



UKWIR Project WR33

GUIDANCE ON WATER USE RESTRICTIONS

“Is a power washer a hosepipe?”

“Why can I hose down my patio but not water my garden?”

“Can I water my allotment?”

These were some of the simpler questions put to water company staff during the 2004-2006 drought in the South East of England.

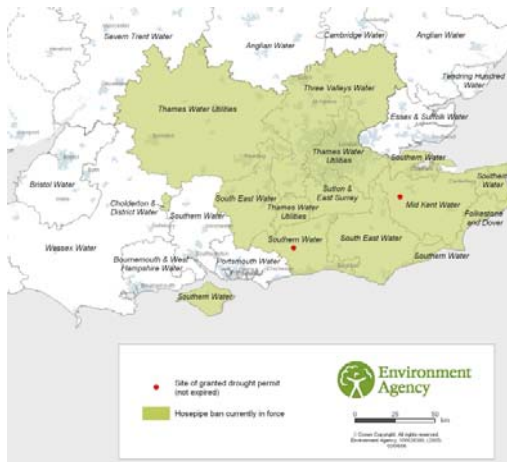


Figure 1 – Hosepipe bans in South East England, May 2006¹

The hosepipe bans and restrictions on non-essential use imposed by water companies in the South East during the 2004-2006 drought highlighted that the current legislation on demand restrictions in times of drought is outdated and lacks clarity. The legislation dates from the mid-1940s and is no longer appropriate for a modern, regulated water supply industry.

Water company response

UKWIR carried out a review in 2006 to identify improvements / clarifications that could be made to existing regulations and legislation to simplify the management of

demand in future droughts. That study recommended that the industry should develop guidance covering what an individual company can and cannot include in a hosepipe ban. The guidance should also extend to restrictions on non-essential use and identify which customers would be affected by the different measures.

This project has been initiated to create the recommended guidance document.

Government response

Defra also carried out a review of the current legislation following the 2004-2006 drought. During 2007 it consulted on its proposed changes to the hosepipe ban and to the powers to restrict non-essential uses of water. The consultation generated over 80 responses from a wide range of respondents including water companies, regulators, trade associations and private individuals.

Following its consultation exercise, Defra published a summary consultation document² that indicates how it intends to amend the legislation relating to the management of demand during times of drought.

This will include changes to the Drought Direction 1991 setting out non-essential use powers and to primary legislation governing hosepipe bans (the Water Industry Act)³.

The Government hopes to amend the Drought Direction in late 2008 and to

¹ Environment Agency, Drought Prospects 2006 – spring update, May 2006

² Defra, Summary of responses to the consultation, between 23 March and 15 June 2007, on proposed changes to powers to restrict non-essential uses of water, October 2007

³ Water Industry Act 1991 as amended by the Environment Act (1995), Water Industry Act (1999) and Water Act (2003).

include primary legislation the proposed Floods and Water Bill.⁴

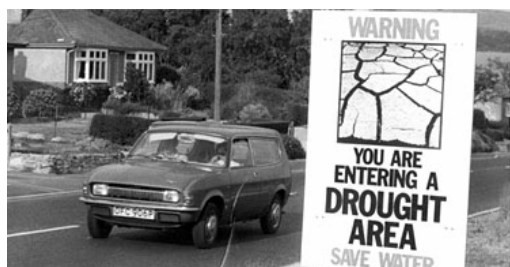
The guidance document will reflect the proposed changes to the legislation on which Defra has consulted.

Project output

The project will build on the output from previous UKWIR and water company studies, the Defra consultation, and the practical and administrative experience gained during the management of the 2004-2006 drought in South East England.

The project output will be a guidance document for water companies that;

- summarises in simple terms the current legislation governing the range of water use restrictions that a water company can impose on its customers during droughts when supplies are threatened;
- summarises the proposed changes to the legislation and the impact of these;
- recommends definitions for key terms in the legislation;
- provides useful information relating to water using activities that companies can restrict during times of drought;
- provides information to help companies decide how and when to impose different types of restriction.



The guidance document will be designed to complement water companies' statutory Drought Plans without impinging on them.

Project benefits

The benefit of this project will be a guidance document that enables water companies to provide consistent and clear messages to customers in times of drought to avoid some of the contradictory messages.

⁴ New plans to be set out in a Draft Floods and Water Bill were announced by the Minister on 17th June 2008