

Water Guides

Saving water at home

Why is it an issue locally?

Water is a precious finite resource vital for sustaining people, wildlife and the environment.

However, Tonbridge and Malling is located in one of the driest regions in the UK which has been identified as an area of water stress by the Environment Agency.

Fact: the South East of England has less water available per person than Sudan and Syria.

The demand on existing water resources such as groundwater, reservoirs, lakes and rivers will continue to grow as significant levels of new development and lifestyle changes take place locally and throughout the South East region. The effects of climate change are only likely to result in increased pressures on available water.

For these reasons, it is essential that we take action now and save water where and when we can. If you have a water meter installed, pursuing water efficiency measures will not only save water but also could potentially save you money because rainwater is free!!

What can you do?



Water butt attached to down drainpipe

There are a number of measures that can be adopted most of which will cost you no or little money but just require a slight change in your usual day-to-day routine.

For more significant projects, including rainwater and greywater harvesting, capital investment is needed for effective, efficient and safe operation.

Before you progress with any significant projects, please contact the Council's Development

Control Section (planning.applications@tmbc.gov.uk, tel: 01732 876230) and consult with the Council's Building Control Section (building.control@tmbc.gov.uk, tel: 01732 876305) for advice.

Inside the home – good practice to save water

- Turn off the tap when cleaning your teeth – a running tap wastes 6 litres of water a minute
- Fix dripping taps
- Run washing machines and dishwashers with a full load and on the economy setting
- Flushing toilets accounts for approximately a third of household water usage. Reduce this by:
 - o Installing a water displacement device (eg 'hippo') in the toilet cistern – this will save water used for each flush, typically one to two litres
 - o Not using the toilet for flushing away rubbish (face wipes, cotton wool balls etc) – save water and use the recycling/dustbin instead.
- Showering can use less water than having a bath unless a power shower is fitted which can potentially use more.

Inside the home – replacement appliances

When replacing washing machines and dishwashers go for a **water-efficient model**.

Be sure to check the **EU labels** on the machines – 'A' rated are the most efficient and 'G' the least. The more efficient 'A' rated machines are generally more expensive but the return in terms of reduced water and electricity bills during the lifetime of the machine means you will eventually save money in the long-run, if you have a water meter installed.

If you live in a small household (eg two or fewer people) and you don't already have one, installing a water meter could well save you money!! Please contact your water company for further information (see contact details below).

Inside the home – greywater recycling

Water from baths, showers and washbasins (not toilets) can be collected, treated and re-used for purposes other than drinking, eg flushing toilets and watering garden plants.

Untreated waste water collected from the bath, shower and washbasin can be used directly to water the garden, providing it is not stored for long before use.

For the purpose of flushing the toilet, the collected water needs to be filtered and treated before use. When the water is retained for a short period of time, the treatment required can be as little as skimming and filtering off debris.

For longer-term storage, the greywater needs to be treated either chemically (eg chlorine or bromine) or using ultra-violet light to kill off bacterial contaminants. Most greywater systems also require regular maintenance.

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Potentially, greywater systems used for flushing the toilet can save approximately a third of daily household water demand.

Outside the home – good practice in the garden

Avoid watering the lawn – they can survive long dry periods providing the grass has not been cut too short.

Use organic mulches in the borders to reduce soil moisture loss and therefore the need for frequent watering.

In the garden, using a watering can rather than a hose can save a considerable amount of water – a garden hose can use more water in an hour than a family of four uses in a day. Note: Gardeners using sprinklers must have a water meter fitted.

To reduce the amount of water lost through evaporation, water your garden in the cool of the early morning or evening.



Underground water storage tank to harvest rainwater at Baldwin's Oast, West Malling

Outside the home – rainwater harvesting

Install a water butt and harvest rainwater to water garden plants.

A water butt, stand and tap can be bought from your local garden centre or water supply company (see details below) and fitted to the down drainpipe.

For larger-scale rainwater harvesting to use for the flushing of toilets as well as watering the garden, water can be stored in a tank, possibly underground.

A pump needs to be installed to move the water to the point of use and a filter needs to be fitted to remove debris.

Who can help?

Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs – a government department that provides tips on how to save water (www.defra.gov.uk/environment/water/conserve/index.htm, tel: 0845 933 5577)

Waterwise – a not-for-profit non-governmental organisation focused on decreasing water consumption in the UK (www.waterwise.org.uk, tel: 0207 344 1882)

Environment Agency – a body responsible for protecting and improving the environment (www.environment-agency.gov.uk, tel: 08708 506 506)

South East Water – a water company serving the community of Tonbridge and Malling (www.southeastwater.co.uk, tel: 0845 850 6060)

Southern Water – a water company serving the community of Tonbridge and Malling (www.southernwater.co.uk, tel: 0800 027 6152)

Thames Water – a water company serving the community of Tonbridge and Malling (www.thameswater.co.uk, tel: 0800 714 614)

Kent County Council: Kent Design Guide – This guide promotes good, sustainable design in Kent and includes an appendix on Water Efficiency (www.kent.gov.uk, tel: 01622 221866)

Baldwin's Oast, West Malling – a local property that has installed a rain water harvesting system to flush the toilets, water the garden and clean the cars. Please contact the Council for further details (ldf@tmbc.gov.uk, tel: 01732 876266)

If you have difficulty reading this leaflet and would like the information in another format, please call 01732 876266 or email ldf@tmbc.gov.uk.

