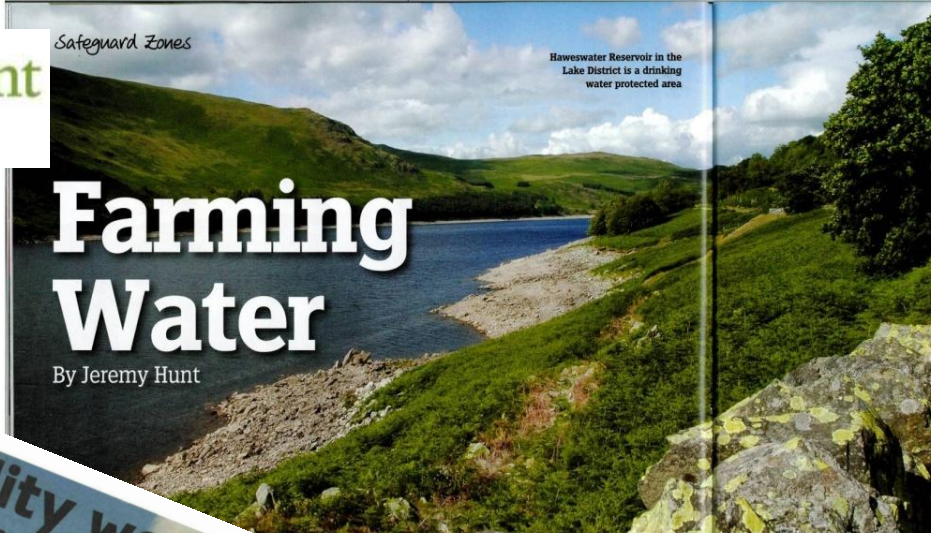


# Regulatory background Action



Environment Agency

Safeguard Zones



Haweswater Reservoir in the Lake District is a drinking water protected area

## Farming Water

By Jeremy Hunt

**Water quality worries for reservoir bosses**  
Utility firm acts over supplies from surrounding areas

**BY MARK SMITH**  
Two Bolton reservoirs have been declared 'safeguard zones' over falling water quality in the surrounding area. United Utilities look at water supply concerns that worsen near Ennerthorpe and with pollution among the possible problems. The area is one of 16 across the North West which have been designated 'water safeguard zones' because local rivers, reservoirs and boreholes are getting worse. The firm is due to host a series of 'meetings' involving councils and landowners to discuss the underlying problems. The company said that although customers' tap water is not affected, the problems that water from the reservoirs which supply 40 per cent of Bolton's drinking water need to be treated with increasingly expensive and environmentally-unfriendly chemicals to make it fit to drink. Catherine Straker, manager of Catchment Strategy for United Utilities, said: "In some cases, this deterioration has been happening over decades as the result of practices which are long established. Practices like draining bog, to grazing and help improve water quality. In the past, we've known that it's not good for the environment. Biodiversity or protection area which yields more than ten thousand litres of water a day for consumption, and where raw water quality has got worse over time as a result of human activity. Not saying who the problem is occurring or who is responsible, but it acknowledges that there is one. Working with the Environment Agency, we want to bring local people together to ask them what they think is causing the problem and think about what could be done."



WARNING Kate Snow

**“We aren't suggesting that farmers are involved in any malpractice but we're trying to identify and address anything”**

These zones have been created with the intention of enabling both United Utilities and the Environment Agency to work with landowners in a way that will help them improve the management of their farms in sensitive areas without affecting their livelihoods.

ing to be a costly problem for deal with and one that involves as they see as not being environmentally friendly. try and find a solution to the them United Utilities is collaborating in the Environment Agency and has entitled new water Safeguard Zones in the North West.

Action plans will be created for each zone by a partnership of United Utilities, Environment Agency and local stakeholders who will use knowledge of catchment management gleaned from similar work on their own land. United Utilities says there's potential for landowners taking part to access agri-environment scheme grants as part of the process of water quality improvement and its staff will be prepared to work with them to achieve any financial benefits that may be available.

