

Response ID ANON-HUEN-N7QP-P

Submitted to **Measures to reduce personal water use**
Submitted on **2019-10-10 10:28:46**

Consultation and call for evidence

What is your name?

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If you are providing an official response on behalf of your organisation, please enter details of your organisation. Otherwise, please state that you are responding as an individual.

Organisation:

Impress the Chess - a community river conservation partnership

Would you like the information, including personal data, that you provide to be treated as confidential?

Tick if you want your information to be treated as confidential:

No

Ministerial foreword

Introduction

Building regulations for water consumption

1 Do you consider that the current approach in Building Regulations (i.e. a mandatory minimum standard for new homes but with local authorities in water stressed areas having discretion to ask for a higher standard through a Building Regulations Optional Requirement) is effective?

No

Please give reasons to support your answer in the text box below.:

The optional requirement relies on the local planning authority having a good understanding of the local water situation; and this may not always be the case. Looking at the development of Chiltern District Council's Local Plan 2036, it was evident that there was limited understanding of water supply issues and the detrimental impact of abstraction on the local environment, even though we are located in a water stressed area. If an area is water stressed, the higher standard should be compulsory.

2 Do you consider that the current minimum standard of 125 litres per person per day and optional requirement of 110 litres per person per day should be changed, and if so what might be an appropriate new standard?

Yes

Please give reasons to support your answer in the text box below, including what might be an appropriate new standard.:

We would like to see more ambitious standards set in line with the report of the Committee on Climate Change's Mitigation and Adaptation Committee which states that much tighter standards are required than 110 litres per person per day. The CCRA found that a package of adaptation measures, including per capita consumption of 92 litres per day by 2050 could significantly, but not fully alleviate projected future supply-demand deficits under a high climate change scenario, so it would seem logical to aim for this target, perhaps by phasing in reductions in the standard use over time starting with a reduction to 110 litres.

3 Are there any other issues relevant to using Building Regulations to set water efficiency standards that the Government should consider?

Add response in text box below.:

Mandatory targets for rainwater harvesting and greywater reuse are needed. Aspirational targets are not effective.

It is regrettable that there are no powers under Building Regulations to prevent householders from changing water fittings if they so choose. This should be reconsidered, as it undermines the mandatory standards for new homes if they can simply be changed once purchased.

Building regulations for water consumption - part 2

4 To what extent do you agree or disagree that Government should work with water companies and local authorities to run partnership retrofit and behaviour change programmes in existing homes?

Strong agree

Please explain your answer in the text box below.:

We would be particularly keen to see these programmes focusing on low income households and those either known to have high consumption rates or likely to have high water use based on their profiles (e.g. younger people have been identified as less likely to save water than older people). Social housing organisations need to be included in this work, as well as genuine partnership with third sector organisations to support, embed and sustain the programmes.

Water efficiency labelling

5 To what extent do you agree or disagree that information on water efficiency should be displayed on water using products?

Strongly agree

Please explain your answer in the text box below.:

This information should be displayed on the products and be easily findable on e-commerce sites, in the way that energy ratings are for appliances.

6 To what extent do you agree or disagree that providing information about products' water efficiency changes peoples' purchasing behaviour and reduces their use of water?

Slightly agree

Please explain your answer in the text box below.:

It will help to change people's purchasing behaviour and reduce their use of water if they already have an understanding of the benefits of this. In some cases, it may help to initiate discussions and understanding about this if people don't already know about it, but there should be much more education and awareness raising done more widely in the community before the point of purchase. This provision of information should help people to make smart choices when they already have a good understanding of the value of water conservation.

7 To what extent do you agree or disagree that water efficiency labels should be linked to building standards and minimum standards?

Don't know

Please explain your answer in the text box below.:

8 How else could Government or water companies encourage people to use more water efficient devices/appliances at home?

Add response in text box below.:

It would be great to see the government initiating a national campaign to educate people about the importance of saving water, and to support/encourage/require water education in schools, starting with Year One. Lessons could be learnt from other countries that have already been through this process, such as Australia and South Africa.

Could the government implement a scheme similar to the Boiler Scrappage Scheme to get people to switch to more efficient appliances?

Metering

9 To what extent do you agree or disagree that people should pay for water according to how much they use?

Strongly agree

Please explain your answer in the text box below.:

Metering has been shown to be a valuable tool in reducing water consumption. However, water is comparatively cheap as a utility, which means that the economic incentive to reduce water use may not be very strong based on current charges, particularly for households with high incomes. It may be appropriate to look at water tariffs being higher in water stressed areas, or look at variable tariffs so that the more you use, the more you pay per unit to target the highest water users.

