



The voice for water consumers
Y corff sy'n rhoi llais i ddefnyddwyr dŵr

CCW's response to Call for evidence – Energy Related Products

September 2020

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1. Introduction

The Consumer Council for Water (CCW) is the statutory, independent voice for water consumers in England and Wales. We campaign on behalf of both household and non-household water consumers.

We are focusing our response on Question 29 from this call for evidence as we believe that mandatory water labelling can have benefits for water consumers, and the environment. These benefits include (but are not limited to) helping consumers to use less water, helping to save energy by reducing hot water use and helping to reduce carbon emissions in the process.

2. Executive Summary

- We support the introduction of a mandatory labelling scheme for taps and showers that clearly displays information about their water use and savings. Doing so can empower consumers to make decisions to help them reduce their personal water use and the energy needed to heat water. Also, evidence suggests that a mandatory water label is the most cost-effective measure to save water.
- A label should be easy to understand and engage with. As part of the process (and to maximise benefits) consumers need to understand how the products work, what is the most efficient way to use them and why it is important to save water and energy.
- Choosing and using water efficient taps and showers can bring financial savings to customers by reducing their water bill (if they are on a meter) and their energy bill (by reducing hot water use).
- Government should provide leadership in this area – reducing personal water use can have a positive effect on the resilience of water supplies and on climate change (reducing carbon emissions linked to treating, distributing water and heating water at home).

3. Detailed Response

29. Are there any existing measures in place which encourage energy and water savings in these products?

>IF YES, how can they be made more effective? Please provide evidence and/or data.

>IF NO, should some be introduced (e.g. restriction of flow rates, mandatory or voluntary labelling)? Please provide evidence and/or data.

No. We support the introduction of a mandatory labelling scheme for taps and showers, where information about water use (and savings) is displayed clearly on products. Doing so can empower

customers to make decisions that can have a positive effect towards reducing their personal water use and the energy needed to heat water.

To maximise benefits, mandatory labelling (of taps and showers) should be part of a concerted, wider programme. The label (information about water use/saving) must be supported with information explaining why it is important to save water (for example, wider environmental benefits, reduction of energy use when using hot water) and why it matters if more people choose these products. A label should be easy to understand and engage with.

Installing water saving products (identified by a label) can help to reduce water and energy use, but it is important that consumers understand how these products work and the most efficient way to use them. For example, understanding the correct/more efficient setting will help to realise the benefits. Also, it is important that products deemed to be more efficient are affordable to increase customer buy-in and use.

Understating who the potential buyers are can help when targeting products to different customer segments. Consumers who are more 'willing and able' to save water may be easier to persuade to change their behaviour.

Benefits of labelling

- Recent analyses¹ suggest that the single most cost effective intervention to save water would be to introduce a mandatory, independent water efficiency label displayed on all water using products at the point of sale. The benefits would be greater if the label were linked to tighter Building Regulations and water supply fitting regulations.
- Labelling can be a catalyst for innovation for product development, by increasing the range and types of water saving products available and improving the 'experience' of using these products. In future, people should not be able to tell the difference, in terms of functionality or experience, and ideally, cost.
- Over time, it can be the case that the performance and popularity/demand for water saving products will make them mainstream as more people opt for them resulting in potentially widespread reduction of water use.
- Choosing water efficient taps and showers (and using them properly) can also bring financial savings to consumers, by reducing their water bill (if they are on a meter) and their energy bill by reducing hot water use.
- Reducing hot water use at home can also contribute to a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions. Hot water use at home (from showers and taps) is the second largest source of household Greenhouse Gas emissions, after space heating, accounting for 17% of home energy use².

¹ Artesia, Efttec (2019) for Water UK. Pathways to long-term pcc reduction. Available at: <https://www.water.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/Water-UK-Research-on-reducing-water-use.pdf> (accessed on 3 September 2020).

² Committee on Climate Change (2019) UK housing, fit for the future? Available at: <https://www.theccc.org.uk/publication/uk-housing-fit-for-the-future/> (accessed on 3 September 2020).

Leading the way

Government should provide leadership in this area, considering the effect that reducing personal water use can have on the resilience of water supplies and on climate change (by reducing the carbon emissions linked to treating, distributing water and heating water at home).

To maximise the benefits and take up of water efficient devices, a mandatory labelling scheme for taps and showers (and potentially other water using products), can could work alongside other actions:

- Incentives to encourage consumers to opt for water efficient products. For example, subsidies/rebates to exchange inefficient goods for efficient ones. A similar approach to the 'boiler scrappage scheme'.
- Coordinated messaging to inform consumers about the 'bigger picture' – why using less water matters and highlight what people can do in practical terms to reduce their water use, and the benefits of doing so.
- Improve the existing free home visits from water companies (reduced at present due to Covid-19), to include energy advice. In these visits, an engineer comes in the house to help consumers understand their water use and how to reduce it. These visits often include installing free water saving products like showerheads and tap aerators.

We think that it was a missed opportunity to not have included water efficiency measures in the recently announced Green Homes Grant as these measures can help to reduce the energy and carbon linked to heating water at home. Although not a perfect solution, this could be (partly) overcome by ensuring that in the near future all taps and showers include information about their water and energy use to help consumers make informed choices.

Enquiries

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