

SECTION 7 | POLICY AND REGULATORY CONTEXT FOR CHANGE

ORiW aligns with the direction of UK policy, demonstrating how environmental investment can move beyond regulatory compliance to deliver integrated improvements in water quality, climate resilience and ecological recovery, while supporting economic growth.

Key national drivers include:

- **Water Framework Directive:** The European Union's main law for protecting and improving rivers, lakes, groundwater, estuaries and coastal waters which has been transposed into UK law and remains central to the protection of UK freshwaters.
- **Storm Overflows Discharge Reduction Plan (2023):** Targets elimination of ecological harm from storm overflows by 2050 and a 70% reduction in discharges to bathing waters by 2035.
- **Environmental Improvement Plan (2025):** Sets statutory targets to restore nature and reduce pollution. ORiW aligns directly with Goal 3 (clean, resilient and plentiful English waters).
- **The Environment Agency's EA2030: Change for a better environment strategy (2025):** Contribution to the Environmental Improvement Plan. ORiW aligns to delivery of EA2030 objectives relating to healthier water and place-based catchment management with local partners.
- **New Vision for Water White Paper (2026):** Sets out a major plan for water-sector reform and signals a move toward joined-up local planning. This is the governance model ORiW is already developing, and it is well-positioned as an early demonstration of the kind of place-based, multi-stakeholder programme the vision is designed to enable.
- **Regulators' Alliance for Progressing Infrastructure Development:** A partnership between Ofwat, the Environment Agency and the Drinking Water Inspectorate to accelerate delivery of strategically important infrastructure.
- **The Third UK Climate Change Risk Assessment (2022):** Identifies risks to freshwater habitats and species as a national priority and explicitly references Windermere as a freshwater body already showing climate-driven ecological change, consistent with this approach.
- **UNESCO World Heritage Site status:** Reinforces the national and international importance of protecting and enhancing Windermere's water quality.

