

Sustainability Newsletter

ISSUE 2

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Feeling the heat

Throughout this summer, demand for water significantly increased due to the hot and dry weather across much of the UK.

Affinity Water, our local water supplier, usually supplies roughly 900 million litres of water each day to 1.4million households. This increased to an average of 1,200 million litres of water per day during the hot weather.

Affinity Water worked to increase capacity, move water to where it was needed and fix leaks. It also worked with other water companies to share water in areas of high demand.

You can help to reduce the burden on our water supplies by following these 'water smart' tips:

Kitchen

- 👉 Wash up in a washing up bowl rather than under a running tap.
- 👉 Use washing-up water to water your plants.
- 👉 Keep a jug of water in the fridge to provide cool water, rather than running the tap.
- 👉 Air your clothes and get another wear out of them. This will save you time and energy on washing too.

Bathroom

- 👉 Take shorter showers (aim for 4 mins). This will use around 40 litres less water than a bath.
- 👉 Turn off the tap when brushing your teeth.

In the Garden

- 👉 Use a watering can instead of a hosepipe.
- 👉 Don't worry about the lawn going brown – it will recover as soon as we get the next round of good rainfall. A sprinkler can use as much as 1,000 litres of clean drinking water in a single hour. This is more than a family of four would use in a day and a half.
- 👉 Water the garden when it's cooler and there is less chance of the water evaporating.
- 👉 Paddling pools can use up to 1,000 litres of water. To save water and keep the children entertained in hot weather try paddling pool play dates. Just invite their friends to share the same paddling pool. You can also use the water on plants afterwards!

Affinity Water has a range of water-saving devices that it offers to local householders for free. To claim yours apply here:
www.savewatersavemoney.co.uk/affinity/free-water-saving-products



St Albans
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Idling Action St Albans

We all have a right to clean air. Unfortunately, the growing number of vehicles on our roads makes achieving this a significant challenge.

While we can't take the cars off the road, we can ask people to use their vehicles more wisely. The Council is asking drivers to switch off their engines when they are parked or stationary for longer than one minute.

Not many people realise, but when vehicles stand stationary with their engines running they emit 20 times more pollution than when they are moving. By switching off your engine when you are stationary, you can help to improve local air quality and reduce health impacts. You can also help cut emissions that cause climate change and save yourself some money.

Idling engines release unnecessary emissions of nitrous oxides, particulates, carbon monoxide, sulphur dioxide, benzene and other toxic chemicals. These degrade air quality and exacerbate conditions such as asthma, heart and lung disease. They also have been shown to affect long-term mental development and lung function as well as cause cancer.

While we can't see air pollution, it affects us all. Public Health England links 5% of all adult deaths (over 25) in Hertfordshire to air pollution. It estimates that 507 people in the county die prematurely each year just as a result of ultra-fine particles released from diesel engines.

Across the UK, it is thought that air pollution is responsible for the premature death of 50,000 people per year. When compared with the numbers of people dying as a result of alcoholism (22,000) or road traffic incidents (1,901) we see the magnitude of this health risk.



Children are more vulnerable to the effects of air pollution as they breathe 50% more air per pound of body weight than adults.

Myths

- ✗ **Letting your car idle is not the best way to warm your vehicle in cold weather. The best way is to drive it.**
- ✗ **Restarting doesn't deteriorate the engine and battery. It has little impact on any engine parts.**
- ✗ **Restarting your engine doesn't use more fuel than idling.**

Truth

- ✓ **Studies confirm that if you think you'll be stationary for more than a minute, it is better to switch off the engine. This will have a positive effect on fuel consumption, air quality, health and emission levels.**

If you are passionate about tackling engine-idling there are a number of ways you can help.

