

What has Water got to do with Energy?

The short answer is... plenty! About 70% of global freshwater is used in agriculture - this provides us with our food energy. Hydropower provides some 20% of global electricity.

On average each person in the UK uses 150 litres of water a day. According to Waterwise, this rises to 3400 litres a day when you add the water used to produce the goods we import. Moving this lot around takes energy.

We're lucky - we get rain in the UK, but as summer hosepipe bans imply, we should not take water for granted. There are many easy ways to use less:

- Keep showers short - especially if you have a power shower
- Reuse water - bath water is fine for watering plants
- Have a water meter fitted - on average metered homes use 15% less water
- Modify your toilet to give you a reduced or graduated flush
- Fix dripping taps

Also note that 30% of the average UK gas bill goes on heating water, so insulating your hot water tank and using less hot water will save you money.

For more on saving water, visit www.waterwise.org.uk



Rain (shower) in Cuba

Photo courtesy of cocoonyourhome.co.uk

Notes for editors:

1. References:

For water use in agriculture and electricity from hydropower (my figures are rounded up by 1% for simplicity) see the 2003 International Year of Fresh Water website (wateryear2003.org) for details.

<http://tinyurl.com/38e38ug>

For UK daily household water consumption and percentage of UK gas bill spent on heating water, see the Energy Saving Trust website.

<http://www.energysavingtrust.org.uk/Water>

For Waterwise's report on the water embedded in our imported goods see

<http://tinyurl.com/34b6j6h>

Metered Homes use 15% less water according to The Times, September 2009.

<http://tinyurl.com/y87b8ja>

2. Waterwise point out that power showers can easily use more water than a bath. This is worrying given the UK trend towards taking longer showers. 3 - 4 minutes should be adequate. Shower timers are available.
<http://tinyurl.com/3xu72db>
3. For further information on reducing domestic water use, see waterwise.org.uk. Water companies often offer free 'Hippos' to displace water in your cistern. See interflush.co.uk for a DIY retrofit providing a graduated flush. Some older cisterns use 9 litres of water on each flush.
4. This article was produced by United Sustainable Energy Agency (USEA).
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5. USEA (usea.org.uk) works in partnership with local authorities throughout Bucks, Berks, Beds, Herts, Oxon, Hants and the Isle of Wight. We operate an Energy Saving Trust advice centre for the South East and offer an insulation installer comparison service called Cocoon (cocoonyourhome.co.uk).
6. The information contained within this article is correct to the best of our knowledge, but is subject to change. USEA cannot in any way be held legally responsible for any advice given or any work carried out as a result of this information.