However, it is also important to ensure that low-income or vulnerable households aren't left struggling. Social tariffs and payment plans need to be effective, and programmes to assist people to reduce their water consumption should be targeted at those least able to afford their water bills.

Metering - part 2

10 To what extent do you agree or disagree that the amount of households charged by metered volume should be increased beyond and/or faster than what is already planned by water companies?

Strongly agree

Please explain your answer in the text box below.:

There is plenty of evidence that shows that this leads to a reduction in consumption and with the water resources situation in the South East of England being so grave, there is no time to waste in proceeding with compulsory metering. If metering was compulsory across the nation, it might lead to less resistance from the public, as some people might perceive it as unfair that they have to have a meter whilst relations and friends elsewhere in the country, don't.

11 If you agree that the amount of households charged by metered volume should be increased, what do you think would be the best or most appropriate approach? Do you have suggestions for increasing metering other than what is mentioned above?

What do you think would be the best or most appropriate approach? Please enter your answer in the text box below.:

Metering should be compulsory nationwide. It would make sense to focus on installing in areas with the least water availability first and also targeting areas with above average water use per person.

Do you have suggestions for increasing metering other than what is mentioned above? Please enter your answer in the text box below.:

12 Are there any other issues we need to consider with regard to increasing metering?

Add response in text box below:

Greater emphasis should be placed in communications with the public about the important role of metering in helping to identify and repair leaks. The high level of leakage leads to resistance from people to saving water – there can be a perception that water companies aren't making the effort to save water, so why should customers. If people understood that meters helped resolve leaks, it might improve acceptance of them.

We would encourage water companies to publicise their plans for physical works for installation with local community organisations and councils. Although in our experiences, meter installation in Chesham was well publicised to residents by Affinity Water, there were still residents who were unaware of the planned works, which made them more dissatisfied about the resulting disruption. The more channels that this information goes through, the more likely that people are to be informed.

Smart metering

13 To what extent do you support or oppose use of smart water meters instead of manual meters?

Slightly support

Please explain your answer in the text box below.:

Whilst it sounds as though smart meters could result in increased savings and better leak detection, we would welcome information on the results of the smart meter trials being carried out by companies like Thames Water before being strongly supportive of their use. We are aware of issues with smart meter installation and functionality that occurred with energy meters, and would like to see robust technology in place before smart water meters are rolled out.

Incentives

14 To what extent do you support or oppose use of incentives to encourage customers to use less water?

Strongly support

Please explain your answer in the text box below.:

Economic incentives in the form of reduced water bills will not be sufficient alone to drive the level of water consumption reductions that we need to achieve. It is important to understand what sort of incentives will be successful, e.g. personal incentives (such as prizes or rewards) or community incentives.

15 What incentives could water companies use to reduce customer use of water?

Add response in text box below:

In Chesham, we would like to see reduced water consumption in our communities being rewarded by reduced abstraction from our catchment (rather than less imported water from outside the catchment) to leave more water for our chalk stream, the River Chess. Other incentives could involve putting money into local river projects to improve the environment, or funding environmental opportunities for local children, such as Trout in the Classroom or field trips to the river to help them see the benefit of water savings.

People can also be incentivised by the provision of information. For example, this World Bank study in Costa Rica found that easy to read infographics on water use, comparing people's water use to neighbouring households, or providing planning worksheets to prompt people to set goals for reducing water use, was effective in driving reduced water consumption.

<http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/809801468001190306/A-behavioral-approach-to-water-conservation-evidence-from-Costa-Rica>

Research by Hubbub has shown that there's widespread scepticism towards water saving messages coming from water companies. Perhaps water companies could partner up with partners who may be more trusted, e.g. Wildlife Trusts, to help convey the message of saving water in a way that will be better received by the public.

Rainwater harvesting and water reuse

16 To what extent do you support or oppose the use of RWH and GWR schemes at individual level?

Strongly support

Please explain your answer in the text box below.:

We need to use any methods at our disposal to reduce abstracted water consumption. But urgent work needs to be carried out to reduce the carbon footprints of these systems. Mandatory installation of these systems should be considered for new developments.

17 To what extent do you support or oppose the use of RWH and GWR schemes at community scale?

Strongly support

Please explain your answer in the text box below.:

But urgent work needs to be carried out to reduce the carbon footprints of these systems. These schemes could be particularly beneficial in areas like Chesham, that are prone to surface water flooding after heavy rain.

