

Major campaign launched to encourage the nation to 'Love Water'

The British public are being asked to help the country protect water resources for future generations as part of a major campaign launched today by more than 40 environmental groups, charities, water companies and regulators.

Clean, healthy and readily available water is essential for health and wellbeing, as well as economic growth, but as the climate emergency and population growth put increasing pressure on the water environment, the UK is facing hotter and drier summers and an increased risk of water shortages.

The UK already has less available water than most other European countries and the average person uses a staggering 150 litres per day. Sir James Bevan, Chief Executive of the Environment Agency, gave a stark warning earlier this year that the country is approaching the 'jaws of death' as parts of England are at risk of running out of water within 25 years.

The 'Love Water' campaign aims to raise awareness of the importance of water and the role everyone plays in protecting it. It is the first time such a large group of partners have joined together to work with businesses and consumers to tackle issues such as pollution and wastage.

The long-term campaign is led by bodies including the Environment Agency, Water UK, Ofwat, NFU and Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust (WWT) among others. It will feature events and initiatives, such as beach and river cleans-ups and water saving projects, designed to engage the public and encourage them to enjoy water and the environment.

'Love Water' is also inviting businesses and other companies to get involved by supporting the campaign through promotional activity while pledging to do their bit to save water and protect the environment by reducing pollution and waste.

The campaign's long-term ambition is to call on businesses to make water-saving and pollution reduction part of their operational and corporate responsibility targets.

It is being launched as part of the government's Year of Green Action which aims to help people to connect with, protect and enhance nature.

Many people are not aware that actions like tipping waste liquids down roadside drains, flushing wet wipes or washing up greasy pans in the sink harm wildlife and affect water quality by causing pollution in local rivers, lakes and the sea. The campaign will raise awareness of the small changes people can make to achieve a big difference:

- The UK water industry spends £100 million each year on clearing blockages caused by the wrong things going down sinks and loos. In

February, United Utilities spent 8 weeks clearing a 90 tonne fat berg beneath the streets of Liverpool – more than 84 metres long.

- Research by Keep Britain Tidy shows that 1 in 4 people admit to littering. Last year, a spring beach clean organised by Surfers Against Sewage removed almost 66 tonnes of litter from beaches across the country.
- 72% of people surveyed said they used wet wipes, although most brands are not flushable and can cause blockages and pollution when they get into sewers.
- One litre of oil poured down the sink can pollute one million litres of water.
- If everyone in the UK turned off the tap when brushing their teeth we would save 1,584,000,000 litres (1584 megalitres) a day.

Sir James Bevan, Chief Executive of the Environment Agency said:

Most people agree that water is a precious resource but too often we take it for granted and don't see how our actions have a direct effect on the local rivers, lakes and beaches we all care about.

Our campaign intends to change that by urging people to use water wisely and to think before pouring cooking oil down the drain or flushing a wet wipe away.

We know that everyone has a duty to preserve and protect water and the campaign will also work with industry, water companies and other regulators in the longer-term to cut down on wastage.

Michael Roberts, Chief Executive of Water UK said:

The Love Water campaign is a great way to get the public to think about the link between the water we all use and the rivers and lakes that provide it and sustain our environment.

But we also know the water industry must play its role which is why we have set out ambitious plans to reduce leakage alongside a new programme for helping the environment, which will see 8000 km of rivers cleaned and improved.

We all need to take action so that this country does not run out of water in the middle part of this century. Only by working together can we bring about the changes needed to ensure we have a resilient water environment now and in the future.

Rachel Fletcher, Chief Executive at Ofwat said:

We all have a part to play to protect and preserve this most vital resource. We look forward to working with partners within and

outside the water sector to encourage everyone to do their bit and think about the value of water.

Martin Spray CBE, Chief Executive of the Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust (WWT) said:

Every day in our wetlands we see the impact that poor water quality and quantity can have on wildlife. More than half of species in British freshwaters are in decline, with 13% threatened with extinction including wading birds like curlew and plants like triangular club rush.

We all need to make the mental connection that our water comes from and returns to the natural world – via our taps and drains – so it's up to us to care for that water for the sake of all life, including ourselves.

NFU Vice President Stuart Roberts said:

Water is fundamental to food production and is absolutely essential to nearly every food item British farmers produce. Water availability is often only talked about during times of flood or drought but we need to raise the awareness of its essential role 365 days a year. It plays an absolutely critical part in delivering safe, traceable and affordable food to the nation.

Tim Wainwright, Chief Executive at WaterAid, said:

Around the world, one in ten people live without safe water close to home. Water is a precious resource that we cannot take for granted, and we are delighted that the Love Water campaign is raising awareness of this important issue. It is vital that we work together to manage this precious resource in the UK and globally so we can achieve a world where clean water is normal for everyone, everywhere.