

# Making water work



A guide to  
our operations  
and activities



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## Raising standards

**Every day Southern Water invests hundreds of thousands of pounds in improving the job we do.**

Since 1990 this investment has reached in excess of £3 billion – some £2,000 for each and every household we serve.

The company's capital investment programme underpins the day-to-day job of supplying water and recycling wastewater by continually upgrading treatment and supply systems.

It is ensuring services to customers, monitored by industry regulator,

OFWAT, are continually being improved, in particular through the quality of our tap water and better safeguards for water supplies.

The programme is also enabling Southern Water to meet ever higher standards to protect and enhance our environment, primarily through improvements to wastewater treatment which benefit river water and seawater quality.

Indeed, the South's beaches are the main beneficiary of this investment with bathing waters off the coast from Kent to Hampshire now cleaner than ever before.

# Your tap water

## Water supply is a complex business – especially at the volumes dealt with by Southern Water.

Every day we supply nearly 600 million litres of water to almost one million homes, as well as industry and businesses in our supply area.

We collect water from natural underground sources, which account for two thirds of our supplies, as well as rivers and reservoirs.

### Treating water

Regardless of from its source water requires treatment to remove contaminants.

This water is treated at more than 100 water supply works before it is pumped via water mains to taps.

### Testing the water

Water quality is monitored constantly to make sure your tap water is safe to drink. We carry out more than 380,000 tests looking for over 100 different substances every year.

An independent laboratory analyses the samples, and the Government's Drinking Water Inspectorate monitors the results.

Water quality in Britain is better than almost anywhere in Europe, and Southern Water customers enjoy drinking water that consistently passes the stringent standards set by the Drinking Water Inspectorate.



### How much water do we need?

Not only does every drop of water have to meet very high quality standards, but Southern Water also needs to

predict demand accurately if it is to offer a reliable service.

The water resources available compared with the local demand vary across the country, but here in the south east high demand is often combined with below average rainfall.

However, modern technology and new water mains, pumping stations and pipelines mean that we can now better manage resources.



### Saving water in the network

Along Southern Water's 13,000km of water mains, there are 2.2 million joints and thousands of other connections. With a network that large, bursts and leaks are inevitable. The task is to manage these resources with care, minimising waste and reducing leaks to a practical minimum.

Since privatisation in 1989, we have progressively reduced the water lost through leaks and, compared with then, now save 145 million litres a day, which is enough to serve a population of 500,000.

Both old and new technologies have a part to play in leak detection.

Computer-controlled sensors can pinpoint leaks underground, while highly skilled operators also use simple listening sticks to track down leaks, usually in the middle of the night when the roads are quiet.

Customers can also telephone us with information on our leakline number, **0800 820 999**.

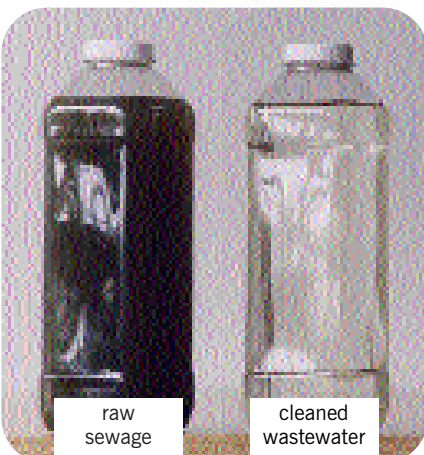


## Recycling wastewater

**Used water, once treated, is safely returned to the environment where it once again becomes part of the water cycle. Organic bi-products are also beneficially recycled to agriculture.**

Every day, Southern Water treats 1,400 million litres of wastewater from 1.7 million properties. This wastewater is a combination of rainfall, water used in factories, and domestic wastewater from toilets, baths, kitchen sinks, washing machines and dishwashers.

Not surprisingly, there are high standards with which Southern Water must comply to ensure that, once treated, the recycled water can be safely returned to the environment via rivers and the sea. These standards are set and monitored by the Environment Agency in line with directives agreed with the European Union. These standards are frequently reviewed and improved.



## Bag It and Bin It

Every day our beaches, rivers and water systems come under threat from our own bad habits.

Flushing non-biodegradable personal items can have a direct impact on the quality of our environment by ending up on beaches and riverbanks. If this happens, it presents a potential health risk to humans and wildlife, as well as looking unsightly.

These items include:

Cotton buds, condoms and femidoms, tampons and tampon applicators, sanitary towels, panty liners and backing strips, syringes and needles, incontinence pads, colostomy bags, old bandages, medicines, razor blades and disposable nappies.

