



CITY OF CAPE TOWN  
ISIXEKO SASEKAPA  
STAD KAAPSTAD

# Water-related FAQs

(Last update: 1 October 2018)

Visit [www.capetown.gov.za/thinkwater](http://www.capetown.gov.za/thinkwater) for all water-related information.

## Water-related FAQs

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**Disclaimer:**

This document is subject to frequent updating and should be regarded as a living document which aims to provide clarity on water-related operations.

## General

### 1. Where can I find a copy of the Water Disaster Plan?

Please see [www.capetown.gov.za/thinkwater](http://www.capetown.gov.za/thinkwater).

### 2. When did the water tariffs change and where can I find the new tariffs?

Water restrictions and associated tariffs came into effect on 1 March 2019.

The tariffs remain based on usage. The more you use, the more you pay. High users will be hit especially hard. The City does not make a profit on income from the sale of water.

The tariffs are available at [www.capetown.gov.za/tariffs](http://www.capetown.gov.za/tariffs).

### 3. Will there be further water restrictions?

Yes. We assess the situation constantly. Decisions might be communicated at short notice due to the severity of the situation.

### 4. How much water is agriculture using?

The City does not have any control over agricultural releases.

### 5. How will the City prevent people from selling water?

The sale of **unmodified** municipal water is unlawful in terms of our by-laws. It is, however, not unlawful to sell 'prepared water' (i.e. water that has been modified with added flavours, bubbles, or otherwise).

We can enforce our by-law, but the supply of bottled water is a supplier-consumer issue with which we cannot interfere.

In general, (note this response does not apply to a particular company) it depends on the source of the water. If water is being taken from the municipal supply it will constitute the resale of water which is prohibited in terms of section 31 of the City of Cape Town's Water By-law, 2010. They will then be liable to a fine or imprisonment in terms of section 64 of the Water By-law, 2010.

If a company is abstracting water from an alternative source (other than from the municipal supply), for example from boreholes or springs, then a formal application must be sent to the National Department of Water and Sanitation. The latter is not within the City's mandate to oversee.

Note, it is the responsibility of consumers to do their homework and to find out where the water comes from (municipal supply or not) or whether approval has been granted by the National Government for

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such use. Consumers must ensure that what they purchase is not unlawful. Demand proof of the source of the water and whether it has been legitimately extracted.

Furthermore, the City can only guarantee that the water that we provide via the municipal supply is of drinking-water quality. For all alternative sources of water, such as greywater or borehole water, or water from springs and other sources, the City advises residents to only use it for flushing toilets.

Report all cases via 107 or 112 from a cell phone or 021 480 7700 or send a Whatsapp message to 063 407 3699 to report. Please note, always try to submit as much evidence as possible.

### **6. Those with boreholes and wellpoints – what are the dos and don'ts with that type of water?**

Please see link to water restrictions. (Visit [www.capetown.gov.za/thinkwater](http://www.capetown.gov.za/thinkwater))

Firstly, the City does not regulate borehole usage. The custodian of water resources is the National Department of Water and Sanitation. But the City has, in the implementation of previous water restrictions, encouraged conservative usage of borehole water. We have recommended limited usage in accordance with water restrictions for municipally-supplied drinking water.

Our water restrictions make further recommendations for the use of boreholes. It is not in the City's mandate to regulate the usage of groundwater sources, but we have tried as far as possible to drive the message home that unlimited usage of boreholes is not sustainable.

The main consideration here is that private boreholes are not recharged. Private users do not replace the underground water that is used. This is in contrast to the City's aquifer programme, where aquifer recharge will be a non-negotiable aspect of abstraction.

Our goal is not only to survive the drought and to thrive despite it, but to change our relationship with water.

We advocate for the sustainable use of borehole water for indoor purposes but we do not support the use of borehole water for outdoor purposes, such as gardening.

### **7. Must I switch off my geyser as there will be no water in the pipes?**

Residents are advised to switch off their geysers to avoid any damage that may be caused by water suspension when the water comes back online again. Check your home insurance cover. The City is not liable for any damages.

Switch off all plumbing that could result in leaks or water damage when the water comes back on.

Residents are advised to start adjusting their water stop-cocks now to reduce water usage, as pressure reduction could cause temporary interruption of supply. If the water flow is reduced, any damage will be minimised once the water comes back on.

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### **8. Why has the City not (substantially) reduced pressure on water? Would this result in some areas being cut off? But then can't special provisions be made for these areas in the meanwhile?**

The City has in fact been substantially reducing water pressure since March 2017. Our engineers have been reducing water pressure in the bulk pipes at our reservoirs as well as in the reticulation network that feeds our households. Much of this work has been an engineering-first.

Water flows to a property because of the action of water pressure. For the water to reach different areas, pressure must be managed. This is done by controlling the flow of water to every area in the city. Some areas in the city are located at lower points, while others are located higher up. Water, like everything else, is bound by the laws of gravity. So, it will either flow downwards or it will remain at the same level. If we want it to get to higher-lying areas, or properties located on high ground or into tall buildings, we need to use valves and pumps to get it to those areas.

