



Drought plan consultation

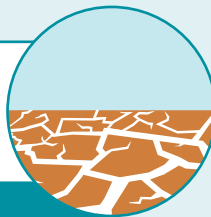
**Have your say on our
plan to manage droughts**

June 2021



At a glance

Droughts are a period of water shortage caused by low rainfall. They can cause harm to the environment and reduce how much water we have to supply our customers.



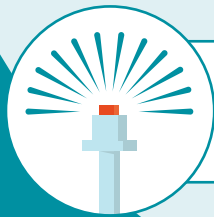
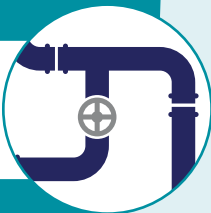
This plan sets out how we will carry on supplying water during a drought.

We continually monitor our sources, so we know when a drought is starting.



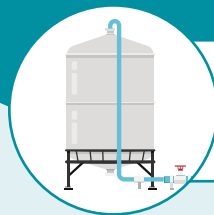
We use drought triggers to tell us what activity we should carry out and when.

This includes taking action to maximise the amount of water from our sources and move it around our area.



We will ask customers to use less water and restrict water use for certain activities as the drought becomes more serious.

If needed, we will ask for permission to temporarily take more water from the environment to supplement our supplies.



In an emergency situation we may need to tanker water from elsewhere and ration water supplies.

We want to hear your views on our drought plan. Have your say at seswater.co.uk/publications

Introduction

This plan sets out how we will carry on supplying water during a drought. It explains the steps we will take to keep taps flowing and what you can do to play your part.

There are different types of drought, but all result in a period of water shortage caused by a prolonged period of low rainfall.

The nature, timings and impact of droughts can vary. Some will only affect a small area while others will be more widespread. They can impact on sectors – such as agriculture, water companies, the leisure industry and the environment – quite differently.

The more serious they become, the more of an impact they will have on society, the economy and the environment. That is why we are required by law to have a plan to manage them.

We can't prevent a prolonged period of low rainfall from happening but we can, with your help, manage the situation and reduce the impact on people and the environment.

This is particularly important as we are in an area of serious water stress so we all need to do everything we can to help protect our water supplies, whatever the weather.

We would like to hear your views before our plan is finalised and published because the measures within it will impact on people, communities, and businesses; as well as the local environment.

We ask a number of questions at the end of this document so please share your feedback.

No two droughts are ever the same and climate change is likely to make them more severe and frequent. That's why we have tested this plan against lots of different drought scenarios including those we've experienced in the past and those that might occur in the future.



When will we use our drought plan?

We continually monitor rainfall levels and river flows, as well as the amount of water that is in the water sources we use to supply our customers.

