

Water levels at an all-time low

From our Environment Correspondent

The water companies have been given just three weeks to come up with plans to explain how they will respond to the current water shortage and to the long-term need to provide water for homes while, at the same time, protecting our rivers.

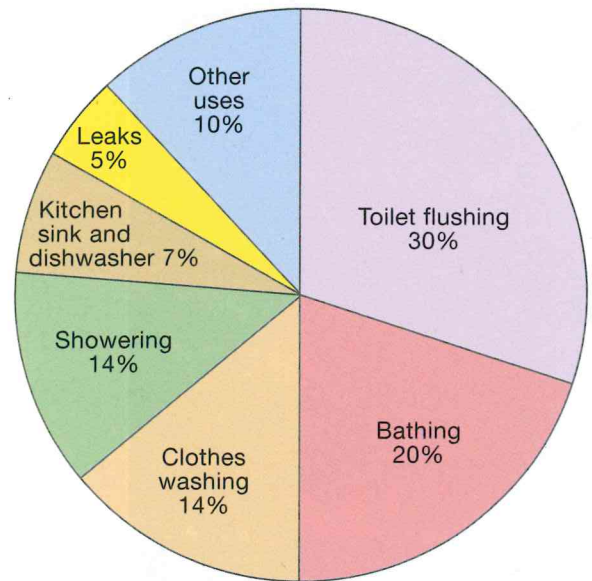
Leakage is the top priority. At present an average of 30% of treated water leaks away before it can be used.

Among the plans being considered is for the water companies to offer to repair leaks on customers' land free of charge.

Another way of saving water is for every home to use water more carefully. A way of encouraging this would be to introduce water meters in every household. "If people knew they had to pay for every drop of water they use," said one water company spokesman yesterday, "they would soon be far more conservation minded!"

But the government is reserving its position on water meters. Apart from the extra cost of installing the meters, they wonder about the fairness for people with large families, or those with medical conditions requiring frequent bathing, or those whose work makes them dirty.

As a third of domestic water currently goes down the toilet, reducing this could alone make a major impact on the immediate problem.



Water use in the home

A recently produced Environment Agency leaflet gives some water saving tips:

- The toilet. Placing a water-filled bottle in the cistern will help by stopping the cistern from taking in so much water as it refills.
- Showers use much less water than baths.
- Don't use washing machines or dishwashers with half loads.
- Be a water pest! Snoop for dripping taps and get them fixed.
- Use washing-up water in the garden to water the flowers and vegetables, rather than fresh water.
- Use a water butt to collect rain water for the garden.
- Turn off the tap while you are brushing your teeth.
- Don't use sprinklers unless essential.