

Greens call for water companies to be taken into public hands as Environment secretary visits polluted Windemere

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Green Party Co-Leader Adrian Ramsay MP has poured cold water on today's visit by Environment Secretary Steve Reed to Lake Windemere and the announcement that United Utilities will invest £200m into upgrading 10 wastewater treatment works at Windermere [1]. He said:

"The government is today trumpeting its "Things Can Only Get Cleaner" tour. But the reality is that can only happen if we take back control of our water.

"United Utilities offers a prime example of the failed privatisation experiment with our water.

"More than 140 million litres of waste were pumped into Windermere by the corporation between 2021 and 2023 at times when it was not permitted [2].

"The company then took legal action to try to block public access to data on treated sewage it is discharging into Windermere [3]. That failed.

"So the company has now belatedly agreed to invest £200m in cleaning up Lake Windemere. But it's been dragged kicking and screaming to act.

"United Utilities has spent years focussed on paying out dividends to shareholders and fat cat salaries rather than treating sewage.

"The Group's CEO has amassed around £1.41m a year in salary and bonuses and the company will pay its investors – which include some of the world's biggest asset managers – £339m in dividends this year, up from £310m for 2023. This hike follows reported higher operating profits thanks to a rise in customer bills. All this puts the £200m investment into Windemere into sharp focus.

"It's time to bring United Utilities and all water companies back into public hands so that our bills can be used to improve the service rather than being siphoned off into the pockets of shareholders."

Notes

1. [UK government vows to clean up Windermere after sewage criticism | Pollution | The Guardian](#)
2. [Sewage illegally dumped into Windermere repeatedly over 3 years, BBC finds – BBC News](#)
3. [Clean water campaigners claim victory in Windermere sewage case |](#)

[Pollution | The Guardian](#)

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