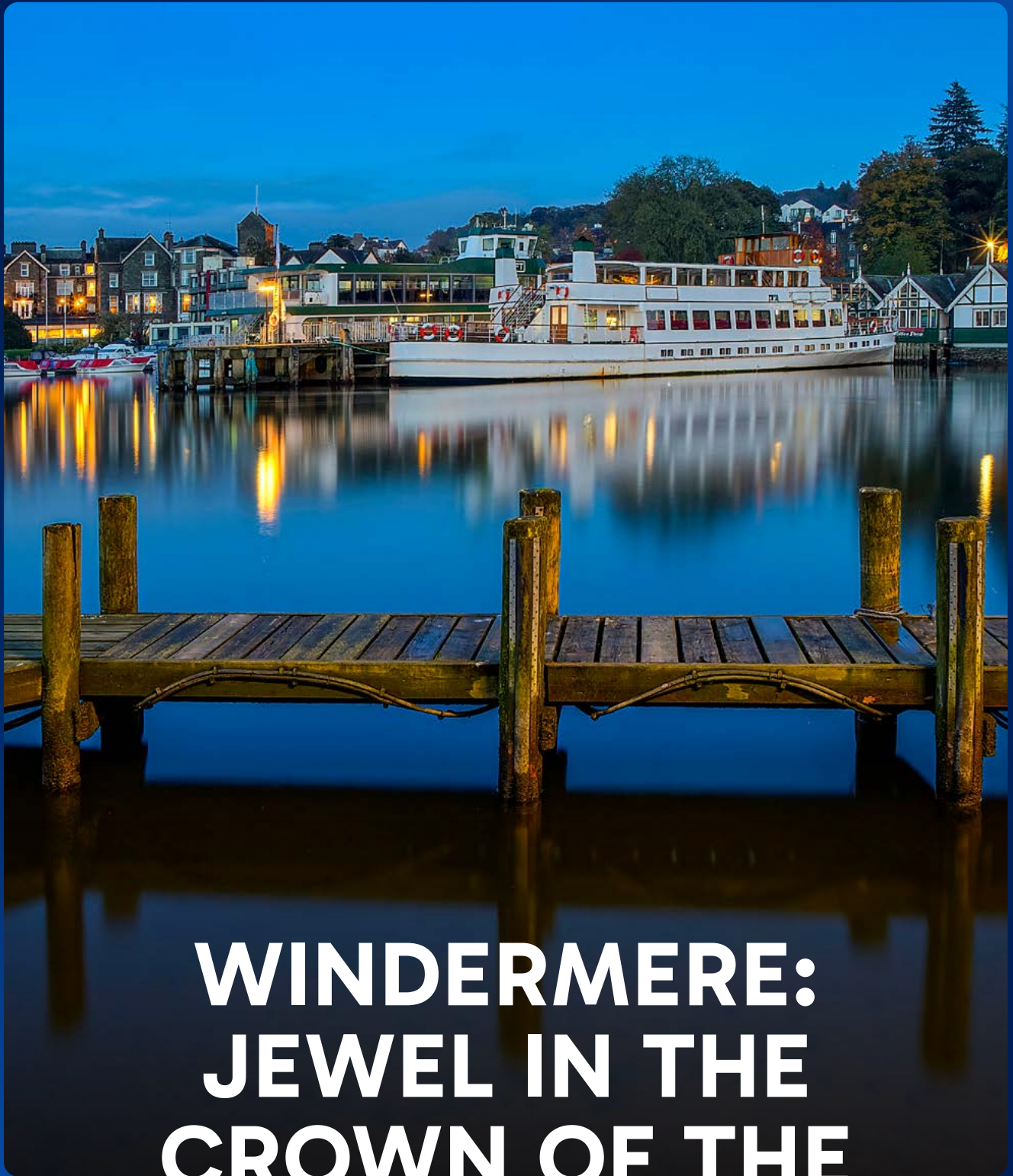


SECTION 5 | THE AMBITION OF ORiW



WINDERMERE: JEWEL IN THE CROWN OF THE LAKE DISTRICT

At the heart of a UNESCO World Heritage Site, within the Lake District National Park, Windermere is one of the most environmentally, culturally and economically important landscapes in England.

