

Annex 2

CITY OF YORK COUNCIL

Water Scrutiny Report

Yorkshire Water July 2026

To: City of York Council, Economy, Place, Access and Transport Scrutiny Committee

Date: 21 July 2026

1. Background

- 1.1 Yorkshire Water delivers clean and wastewater services to over 5 million residential customers, and 141,000 businesses.
- 1.2 This includes responsibilities for sewage and, in some cases, surface water across the City of York, as well as potable water services. We work closely with City of York Council (COYC) colleagues on a range of work areas, notably highways, streetworks, and flooding.
- 1.3 This paper provides key updates regarding Yorkshire Water's responsibilities and roles regarding river health and flooding and the investment we are making.

2. Overview

- 2.1 The water sector is regulated in 5-year cycles, known as asset management periods (AMPs). The current period, AMP8, started in April 2025 and will end in March 2030.
- 2.2 Our business plan for this period was agreed with our economic regulator, Ofwat, in December 2024. It outlines our largest ever investment in the region totalling £8.3bn of expenditure. This is £3bn more than 2020-2025 and includes, but is not limited to:
 - £5.4bn for day-to-day expenditure and operating our core services
 - £99m to improve drinking water quality
 - £1.5bn to reduce storm overflow discharges
 - £350m to prevent nutrient pollution such as the levels of phosphorous present in the final effluent discharged to rivers
 - £163m to roll out smart meters to help reduce leakage and bring down customers' bills
 - £24m to support growth and development
 - £98m to invest in water quality monitoring
 - £70m to reduce barriers for fish in rivers
- 2.3 A breakdown of the schemes anticipated to take place in the City of York Council area will be shared with members prior to the meeting. This list is indicative and will be subject to amendment throughout the Asset Management Period.

- 2.4 The first year of this AMP, April '25- March '26, saw £990m invested across Yorkshire to improve our infrastructure, this included completing 88 significant investment schemes and replacing 174.7km of water mains. We've also installed 177,000 smart meters to help people save water and reduce their water bills.
- 2.5 During this time we have also made some notable improvements, including reducing leakage by 18.5% compared to the 2020 baseline and reducing external sewer flooding incidents by 10.1%.

3. River Health

- 3.1 There are many influences on river water quality. In March 2023, based on the 2022 Water Framework Directive (WFD) assessments, the Environment Agency stated the following reasons for waterbodies failing to reach 'good' ecological status:
- Storm overflows - 7%
 - Wider water industry - 36% (including storm overflows)
 - Agriculture - 40%
 - Urban and transport - 18%
- NB They did not specify the cause of the other 6%.

Additionally, figure 1 shows the apportionment of annual loads of nitrogen, phosphorus and fine-grained sediment, from both diffuse (agriculture, urban, river channel banks, atmospheric deposition, groundwater) and point (sewage treatment works, septic tanks, combined sewer overflows, storm tanks) sources to rivers at Water Framework Directive waterbody scale in the York Central and York Outer areas.

