

## What the water companies have to say -

One of the requirements of a Drought Order is a total ban on non-essential use - golf clubs fall into this category. Could we see courses close and/or their greens be lost to the drought?

Customer Adviser for Southern Water, Tony Wood, explains: "During the full hosepipe ban in Kent, Sussex and the Isle of Wight, where Southern Water supplies drinking water, a customer cannot use a hosepipe, a pressure washer or a sprinkler, to water a private garden or wash a private motor vehicle. However, it is permissible to use a watering can or bucket to perform these activities; to use a hosepipe to transfer used water from a bath or sink, or to transfer rainwater from a water butt.

"Southern Water applied for a drought order from DEFRA on March 20, to enable us to ban non-essential water use. This application was approved by DEFRA on May 25. However, due to average rainfall in April, and above average rainfall in May, Southern Water shall not be implementing any further water restrictions at this time, but will closely monitor the situation.

"However, if further restrictions are required, these may affect all natural or artificial surfaces used for sport and recreation (including golf courses). A possible restriction on the watering of golf courses may be to reduce the period watering can occur (eg 19:00 - 07:00).

Golf courses with their own water supply are not affected by the hosepipe ban or by any future water restrictions implemented from the non-essential use order.

Anyone flouting drought orders can face a fine of up to £5,000 in magistrates courts or an unlimited fine in the Crown Court. Seven water companies, all in the south east - where shortages are most severe - already have hosepipe bans.

Sutton and East Surrey Water have also been granted a Drought Order by DEFRA. Their non-essential use ban came into effect on May 27, prohibiting sprinkler and hosepipe use for the watering of golf courses and other sports grounds.

At present, the drought problem appears to remain in south east England. However, most of England and Wales has had a dry winter and only northern England has approached average rainfall.

The drought is starting to affect Norfolk and Suffolk, with low groundwater levels and low river flows. Water companies in the east of England are monitoring the situation and preparing to take further steps, to manage supply and demand if the drought intensifies.

With hot, dry weather the drought will spread into other areas. The east of England and the south Midlands are most vulnerable, but reservoir levels in Wales and the south west, could also drop quickly this summer. Northern England is at no higher risk from drought than normal.

Yorkshire Water say there is no water shortage in Yorkshire and their reservoirs are very healthy for this time of year. They are not planning any usage restrictions this year.

Scottish Water say there are no concerns about water levels in Scotland and no plans for water measures. They are currently experiencing between 95 to 100% capacity at their reservoirs. Geoff



Apex Bewl reservoir, in Sussex, remains 85% full, which is low for this time of year

Aitkenhead, Scottish Water's Asset Management Director, told me: "There is currently no issue in Scotland with regard to water levels in our reservoirs. Water stocks are at acceptable levels and are of no current concern for Scottish Water. But this does not allow us to become complacent as water users. Water is a valuable resource and it is still advisable to use water wisely and conserve stocks whenever possible throughout the year."

Northern Ireland Water Service have no water shortage and are not planning any restrictions.

Thames Water, who introduced a hosepipe ban in April and supply to 14.5 million customers in the UK, applied for a Drought Order on June 13. Should this go ahead, it could threaten some of this year's major sporting events such as the cricket test between England and Pakistan at the Oval, in August. Thames Water lose 201 million gallons of water through leaks every day, this is enough to fill 366 Olympic swimming pools.