Regulations regarding water quality are contained within the Water Framework Directive. Within this very detailed massive is a designation of what constitutes a drinking water protected area. This is anywhere used for the abstraction of more than 10 mega litres per day or 50 people served and is something that covers not only the major water companies but also the larger domestic abstractors.

But some water abstracted from a water protection area can show signs of deterioration as a result of human activity – most usually by colour, the

A typical case would be Haweswater in the Lake District where the reservoir itself has been designated as a drinking water protected area and the whole of the catchment area around it has now been designated as a Safeguard Zone for colour. Over the last two decades there has been deterioration in the colour of the water caused by human activity, according to United Utilities.



"But we now want farmers to have a real understanding of what a Safeguard Zone is so that we can address these issues. What a Safeguard Zone is actually saying is there is a problem here – and that problem is caused by something the farmers or other stakeholders are doing on that catchment area," says Kate Snow. "This designation isn't saying exactly where the problem is occurring or who is responsible, but it simply acknowledges that there is a problem."

The Environment Agency is the lead body responsible for drawing up an action plan to deal with such a problem for each Safeguard Zone and brings together all the stakeholders and anyone who has an interest in that catchment area to discuss what they think is causing it and what action can be taken to prevent further deterioration and hopefully reverse it.

So what are the main causes of water quality deterioration? United Utilities say there is a range of causes. Solvents, for example, that are detected in drinking water are most likely to be an issue of industry. Where nitrates are found in bore-hole water or algae in surface water the cause is a nutrient issue and could be

caused by farming practices, septic tank seepage or even golf-courses which are heavy users of nitrates.

"Discussions with stakeholders raises their awareness that they are operating in a drinking water catchment area and that there is an issue. And the solution to the problem where farmers are concerned may simply be down to utilising fertilisers and pesticides in a more sustainable way," adds Kate

"We need farmers to farm the land and United Utilities is very supportive of farmers. We aren't suggesting that farmers are involved in any malpractice but we're trying to identify and address anything that is having a cumulative adverse effect on the quality of drinking water."

"It may be necessary for farmers to make certain changes to routine practices. That may mean taking a look at the times of year when most of the manure is spread or even using different pesticides. Perhaps a washing off area for equipment used in pesticide treatment has a drain that leads into a watercourse and the farmer didn't realise that.

"Growing buffer strips of woodland attracts funding and can be very beneficial in improving water quality. Soil sampling too can be a big help. Our soil sampling can help farmers save money by using manure more effectively and perhaps even removing the need to use any inorganic fertilisers at all on certain parts of the farm. These are the issues we want to address and to work more closely together."

Jane Hodgson, water resources adviser with the Environment Agency in the North West says farmers, landowners and other interested parties from within a drinking water catchment area will be invited to meetings to discuss the action plan for the Safeguard Zones.

"It's a voluntary action plan and will enable farmers to take positive steps to address any deterioration in drinking water quality that has been identified," says Jane Hodgson.

In its latest round of fund applications, United Utilities hopes to secure an allocation that will help benefit farmers in a practical way. While the primary aim is to improve water quality in catchment areas where there have been problems – and to sustain that level of quality – it's to be hoped that farmers and landowners will also have received guidance along the way covering a range of issues to help them farm more efficiently and benefit water quality into the bargain.



Thirlmere and Helvellyn

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# Regulatory background

## Action: Wayoh catchment safeguard zone



- Partnership created with United Utilities the Environment Agency, Ribble Rivers Trust and the Irwell Rivers Trust.
- Spearhead a Safeguard Zone action plan for the Wayoh catchment to stop and reverse the deteriorating trend in water quality due to pesticides.



# Current position

- UU must take a cautious and responsible position
- UU has still not had any regulatory failures
- Balance between mechanical and chemical grounds maintenance
- UU lifted its ban for grounds maintenance control at non-drinking water reservoir locations
- Pilot controlled use in one business area
- Review position upon completion of pilot

# Current position



**A clear solution  
for farmers**  
ENGLAND CATCHMENT SENSITIVE  
FARMING DELIVERY INITIATIVE



Environment  
Agency



Forestry Commission



nature's  
voice



# Next steps

## Stay in control



**A clear solution  
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*the umbrella body of the rivers trust movement*  
where there's water there's life



Forestry Commission



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voice



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