

# HOW WE PLAN TO MEET THE CHALLENGES OF DROUGHT

Have your say:  
June 7 to August 2



# INTRODUCTION



This is our plan for how we'll tackle droughts to make sure we can always supply fresh, reliable water to our customers in West Sussex and Hampshire.

Droughts happen when there is less rain than usual, leading to a shortage of water for people, the environment, farming and industry.

Other events also make it more challenging to supply water, such as very high temperatures in summer and the Covid-19 pandemic which has seen people using more water at home.

It's really important we all work together to save water in a drought so there's enough for everyone for the daily necessities of drinking, cooking and washing and to protect the environment and wildlife from harm for as long as possible.

We'd like to hear your thoughts on our plans, so please get in touch and share your feedback by August 2.

## OUR DROUGHT PLANS

Along with other water companies, we use a traffic light system to show the different levels of drought and what actions we'll take when.

Most of the water we supply comes from underground and we monitor this continually. When it drops below certain levels, this triggers the move to the next set of actions.

These levels are:

**LEVEL 0:            NORMAL**

**LEVEL 1:            DEVELOPING DROUGHT**

**LEVEL 2:            DROUGHT**

**LEVEL 3:            SEVERE DROUGHT**





**LEVEL 4:            EMERGENCY PLAN**

**AFTER A DROUGHT: LESSONS LEARNT**

Even before there's a drought, we encourage everyone to save water every day, by offering tips, advice and free water-saving products.

We also work round-the-clock to find and fix leaks. We've committed to reduce leaks by half by 2050 and last year we reduced them to their lowest levels yet.

**When a drought starts, there are four key actions we'll take:**

-  **Raise awareness and share advice**  
(tailored to local communities)
-  **Promote enhanced water saving**
-  **Apply to the Environment Agency to supply more water from a source in West Sussex**
-  **Monitor and protect the environment and wildlife.**



The table below shows the range of actions we would take as a drought progresses:

Example timeline	Drought Plan Level	Raising awareness and saving water	Supplying more water and protecting the environment
Year 1	Level 0 Normal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Promote water efficiency</li> <li>Find and fix leaks</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Monitor water levels</li> </ul>
	Level 1 Developing Drought	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Media campaigns - newspapers, TV, radio, social media, emails</li> <li>Promote water efficiency and water saving</li> <li>Find and fix more leaks</li> <li>Reduce water pressure</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Monitor the environment</li> </ul>
Year 2	Level 2 Drought	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Temporary Use Bans (TUBs) for households to save water (formerly called hosepipe bans)</li> <li>Contact vulnerable customers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Prepare to apply for a Drought Permit to take more water from underground in North Arundel</li> </ul>
	Level 3 Severe Drought	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Non-essential Use Bans (NEUBs) for businesses to save water</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Apply for the North Arundel drought permit and install equipment to pump the water from underground and clean it for supply</li> <li>Monitor the environment</li> </ul>
Year 3	Level 3 Severe Drought	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Extreme actions – promote reduction in water use to 50-80 litres per person per day</li> <li>Support vulnerable customers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Supply more water from North Arundel</li> <li>Explore options to bring water in by sea tankers</li> <li>Explore temporary desalination plants on the coast</li> </ul>
Year 4		Level 4 Emergency Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Introduce emergency plan working with the Government – rota cuts and standpipes</li> </ul>

# PROMOTE WATER SAVING

In a drought, we'll introduce restrictions on water use to help the scarce supplies last longer and protect the environment and wildlife for as long as possible.

We've agreed with other water companies in the South East to use the same restrictions and exemptions, so it's clear what everyone should do to save water and help tackle the drought

The first stage is Temporary Use Bans – these used to be known as hosepipe bans. They mainly restrict water use at home.

### Stop using hosepipes for:

- ⊗ **Watering a garden** – a 'garden' includes a garden and lawn at home, park, gardens open to the public, grass verge, grass used for sport or recreation, allotment and any other green space.
- ⊗ **Cleaning a motor vehicle**
- ⊗ **Watering plants at domestic premises**
- ⊗ **Cleaning a private leisure boat**
- ⊗ **Any domestic recreational use**
- ⊗ **Filling or maintaining a domestic pond**
- ⊗ **Cleaning walls and windows of domestic premises**
- ⊗ **Cleaning paths or patios**
- ⊗ **Cleaning other artificial outdoor surfaces**

### Also, stop using water for:

- ⊗ **Filling or maintaining a domestic swimming or paddling pool**
- ⊗ **Filling or maintaining an ornamental fountain.**



### Exemptions from the restrictions

We've also agreed exemptions to these restrictions to help protect vulnerable customers and support businesses and jobs for as long as possible.

### Some will be allowed in every drought:

- All customers on our Priority Services Register
- Blue Badge holders
- Water-using activities which protect health and safety
- Customers using an approved drip or trickle irrigation system fitted with a pressure-reducing valve and timer
- Companies using hosepipes as part of their cleaning business
- Private boats where it is the customer's only

home; the engine needs to be cleaned with a hosepipe or where not cleaning means the boat will use more fuel

- Filling or maintaining a domestic pond which contains fish or other animals which live in water, or fountains adding air to these ponds
- Goods vehicles and public service vehicles
- Filling or maintaining a domestic swimming pool during construction or for health and safety reasons.