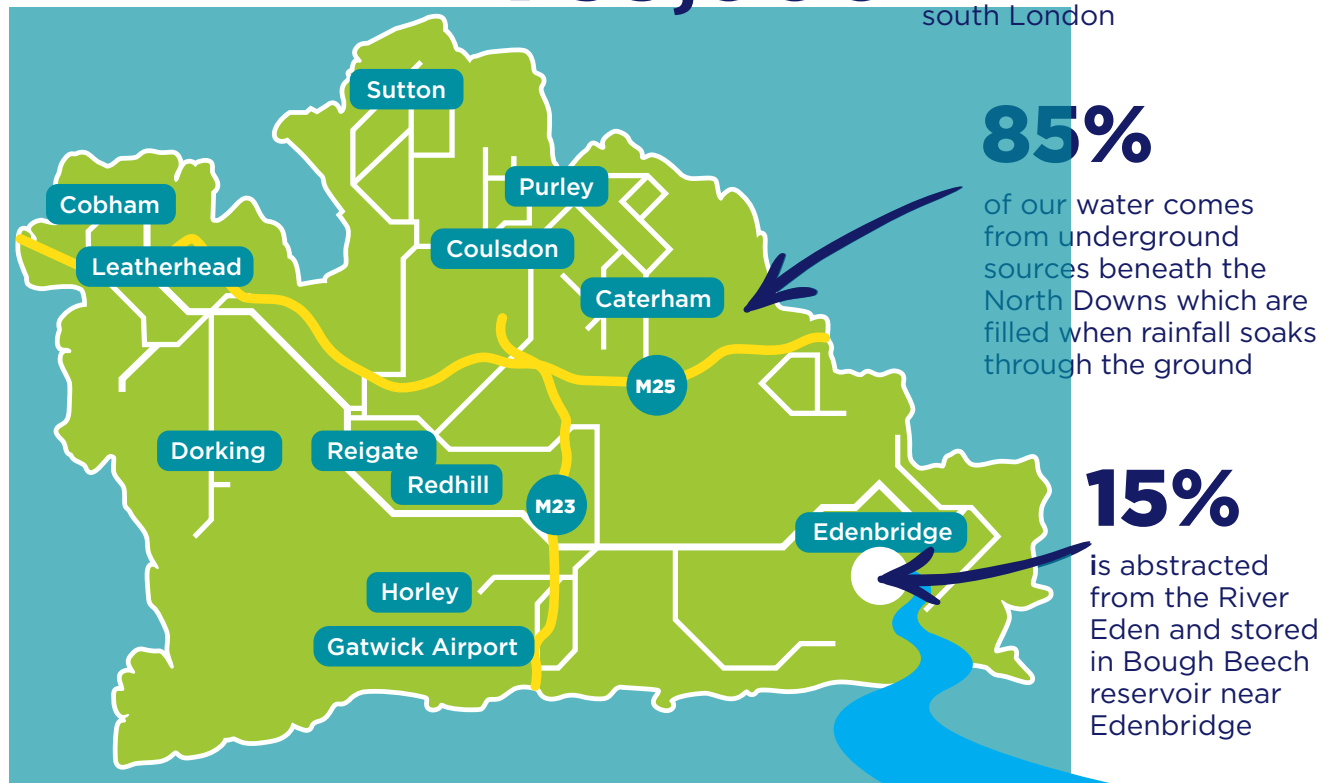
Each of these sources have a series of trigger levels which tell us when a drought is developing and getting worse. These correspond to the following stages:

- Normal (no drought)
- Impending drought (level 1)
- Drought (level 2)
- Severe drought (level 3a and 3b)
- Emergency drought (level 4)

As the drought progresses we will take different actions at each stage to mitigate its impact and preserve water supplies.

Where our water comes from

We supply high quality drinking water to more than **735,000** people in parts of Surrey, West Sussex, Kent and south London



What we will do during a drought

The actions we will take to manage a drought can be split into two areas - maximising water supplies and reducing demand.

Maximising water supplies

These actions will help us to make more water available to supply to customers. They include:

Changing how we operate our sources - we will change how we use our water sources so we rely more heavily on those that can be recharged by pumping water from other parts of the aquifer and preserving supplies in those that are reliant on rainfall to refill them.

Moving water around our region - we have constructed new pipelines which means we can move water around our region more easily. In particular, we can transfer more water from Bough Beech reservoir in the south of our operating area to the north, helping to preserve supplies in local sources.

Drought permits - we can apply to the Environment Agency for permission to abstract water from the River Eden outside our normal abstraction period to help us refill Bough Beech reservoir.

One drought permit would allow us to continue our winter abstraction throughout May and the other would allow us to abstract from June to August, if river flows permit. Together, they would provide up to 272 million litres per day of extra water.

We can also apply for permission to abstract additional water under certain conditions from three groundwater sources - Hackbridge, Kenley and Woodmansterne. Together, these could provide an additional 9 million litres per day. We would not apply for a drought permit until after Temporary Use Bans have been introduced. If we do, we will enhance our environmental monitoring and take measures to mitigate the impact on the environment.

Reducing demand

These actions will help us save water so the supplies that we have can go further. They include:

Customer awareness campaigns - we will use a range of channels including social media, newspapers, TV and radio, advertising and events to reach our customers and ask them to use water more carefully. We will join up where we can with the other water companies and water retailers, to work together to reach customers, businesses and other water users.

Leakage management - we will step-up our activity to find and fix leaks both on our network and customers' pipes, and manage the pressure inside our pipes so less water is lost.

Temporary Use Bans (TUBs) - will restrict some outdoor water use by household customers to help save water.

Non-Essential Use Ban (NEUB) - will restrict some water use by non-household customers to help save water.

Limit household consumption - we will make public appeals to customers to limit their daily consumption to help preserve supplies and avoid rationing water.

Pressure reductions - we will reduce pressure in a phased way.

