

Water Efficiency

Promoting water efficiency to our customers and stakeholders is set to become more important with the introduction from 2010 of new mandatory water efficiency targets for our industry. So we're planning to expand our current programme to meet these challenging new targets. This year, we appointed a dedicated Water Efficiency Strategy Manager to help us meet the challenge. Our existing programme focuses on initiatives aimed at all domestic and commercial customers to encourage reduced water usage, alongside research on new techniques and monitoring the effectiveness of different methods. We offer free and reduced cost water saving equipment, a free water meter option and a water audit service. We also run promotional events and education programmes. Leaks on customers' pipes are the responsibility of the customer. However to reduce water wasted in this way, we operate a repair / replacement programme for supply pipes, with one repair per year offered free of charge, and a subsidised lead pipe replacement service (replacing these older pipes also helps to reduce water leakage).

We've already had some success. During 2008/09 we have increased the volume of water saved through domestic water efficiency measures (not including leakage) by nearly 70% – up from 0.32 million litres per day in 2007/08 to 0.54 million litres per day in 2008/09. Domestic water demand in 2008/09 was just over 900 million litres per day (135.9 litres per person per day).

This was helped by increases in the numbers of free cistern devices (57342) given out in 2008/09, as well as raising customers' awareness through high profile events linked to our sponsorship of Liverpool's Capital of Culture, and a focus on big customers such as the National Health Service. We also distributed 30,206 water efficiency self audit packs in 2008/09. Nearly 26% of households are now on water meters, an increase from 23.5% at the end of 2007/08. Households on a meter used 22% less water than un-metered properties last year. We offer a free water meter installation. In 2008/09 we installed 58,240 meters through this route, an increase from 37,734 in the previous year.

We've also maintained links with organisations such as Groundwork, allowing us to get information to small and medium businesses. Working with the Lancashire and Blackpool Tourist Board, we've targeted hotels, guest houses and restaurants. We have also developed a website that promotes water efficient items for the home and we are monitoring its impact. Working with partners is key to achieving water efficiency. For example, we are running a joint project with Warrington's Golden Gates Housing Association to encourage the installation of water saving devices in social housing by installing water efficient showerheads. This builds on research by Liverpool John Moores University previously reported on. The project aims to get cost-benefit information that can be applied to other housing developments, as well as information on user acceptability. We're also working with the Water Research Council on a project to determine the actual water savings from different devices.

Of course, we have to lead by example. Last year we carried out a water efficiency audit of our Lingley Mere, Warrington headquarters. This showed that the amount of water used per 1000 employees on this site was 8.84 million litres per year. Over the next year we'll work to reduce this figure. In addition, we have established water saving devices in a new office building at our headquarters. The building has been designed to a 'Very Good' BREEAM (Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Methodology) rating, incorporating water efficiency measures.