

THE BY BROOK SUSTAINABILITY CALENDAR

JUNE – WATER

Welcome to the latest edition of the By Brook Sustainability Calendar. This month we look at water and why we should not take it for granted.

In some of our villages in the By Brook Valley, it's only three generations since our forebears fetched their water from the village pump or well. Now we turn on a tap and expect endless amounts of clean water to flow.

So what have we got to worry about?

Water running low – that's what. As our population grows, across the world and here in the UK, so does our water use. At the same time, climate change is already creating higher temperatures and more extreme weather conditions. This in turn leads to variable water supply and even greater water demand, especially for agricultural irrigation.

What is the picture globally?

In many parts of the world, water demand (especially for manufacturing and production) cannot be met by water supply – this is known as water stress. Currently 25% of the world's population lives under water-stress, and in these areas conflicts between big businesses and local populations are increasing. Drinks bottling plants are obvious transgressors, with major companies such as Nestle and Coca Cola coming under fire in recent years, but a wide range of industries are culpable.

At the same time, the United Nation currently reports that 26% of the world's population lack access to safely managed water, while 44% have no sanitation.



What is the picture nationally?

Back in 2019, Sir James Bevan, CEO of the Environment Agency, cautioned “on present projections, many parts of our country will face significant water deficits by 2050, particularly in the south-east where much of the UK population lives.” This means we may face water rationing which has already had to be imposed in many areas across the world.

What is the picture locally?

In the Wessex Water area, 80% of our mains water is extracted from underground aquifers. If water is extracted faster than it can be replenished, then water levels drop, which in turn leads to reduction in river flow. In recent years in the By Brook area, we have seen our streams and rivers running low or even drying up completely, with significant consequences for local ecology.

So we just need to have fewer baths, right?

This will certainly help. Average water use in the UK is around 150 litres per person per day. To reduce our demand on water, many experts say we need to get this down to below 100 litres per person. So with an average bath accounting for 115 litres, we certainly need to consider our bathing habits - along with all our other household use. See below for tips.



Steart Marshes in Somerset

What can we do practically?

We should all do our bit to save water in the home. For tips see www.waterwise.org.uk

Much of the watering we do in our garden is wasted. Minimise mains water use by installing a water butt, and get a bucket load of more advice at www.rhs.org.uk

Have a water meter installed. It's free. You can see how much you are using and can save money. If your bills end up higher, revert to a non-metered supply and get your extra payments refunded, so it's no risk. You can also send off for free gadgets to save water in your home. See www.wessexwater.co.uk

Whenever you can, check out the water impact of your purchases. Look to support businesses that are innovating. For example, clothing company BAM claim to have reduced the water impact of their bamboo jeans by 75%. www.bambooclothing.co.uk

Support these excellent charities as your contribution to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal No.6: 'Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all'. www.wateraid.org.uk
www.toilettwinning.org

Campaign for protected and new wetlands - nature's solution to the water crisis, as they absorb and clean water, help regulate temperature, store carbon and enhance biodiversity. We have destroyed 90% of the UK's wetlands in the last 400 years, and global wetland loss is occurring three times faster than forest destruction. Sign the *Wetlands Can!* Pledge, and visit our nearest new wetland at Steart Marshes in Somerset where rare UK species such as spoonbill and black-winged stilt certainly appreciate the new habitat. www.wwt.org.uk

Next month we cover Transport & Travel.

Meanwhile, if you have comments or ideas about any topics we've covered or should cover in the By Brook Sustainability Calendar, contact us at mike@vertigosdc.com

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