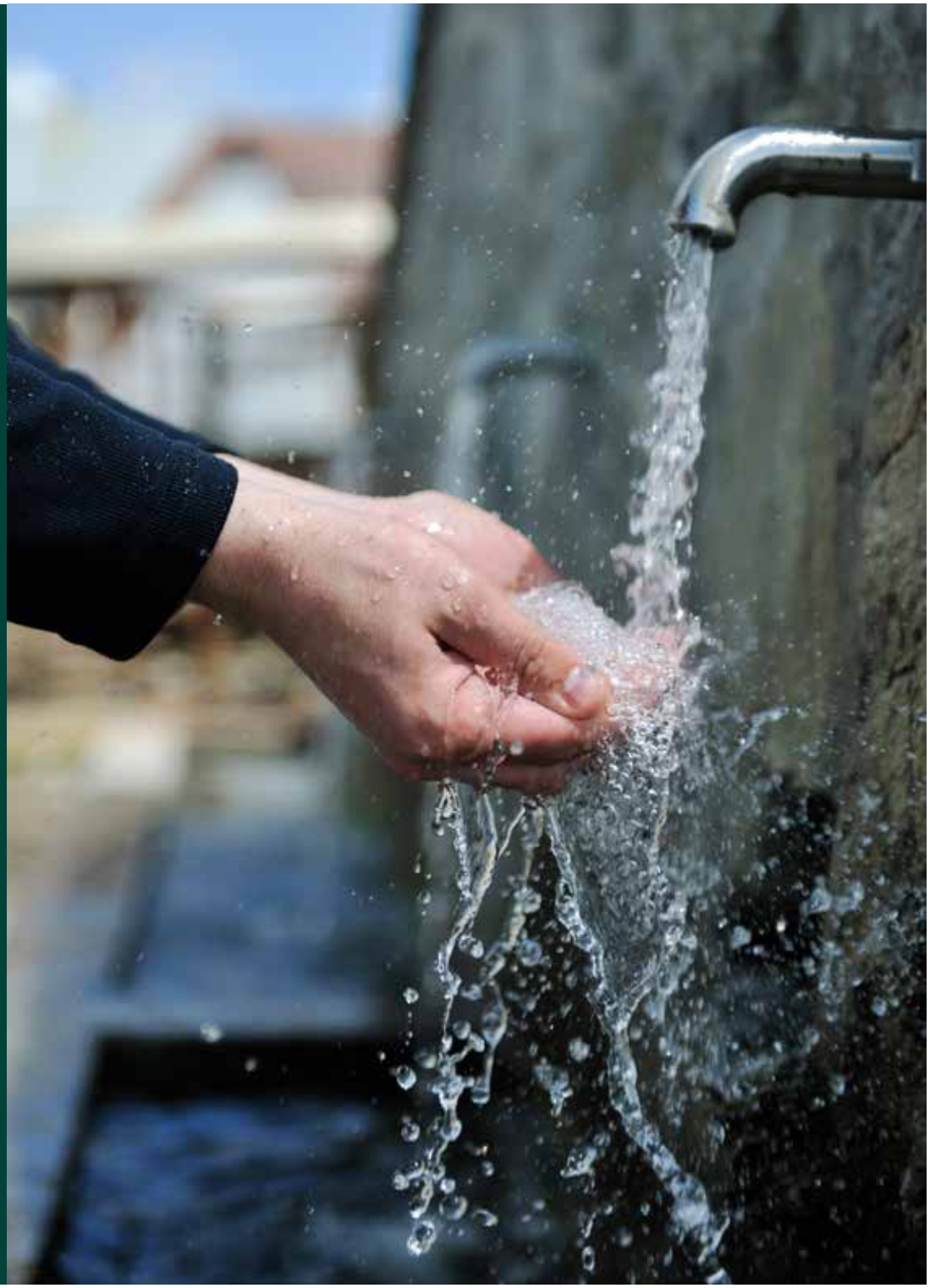
Water management

About this guide

It's estimated that each person in the UK uses about 142 litres of water every day. That's all water that must be managed through the water and wastewater network. When you consider that showers (25%) and toilet flushes (22%) are used the most, it's easy to see how tourism and hospitality can make a huge difference by promoting responsible water use.

This guide outlines the benefits of water management, together with some simple ideas to help you conserve and protect your water supply.

Green Tourism



Five benefits of responsible water management

The water that comes out of our taps must be extracted, filtered, treated, distributed, piped back, and then treated again before rejoining the water cycle. This cycle contributes about 0.8% of the annual UK greenhouse gas emissions. Reducing your water consumption will reduce your carbon footprint and it could reduce your bills. Here are five further benefits of responsible water management:

1. See clearly what measures are working

Monitoring your water consumption will tell you if any water-saving devices or measures are working and if the targets you have set for reduction are being met.

