



Update

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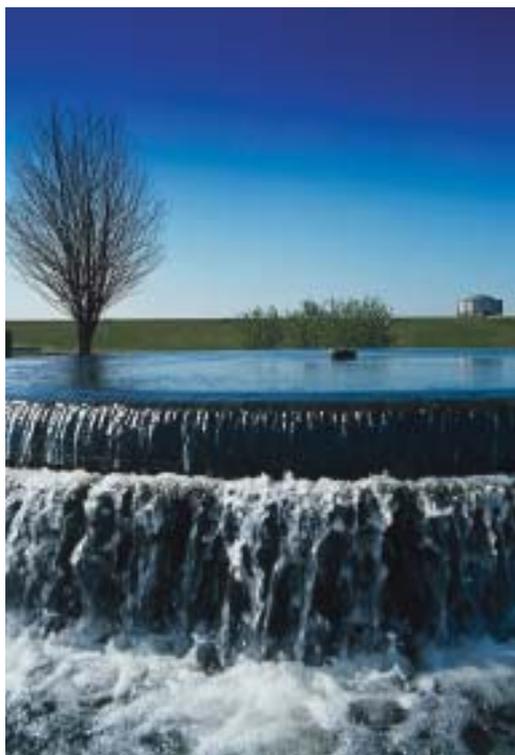
Record dry year keeps pressure on water supply

New figures show 2003 was the driest since 1974 and third driest year on record, prompting Thames Water to renew its appeal to customers to use water wisely.

Last year, the region received just 74% of the normal yearly average rainfall. Indeed, the months of August and September were the driest since measurements began in 1897.

Mark Malcolm, Water Supply Manager at Thames Water, said: "The winter has so far brought welcome rain for the area, but there is still some way to go before we make up the deficit from the long, dry summer and autumn. Although the rainfall has helped boost levels in the region's rivers and reservoirs, our groundwater sources remain below average".

In London, Thames Water takes most of its raw water from rivers, with only about 20% coming from ground-



water sources. Outside of London around 80% of our supply comes from groundwater. River levels are more responsive to rainfall than groundwater and so levels in London are recovering faster than those outside.

"We need to see a lot more winter rainfall, or the possibility of restrictions later in the year will remain. We are still working hard to conserve supplies where possible, and would like to encourage our customers to think carefully about how they use water too," Mark continued.

Water-saving tips include using a bucket instead of a hose when washing the car, taking a shower rather than a bath, and ensuring the washing machine has a full load before use. Customers can also save water by not leaving the tap running when brushing teeth or washing vegetables.

Reservoirs recover(left): More rain needed

Streetworks legislation could add to utility costs

Thames Water has raised concerns that the implementation of the Traffic Management Bill could significantly increase costs and response times for the maintenance of essential water and sewerage networks.

Roads do not only carry traffic. Beneath them are the pipes and wires upon which we all depend to deliver essential services such as water, gas, electricity and telecommunications.

"Under no circumstances does

Thames Water did up streets unnecessarily," said Streetworks Coordinator Steve Moore, "and in fact the average duration of each job is amazingly low, only 3 ½ hours in most cases."

Thames Water shares the Government's desire for less congestion and has worked enthusiastically with other utilities to minimise the impact of its streetworks.

However, it is felt that measures that enable greater coordi-

nation and cooperation between all those involved, and not further legislation, is the key to minimising the disruption caused by streetworks.

"It would be a shame if expectations were unrealistic. After all, the Transport Research Laboratory has indicated that only 5% of congestion is caused by utility streetworks," Steve concluded.

Roads: Not only for traffic



Hérons benefit from cleaner water environment

London's heron population is booming, just fifty years after it was predicted that the species would no longer live wild in the capital.

The numbers of grey herons, which rely on a plentiful supply of fish, provide an indication of the health of a freshwater environment. As recently as 1949, before the massive biological improvement of the River Thames, the Collins guide *London's Birds* predicted: "It can be asserted with a fair degree of certainty that the heron will never again breed in London outside the zoo."

Now there are now heron populations at Thames Water sites in Bexley and Hounslow as well as London's oldest and largest heronry being sited on our reservoirs in Walthamstow. Plans are also being made for the construction of an artificial heronry on the Thames Water nature reserve at Crossness Sewage Treatment Works.

Thames Water is sponsoring the seventy fifth British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) Heronries Census. The census is the world's longest-running monitoring scheme for any bird species in the world and records details of all occupied nests at heronries around the UK.

John Marchant, Team Leader of the BTO's Census Unit, said: "The BTO's survey, generously



supported by Thames Water, will produce more complete national and regional estimates of heron numbers. We think that new lakes and gravel pits, improvements in water quality, reduced persecution, and climatic factors may all be helping Britain's heron populations at present."

MPs alerted to problems of fat in sewers

Thames Water has teamed up with Dartford MP Dr Howard Stoate to highlight the problems caused by cooking fat blocking sewers.

Dr Stoate has tabled a motion in Parliament which calls for 'fat

traps' to be fitted in all commercial hot food premises. He also helped organise a Westminster briefing session at which Thames Water staff demonstrated how fat blockages can cause sewage to flood homes, gardens

and the wider environment, including rivers and streams.

Thames Water spends over £6 million per year clearing more than 100,000 blockages from sewers, half of which are caused by fat and grease.

Tony Dearsley, Thames Water's Environment Manager, said: "Cooking fat poured down the drain is a major problem for us. It can lead to flooding within customers' own homes and gardens and also pollute the wider environment, including rivers and streams".

Customers should pour fat into a container and allow it to cool and solidify. The fat can then either be thrown out in the rubbish, or mixed with seeds, dried fruit and other food scraps to hang in the garden as a food source for birds.



Blocked: Fat build ups lead to flooding

NEWS IN BRIEF

Award for nature reserve

Thames Water has won a Green Apple award for its nature reserve at Crossness Sewage Treatment Works in Bexley, south east London.

The 50-acre reserve was created to encourage local people to enjoy the voles, bats, wading birds and other wildlife found on the site - one of the last remnants of grazing marsh in the capital.

The site also features an environmentally friendly wind pump, which brings water from drainage dykes to irrigate the ponds and ditches on the reserve.

The Green Organisation's Roger Wolens said: "We had more than 500 entries for the awards from all over the world, including Sri Lanka, Kuwait and Ghana. It was a much more competitive field than in previous years, so Thames Water did very well to achieve the level of success that it did."

Advice on avoiding burst pipes

Advice from Thames Water could help householders avoid the misery and expense of burst pipes during a cold snap this winter.

Thames Water's tips include checking that loft insulation is thick enough, lag pipes in the loft, repair dripping taps and overflows, be aware of where stopcocks are located and to turn off central heating in empty properties.

If the worst happens and the pipes freeze turn the water off at the stopcock and thaw pipes slowly using a hot water bottle or cloth soaked in hot water.

A leaflet giving advice on insulation and what to do in the event of burst pipes is available by calling Thames Water Customer Services on 0845 9200 800.

Information can also be accessed via the company's website www.thameswater.co.uk.