Emergency drought order - would allow us to bring in emergency measures such as only supplying water at certain times of the day ('rota cuts') or putting standpipes in public places for people to draw water from instead of it being supplied to their homes.



Water use restrictions

During a drought we may need customers to restrict their water use. Here we explain what would be restricted at each stage.

There are exemptions for certain customers and activities. Some of these will be applied automatically by all water companies. Others will be introduced at the discretion of individual companies.

A = Automatic exemption

D = Discretionary exemption

Temporary Use Ban (TUBs)

What's not allowed?

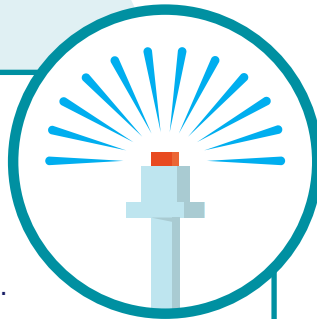
You can't use a hosepipe or a sprinkler for:

- Watering a garden - which includes private and public gardens, parks, allotments, grass verges and open green spaces
- Cleaning a private motor vehicle
- Watering plants at domestic premises
- Cleaning a private leisure boat
- Any domestic recreational use

- Cleaning the walls or windows of domestic premises
- Cleaning paths or patios.

Or use water to:

- Fill or maintain a domestic pond or ornamental fountain
- Fill a domestic swimming pool or paddling pool.



What's exempt?

- Watering the areas of grass with a hosepipe or sprinkler that are used for sport or recreation (not the whole ground), to protect health and safety (A)
- Approved drip or trickle irrigations systems that have a pressure reducing valve and timer (A)
- Blue badge holders (A)
- Companies that use hosepipes for their cleaning business such as window, car and patio cleaners (A)
- Using a hosepipe to clean a private boat which is the customers' home; where not cleaning it will increase fuel consumption and where it is the required method of cleaning the engine (A)
- Filling a domestic pond during construction and which contains fish or other species (A)
- Filling a pool used for medical treatment, veterinary treatment and animal decontamination (A)
- Filling an ornamental fountain that provides air to a pond containing fish (A)
- Watering newly laid turf with a hosepipe or sprinkler for the first 28 days (D)
- Customers with mobility issues on the company's vulnerable customers list (D)
- To prevent the spread of invasive species (D)
- To operate water features with religious significance (D).

We will introduce TUBs in a phased way. In phase one only the use of sprinklers and unattended hosepipes will be banned for watering a garden. In phase two this will extend to the use of a handheld hose for all the activities outlined above.

Non-Essential Use Ban (NEUB)

To introduce a NEUB we are required to apply for a Drought Order to the Secretary of State.



What's not allowed?

- Watering outdoor plants on commercial premises
- Using a hosepipe for filling or maintaining a commercial swimming pool or paddling pool
- Using a hosepipe for filling or maintaining a pond
- Operating a mechanical vehicle washer
- Cleaning any vehicle, boat, aircraft or railway rolling stock
- Cleaning any part of an exterior building or wall
- Cleaning the windows of non-domestic premises
- Cleaning industrial plant
- Using water to suppress dust
- Using an automatic cistern in an unoccupied building.

What's exempt?

- Water used to protect health and safety (A)
- Blue badge holders (A)
- Watering plants that are for sale; or are part of the National Flower collection or on temporary display (A)
- Filling or maintaining pools that are open to the public, used by schools for swimming lessons, used for medical or veterinary treatment and animal decontamination (A)
- Filling pools or ponds which contain fish or other aquatic species (A)
- Using an approved drip or trickle irrigation system during the evening or night (D)
- Watering newly bought plants for the first 28 days (D)
- Businesses whose sole occupation is cleaning windows using a hosepipe (D)
- Businesses that use water to remove graffiti (D)
- Using water on biosecurity grounds (D).

Our drought plan

Below we set out the actions we will take at each stage as the drought develops.

