

RECENT RAIN HELPS EASE DROUGHT PAIN – BUT MORE STILL NEEDED

Heavy rainfall over the Christmas and New Year period has delivered early signs of recovery for South East Water's two reservoirs in Sussex – but more rain is still needed.

The festive downpours have seen Ardingly Reservoir levels recover to around 37% in early January 2012, up from 12% at the end of November, and Arlington Reservoir reach about 60% in early January, up from 20% at the end of November.

The rainfall also means that South East Water hasn't yet had to use the Drought Order, recently granted by Defra, which allows it to reduce the amount of water that can naturally flow in the River Ouse, below its Barcombe Water Treatment Works¹.

Lee Dance, Head of Water Resources and Environmental at South East Water, said:

“The recent increased rainfall has certainly seen levels in both our key reservoirs in Sussex improve.

“But this rain has by no means solved the problem. We would still hope to see prolonged periods of rainfall over the coming winter months to bring all our water resources – both reservoirs and underground aquifers - back to normal for this time of year, in readiness for the expected increase in demand for water this Spring and Summer.

“While we've not yet needed to use the Drought Order, it was prudent to get this in place, in case we were faced with the worst case scenario of there being no rainfall, and very low flows in the River Ouse, as this is where we abstract water from for 65,000 customers.”

Alongside the Drought Order, South East Water has increased its efforts to find and fix leaks in the Sussex and West Kent area, carried out maintenance at its water treatment works to ensure they work as efficiently as possible, and re-routed water around its network of pipes from areas with more water available to allow the reservoirs to recover.

Lee Dance added: “Our customers are continuing to play their part too, and we are greatly encouraged by the fantastic response we've had to our public appeals to use water wisely, and not waste it.”

Simple water efficiency measures include:

- Using a bucket and sponge to wash your car instead of a hosepipe.
- Taking shorter showers instead of baths.
- Turning off the tap when you clean your teeth.
- Installing a water displacement bag in your toilet cistern - this can save about 1.6 litres per flush.
- Using washing machines and dishwashers only when you have a full load.
- Installing a water butt in your garden to collect winter rain – plants prefer rainwater to tap water

Customers can log onto www.southeastwater.co.uk/waterefficiency for more information on water efficiency tips for the home and garden and links water saving products and discounts on water butts. Visit www.southeastwater.co.uk/waterupdate for the latest information on the water resources situation.

Note to News Editors:

1. The Drought Order allows South East Water to reduce the minimum flow in the River Ouse from 20 million litres a day, to 5 million litres per day. That, in turn, will help “slow down” the rate of water being released from Ardingly Reservoir into the same river system.
2. The Drought Order is valid up to the 31st March 2012.
3. South East Water supplies 565 million litres of water every day to 2.1 million customers in Kent, Sussex, Surrey, Hampshire and Berkshire.