



Environment Bill: Amendments to help Reduce Water Demand (May 2021)

[Waterwise](#) was founded in 2005 and is the leading authority on water efficiency in the UK. We are an independent, not-for-profit campaigning organisation, receiving funding from supporters across and beyond the water sector and wider sponsorship and research projects. Our Vision is that water will be used wisely, every day, everywhere.

We believe the Environment Bill needs to be strengthened in respect to water efficiency and reducing water demand. Waterwise supports [the call by Water UK](#) for a new 'Reducing Water Demand' clause to be added to the Environment Bill.

Why we need a Reducing Water Demand clause in the Environment Bill

We need a new clause for the following reasons:

- **To secure future water supplies** in the face of population growth and climate change as set out in the [NIC 2018 report](#) and in the Environment Agency's [Water Resources National Framework](#)
- **To reduce our energy use and carbon footprint.** Heating water in our homes accounts for about 4% of the UK's total carbon emissions [Energy Saving Trust](#). A [10% reduction in water demand](#) could quickly reduce UK GHG emissions by around 0.5%.
- **To leave more water in the environment.** Using less water leaves more water in our rivers and precious chalk streams. The volume of water saved by reducing demand by 30% is equivalent to the summer flow of a third of UK rivers combined.
- **To free up water to allow future business growth and supporting abstraction reform.** In many catchments, especially in the south east, there is no water left for business to abstract without impacting the environment.
- **To reduce costs for the water sector and its customers.** Deferring the need for some large-scale infrastructure schemes and reducing water and energy bills for customers, including vulnerable customers.

What the new clause needs to address

There are three priority areas we would like to see addressed in a new Reducing Water Demand clause:

1. We want a commitment to a **mandatory water efficiency label** on water-using products linked to minimum standards

[Research and evidence from schemes already in place](#) has demonstrated that a mandatory water efficiency label on water-using products (white goods, taps and showers etc) could reduce consumption by 20% over the next two decades. It is the single most cost-effective policy intervention the government can make to help reduce water consumption, with every

waterwise

£1 spent delivering more than £50 of benefits. The label would deliver benefits for both new homes (see 2 below) and existing homes - where retrofits could specify use of A or B rated products for example. We need the UK Government to confirm it will use Clauses 51 and 52 in the Bill to introduce the water label linking it to minimum standards.

2. We want changes to Part G of **Building Regulations** in order to stop the ever-increasing stock of water-inefficient homes.

Along with Water UK we believe that Building Regulations should apply a 'fittings-based' approach and require all fixtures and appliances to meet a certain water efficiency label rating or better. Minimum ratings should be set to achieve water use in new homes of 100 litres/person/day, and tighten over time to deliver greater water efficiency. Tighter standards in new homes can readily be achieved using existing products that meet customers' needs at little or no extra cost.

3. We want to see government mandating the roll-out of **smart water meters** to all homes by 2035

Smart (AMI) water meters [have been shown](#) to deliver significant water savings. The high resolution data they provide enables water companies to quickly find and fix leaks. It allows customers to better understand and manage their water use - saving water, energy and money. Consumer groups such as [CCW agree](#) that metering is the fairest way for customers to pay for water and we believe protections can be put in place for vulnerable customers. The water industry is gradually rolling out metering and over 83% of homes will be metered by 2045. We want these programmes accelerated as part of our efforts to address the climate emergency and support a green recovery. We calculate that fitting 1 million smart meters a year could save over 1 billion litres of water a day by 2035 and reduce UK carbon emissions by 0.5%.

Suggested Amendments

The wording of the following amendment is [as proposed by Water UK](#) but with an additional clause 4 on smart metering.

To move the following new clause: Reducing Water Demand

(1) The Secretary of State shall within 12 months of the commencement of this Act introduce regulations to require water-using appliances to meet water efficiency standards and to bear appropriate labelling and shall in particular:

(a) establish appropriate standards to achieve Government objectives for reducing water demand and

(b) establish the appropriate labelling format

(2) The Secretary of State shall within 12 months of the commencement of this Act amend the Building Regulations 2010 Part G to:

(a) require all fittings to meet specified minimum water efficiency requirements and



(b) specify such water efficiency requirements.

(3) Standards as introduced under subsection (1)(a) and (2)(b) shall be reviewed every 5 years to assess their contribution to meeting government objectives for reducing water demand.

(4) The Secretary of State shall bring forward amendments within 12 months of the commencement of the Act to existing regulations such that water companies must progress compulsory smart water metering linked to charging by volume for all customers by 2035.

A Statutory Water Demand Reduction Target linked to the Environment Bill

We are pleased to see Defra progressing a [statutory water demand target](#) linked to the Environment Bill, as promised in the 25 year Environment Plan. We badly need a water demand target as it helps hold the government to account for policy and regulatory interventions as well as water companies and wider society. Our proposed amendments above would support delivery of the target.

CONTACT DETAILS

Dr Nathan Richardson
Head of Policy at Waterwise
nathan.richardson@waterwise.org.uk