

## Waterwise Manifesto – European elections

*Waterwise is the UK water efficiency NGO focused on decreasing water consumption in the UK. Waterwise works with governments, regulators, water companies, manufacturers, retailers and the wider public to promote water efficient practices and to reduce waste. It is building an evidence base for large scale water efficiency. For more information on Waterwise visit [www.waterwise.org.uk](http://www.waterwise.org.uk)*

Waterwise calls for greater attention to the significant potential of water efficiency measures in mitigating and adapting to climate change and boosting the economy.

**Lack of water – the UK is also affected as are other European countries – water efficiency can help address the problem.**

To date, the focus in Europe has been on energy within the context of climate change. Water is equally important and must be addressed with equal urgency: supply/demand balances are already being affected across Europe and this is no longer an issue specifically for southern countries. The UK has less available water per person than most other European countries. London is drier than Istanbul, and the South East of England has less water available per person than the Sudan and Syria. Water is also periodically scarce in parts of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. Many parts of the UK recently experienced (2005-2006) a severe drought, with the lowest rainfall sequence for nearly 200 years in Southern England. This was the result of two exceptionally dry winters, leading to well below average recharge of aquifers: the source of around 70% of public water supplies in many parts of the South East of England. Climate projections for the UK indicate a pattern of hotter, drier summers and more frequent and intense rainfall events in the winter, suggesting that the UK's recent experiences of drought and flooding will be common in future.

Furthermore, by 2050, 80% of UK rivers are predicted to have half their current flow volume during the summer which would mean no water available in some parts of the country including in the North East. This will also affect water quality.

The UK and European policies have been developing to address these new pressures and Waterwise continues to work at the UK level to influence further policy and regulatory changes. These advances can be further supported at the European level, creating opportunities not only for the environment but also for the economy.

Waterwise calls on UK MEPs to influence future European policies:

### **Develop the European new Green Water Deal**

- To respond to the social and economic agenda by developing water-related green jobs.
- To target existing and future investments in the green economy at promoting eco-innovation in water efficiency programmes in housing, SMEs and large businesses, through water management schemes or through projects on urban and rural regeneration.
- To consider water and energy together. Retrofitting packages should be taken forward in tandem, linking water and energy efficiency projects.

- To boost water efficiency measures which target low-income households and social housing through Structural Funds and Cohesion Funds.

### **Making wasting less water pay**

- To launch a genuine debate at the European level on financial and fiscal incentives within the framework of the EU green taxation package.
- To encourage changes in consumer behaviour through fiscal incentives on water-efficient products within the wider strategy for supply/demand balance. Such incentives will however only have yield changes in consumer behaviour within a wider framework of measures such as labelling and technological innovation.

### **Homes and buildings which waste less water**

- To push for the introduction of water neutrality in future urban and land use planning policies. “Water neutrality” means that impacts on water resources are considered *before* a development project or an activity such as irrigation is decided upon as well as the measures necessary to reduce the impact of these should they proceed. The total water use after the new development should be equal to – or less than – the total water use in the area before the planned development “in particular, in water stressed areas”. Actions on demand management should be undertaken to reduce or maintain the demand from new development or activity in the same area.
- To push for a fair framework for abstraction licensing and charging in line with the Water Framework Directive.

### **Making the case for water efficiency**

- To improve and refine the knowledge base on water efficiency at the European level. It is important to ensure that the knowledge base on water efficiency and the data are refined in order to ensure that the decisions on supply and demand measures are underpinned by appropriate evidence.