### Others we may allow for a while, depending on the water levels:

- Vulnerable customers with mobility issues
- Watering newly-laid turf for 28 days
- To prevent or control the spread of non-native and/or invasive species
- Operating water features with religious significance

# NEXT STEP OF RESTRICTIONS

The second stage is Non-essential Use Bans – we’d apply to the Government to introduce these if a drought gets worse. They mainly restrict water use for businesses.

- ⊗ Watering outdoor plants on commercial premises
- ⊗ Filling or maintaining a commercial swimming or paddling pool
- ⊗ Filling or maintaining a pond
- ⊗ Hand car washing businesses and all automatic car washes
- ⊗ Cleaning any vehicle, boat, aircraft or railway rolling stock
- ⊗ Cleaning any exterior part of a non-domestic building or non-domestic wall
- ⊗ Cleaning a window at commercial premises
- ⊗ Using water to suppress dust
- ⊗ Use of automatic cisterns
- ⊗ Watering national and international sports grounds between 7am – 7pm (and only for two hours between 7pm and 7am)
- ⊗ Cleaning of paths and patios – including graffiti removal
- ⊗ Cleaning of artificial outdoor surfaces – including graffiti removal
- ⊗ Cleaning industrial plant

We can introduce each of these restrictions in stages.



## Exemptions from the restrictions

Again there are exemptions we would allow in every drought:

- All customers on our Priority Services Register
- Blue Badge holders
- Water-using activities which protect health and safety

## Others we may allow for a while, depending on the water levels:

- Small businesses whose sole operation is cleaning windows using hosepipes
- Watering newly bought plants for the first 28 days after the ban is introduced
- Using an approved drip or trickle irrigation system fitted with a pressure-reducing valve and timer set for evenings or during the night
- On biosecurity grounds
- Companies removing graffiti.
- Operating water features with religious significance

# SUPPLY MORE WATER WHERE POSSIBLE

As well as making the most of the water available, we have included a drought permit in our plan to increase supplies from a source in West Sussex in a severe drought.

We would apply to the Environment Agency for the drought permit to increase the amount of water we can take from an underground source in North Arundel.

We've included this option because it's the least likely to affect the environment.

It would take about six months to apply for the drought permit and put equipment in place to pump and treat more water. We'd only use it after we'd introduced all the restrictions to save water and we'd carefully monitor its impact.

## EMERGENCY PLAN

If a severe drought got much worse and lasted for many years, we'd work with the Government to bring in emergency plans to keep supplying water.

This is extremely unlikely but could include rationing water to certain hours in the day or through standpipes in the street. Supporting vulnerable customers would be a priority.

To avoid this, we'd explore other actions first, including:

- Asking everyone to use only 50-80 litres of water each day (this happened in South Africa recently to avoid reaching 'Day Zero' with no water)
- Bringing tankers of water into local ports
- Setting up temporary desalination plants on the coast.

## WHEN A DROUGHT ENDS

A drought ends when there's enough rain to re-fill water sources to healthy levels, which can take many months.

Once we're sure the water levels underground are back to normal levels, we'd lift restrictions, stop using the North Arundel drought permit as soon as possible and let everyone know the drought is over. We'd review our actions to see what worked well, and what improvements we could make next time.



# HAVE YOUR SAY

We'd like to hear your thoughts on our plans to meet the challenges of drought.

visit [www.portsmouthwater.co.uk/droughtplan](http://www.portsmouthwater.co.uk/droughtplan) to get in touch and fill in our online questionnaire (all responses will go directly to Defra; the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs).

You can also email Defra at [water.resources@defra.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:water.resources@defra.gsi.gov.uk) or write to:

Drought Plan Consultation (Portsmouth Water)  
 Defra  
 Water Resources  
 Seacole 3rd Floor, 2 Marsham Street  
 London SW1P 4DF

## We'd particularly like to ask the following questions:

1. Do you think the different levels of drought and the associated actions are easy to understand?
2. Are the proposed restrictions on using water for households and businesses easy to understand?
3. Do you agree with introducing restrictions on using water for households first and businesses afterwards? (To protect jobs and businesses for as long as possible)
4. Do you agree with the automatic exemptions from restrictions on using water which apply to everyone? (These are agreed by all water companies in the UK)
5. Do you agree with all the discretionary exemptions from restrictions on using water? (We agree these for our customers)
6. Do you support the need to use the North Arundel Drought Permit in severe droughts to abstract more water to maintain supplies? (Please get in touch if you'd like to read an environment assessment of using this permit)
7. Would you support the introduction of emergency restrictions such as standpipes (water pipes in streets) or rota cuts (where water is only available for a few hours each day) in an emergency to safeguard essential supplies?
8. Would you be willing to significantly reduce your water use to 50-80 litres of water each day in order to avoid standpipes or rota cuts?
9. Do you think we have got the right balance between reducing demand for water, using the drought permit to produce more water and protecting the environment?
10. What do you think is the best way to tell customers about a drought and restrictions?

Thank you for your time, we'll update our plans with your feedback and share them later this year.



For every individual response Defra receives during the consultation, we'll donate £1 to WaterAid.