

I AM THE CUSTOMER - WATER RESOURCES

“Save water as if your life depends on it.”

That was the stark message communicated to residents in Cape Town recently as a severe drought threatened to the run the taps dry.

The crisis in South Africa is a reminder - if ever we needed one - that water is precious and not something we should take for granted.

Back in the UK, one of the biggest challenges facing water companies in our most water-stressed areas is ensuring our water supplies are resilient in the face of climate change and population growth. Part of that challenge will be to encourage consumers to use water more wisely. But if we want everyone to play their part we have to do much more than just offer practical tips on saving water. Without setting the scene - like the fact there could potentially be a 22% shortfall in water supply by 2050 - advice on what people can do to reduce their water use will fall on deaf ears.

Sound obvious? You'd be amazed how often the big picture is missed when it comes to the industry talking about water efficiency. And yet a study we carried out last year showed consumers are far more likely to be receptive to messages about saving water when they have a much better understanding of why it matters.

It's then important water companies segment their audience and tailor their messages accordingly, rather than adopt a 'one-size fits all' approach to communicating with their customers.

Embracing this approach can help us as a sector to create a more compelling call to action.

Dr Mike Keil

Head of Policy and Research

Consumer Council for Water