2. Detect leaks quickly

Tracking your water usage is a great way to detect leaks. And, a quick reaction could save you money. (A dripping tap if left for a year would use 5,500 litres of water.) You might also prevent secondary damage caused by the undetected leak.

3. Reduce pressure on supply

By recovering and reusing water in your premises you'll be tapping into a free or prepaid resource. You'll also reduce the demand for water in your region, possibly helping to allay seasonal shortages.

4. Reduce pressure on the system

Certain items like wet wipes, nappies and fats are known to cause blockages and break-downs in the system. By doing what you can to prevent these items from entering the wastewater system in the first place, you'll stop them from ending up in the wrong place and could potentially save your business from having to fork out for expensive repairs.

5. Reduce emissions

By carefully managing your water usage you will be helping to protect and conserve a vital resource, helping to cut carbon emissions and save energy. The water industry uses large amounts of energy to supply water and treat wastewater.

Eleven ways to conserve water

1. Keep a record

If you are on a water meter, then keeping a record of your water usage is straightforward. If you don't have a water meter, inline meters are inexpensive to buy (£25 to £50) and usually not a big job to fit. These can be fitted to the water supply of static caravans, lodges, extensions, yurts, treehouses, and individual properties, wherever there is an incoming water supply pipe. For bigger properties, there are a range of larger water meters available. It's best to have them fitted by a plumber.

2. Look out for leaks

If you don't have a meter, detecting leaks becomes a bit more difficult. However, here are some things to look out for. If the water coming from the cold tap is colder than normal, water could be flowing somewhere and dropping the temperature. Has there been a noticeable drop in your water pressure? Are there any persistent puddles outside even though the weather has been dry? Is there any water movement in the puddles? These are all signs that you are above or near an underground leak.

3. Install a water bot

A water bot is a smart device that detects leaks within your property. Some insurance companies are even giving them out free with certain policies so it's worth asking your insurer. These clamp to your pipe, detect any unusual changes in water flow within your premises and alert you via an app on your phone. Others, such as the Water Savers Leak Detection System are more expensive, but they do comply with BREEAM WAT02 (water monitoring) and BREEAM WAT03 (water leak detection and prevention).

4. Talk to your plumber about water-saving fittings

Dual flush cisterns, waterless urinals, sensor and push top taps, water-saving shower heads, (non-aerating and aerating) and eco-mixers can all save water. (Showers may use a lot less water than baths, but an eight-minute shower can still use 60 litres of water.) The good news is that most of these fittings can also be retrofitted.

5. Educate staff

Show people how to be mindful of water usage. Put signs up in kitchens above the veg prep sinks and dishwashing areas, reminding staff to use water responsibly. Have a 'one flush per clean' policy for housekeeping staff when cleaning guest accommodation.

6. Educate guests

Consider putting some communication in guests' areas to encourage them to be mindful of their water usage during their stay. It might include things like, don't leave the tap running when cleaning teeth, shower versus bath, items not to flush and a polite notice to use the bins provided for items other than toilet roll. (This is especially important to those on a septic tank.)

7. Consider waste oil practices

Grease traps in a commercial kitchen are a legal requirement, but even smaller kitchens in self catering premises should take care when disposing of cooking oil and grease. You'd be surprised that oil from tinned fish and olives when poured into the sink will solidify in the sewage system and eventually cause blockages. Consider adding a heat-proof container marked 'For waste oil and fat' near the cooking area or sink. Or, fit a small grease trap, they are not expensive.

8. Fit a microplastic filter

Microfibers from clothing washed in washing machines are becoming a problem, (35% of microfibers in the ocean come from synthetic clothes washed in washing machines). Retro-fitting a microplastic filter to your washing machine will reduce the amount released into the wastewater system by 90%.

9. Recover and reuse water

Use water butts to capture rainwater, and add a stirrup pump to irrigate flowers, wash bikes/dogs/muddy boots or rinse salt off wetsuits, for example.

10. Rainwater harvesting

Grey water systems are more expensive to install but if your water usage is significant, such as for irrigation (golf courses) or car washing (car hire, chauffeur companies, minivan tours), etc., then it may be investigated. Grey water systems collect the water you've used in your sinks, dishwasher, showers, and baths, clean it up and plumb it straight back into your toilet, washing machines and outside taps. Rainwater harvesting takes runoff water from your roofs and filters and stores it then supplies all non-potable applications within your business.