

Green Living

The sixth leaflet in a series produced in September-November 2021 by the Green Living groups of Avenue St Andrew's United Reformed Church, Southampton, and its ecumenical partners, from material in *The Dorset Green Living Guide* and current versions of related websites
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Water

Climate change and Water

Southern Water says,

“Climate change¹ is a significant issue in the South East because global warming is leading to changes in our weather with an increased threat of droughts and flooding. “The Met Office² has stated that ... 16 of the 17 warmest years on record have occurred since the year 2001.

“The sea is predicted to rise by one metre this century, exposing millions more people to flooding, and, by 2080, annual rainfall in the South East could drop by half. We're making plans to cope with the increased threat of droughts and flooding, to ensure there are sufficient water supplies³ to go round and reduce the risk of sewer flooding to homes and gardens.”

Water at home

In that context, how can we do our part to use less water and use it more carefully?

Firstly, see how much water you actually use, according to meter readings on your bills, or take your own reading at the meter which is probably in the pavement near your entrance.

How does your daily average compare with the figure a few years ago in this panel from *The Dorset Green Living Guide*?

You may already do some of the ways suggested below, but you might like to try more.

After a month or so, take another reading to see the difference – and continue!

Ways to reduce use

If appropriate in your case:

- Fix drips, leaks, overflows.
- Collect cold run-off from hot taps for plants, garden or toilet tank.
- Flush toilets less often.
- Put something in toilet cistern to reduce its capacity, unless yours is a modern water-efficient type.
- Wash clothes and dishes less often, in full loads.
- Select a washing cycle using less water.
- Shower (gentle flow) rather than bath.
- Turn taps off while soaping yourself or brushing teeth.
- Use minimum water needed in kettles and saucepans.
- Use sprinklers for less time and in the cooler part of day, butts to collect rainwater, watering can rather than hose.



For more ways to save water see

- *The Dorset Green Living Guide* <https://greenliving.sustainabledorset.org/> chapter 6
- <https://www.southernwater.co.uk/help-advice/how-to-save-water>
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Water companies improving water use

Water companies across England & Wales have reduced leakage by a third since the 1990s. In 2019 they pledged⁴ to work together to triple the rate of leakage reduction by 2030.

Southern Water⁵ has invested in new pressure management technology to help reduce leaks.

“During 2020–21, we installed 7,400 acoustic loggers on our network which help to quickly detect possible leaks, and completed 20,000 leak repairs.”

It also has its *Target 100* programme to:

- support customers to reduce their daily water use to 100 litres per person per day
- raise awareness about water efficiency and scarcity
- install smart meters and provide incentives
- provide free home visits to install water-saving devices and talk about ways to save water.



More broadly, since privatisation 30 years ago⁴, the water industry in England and Wales:

- has spent around £160 billion improving pipes, pumping stations, sewers and treatment centres
- says customers are now
 - 5 times less likely to suffer from supply interruptions
 - 8 times less likely to suffer from sewer flooding
 - 100 times less likely to have low water pressure.

However water companies have been found guilty of major sewage pollution of waterways, e.g.

Southern Water July 2021 <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/record-90m-fine-for-southern-water-following-ea-prosecution>

Anglian Water Jan 2023 <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/water-company-fined-560170-after-sewage-discharge-in-river>

Water companies reducing carbon emissions

Southern Water is “one of the largest users of energy in the South East due to the significant amounts of energy needed to pump water and wastewater around the region and treat it.”⁵

Southern Water’s carbon footprint of around 280 kilotonnes of ‘carbon dioxide equivalent’ (that includes methane and nitrous oxide from sewage treatment) mainly resulted from national grid electricity from fossil fuels.

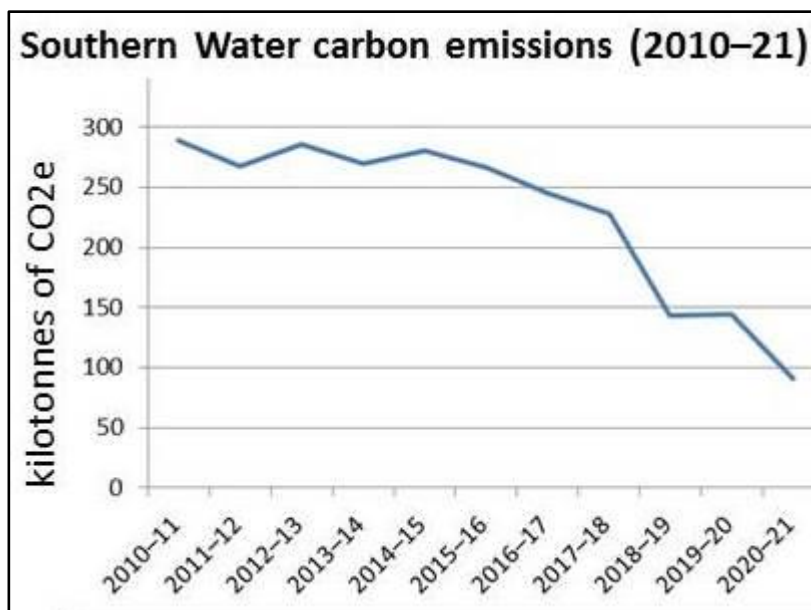
This has already been reduced to about 90 kilotonnes through:

- changing electricity supplier to draw from renewable sources
- generating their own power
 - 74 GWh ‘power from poo’ (using biogas from biosolids to make power and heat)
 - 3 GWh from solar panels (and surplus power to grid)
- changing to electric vehicles
- efficiency improvements.

This is well on the way to Southern Water’s pledge of net zero carbon emissions by 2030.⁵

This pledge is now shared by the whole water industry.⁴

And this helps us to reduce our carbon footprints too.



What about bottled water?

An incisive video from *The Story of Stuff* Project
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Se12y9hSOM0>

For more information on these subjects you may like to click on these footnotes:

¹ <https://www.southernwater.co.uk/water-for-life/protecting-the-environment/climate-change>

² <https://www.metoffice.gov.uk/weather/climate-change/what-is-climate-change> & graph in our leaflet 1

³ <https://www.southernwater.co.uk/our-story/water-resources-planning>

⁴ <https://www.water.org.uk/news-item/water-industry-reaffirms-pledge-to-work-in-the-public-interest/>

⁵ https://www.southernwater.co.uk/media/4931/5585_net_zero_report_a4_v10.pdf