Windermere has increasingly found itself at the centre of a national and international debate about how we protect our natural environment for future generations from pollution. Previously, the question was whether Windermere had a problem. Today, the conversation is about delivering one of the most ambitious freshwater restoration projects anywhere in Europe.

The ambition

The ambition is clear: make Windermere one of the cleanest lakes in England by eliminating treated and untreated wastewater from public and private sources, alongside managing highway run-off, from the lake once and for all. This is not an incremental upgrade. It is a generational commitment to protect Windermere from the pressures it faces today and the pressures it will face over the next century.

The project offers the chance to create a lasting legacy: resilient wastewater infrastructure that protects nature, supports communities, sustains businesses and secures the future of one of England's most cherished landscapes.

The end state is uncompromising: Only Rainwater into Windermere. The ambition is to return Windermere as close to its natural condition as possible by eliminating point-source pollution inputs and harmful algal blooms. This will protect the health, appearance and ecology of the lake for generations to come, securing Windermere in its rightful place at the heart of a thriving National Park.

As England's largest natural lake and a landscape of international importance, Windermere demands a level of ambition equal to its significance. By achieving this project, Windermere can become a national blueprint for restoring and protecting our most treasured freshwater environments.

What?

The feasibility study brings together international expertise and leading engineering capability to test over 70 options for achieving the vision. It sets out a disciplined, evidence-led route from today's fragmented legacy system towards a future-ready approach to wastewater management across the catchment, eliminating all point source inputs into Windermere.

From that assessment, the study recommends preferred ways forward designed to deliver the end state of Only Rainwater into Windermere while maximising environmental benefit and minimising disruption to communities through the latest engineering and tunnelling techniques.

Once detailed design, approvals and mobilisation are complete, construction, to ensure only rainwater enters the lake, could take seven years. A new state-of-the-art treatment works downstream would deliver some of the highest wastewater treatment standards in England.

**For a place of
Windermere's
ecological, cultural
and economic
importance,
continuing as usual
is not enough.**



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Why?

Evidence shows that Windermere is already experiencing ecological pressures such as increasing algal biomass, nutrient enrichment and impacts on sensitive freshwater habitats and species. Modelling undertaken for the Environment Agency's Nutrient Futures for Windermere study indicates that climate change is likely to exacerbate these challenges. Rising temperatures, changing rainfall patterns, more intense storm events and longer periods of thermal stratification are expected to place additional pressure on the lake, as well as wastewater infrastructure – requiring a new approach to meet long-term climate resilience, outlined further in Section 5. While incremental investment will keep pace with this change, ORiW provides both a 'one and done' approach, avoiding ongoing disruption from repeated investment, and removes significant nutrient inputs from Windermere – something that can't be achieved through investment in existing infrastructure. Windermere needs a different solution to benefit the environment and communities – also outlined in Section 5.

How?

The study confirms that it is technically possible to intercept, transfer and treat public and private wastewater away from Windermere, minimising rainwater getting into the network and keeping it in the natural environment. It also identifies opportunities to manage highway run-off, ensuring all controllable wastewater pollution pathways are addressed.

Delivery requires a catchment-wide investment programme that stops pollution at source, captures wastewater before it reaches the lake and transfers it for advanced treatment.

The preferred ways forward are taking the wastewater away from the lake to a wastewater treatment works where it will be treated to some of the highest standards in England. The solutions offer the strongest balance of deliverability, environmental benefit, community impact and long-term resilience. The ambition can be delivered, creating enduring value for communities, businesses, customers and the environment over the next century. Infrastructure on this scale needs a clear regulatory framework, long-term certainty and access

to investment at pace. A solution designed for the next century allows investment to be considered over the long term, spreading costs over time and seeking to minimise the impact on customer bills.

Who?

The ORiW coalition brings together the organisations needed to turn ambition into delivery: the Environment Agency, Lake District National Park, Love Windermere, Save Windermere, United Utilities and Westmorland and Furness Council.

Achieving this ambition has required unprecedented, system-wide collaboration. In pursuit of this vision, regulators, the water company, environmental organisations, activists, local authorities, the Lake District National Park Authority and local stakeholder groups have come together, aligning investment, decision making and delivery to achieve an end to wastewater inputs into Windermere and its surrounding catchment.

The coalition's ambition is simple, visible and measurable:
Only Rainwater into Windermere.

**This is Windermere's
once-in-a-generation opportunity:
to protect and restore one of the
UK's most iconic lakes.**