waterwise

Defra Water Review

Waterwise' Recommendations on Scope and Objectives

October 2024

We welcome steps taken by this Government to drive water efficiency and the Water Review. England faces a water deficit of at least 4800 million litres per day - jeopardising economic growth, a healthy environment, secure water supplies, and public health. 48% of this gap needs to be met through water efficiency and metering - with at least 1000 million litres per day relying on new government policy. The Water Review is an opportunity for the Labour Government to make sure we have enough water to go around - nothing can happen without water, including economic growth.

Scope:

1.	**Include all government policy, not just that in Defra's gift** - everything is affected by water scarcity: economic growth, energy, housing, health, education, transport, and the environment.
2.	**Specify non-household customers as well as household customers, and include the business water market** - there are similarities but also key difference between these groups.
3.	**As well as simplifying regulation, specify that in regulation demand should be prioritised (and funded) equally with supply** - PR24 contains the largest ever investment in water efficiency in England and Wales, but this is still dwarfed by supply-side investment, and yet water efficiency is expected to make up half the supply-demand gap.
4.	**As well as ensuring affordability, ensure that the water sector is proactively driving social justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion** - it would be a great legacy of a Labour Government if the water sector recast itself as an essential public service that actually drives these, in addition to managing them.
5.	**Include different sector models** - drawing on international experience in consideration of which models will best meet the needs of the economy, society, and the environment.

Objectives Include:

1.	**That the environment, customers and economic growth are equal priorities.**
2.	**That water is used wisely every day, everywhere, by everyone.**
3.	**A clear prioritisation of need, set by government, at times of water scarcity.**
4.	**All government policy and legislation includes quantification of the risk of water scarcity.**
5.	**All new homes and buildings are water neutral or water positive.**
6.	**The water sector plays a key role in driving social justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion.**

Waterwise is the leading independent voice in the UK for using water wisely, for the benefit of people and the planet. Our vision is that water is used wisely every day, everywhere, by everyone. Our core purpose is to lead and inspire change so that water is never wasted.

We are the UK's conscience on water efficiency, on behalf of people and the planet, and are experts in water efficiency policy, regulation, research, behaviour and campaigns. Waterwise is a people-led organisation which prioritises the wellbeing of its staff.

Waterwise's UK Water Efficiency Strategy to 2030 was agreed by 100 organisations in the UK water sector and sets out what needs to be done to close the gap between water supply and demand. Waterwise is playing its own part, including through year-round water efficiency campaigns.