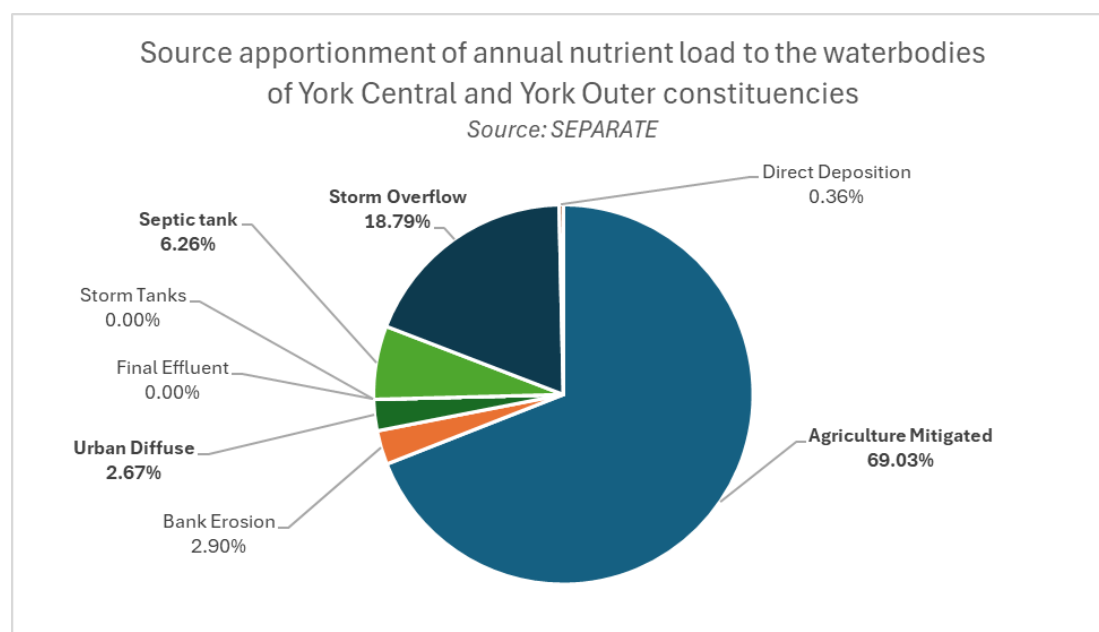


Figure 1 Source apportionment of annual nutrient load to the waterbodies of York Central and York Outer constituencies
Source: <https://data.catchmentbasedapproach.org/datasets/therivertrust::separate-all-sources-of-phosphorus/about>

3.2 Waterbodies in the England are classified by the Environment Agency through three-yearly sampling programmes undertaken as part of the Water Framework Directive (WFD). The last cycle of data to be published online is from 2022, with the 2025 data expected to be published in autumn 2026.

While 21 waterbodies are classed as falling either wholly or partially within the York Central and Outer area, it is the following four that make up the largest part of the region. Please note, all classifications and associated data is from 2022 and can be viewed publicly on [the Environment Agency's Catchment Data Explorer website](#).

3.2.1 The catchment from Claxton into the City Centre, known as *Tang Hall Bk/Old Foss Bk catch, trib of River Foss Water Body* is rated as 'moderate ecological status'. With the following reasons for not achieving good (RNAG) and reasons for deterioration (RFD)

Reason Type	SWMI	Activity	Category	Classification Element
RNAG	Point source	Private Sewage Treatment	Domestic General Public	Ammonia (Phys-Chem)
RNAG	Physical modification	Flood protection	Local and Central Government	Mitigation Measures Assessment
RNAG	Physical modification	Urbanisation - urban development	Urban and transport	Invertebrates
RNAG	Point source	Private Sewage Treatment	Domestic General Public	Invertebrates
RNAG	Point source	Private Sewage Treatment	Domestic General Public	Phosphate
RNAG	measures delivered to address reason, awaiting recovery	Not applicable	No sector responsible	Polybrominated diphenyl ethers (PBDE)
RNAG	Physical modification	Land drainage - operational management	Agriculture and rural land management	Dissolved oxygen
RNAG	Diffuse source	Poor nutrient management	Agriculture and rural land management	Dissolved oxygen
RNAG	Point source	Sewage discharge (continuous)	Water Industry	Dissolved oxygen
RNAG	Point source	Private Sewage Treatment	Domestic General Public	Dissolved oxygen
RNAG	Point source	Trade/Industry discharge	Industry	Phosphate
RFD	Unknown (pending investigation)	Unknown (pending investigation)	Sector under investigation	Dissolved oxygen
RNAG	measures delivered to address reason, awaiting recovery	Not applicable	No sector responsible	Mercury and Its Compounds
RNAG	Point source	Sewage discharge (continuous)	Water Industry	Phosphate
RNAG	Physical modification	Urbanisation	Urban and transport	Mitigation Measures Assessment
RNAG	Diffuse source	Poor soil management	Agriculture and rural land management	Phosphate
RNAG	Point source	Misconnections	Industry	Phosphate

3.2.2 The Ouse through central York, known as *Ouse from River Nidd to Stillingfleet Beck Water Body* catchment, is rated as ‘*moderate ecological status*’ by the Environment Agency. Reasons for not achieving good status (RNAG) and reasons for deterioration (RFD), as reported by the EA are:

