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Sustainable Resources Guide: Water

This guide is designed to support your business to use resources more efficiently, reducing waste and reducing costs.

Why water?

The supply of water, treatment of wastewater (e.g., water from bathrooms, process use, vehicle washing etc.) and disposal of waste can represent a significant cost to a business - up to 4-5% of annual turnover for waste alone, according to the Chartered Institute of Purchasing and Supply. Taking steps to save water and reduce waste (including diverting as much as possible from expensive landfill) often involves simple actions with no or low cost and can cut business overheads as well as providing immediate environmental benefits. In addition, the deregulation of the UK's water industry in 2017 now makes it possible to “shop around” to find the best water supply rates which can also produce some significant savings.

The rate charged for water supply to a business include both fresh water supply and wastewater treatment costs. The UK average for a medium sized business using 1500 m³ water per year is £1.58 per m³ for water supply and £1.68 per m³ for treatment (with a difference of 34% between highest and lowest costs). The average annual total cost of water supply to the business is £4873.¹

Water supply and waste treatment of any sort also requires energy with an associated carbon footprint and – in the case of waste sent to landfill – can release methane, a potent greenhouse gas. This footprint is attributed to the business as an indirect (Scope 3) emission.

The Business Case

1. **Cut overheads:** Saving water saves on business water rates.
2. **Secure supply:** Water resources are becoming scarcer, which means that it's becoming more expensive to build new infrastructure to augment existing water supply. Saving water helps to ensure continued supply of affordable

¹ Source: <https://www.businesselectricityprices.org.uk/water-prices/>



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water and reduces the pressure on creating new infrastructure. It also means that our water supply is more resilient to climate change.

3. **Create business opportunities:** As well as cutting the cost of water supply, being proactive in being more efficient with water and eliminating water can reduce the cost of raw materials.
4. **Protect the Environment:** Efficient water use minimises the amount of water taken from aquifers and rivers due to a rise in demand. Reducing dependence on these water sources protects the resources themselves as well as the wildlife that inhabit them.
5. **Reduce Your Carbon Footprint:** Supplying water, treating wastewater is an energy-intensive process. For example, The operational emissions from the water industry account for almost 1% of the UK's total emissions.
6. **Generate Positive PR:** Showing the public that your business cares about saving water enhances its reputation. Your water saving measures can be used as public relations material.
7. **Comply with Environmental Legislation:** All businesses are legally required to exercise a duty of care by ensuring wastewater is properly treated and does not pollute ground water or water courses.
8. **Tax incentives:** Businesses that invest in technologies and strategies that encourage sustainable resource use and energy saving may be eligible for tax savings. The Enhanced Capital Allowance (ECA) scheme incentivises businesses to invest in technologies that reduce energy use, improve water quality and save water by letting qualifying companies claim back 100% first-year allowances on investments in certain technologies and products.

What can you do?

1. Shop around and save on business water rates and waste disposal costs

The water market was deregulated in 2017 which offered businesses a choice of water suppliers and allowed them to benefit from increased competitiveness and elect the water supplier that best suits their needs. It also means that businesses can consolidate their bills, with one supplier to administer all their sites.

Use water comparison sites to find the most competitive water rates for your business. Examples include:



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[Business Cost Comparison](#)

[Expert Market](#)

[The Eco Experts](#)

[Love Energy Savings](#)

2. Reduce Water Consumption

No cost steps:

- Educate and inform employees on the importance and practices of water efficiency and remind them to save water at every opportunity (they may also have some ideas of their own).
- Monitor leakage by checking water meters at night or when water is not being used.
- Make sure that relevant personnel know where water supply pipes run and where the shut-off valves are located. Should a pipe suddenly burst, someone will then be able to shut off the mains quickly to avoid water wastage.
- Insulate water pipes to reduce the risk of water freezing and pipes bursting.
- Check your monthly water bills and record your consumption so that you're aware of any spikes in your tariffs and can identify the cause of them.
- Use a smart water meter for efficient water consumption data and analysis. You can use this to set targets for water efficiency.
- Conduct regular checks for drips, leaks and other water wastage and encourage your employees to do the same.

Low cost/Longer-term

Major cost savings can be gained through the installation of simple devices that may require higher upfront costs but result in water and cost-savings in the long run.

- Purchase water-efficient equipment
- Urinal controls or waterless urinals



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- Efficient flush toilets
- Automatic or sensor taps
- Water-efficient taps and showers (these will save on both water and energy by minimising the use of heated water)
- Fit your showers and taps with low-flow restrictors
- A rainwater harvesting device
- Water recycling infrastructure that will allow you to use greywater or rainwater
- Use an irrigation system with sensors, to better control exterior water use