Drought stage	Maximise supplies	Reduce demand
Impending drought (level 1)	<p>Start to use sources conjunctively so groundwater can be preserved and surface water used where possible</p> <p>Transfer more water to the north of our area</p> <p>Begin environmental monitoring</p> <p>Postpone or cancel planned work at our sites that would make less water available</p>	<p>Begin customer awareness campaign</p> <p>Promote water efficiency advice, products and virtual home audits</p> <p>Engage with essential service providers</p> <p>Increase work to find and fix leaks</p> <p>Use less water to run our own operations</p> <p>Co-ordinate communications with other water companies and regulators</p>
Drought (level 2)	<p>Bring peak sources into supply or increase their output</p> <p>Use transfers to move water around the area to where it's needed most</p> <p>Continue to use Bough Beech reservoir and transfer water to the north if river flows are sufficient</p> <p>Begin drought permit preparations and start environmental mitigation measures</p>	<p>Implement TUBs phase 1 and 2</p> <p>Communicate introduction of TUBs to customers using a range of channels</p> <p>Repair leaks more quickly and find and fix more customer-side leaks and offer free repairs</p> <p>Work with retailers, key local stakeholders and large water users to prepare for more severe drought</p> <p>Engage with and support vulnerable customers</p> <p>Increase communications activity in collaboration with other water companies and regulators</p>

Drought stage	Maximise supplies	Reduce demand
Severe drought (level 3a)	<p>Apply for a drought permit to abstract water from the River Eden during May to refill Bough Beech reservoir</p> <p>Apply for one or more of the groundwater drought permits (timing and order will depend on the drought situation and time of year)</p> <p>Apply for a drought permit to abstract water from the River Eden during the summer to refill Bough Beech. We would not make this application until a NEUB has been introduced.</p> <p>Carry out enhanced environmental monitoring and mitigation measures</p>	<p>Further increase public awareness and appeal for restraint</p> <p>Ask retailers, large business users, local authorities, fire authorities, hospitals and schools to reduce demand</p> <p>Apply for a drought order to implement NEUB</p> <p>Communicate non-essential water use restrictions to affected businesses</p> <p>Support vulnerable customers</p> <p>Further increase activity to find and fix leaks</p> <p>Implement pressure reduction in areas where we can</p>
Severe drought (level 3b) – we've included additional activity, so we are doing 'more before 4' to help avoid emergency drought measures	<p>Tanker additional supplies of water</p>	<p>Remove all exemptions on TUBs and NEUBs</p> <p>Implement further pressure reduction where possible</p> <p>Consider limiting consumption to 50 litres per person per day</p> <p>Increase support to vulnerable customers</p>
Emergency drought (level 4)	<p>Increase use of tankers to provide extra supplies</p>	<p>Co-ordinated communication with Government and relevant agencies about extreme restrictions</p> <p>Introduce phased pressure reduction</p> <p>Introduce standpipes and/or rota-cuts as appropriate</p> <p>Work with emergency planning bodies to ensure security of supplies</p>

You can read our full drought plan document at www.seswater.co.uk/publications

Levels of service

We aim to provide our customers with an excellent service, but these measures will be needed if a drought occurs. We plan to introduce:

- ➡ Temporary Use Bans (TUBs) – **once every 10-years** on average
- ➡ Non-Essential Use Bans (NEUB) – **once every 20-years** on average
- ➡ River Eden drought permit (May extension) – **once every 20-years** on average
- ➡ Groundwater drought permits – **once in every 20-years** on average
- ➡ River Eden drought permit (summer refill) – **less than once in every 20 years**
- ➡ Emergency drought measures – **once in every 200-years*** on average.

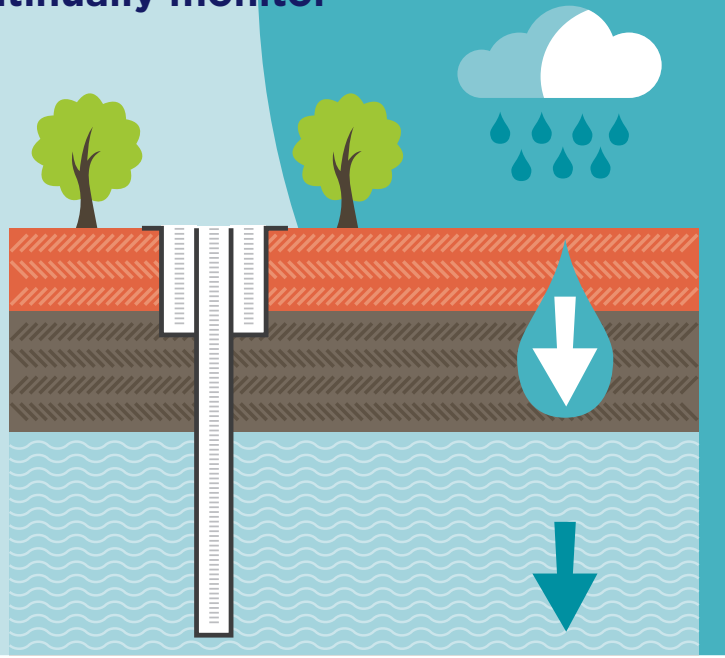
*This aligns with our current Water Resources Management Plan (WRMP) which plans for emergency drought situations once every 200-years. Our next WRMP will plan for this to happen once every 500-years reducing the chance that emergency measures will be needed.