Reason Type	SWMI	Activity	Category	Classification Element
RNAG	Unknown (pending investigation)	Unknown (pending investigation)	Sector under investigation	Perfluorooctane sulphonate (PFOS)
RNAG	measures delivered to address reason, awaiting recovery	Not applicable	No sector responsible	Polybrominated diphenyl ethers (PBDE)
RNAG	Point source	Sewage discharge (continuous)	Water Industry	Phosphate
RNAG	Physical modification	Urbanisation	Urban and transport	Mitigation Measures Assessment
RNAG	measures delivered to address reason, awaiting recovery	Not applicable	No sector responsible	Mercury and Its Compounds
RFD	Unknown (pending investigation)	Unknown (pending investigation)	Sector under investigation	Mercury and Its Compounds
RNAG	Diffuse source	Poor nutrient management	Agriculture and rural land management	Phosphate
RNAG	Physical modification	Flood protection	Local and Central Government	Mitigation Measures Assessment

3.2.3 The Holgate Beck from Askham Bryan into the City Centre, known as *Holgate Beck to Ouse Water Body*, is rated as ‘*moderate ecological status*’ by the Environment Agency. Reasons for not achieving good status (RNAG) and reasons for deterioration (RFD), as reported by the EA are:

Reason Type	SWMI	Activity	Category	Classification Element
RNAG	Point source	Misconnections	Local and Central Government	Dissolved oxygen
RNAG	Point source	Misconnections	Local and Central Government	Ammonia (Phys-Chem)
RNAG	Point source	Sewage discharge (intermittent)	Water Industry	Phosphate
RNAG	Point source	Sewage discharge (intermittent)	Water Industry	Invertebrates
RNAG	Physical modification	Urbanisation	Urban and transport	Mitigation Measures Assessment
RNAG	measures delivered to address reason, awaiting recovery	Not applicable	No sector responsible	Polybrominated diphenyl ethers (PBDE)
RNAG	measures delivered to address reason, awaiting recovery	Not applicable	No sector responsible	Mercury and Its Compounds
RNAG	Physical modification	Flood protection	Local and Central Government	Mitigation Measures Assessment

- 3.2.4 The River Foss from Strensall into the City Centre, known as *Foss from the Syke to the River Ouse Water Body*, is rated as ‘*moderate ecological status*’ by the Environment Agency. Reasons for not achieving good status (RNAG) and reasons for deterioration (RFD), as reported by the EA are:

Reason Type	SWMI	Activity	Category	Classification Element
RNAG	Point source	Private Sewage Treatment	Domestic General Public	Phosphate
RNAG	Point source	Sewage discharge (continuous)	Water Industry	Phosphate
RNAG	Physical modification	Urbanisation	Urban and transport	Mitigation Measures Assessment
RNAG	Unknown (pending investigation)	Unknown (pending investigation)	Sector under investigation	Perfluorooctane sulphonate (PFOS)
RNAG	measures delivered to address reason, awaiting recovery	Not applicable	No sector responsible	Polybrominated diphenyl ethers (PBDE)
RNAG	Physical modification	Urbanisation - urban development	Urban and transport	Invertebrates
RNAG	Point source	Sewage discharge (continuous)	Water Industry	Invertebrates
RNAG	Point source	Sewage discharge (continuous)	Industry	Phosphate
RNAG	measures delivered to address reason, awaiting recovery	Not applicable	No sector responsible	Mercury and Its Compounds

- 3.4 As outlined in section 2 we have significant investment planned this AMP including £1.5bn to reduce CSO discharges (please see section 4 for more information) and £350m to reduce nutrient pollution, namely reducing phosphorous present in the treated effluent we return to the environment.
- 3.5 We have set ourselves the goal of reducing phosphorous in our final effluent by 75% by 2030 (from 2020/21 baseline). We’ve already made significant progress in this area over the last 5 years, reducing phosphorus at 80 of our treatment works and reducing levels by 56% (against 2020/2021 baseline). In York phosphorous removal schemes are planned at York Rawcliffe, York Naburn, and Haxby Walbutts treatment works.
- 3.6 As the RNAGs demonstrate however, our assets and operations are not the only influences on river health. As such working in partnership is essential; we work with both with local groups as well as the EA, City of York Council and the Combined Authority and the agricultural sector to help improve water quality.
- 3.7 An example of cross-sector work centres around the impact of private properties misconnected into the Yorkshire Water surface water network, allowing untreated waste to enter watercourses directly and continuously. The legal limit Yorkshire Water has is only to identify the property and issue a letter to the owner to outline what is misconnected with advice on how to resolve it. Any legal proceedings where the property owner does not rectify the misconnection sit with the local authority

