

Spring into summer



Water resources newsletter

Spring 2023

Welcome to our first water resources newsletter of 2023.

It's packed with updates since we lifted restrictions in November 2022, ways to be prepared for another dry summer, and a timely world view of water.

Also included is an overview of our spring communications plan to get the message out there to use water wisely, and an update on our mission to find and fix leaks.

Winter planning for summer preparedness

Following on from the challenges we faced last year we have continued to develop our plans ahead of this summer to ensure we are in the best state of preparedness should we face a second dry winter & spring and a return of a hot, dry summer.

We have continued to maintain a full incident structure with executive oversight reporting our progress up to board level, throughout the Winter we have been developing and implementing a number of capital maintenance schemes to help increase the resilience of our asset base.

We have conducted an extensive lesson learnt exercise alongside working with the broader industry and stakeholders to look at ways we can strengthen our drought plans and reduce the risk on the environment and limit restrictions of our services to our customers.

We have been working hard to address the actions identified in our lessons learnt report with over 60% already started and hoping to complete all by the end of May.

One key part of the lessons learnt review was to take a much more cautious approach to planning, including a greater account of demand scenarios. We have updated our modelling to consider three different scenarios of risk: average rainfall, 2022 actuals and 40% of LTA (long term average) rainfall.

These models help demonstrate when triggers may need to be introduced under each scenario and help with early warning.



Wroughton reservoir

Finding and fixing leaks 24/7

The exceptionally hot weather last summer caused reported leaks to increase by at least 10%. This was mainly caused by the highest ever recorded dry ground conditions and unprecedented demand.

More recently, the freezing temperatures before Christmas resulted in a new surge of leaks. Leakage is 1/3 from our pipes, 1/3 from customers and 1/3 is at homes that are not yet metered.

To reduce leakage, we've implemented a substantial recovery plan. We'll have more teams fixing and finding leaks than ever before – we're currently fixing 13,000 leaks a week, which is one every 7.5 minutes. We have installed more than 800,000 smart meters to help save water and better understand leakage.

We're spending over £55m on pressure management and £200m on replacing water mains over the next three years.

We've repaired twice as many more visible leaks on our water mains since the start of our leakage recovery plan began in September 2022 and we've already managed to increase the volume of leaks we've found by 47%.

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Drought is a global problem

The WHO (World Health Organization) estimates 55 million people around the world are affected by droughts every year, and it's the most serious hazard to livestock and crops nearly everywhere.

European countries such as France are in a state of high alert after recording the longest winter drought since record-keeping began in 1959, joining a host of other European countries experiencing severe conditions.

Further afield in North America, extreme dryness has ravaged the American West for more than two decades, with the last 22-year period ranked as the driest in at least 1,200 years and commonly known as the megadrought.

The water levels are so low in the Colorado river, which supplies water to seven states, that the river is at risk of becoming a 'Deadpool', a condition where there's not enough water to pass through dams which would be catastrophic for downstream states.

Scientists and researchers believe that climate change caused by human actions is a significant driver of destructive conditions such as those experienced in the US.

With extreme weather patterns increasing in frequency further afield, as well as in our own back gardens, the onus is on us at Thames Water to communicate our water resource plans with our stakeholders and empower customers to understand the necessity to take collective action right now.

What is our current water resources position?

Despite the UK experiencing the wettest March in over 40-years, February was also the driest on record in 30-years for England. The swing between extreme climate conditions is a clear indication that it's more important than ever to protect our future water supply.

In February, the Thames catchment had 13% long term average rainfall, whilst in contrast, March had 252% long term average rainfall. Our reservoirs have been replenished by the recent rain and storage levels are above average at most sites.



Tackling water scarcity

Building regulations create unsustainable approaches to water efficiency and change is needed. Ofwat and Environment Agency guidance sets targets of 110 litres per person per day (l/p/d).

We support the use of ambitious targets but building regulations only require new developments to be constructed to 125 l/p/d, with 110 l/p/d as an optional target.

A crucial step to tackling water scarcity is making the 110 l/p/d the standard that all new buildings must meet, which must be enforced through building regulations.

Improving the water efficiency of buildings is vital to reducing overall demand.

We have recently consulted on our Water Resources Management Plan which sets out our water resource plans for the next 50 years. You can find out more [here](#).



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What is our current water resources position? cont.

River levels responded well to recent periods of rain and are currently above average in both the Thames at Farnoor and Thames at Teddington.

Groundwater levels have also responded well to the heavy winter rainfall and are mostly normal across the catchment. In the Cotswolds the levels are exceptionally high, whilst levels in the Chilterns West chalk respond slower and are still below normal.

Spring communications plan

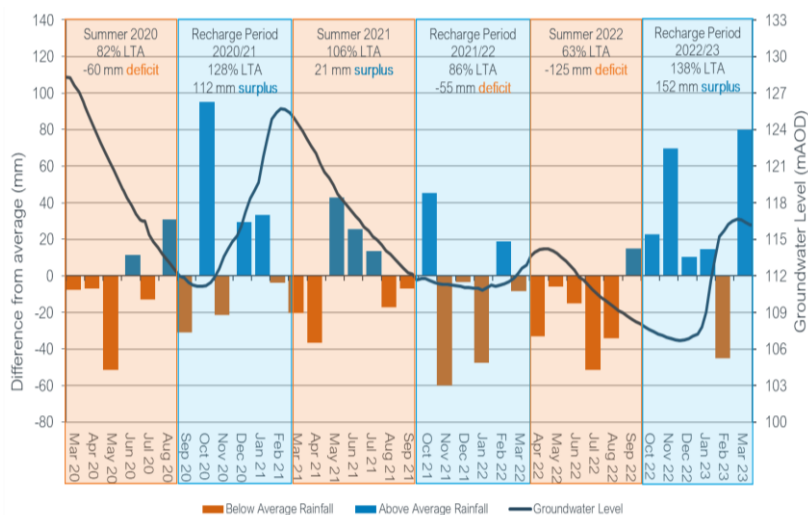
Ahead of the Easter weekend, we're encouraging our customers to use water wisely. Whether people are spring cleaning or getting the garden ready for summer there are simple swaps that everyone can adopt to save water.

This week we've issued a water-saving press release to local media. Next week our water demand manager, Andrew Tucker, will chat to BBC radio stations to share tips and explain why we still need to use water wisely, despite the recent wet weather. In March, Andrew featured in a [BBC Radio 4](#) series, where science correspondent James Gallagher discussed water scarcity and asked could we run out?

Earlier in March, we also kicked-off a campaign with Global, who operate Heat and Capital radio stations, to air water saving adverts across their radio stations. This was amplified with on-air and social media support from presenter Zoe Hardman and supported with a competition giveaway. Collectively the campaign is due to reached over 4.88m customers.

In addition to sharing this water resources update, we've also been sharing a range of water saving tips on both Facebook and Instagram. Looking ahead, our customer marketing team will be issuing water saving advice by email to 2.4m customers from the 17 April.

Information on how you can save water, which you can share with your stakeholders, is available [here](#).



Monthly rainfall totals and groundwater levels