The last Temporary Use Ban was used during the 2012 drought. We typically see demand reduce by around 5% when TUBs are introduced.

After a drought

A drought affecting the public water supply will only end when there has been enough rainfall to refill our water sources. That can take months. We will continually monitor the situation and remove the different levels of restrictions as soon as we can, once our water supplies reach a healthy level.

We will always carry out a full review following a drought which will include considering how well restrictions worked, the impact on the environment and how it affected our customers. We will share our findings with our industry colleagues and use them to inform our next drought plan.



Taking action today

We’ve prepared our drought plan, so we are ready in case a drought develops and becomes more serious. This is our emergency plan to make sure water supplies are maintained and the environment is protected.

But we aren’t waiting until things get really bad to take action. We are working hard today to make sure our water resources are reliable and resilient, so we reduce the chance of having to take these emergency measures. There are also things you can do now to help protect our precious resource and the environment it comes from.

We are...	You can...
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Providing free water meters to all our customers to help them save water• Introducing smart meters to provide customers with more regular updates on their water use and help them use less• Reducing leakage on our network by using new technology that helps us find leaks more quickly and identify the water mains most likely to leak and replace them• Offering free repairs to customers who have a leak outside or inside their home• Working with our neighbouring water companies to identify where we need new sources of water and pipelines to move it around the region more easily• Carrying out work that will help improve the quality and quantity of the water in our rivers and underground sources and make them more resilient to drought events.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Find out how much water you use and how you can make savings by carrying out a 20-minute virtual water audit of your home at www.seswater.co.uk/getwaterfit• Install the recommended water saving devices in your home to help you use a little less everyday• Encourage everyone in your home and at work to avoid wasting water where they can by turning off taps, taking shorter showers and waiting until the dishwasher is full before running a load• Fix dripping taps and leaky loos and if you’re worried you have a leak contact us quickly and we can help you fix it• Have a meter installed at your home so you only pay for what you use• Choose a water efficient model next time you change your washing machine or dishwasher• Buy water efficient fixtures and fittings next time you refurbish your bathroom or kitchen• Install a water butt or two in the garden so you capture rainwater to water your plants.

Remember, every drop counts. **If we all save a little, together we can save a lot.**

Tell us what you think

We would like to know what you think of our plans to manage droughts. Below are some questions which will help us to understand your views.

1. Do you understand the different phases of drought and the action we will take at each?
2. Do you understand what activity is not allowed under a Temporary Use Ban and a Non-Essential Use Ban?
3. Do you agree with the automatic exemptions from restrictions on using water?
4. Do you agree with the discretionary exemptions from restrictions on using water?
5. Do you agree that we should not apply for a drought permit until Temporary Use Bans are in place – so we are taking measures to reduce demand before we take more from the environment?
6. Would you be willing to limit your water use to 50 litres per day to help avoid water rationing being introduced?
7. Do you think it is ever acceptable to introduce water rationing such as standpipes or rota cuts?
8. How best can we communicate with customers during a drought?
9. Do you have any other comments about our drought plan?



You can answer these questions using our online form www.seswater.co.uk/publications

Alternatively, you can email your response to water.resources@defra.gov.uk or write to:

Secretary of State (DEFRA)

Drought Plan Consultation (SES Water)
Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
Area 3D
Nobel House
17 Smith Square
London
SW1P 3JR



The closing date for responses is 30 July 2021.

Thank you very much for participating in our drought plan consultation.
We will publish our Statement of Response and update to our plan later in 2021.

Find out more

Visit our website seswater.co.uk

Follow us on Twitter [@SESWater](https://twitter.com/SESWater)

Join our Talk on Water
online customer community
seswater.co.uk/talkonwater