18 How can Government or water companies most effectively encourage people to reuse water in their homes?

Add response in text box below:

A campaign should be launched to explain the wide range of benefits – cost, environmental impact and helping reduce some flood risks. Water companies or government could offer reduced cost retrofitting of equipment. Perhaps community champions could be identified who would have the equipment fitted for free if they engaged in a local project to share their experiences with the community to promote the benefits of RWH and GWR.

Supply pipe leakage

19 Do you have any evidence/views/comments on the potential impacts on water bills for various customers and geographical regions should the management of supply pipes be transferred to water companies?

Add response in text box below:

In Chesham, which is a water-stressed area, whose river has been continuously dry for months due to drought, it is very frustrating to witness long-term leaks not being dealt with due to the leak coming from pipes in private ownership. Supply pipe leakage must be tackled to help reduce water wastage and the most effective way to ensure this happens is to transfer the management of supply pipes to water companies.

Supply pipe leakage - part 2

20 Of the alternative options above, which is your preferred? Please explain why or if you have other ideas.

Add response in text box below:

We support the first 4 options in this list. Of these, if supply pipes aren't to be transferred to water companies, increased metering to help detect leaks, and assistance with maintenance and repair may be the most beneficial.

21 What other options are available to reduce leakage from customer supply pipes?

Add response in text box below:

Communications and behaviour change

22 What are the main barriers to changing behaviours to reduce personal water use? Please rank your top three options by order of importance:

Qu. 22 - Insufficient access to support and advice:

Qu. 22 - Insufficient information about personal water usage:

Qu. 22 - Insufficient information about water scarcity:

2

Qu. 22 - Lack of financial incentive:

3

Qu. 22 - Investment in more water efficient equipment is prohibitively expensive:

Qu. 22 - Difficulty in changing habits:

1

Qu. 22 - People feel they are already doing all they can to reduce water use:

Qu. 22 - Hygiene reasons:

Qu. 22 - Other (please specify in box below):

Add other option in text box below:

23 Which organisation(s) (if any) should communicate about how to reduce personal water use? Please select all that apply.

Please add other organisation(s) in the text box below:

Consumer advice organisations, like CAB; Businesses involved in selling or installing appliances that consume water; Social housing providers.

Please explain your answer in the text box below.:

All of the above need to be involved, plus social housing providers, consumer advice organisations like Citizens Advice, businesses involved in plumbing and plumbing supplies and those selling appliances that use water. The more there is a consistent message from a broad range of organisations, the more likely the message will be believed and acted upon.

Anything further matters or information

24 If there are any further matters that you would like to raise or any further information that you would like to provide in relation to measures to reduce personal water use, please give details here.

Add response in text box below:

OFWAT should have a duty to consider the environment, and not just give 'a regard to'. For too long it has felt as though the focus of OFWAT is on delivering benefit to the customer regardless of the negative impact on the environment. Recent messages from OFWAT have indicated that this is beginning to change, but we need evidence that this will change and change fast.

Call for evidence

25 a More ambitious water efficiency standards in building regulations for new homes. The Government is interested in understanding the impacts of any changes to standards, including on housing development, the costs of meeting the current standard and costs of meeting higher standards. Please provide any evidence which you have on impacts. Retrofitting existing homes. Defra is keen to understand what level of retrofitting would be needed should different levels of water efficiency standards in building regulations for new homes be implemented. We are also interested in views of how this could be achieved.

Please add evidence in text box below:

Upload relevant evidence documents:

No file was uploaded

25 b Introduction of a mandatory, government-led water efficiency label linked to building standards and fixtures and fittings.

Please add evidence in text box below:

Upload relevant evidence documents:

No file was uploaded

25 c Changing water fittings regulations to improve water efficiency of homes. Defra is keen to understand what changes would be required.

Please add evidence in text box below:

Upload relevant evidence documents:

No file was uploaded

25 d Options that deliver an increase in metering penetration.

Please add evidence in text box below:

Upload relevant evidence documents:

No file was uploaded

25 e More widespread rainwater harvesting and water reuse schemes.

Please add evidence in text box below:

Upload relevant evidence documents:

No file was uploaded

25 f The use of water company incentives.

Please add evidence in text box below:

Upload relevant evidence documents:

No file was uploaded

25 g Information provision to customers about water saving measures they can undertake and change to a water-saving culture.

Please add evidence in text box below:

Upload relevant evidence documents:

No file was uploaded

25 h Any other relevant measures that could be used to reduce personal water use.

Please add evidence in text box below:

Upload relevant evidence documents:

No file was uploaded