

Crypto crisis blamed as UU delays Haweswater Aqueduct scheme

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The cryptosporidium crisis has forced United Utilities (UU) to put a major multimillion-pound aqueduct maintenance and repair project on the backburner, the company has confirmed. A team of about 450 people was ready to work on the 56-mile Haweswater Aqueduct hundreds of metres beneath the ground from the end of this month.



UU's Aquanauts

A bespoke training camp was scheduled to run from September 21 to ensure everyone was "ready to hit the ground running" at the aqueduct that delivers fresh drinking water from Cumbria to Manchester and surrounding towns and villages in Lancashire.

A UU spokeswoman said the company had to pull off many of the people involved with the 56-mile pipeline to deal with "the major incident".

UU announced on Sunday it had lifted the final boil-water notices for remaining customers across Blackpool, Chorley, Fylde, Preston, South Ribble and Wyre.

But resolution of the crisis has come too late to resurrect what UU had dubbed "Aquanauts 2 – the big return".

UU originally went underground to inspect Haweswater, training 80 carefully selected "aquanauts", assisted by 16 specialist Vehicle Access Systems in 2013 for the first time since the pipeline was built 60 years ago.

A UU spokeswoman said: "The work will need doing at some point but won't be going ahead this autumn. The outage has been postponed for a year."

Martin Oakes head of civil engineering at contractor Land & Marine Land & Marine, said: "It's a disappointment because it's work we were geared up to do for the past six months and working with probably up to ten suppliers.

"The only communication we've had is to say it's been postponed for 12 months."

Oakes said he was not aware of any other UU projects that the cryptosporidium outbreak had delayed and UU did not respond before going to press.

Author: [wwtonline newsroom](#),
Topic: [Asset Management](#)
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