under s59 of the Building Act and the team have been working across the region to build lost relationships and understanding with councils. There are currently six known misconnections open in the York City Council area. A further eleven discovered since 2023 have been resolved.

- 3.8 Within the York area the Yorkshire Water River Health Improvement Team are actively engaged with the following citizen science groups:

River Foss Society

One of the first groups we engaged with, the team have been in contact with the River Foss Society since July 2024, providing information on about Yorkshire Water investment and asset operation as well as monitoring equipment such as Hanna Checkers for phosphate and ammonia, Riverfly kits, and reagents to support their citizen science programme. The group regularly contribute their water quality data to the Yorkshire River Watch app, building a great picture of the catchment and impact of discharges.

Ouse it or Lose It

The team were contacted in May this year following a referral from another stakeholder who had passed on information about the citizen science we are supporting around the Yorkshire region. We will be supporting the group with Hanna Checkers and delivering them on-site later this month to talk about what challenges they are having and where we can support.

York Rowing Club

We recently established contact with the York Rowing Club via another stakeholder, Yorkshire Dales Rivers Trust, to investigate some issues raised at an outfall near the rowing club. We're combining the meeting on site with the Ouse it or Lose it session.

Yorkshire Dales Rivers Trust

The team have worked closely with the Yorkshire Dales Rivers Trust almost from the very beginning of the team coming into existence with our first meeting in March 2024. Since then, we've supported the charity with information, investigations, and citizen science support by rolling out CaSTCo (Catchment Systems Thinking Cooperative) developed methodologies like Outfall Safaris, Hanna Checkers, and Riverfly monitoring. Our team of Investigation & Engagement Leads, Improvements Leads, and Senior River Health Officers have also taken part in numerous practical volunteering sessions, removing skunk cabbage and balsam from land around watercourses.



Figure 2 Examples of some citizen science kit provided to groups showing the ammonia and phosphate Hanna Checkers and Riverfly kits.

University of York

The University of York's AQuA (Action for Quality Aquatic environments) project has been supported by the team from the beginning, providing data and on-site support where requested. Groups such as the River Foss Society have been heavily involved in the project and it's been a positive example of organisations working

together on citizen science initiatives to understand our river impacts more clearly.

4 Combined Sewer Overflows

- 4.1 The combined sewer network conveys both wastewater from residential and commercial properties and surface water runoff from impermeable areas such as roofs and pavements. During periods of heavy or sustained rainfall, the volume of surface water entering the system can exceed its hydraulic capacity. Under such conditions, combined sewer overflows (CSOs) operate as a relief mechanism, allowing excess flows to be discharged thereby preventing wastewater surcharges and the associated risk of flooding to properties and infrastructure. This reflects the original design of the network, much of which was constructed several decades ago.
- 4.2 There is a commonly held perception that discharges from storm overflows have increased significantly in recent years. However, this is not necessarily the case. A more accurate interpretation is that the visibility and reporting of discharges has improved, primarily due to the widespread installation of Event Duration Monitoring (EDM) devices. As a result, there is now a more complete, and robust, dataset on overflow discharges than was previously available.
- 4.3 Across Yorkshire, there are approximately 2,200 CSOs, all of which are displayed on a publicly accessible interactive mapping platform. This platform provides near real-time information on individual storm overflow discharge activity. Data is typically subject to an approximate 15-minute delay to allow for transmission and initial validation processes. We also publish the validated data monthly on our website and annually to the the Environment Agency.
- 4.4 We recognise that the use of CSOs is a matter of significant concern for customers and stakeholders and that we must reduce the frequency and duration of discharges. While these assets operate under permits issued by the Environment Agency, and discharges during rainfall conditions do not constitute a breach of consent, we appreciate how dissatisfied customers are about their use. Accordingly, a comprehensive investment programme has been developed to deliver sustained reductions in discharges and to support compliance with Government prescribed targets.
- 4.5 As outlined above, we are investing £1.5 billion during the current regulatory period (AMP8) to reduce storm overflow discharges. This investment programme is designed to contribute towards achieving the relevant Government targets for storm overflow performance.
- 4.6 Two main programmes of investment are running concurrently over different time spans to reduce discharges to the aquatic environment:
 - Storm Overflow Discharge Reduction Plan (SODRP), a Defra target under the Water Industry National Environment Programme (WINEP), which aims to reduces