### So what's the problem with flushing?

The sewerage system isn't designed to handle non-biodegradable materials and these regularly cause blockages, often in your home's own drains.

Despite investing heavily in the sewerage infrastructure and treatment works, there is a risk that, during times of heavy rain, some of the millions of personal items flushed and forgotten each year may still end up on our beaches.

### Simple solution

If you do use disposable personal items, carefully wrap them up and throw them in a bin.

REMEMBER





## At the heart of the community

**While our core operation is water supply and wastewater treatment, we acknowledge that these two processes can also have significant impact on the environment. That's why caring for the environment is at the heart of our business.**

While the ability to recycle water makes the water industry an intrinsically 'green' one, Southern Water has to balance running an efficient, value-for-money service for its customers with protecting some of the region's finest natural assets.

Each year, Southern Water has to provide a report for the Government detailing the work the company is undertaking to protect and enhance the environment. In the Sustainability Report, we set out measurable annual targets on our environmental performance and report on our progress against them.

The full report is available on the Southern Water website, visit [www.southernwater.co.uk](http://www.southernwater.co.uk). Copies of the printed summary are available free, on request, by telephoning **0845 278 0845**.

### Managing our natural resources

Southern Water also has responsibilities as a landowner. We care for more than 4,000 hectares (nearly 10,000 acres) around the region. Treatment works are often situated in secluded out-of-the-way locations, providing ideal habitats for wildlife and native plants to flourish. Indeed, more than 40 Southern Water sites have been designated as being

Sites of Special Scientific Interest and many more as Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

These specially designated areas include the company's five major reservoirs – Bewl Water in Kent, Weir Wood, Powdermill and Darwell in East Sussex and Testwood Lakes in Hampshire.

Our environmental scientists and ecologists work to ensure that both natural and developed environments are carefully considered at all times. This is particularly important when refurbishment or construction work is planned.

Southern Water's reservoirs also provide a range of recreational activities for the public to enjoy all year round, including fishing, bird watching, windsurfing or just rambling around the perimeter.

### Sharing skills

Every year more than 35,000 children gain a vital skill by participating in Southern Water's Learn to Swim scheme. It is the flagship of the company's sponsorship programme.

The Pond Warden scheme recruits and trains volunteers to protect, enhance and develop ponds in the south while Southern Water also runs franchises for the Prince's Trust Volunteers, giving opportunities for school leavers and the long-term unemployed.

To enhance links with the communities we serve, we also provide Key Stage educational resources, run a talks programme for schools and community groups and promote a continuing campaign to guard against the menace of bogus callers.



# Enjoy water, don't waste it

**Our modern lifestyles  
- with more baths, washing  
machines and dishwashers  
- mean that we are now  
using 50% more water than  
we were 25 years ago.**

Adding to these changes in our lifestyle are changes to the climate; with most scientists agreeing the weather in south east England will generally become hotter and drier in the summer.

However, it's surprising how much water we can waste without thinking. So it's important that we all take steps to use water wisely. We can do this by introducing a few simple changes:

## Fully loaded machines

A single wash uses up to 100 litres of water (about 22 gallons). Cutting out just one wash a week will save over 5,000 litres of water annually (1,100 gallons) so make sure it's fully loaded each time.



## Turn it off

A tap left on while brushing teeth wastes 10 litres of water every minute. Use a mug instead and a family of four could save a bathful of water each day.

## Stand up for water efficiency

A bath uses about 80 litres of water while a shower only uses 30 litres, so save water and time – have a shower!

## Spare your flushes

One third of all the water we use in the home is flushed down the loo. Using a water displacement device, such as a

hog bag, in a toilet cistern, can help save one litre with every flush. Hog bags are available free of charge from Southern Water. Call **0845 278 0845**.



## Don't be a drip

Dripping taps are not only irritating, they are also wasteful. A dripping tap can waste a bathful of water each week.

## Plug in to save water

When preparing vegetables for a meal, use the plug in a sink or fill a bowl, rather than letting the water run down the drain.

## Sensible gardening

Garden sprinklers use as much water in one hour as the average family of four uses in one day. To save water in the garden, use a water butt to collect rainwater.

Remember, if you use a garden sprinkler you **MUST** have a water meter fitted. Call the Metering Service Centre on **0845 270 0845**.

Southern Water's website has a wealth of information about saving water in the home, garden, business or school. Visit [www.southernwater.co.uk](http://www.southernwater.co.uk)



If you would like any further information, please contact:

**Customer Service Centre**

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**0845 278 0845**

[www.southernwater.co.uk](http://www.southernwater.co.uk)