- ✓ Turn off your engine when you are parked or stationary.
- ✓ Display a poster or window sticker to help educate other people about the impacts.
- ✓ Become an Idling Action volunteer and give an hour of your time to talk to people about the impacts of idling engines.
- ✓ Hand out Idling Action St Albans leaflets to drivers you see running their engines while stationary, to raise awareness of the impacts.
- ✓ Invite us to engage parents at the school gates.
- ✓ Follow our Facebook page [Idling Action St Albans](#)

We have leaflets, posters, key-rings and window stickers available to help spread the message. Simply contact sustainability@stalbens.gov.uk.



Managing our plastics responsibly

It's been all over the news this summer that millions of tonnes of plastics sent abroad for recycling may be being dumped in landfill sites. Even worse, [some](#) suggest that these plastics might end up in the ocean.

It's heart breaking to think of the impacts our plastics might be causing on the environment, our health and our oceans.

In St Albans, we are making sure our plastics and other recyclables are managed responsibly. Where possible we prefer to see recyclables reprocessed in the UK. Paper, for example, is sent to a number of UK reprocessors where it is turned back into newsprint. Plastic milk bottles are sent to a reprocessing plant in Dagenham to be turned into pellets to be made into new milk bottles.

The unfortunate reality is that the UK does not have the infrastructure to reprocess all of the dry recyclables we produce. This means it is necessary to allow our private sector partners the freedom to trade dry recyclables on the international market in order to keep costs down for tax payers.

All recyclables are tracked to their final destination. Our records show that the majority of plastics collected from local households is sent to European buyers for reprocessing into new products.

The government is currently looking at options to [reduce single-use plastics](#). Together with our partners, we are lobbying central government over the need to establish new reprocessing capacity in the UK. We are also asking

for the regulatory regime to be tightened to prevent any possibility of illegal exports, pollution, littering or serious environmental impact.

You can also do your bit:

- Food packaging produces a large quantity of plastic waste. Help reduce this by joining a local food box scheme or buying produce from the local market or from a supermarket that provides loose groceries without plastic bags.
- Make sure you are recycling all the plastics you can. Food containers, bottles and tubs can be recycled from home. The only things we can't accept are plastic films, bags and hard plastics (e.g. buckets). Be sure to remove the non-recyclable parts. For example, the central trigger in a spray bottle cannot be recycled and should be removed to allow the outer bottle to be recycled.
- Carry a plastic drinks bottle that you can [refill for free](#) at local businesses, and mini cutlery with you so you never need to use disposables.
- Join [Plastic-Free St Albans](#), a local community group taking action to reduce plastic use. It is working with local businesses and organisations to reduce unnecessary use of disposables such as straws, stirrers and balloons.

Bamboo cotton buds and reusable bamboo sporks are a good everyday replacement for plastic.



Put your baby in Happy Nappies

Did you know that on average, 4,500 disposable nappies will be used per child during their lifetime? The plastics and absorbent chemicals in these nappies mean they could take up to 500 years to degrade. It means your baby's nappy will still be here when your child is a great-great-grandparent!

There are more sustainable alternatives. Real nappies are cloth nappies you can wash and use again, saving you money and reducing the amount of rubbish you throw away.

When you think of cloth nappies, old-fashioned white pieces of fabric may come to mind. The reality is, like with most things, technology has dramatically improved. Real fabric nappies are now designed to provide maximum comfort and water-tightness for babies and ease for the parents.

Best of all they are better for your baby's skin as they are breathable, they don't contain any nasty chemicals, they will save you money and they are far better for the environment.



Even if you use them just when you are at home, you will be making a difference.

We know parents are very busy, so to help make it easier we can provide you with a real nappy kit to allow you to try out different nappies. We will come and talk you through the options. Once you have tried them, if you would like to go out and choose your own nappies, we **will give you £60 towards their purchase.**

To find out more and to apply for the real nappy starter kit or voucher, please visit: www.stalbans.gov.uk/realnappies

New Drinking Water Fountains

New Drinking Water Fountains are being installed in St Albans to encourage people to refill their water bottles rather than purchasing bottled water. This will reduce plastic waste as well as helping to ensure that everyone has access to free drinking water.