discharges from all individual storm overflow assets to less than 10 per year by 2050:

	No. Overflows	2030	2035	2045	2050
Bathing Water Site CSOs	10%	50%	100%		
High Priority Site CSOs	33%	38%	75%	100%	
Total CSOs	Remaining 57%	20%	40%	80%	100%

High Priority Sites:

- Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs),
- Special Areas of Conservation (SAC),
- Urban Wastewater Treatment Regulations sensitive areas,
- Chalk streams,
- Waters currently failing our ecological standards due to storm overflows,
- Shellfish Water Protected Areas,
- Special Protected Areas (SPAs),
- Marine Conservation Zones (MCZs),
- Ramsar sites.

Figure 3 Table outlining the expected upgrade schedule of storm overflows under the SODRP by 2025

- Storm Spill Reduction Programme (SSRP), an OfWat Performance Commitment to reduce the number of annual discharges as an average across the asset base to a maximum of 18 per asset.

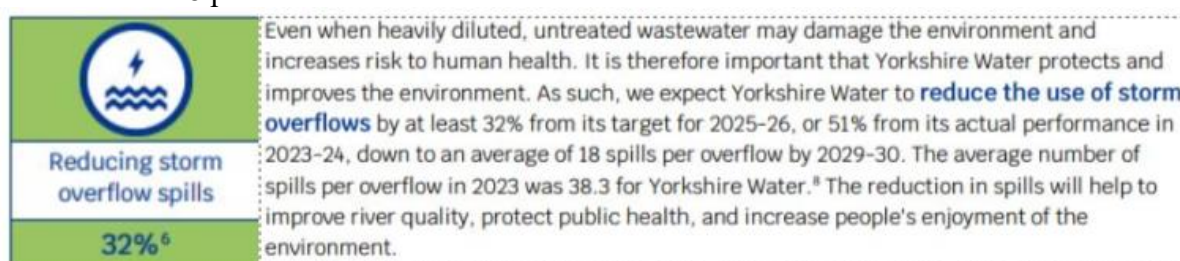


Figure 4 OfWat Performance Commitment for reduction of storm overflow discharge to an average of 18 per asset across the asset base by March 2030

Source: <https://www.ofwat.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/Overview-of-Yorkshire-Waters-PR24-final-determination-1.pdf>

- 4.7 These conflicting targets from multiple regulators make prioritisation complex and selection is based on a fine balance of discharge numbers vs discharge volume vs cost-effectiveness vs receiving waterbody pressures.
- 4.8 While the dominant nutrient load in the York waterbodies is attributed to agriculture, as seen previously, around 19% of the load stems from storm overflow assets. In York we currently have 21 schemes proposed to improve storm overflows performance (see figure 5 for the full Yorkshire Water AMP8 proposed investment map, which includes clean water and wastewater projects). Please note, there is a small chance some schemes may not progress to delivery if there are unforeseen circumstances such as unviable ground conditions.

