

## Water Saving Group (WSG)

Room 806, Nobel House, 17 Smith Square, London

Thursday, 17 May 2007

### Attendees

Ian Pearson (Chair)	Defra
Martin Hurst	
Richard Wood	
Justin Johnson	
Julie Dickason	
Nieves Bottomley	
Tony Smith	Consumer Council for Water (CCWater)
Karen Gibbs	
Barbara Young	Environment Agency (EA)
David King	
Ian Barker	
Philip Fletcher	Ofwat
Regina Finn	
Pamela Taylor	Water UK
Richard Aylard	Thames Water
Paul Butler	South East Water
Jacob Tompkins	Waterwise
Nicci Russell	

**Apologies:** Yve Buckland (CCWater), Shona Dunn (Communities and Local Government), Christine Ogden (CLG)

### Minutes

#### 1. Welcome – Ian Pearson

Ian Pearson welcomed attendees to the fourth meeting of the Water Saving Group (WSG). The minister emphasised that the wet winter should not lessen our commitment to water efficiency and the need to make progress on the action plan.

#### 2. Minutes from last meeting.

The minutes of the November meeting were agreed.

### **3. Progress on action plan.**

#### **3.1 Measuring success. Identifying areas of water stress.**

Ian Barker said that there had been over thirty responses to the consultation on the EA's proposed methodology to identify areas of water stress, which closed on 24 April. Most respondents supported the concept of water stress and that water efficiency activity should be in proportion to the level of water stress. Many responses included comments on the proposed methodology and the EA was considering how to respond.

#### **3.2 Policy and Regulatory Framework. Taking forward targeted action for increasing metering in water stressed areas.**

Richard Wood told the meeting that there had been 58 responses to Defra's consultation on accelerating metering in areas of serious water stress. This had been published in parallel with EA's consultation and also closed on 24 April. The majority of the respondents supported the proposal.

Attendees welcomed progress made. Going forward, it was important for work to progress on affordability, to achieve the right pace for the extension of metering and to inform water companies of the final decision on the approach in time for it to inform draft water resource management plans.

#### **3.3 Understanding and changing customer perceptions and raising awareness.**

Tony Smith provided an update on CCWater's activities on this workstream, which included liaising with the South East Communications Group, sponsorship of an exhibit at the BBC Gardeners' World Live show, release of a radio filler advert and working with other WSG members and local authorities.

Tony Smith then presented CCWater's proposal for next steps in this workstream. CCWater had chaired a meeting with the communications experts of the WSG member organisations to discuss the potential for developing an umbrella national water communications campaign. Work undertaken so far had identified the need to co-ordinate the messages from different stakeholders, so that they are consistent and reinforce each other to maximise their effect. There was a general view that to achieve sustained change in customers' attitudes to water use and behaviours would require a long-term strategy, running over several years. Views were invited on the way forward. The requirement for funding would depend on the scope of the campaign, and was better discussed once this was clearer and a business case had been developed.

Attendees supported the establishment of a WSG sub-group on communications. The sub-group would develop some core messages that

could be used by all stakeholders. It would be important to learn from previous experience and from other sectors what has been successful in achieving behaviour change.

Attendees also supported the principle of having an umbrella campaign with agreed high-level messages. The campaign would be developed by the sub-group. The Group would have ownership of this campaign, which should be branded as WSG. The focus of the campaign will be domestic customers, and the messages linked to the messages on climate change, including the Defra's campaign on 'Act on CO2' to be launched in July. CCWater will contact officials in Wales and Scotland to gauge if there is interest to participate in this initiative.

**Action: CCWater to continue to work with WSG members on development of an umbrella campaign.**

### **3.4 Policy and Regulatory Framework. Promote water efficiency of new buildings and developments.**

Richard Wood gave an update on the CLG/Defra consultation on water efficiency in new homes. The consultation closed on 9 March, and 171 responses had been received. An interim analysis of responses showed that the majority of respondents strongly supported the introduction of regulations to address water use in new homes. Analysis of responses was ongoing and had identified a number of issues for further discussion with stakeholders. CLG and Defra aimed to publish a summary of the responses to consultation along with a 'minded to' statement before the summer Parliamentary recess.

### **3.5 Best practice in water company promotion of water efficiency: developing incentives for companies.**

Regina Finn reported progress on the work of the Infrastructure Charges Working Group set up by Ofwat to consider incentives for developers to install water efficiency in new developments. Ofwat had informally consulted water companies on four possible options for developing an incentive scheme for developers based on the levels of water consumption. The working group was continuing to work on the details of a possible scheme, with an aim to bring in the scheme in the Periodic Review 2009 (PR09). Water companies could also voluntarily adopt the scheme before PR09.

