



Cam Valley Forum welcomes first hosepipe ban in over 30 years

But a long-term sustainable water supply and healthy chalk streams will require much more than hosepipe bans

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

12th July 2026

The Cam Valley Forum welcomes Cambridge Water's decision to introduce the first hosepipe ban in more than 30 years, having long campaigned for the company to use this tool in periods of drought [1].

"We have always thought that hosepipe bans would play a useful role, not only to reduce water use but also to raise public awareness of the water crisis" says Michael Goodhart, who leads our water saving team. "However, at Cam Valley Forum's annual meetings with Cambridge Water, the company previously always made the point that they did not consider such bans to be as effective as other methods of reducing demand."

In a welcome change of heart, the company now says that hosepipe bans are indeed highly effective and can lower demand by about 5% (or 5 million litres a day). In recent weeks, during the hot weather, demand has exceeded 112 million litres a day, which is a 30% increase and the equivalent of an extra 300,000 baths every day [2].

As the Environment Agency pointed out earlier this week (9th July), the series of heatwaves and lack of rain have meant that, throughout England, soils are drier than average and river flows and groundwater levels are declining [3]. Locally, ponds are starting to dry out and our chalk streams are starting to be affected. The upper reaches of the Little Wilbraham are now dry, with the lower reaches maintained only by Teversham Sewage Works, which has a continuous effluent outflow [4].

Many other water companies have now also introduced hosepipe bans [3], recognising that these will help to ensure that water is available for other key purposes: for drinking and washing, for farmers to grow our food, and for rivers and our internationally important chalk streams, along with their wildlife, to thrive. Every time we turn on the tap, we are taking water from the same chalk aquifer that supplies all these needs. The wider Cambridge area is particularly susceptible. Cambridge Water is the only UK company which obtains all its water from an underground aquifer. The planned Chatteris reservoir,

which will mean rainwater and surface run-off can be collected, will not function until the mid-2030s, assuming it is approved.

Cam Valley Forum has every sympathy with local residents who may be incensed by the new regulation, given the negative publicity nationally about the mis-management of water. Improvements were needed many years ago. Leakage of pipes still accounts for 14% of total water usage in the Cambridge area [5] and is made worse by the hot weather and climate change which causes clay soils to shrink and pipes to then crack. Cam Valley Forum is urging the public to report leaks immediately to Cambridge Water [6].

We must however recognise how wasteful the British public is when it comes to water use. Cam Valley Forum is encouraging residents to collect and use rainwater wherever possible, recycle waste water (e.g. from washing up and baths), and avoid taking water directly from local chalk streams. Hosepipes can use up to 1,000 litres of water an hour –the same as a family of four uses normally in two days, or around seven full bathtubs [7].

We also want to see businesses, local councils and both universities take a more proactive role in providing technical support, funding and other help to local residents to address the water crisis. Furthermore, plans and proposals for the future development of the city and its surroundings are, at present, running counter to the urgent need for sustainable water management and we will continue to highlight this. Cambridge Water, local authorities, businesses, farmers and local communities need to work together to improve water resilience and ensure sustainable water management for both us and the rivers and chalk streams that depend on them.

ENDS

For further information: info@camvalleyforum.uk

NOTES

1. Cam Valley Forum's campaign for hosepipe bans:
<https://camvalleyforum.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/CVF-water-press-release-June-2025.pdf>; <https://camvalleyforum.uk/cambridge-water-reject-plea-for-a-hosepipe-ban/>
2. <https://www.cambridge-water.co.uk/news/cambridge-water-announces-temporary-hosepipe-ban-to-protect-water-supplies-and-local-chalk-streams/>
3. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dry-weather-and-drought-in-england-2026-summary-reports/dry-weather-and-drought-in-england-2-to-9-july-2026>
4. <https://www.thewrps.org/post/l-wilbraham-river-dries-up-again>
5. E-mail from Cambridge Water in response to a query from Cam Valley Forum
6. <https://www.cambridge-water.co.uk/incidents/report-a-leak>
7. <https://www.cambridge-water.co.uk/household/temporary-hosepipe-ban/temporary-hosepipe-ban-faqs/>