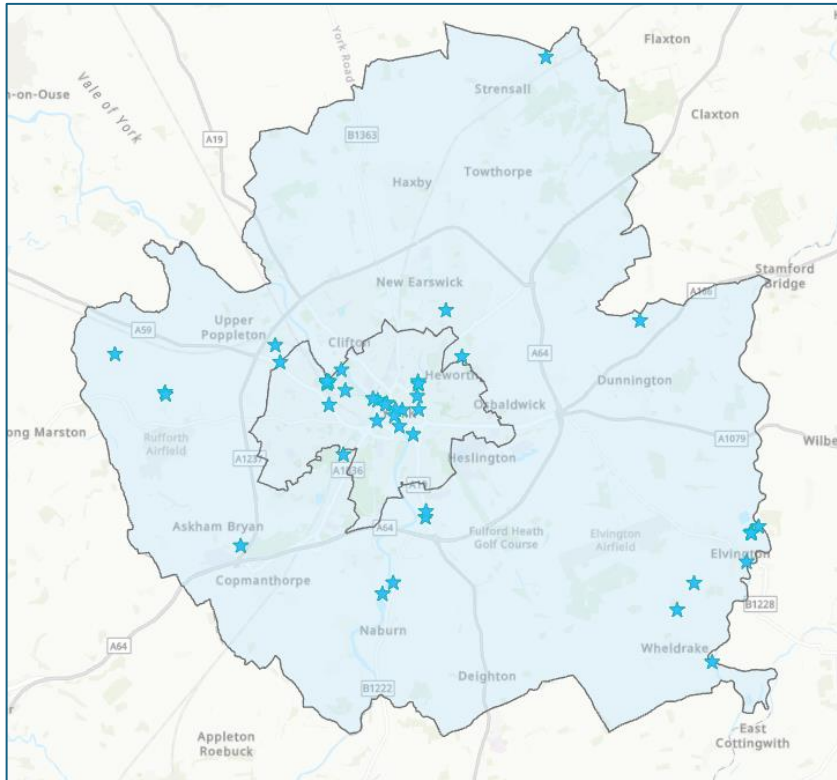


Figure 5 Map of all Yorkshire Water proposed AMP8 investment in the York Central and York Outer constituencies

- 4.9 As these progress to delivery we will be in touch with the corresponding ward councillors to provide further details.

5 Flooding and Integrated Water Management Planning

- 5.1 Integrated Water Management Planning (IWMP) brings partners together to plan water, flooding, and growth at a whole-catchment level rather than through separate schemes. It is particularly needed in York because flooding is driven by multiple interacting sources, alongside increasing pressures from climate change and development. The approach focuses on coordinated, integrated solutions, combining nature-based measures, infrastructure upgrades, and shared investment across organisations. This results in reduced flood risk, better value for public investment, and improved resilience and environmental outcomes for the city.
- 5.2 Yorkshire Water will take a phased approach to IWMP delivery. In the short term, the focus will be on improving existing assets, investigating flood risks, and progressing priority schemes (e.g. pumping, sewer upgrades, and data-led studies). Through AMP8 (the next 2–5 years), Yorkshire Water will invest in capacity, treatment works, and integrated catchment solutions, while co-developing an IWMP with partners to align funding and delivery. In the longer term, Yorkshire Water will support the delivery of a place-based IWMP and develop a business case for large-scale, multi-benefit solutions (e.g. nature-based storage and upstream interventions) to provide sustained flood resilience.

- 5.3 A new North Area partnership team, comprising colleagues from YW, EA, NYC, Y&NYCA, and OuseWem, has been established to deliver a “Working with Water” partnership for the region. The partnership supports integrated water management across York and North Yorkshire, underpinned by the same core aims. To date, work has focused on aligning partner priorities, governance, and data sharing, alongside testing a pragmatic, catchment-based pilot approach to build momentum and avoid duplication. The team meets monthly, and a Local Levy bid to fund a programme coordinator is due in September 2026.