Look out for these new fountains coming soon to Verulamium Park (near the pavilion) and outside the District Council Offices.

These fountains will add to the growing number of places where you can **refill your bottle for free**. If you run a business, you can sign up to the scheme to let people know that you are happy to offer free drinking water.

Get the **Refill App** to see your nearest source of free drinking water.

Refill is a City to Sea initiative that aims to protect our seas by preventing plastic pollution at source.



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NEWSBITES

Low Carbon Workspaces grants

Low Carbon Workspaces offers support and grants of between £1,000 and £5,000 to eligible small and medium sized businesses in Hertfordshire. They are providing up to a third of the cost of projects that will help reduce energy consumption, waste, water and vehicle fuel costs. Projects can include renewable technologies, LED lighting, electric vehicles and energy-efficient office equipment.

To find out more visit: www.lowcarbonworkspaces.co.uk

See what happens to your food waste

Come along and see what happens to your food waste at Agrivert's Anaerobic Digestion facility. They hold tours throughout the year. The next available tour will be on Wednesday 24 October from 10.30 to 12.30pm. Tickets must be [ordered through Eventbrite](#) in advance as we can only take 20 visitors on each tour. To be notified of future events, email: sustainability@stalbans.gov.uk.

Sustainable local business spotlight

A new concept has arrived in St Albans in the form of a packaging-free natural and organic whole foods shop. The Refill Pantry on London Road is based around the idea of zero-waste shopping.

Simply take your own receptacles and fill up on a range of dried goods and natural products. You will soon be able to get your hands on made-on-site products such as nut butters and nut milks.

If you don't have receptacles to hand, you can use paper bags in store or purchase glass jars.

If you run a sustainable business and would like to put yourself forward for mention in this spotlight, please email sustainability@stalbans.gov.uk

Good news story

In June 2018, the UK broke its record for power generated from solar energy. Between 21 and 28 June, enough energy was produced to power all the UK's 27 million households for over 16 hours.

More recycling bins

St Albans City & District Council will be gradually replacing all the litter bins in the City centre with dual refuse and recycling bins. This means you will be able to recycle your glass bottles, plastic bottles and containers, paper and cans while out and about.



First green wall in the city

We welcome the first green wall in St Albans centre. The wall has been installed to the side of a new shop in Catherine Street. The company specialises in living walls and green rooves and all aspects of garden irrigation. The living wall is constructed using a framework of planting pockets and includes a specialist irrigation system to ensure even and efficient watering.



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Is it time to go solar?

If you've ever thought about installing renewable technology at your home, now may be the time to do it.

Since 2010, the Government has subsidised low-carbon and renewable electricity generation technologies, such as solar photovoltaic panels and micro-wind, to increase the uptake through the provision of the Feed-in Tariff (FIT).

The FIT pays householders a set sum of money for each unit of energy produced through their solar panels. While the rate has dropped from 43p per unit back in 2010 to less than 4p per unit this year, the cost of the technology has also fallen dramatically. Taking into account maintenance, inverter replacement and the current rate of FIT, solar panels are still worth considering as they can potentially bring a 9% rate of return.

The Government has announced that the FIT will be abolished in April 2019. If you've been thinking about installing solar panels or another electricity-generating technology, [the Energy Saving Trust](#) thinks this could be a good time to do it. Once they are installed and registered they are guaranteed the FIT income for the next 20 years. It's likely that installers will be very busy at the beginning of 2019, so don't leave it too late!

For further information, visit the Energy Saving Trust at www.energysavingtrust.org.uk/renewable-energy/electricity/solar-panels/feed-tariffs

Sustainability Newsletter

This newsletter is brought to you by the Sustainability Team
at St Albans City and District Council.

For inquiries or comments, please contact sustainability@stalbans.gov.uk.



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