Attendees welcomed progress made. Points made in discussion included support to linking the incentives to the levels of the Code for Sustainable Homes; the need to take into account the costs attached to the initiative and whether the incentives were sufficient to encourage take up, as the infrastructure charges are capped.

**Action: Ofwat to consider the level of infrastructure charges and proposed incentives.**

### **3.6 Policy and Regulatory Framework. Pursue options for introducing a product labelling scheme.**

Nieves Bottomley reported the progress made on this workstream. The key development had been the announcement in March by the Bathroom Manufacturers' Association (BMA) of the launch of a voluntary labelling scheme for water efficient bathroom products. This will be an industry-led scheme run by the BMA Secretariat. The label is a recommended-type label and is expected to be available in June. The BMA is developing a website that will contain the criteria, application forms, fee structure and a database of listed products. The WSG welcomed the BMA scheme, although the EA expressed the need to see the final criteria when available. A number of attendees stressed the importance that marketing will have in ensuring the label is successful, and the role of retailers.

Following focus groups with specifiers in January and February, Defra had been working on the development of a water product information database. Defra will liaise with Waterwise, CLG and BMA to discuss possible overlaps and the best way forward to avoid duplication of effort.

Defra has also looked at the labelling of washing machines and dishwashers. These are covered by the EU mandatory energy efficiency label, which includes information on water used per cycle. There is a correlation between energy and water use. Defra is looking further at this correlation.

### **3.7 Information needs: gaps, priorities and funding.**

Nicci Russell reported progress on this workstream. Waterwise was now working with water companies on twenty large-scale domestic water efficiency projects. The results from the projects will be available from autumn 2007, with some projects reporting later. Waterwise will undertake a statistical analysis of the data to produce a model with cost-benefit analysis of different water efficiency measures by July 2008, to inform the water companies' draft business plans for their PR09 applications, with a further model and scenarios being developed as new data comes on stream. The final version of the Evidence Base, in June 2009, would be in time for Ofwat to use in their final determinations.

A number of attendees stressed the importance of this work informing the PR09 process, and expressed the need to ensure that the evidence base available to water companies to inform the draft water resources management plans should be as robust as possible. Waterwise will contact water companies to inform them of the timetable and share preliminary information, with appropriate caveats, as it becomes available.

### **3.8 Best practice in water company promotion of water efficiency: good practice register.**

Regina Finn updated attendees on this work. Ofwat had developed three calculator tools which could be used by water company customers to assess what water savings they could make in the home and garden, and what financial impact moving to a meter would have. The water savings can then be equated to bill reductions for metered customers and environmental/social benefits for unmetered customers. The EA, CCWater, Defra and Waterwise were testing the calculators.

**Action: WSG members to send feedback to Ofwat on the calculator tools.**

### **3.9 Measuring success. Targets and benchmarks.**

Ian Barker gave an update on the EA's work on targets and benchmarks. The London School of Economics (LSE) had been contracted to work on an economic appraisal of targets and benchmarks. All WSG members are represented on the steering group, and have expressed the need to see the results of the research before taking decisions.

Scott Reid from ICF, working with LSE on this project, gave a presentation on the work undertaken so far. This included a literature review of international experiences and UK experiences in other sectors; and a first assessment of a number of options. Work will continue on the detailed assessment of 4 options: water into supply targets; consumption targets; intermediate targets and a water efficiency commitment. These options are not mutually exclusive.

Points made in discussion included: the need to see any target in the context of the regulatory system; the possibility of quantifying the water companies' current duty to promote water conservation, which would complement this work; the importance of making progress once enough evidence was available to ensure a target would work, even if it was unpolished and was perfected later.

In summing up, the Chairman indicated the urgent need to make progress on this area of work involving all WSG members.

## **4. Future of the Water Saving Group**

Attendees agreed to extend the life of the Water Saving Group for one year, subject to agreeing a revised action plan in the autumn high-level meeting. There was general agreement that the Group should continue to work to deliver the current action plan by the original deadline.

**Action: the official-level group to develop a revised action plan for discussion in the autumn high-level meeting.**

## **5. Communications**

Attendees agreed that there should be a Press Release after the autumn high-level meeting reporting on all the progress the Group have achieved.

## **6. Any other business**

Regina Finn informed WSG members that Ofwat's response to the Public Account Committee's report on 'Ofwat – meeting the demand for water' will refer to this Group and its work. Ofwat will liaise with WSG members where the response refers to their work.

**Department for the Environment Food and Rural Affairs,  
November 2007**