Bathing Water Designation

- 6.1 Should any stretch of the Ouse or Foss be designated as a Bathing Water, this would have a range of implications. Bathing water quality in England is managed through a structured, seasonal monitoring programme designed to protect public health and drive long-term environmental improvement. The bathing water season runs annually from May to September, during which designated coastal and inland sites are sampled regularly by the Environment Agency to assess water quality.
- 6.2 Water quality is highly sensitive to weather conditions. Heavy or prolonged rainfall can wash pollutants from roads, farmland and urban areas into rivers and coastal waters, leading to temporary dips in quality—particularly following heavy and/or prolonged rainfall. Pollution from rainfall-driven pathways, for example CSOs and runoff from roads and farmland, are the dominant drivers of short-term pollution spikes.
- 6.3 Each season, the Environment Agency undertakes extensive monitoring, collecting hundreds of water samples across designated bathing waters. These samples measure bacteria levels and form the basis of the annual classifications published for the public.
- 6.4 Bathing waters are classified annually under the revised Bathing Water Directive, introduced in 2015. This directive raised water quality standards, updated monitoring criteria and strengthened public information requirements. Under the current system, bathing waters are categorised as Excellent, Good, Sufficient or Poor based on a 4-year rolling average. The Environment Agency’s SWIMFO website provides site-specific information for all designated bathing waters.
- 6.5 Significant regulatory changes are now shaping the future of bathing water management. The Environment Act 2021 introduced legally binding targets requiring major reductions in storm overflow discharges near bathing waters by 2035. Meeting these targets will require the largest investment ever made in the wastewater network between 2025 and 2030, with a substantial share directed toward reducing storm overflow discharges and upgrading wastewater treatment facilities near designated bathing sites.
- 6.6 Improving bathing water quality is a shared responsibility. Water companies, regulators, local authorities, landowners and local communities all play essential roles in delivering sustained improvements. The Yorkshire Bathing Water Partnership is central to coordinating this collaborative effort.

Regulatory Review of the Water Sector

- 7.1 Yorkshire Water recognise Regulatory Reform as a key opportunity to resolve many long-term issues within the water sector and its regulatory framework. Many of the issues within the water sector are longstanding and, in some cases, generated by the current processes that determine pricing, investment and environmental standards.
- 7.2 The current regulatory model struggles to balance the inherent trade offs in managing the water sector between cost and outcomes. This is further confused by the numerous regulators and related voices which have different and competing priorities.
- 7.3 Equally, the current system is heavily weighted toward national priorities at the expense of regional flexibility and community feedback. This makes it difficult for Yorkshire Water to deliver regional and local priorities which do not fit neatly into predetermined national frameworks. Through our existing work, Yorkshire Water has seen first hand how effective partnership working can be at delivering positive change and the regulatory reform offers an opportunity to accelerate this way of working.
- 7.4 Regulatory Reform also offers a key opportunity to improve the investability of the water sector, which has tracked consistently below investment opportunities in similar sectors such as energy for some years. Restoring the “aaa” rating of the sector and providing clarity is key to encouraging further investment. This will give the water sector more scope to deliver further investment at pace, whilst reducing the burden on customer bills to meet the increasing demands of environmental and supply obligations.
- 7.5 *Key Measures Supported by Yorkshire Water*
 - 7.5.1 Yorkshire Water has engaged with Government throughout the reform process. A selection of these key deliverables is outlined below:
 - A single independent regulator – By combining Ofwat, the Drinking Water Inspectorate and the water functions of the Environment Agency and Natural England, we can deliver a clearer strategic direction for the sector with a consistent delivery of regulation. This will improve understanding amongst the public who may find the current system confusing and provide greater confidence for investors.
 - A new supervisory regulatory model – Under the current “one-size-fits-all” approach taken by regulation the range of different opportunities and challenges faced by different water companies are ignored. This can create perverse incentives which result in poorer outcomes for customers and the environment. Under a new “supervisory” model the new regulator will have more discretion to manage water companies on a case by case basis, improving outcomes and value-for-money.
 - Regional systems planning – Local planning is currently highly complex with water companies expected to input into over 20 different planning frameworks. We welcome the Government intention to cut this to just two. Furthermore we welcome the proposal to deliver new regional systems planning bodies which will bring together local stakeholders to deliver on

regional water priorities and deliver a more holistic approach to the management of local catchments.

Contacting Yorkshire Water

- 8.1 Members of the public should contact Yorkshire Water through the contact details provided on our website, <https://www.yorkshirewater.com/get-in-touch/> or by phone on 0345 124 2424.
- 8.2 Councillors and Council Officers should contact the Public Affairs Team. Details will be shared directly.

Tim Myatt
Head of Corporate Affairs

Contact Officer: Sarah Robinson, Corporate Affairs Manager