To get through this drought, there are water restrictions and water usage limits in place. We then provide the allowable water to an area. If everyone stays within their daily usage limit, households should not be affected by rationing. But if people in a lower-lying area do not stick to this allocation, people in higher-lying areas are affected. Even with reduced pressure, lower-lying areas will have water as it flows easier because of gravity. But, if the flow is reduced, the water does not have sufficient pressure to flow to higher-lying areas or buildings.

That is why tall buildings and higher-lying areas will often be affected by pressure management. Some areas will not have water.

The City's water reticulation network provides water at pressures between 2.4 and 9 bar.

Operational staff have lowered the pressures across the City but the intention is to keep the system pressurised (keep water flowing). This is because a lot of damage could be done if we switch off this pressure system entirely.

High-rise buildings and dwellings located 10 m or higher than road level will be impacted indefinitely but theoretically everyone living at ground level should have water supply at their metered connection.

However, when many users draw water at once, a peak in the demand is created. This happens when, for example, people tend to do laundry in the morning or shower at more or less the same time during the day. This peak (typically between 05:00 and 09:00 and between 17:00 and 21:00) will draw down the system creating a temporary outage. In this case the system should recover once the demand decreases, i.e. after the washing is on the line. Residents on higher-lying areas within pressure zones are vulnerable and their water supply is dependent on their lower-lying neighbours.

From our reservoirs, we have allocated the precise amount of water that could be required for essential usage while protecting the resources that we have left. Nothing more is given than what is required. It is therefore up to all of us to ensure that we stick to our daily limits. When pressure management is introduced, it remains active in an area all the time. No outages are planned as they

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are solely dependent on the behaviour of users. Because we cannot physically control the behaviour of users, we cannot guess how long it will take for an area to get its water usage down to what is required.

Further advanced pressure management is being rolled out, with some areas at 0,5 bars and lower. But, adjustments may be made on an hourly basis if required.

That is why the City has been advising since March to keep some water for non-essential use but not to store excessive municipal water.

Bringing down the demand through pressure management and communication to promote water reduction among our users has been a vital intervention in helping to buy us time and to stretch our water supplies further.

### **9. Has the City considered water “load shedding” in the same way they did with electricity.**

The City's position is that “water shedding” or turning off water supply to an area for a few hours each day, should be avoided if at all possible, as it can lead to air entering the pipework which greatly increases the likelihood of leaks and bursts, and associated water wastage. Further to this, water shedding has not been proven to result in net savings as it can lead to residents stockpiling water.

The City's is rather adjusting our system so that as many people as possible are supplied at as low a pressure as possible.

We have sent out media releases advising that residents may notice supply interruptions due to these efforts, especially in higher-lying areas, but that water supply should return to normal once demand within the area subsides. Furthermore, residents have been advised to keep an emergency store of between 5 to 10 l of water for drinking and basic hygiene at all times going forward.

### **10. Why is the water a different colour when the water is turned off and on again? Is it safe to use?**

Discolouration is likely caused by planned or unplanned work to the water supply network, which has caused sediment in the pipes to shift. In cases where residents are worried about the quality of the water, we encourage them to report the matter to the call centre on 0860 103 089 to arrange for a sample to be taken.

The City fully supports and complies with strict water quality checks as prescribed by the National Department of Water and Sanitation (DWS). This rigorous process means that water quality is closely monitored via a large number of water samples analysed according to the stringent South African National Standards (SANS 241:2015) requirements.

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To ensure the excellent quality of our water, our laboratory tests over 5 700 samples of water each year. We draw water from sampling points throughout the water system, and we test these samples on a weekly or bi-weekly basis.

Our water samples are taken from:

- raw water (from dams and boreholes);
- water after it has been treated at the treatment plants;
- water from reservoirs; and
- water from pipework (taken from designated sampling points around Cape Town).

Water quality is also controlled at the treatment plants by the process controllers who perform tests on an hourly basis in the on-site labs in order to make the necessary adjustments.

### **11. Has the City considered tapping into the water running in the tunnels underneath the city?**

These tunnels historically carried spring water from Table Mountain, but have since in many cases been incorporated into the stormwater network.

The City is working to maximise the use of spring water, and has extensively studied the springs on Table Mountain in terms of whether they can be used to augment drinking water supply.

The City currently produces 2, 8 million litres of drinking water per day from the Albion Spring in Newlands, and has recently commissioned a new project to produce approximately 2 million litres of drinking water per day from the Oranjezicht Main Springs Chamber.

In the case of other springs, it has been found that the amount of water these would provide would not justify the cost of the infrastructure required to redirect the water into the City's reticulation network and treat it to drinking standards. Procuring greater volumes of water could be done more economically, for instance, via aquifer abstraction or the treatment of wastewater, and the City is rather pursuing these options.

In other cases, the City is exploring whether unused spring water could be used for non-drinking purposes such as industry and irrigation, and has applied to the National Department of Water and Sanitation to authorise the City to use the water in this way. This would also take pressure off drinking water reserves somewhat.



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**12. Just about every shop in Cape Town is selling more bottled water. Does the City have any suggestions to residents on what to do with the excess plastic bottles they are buying? Are plans being made to collect the excess plastic that will result from the huge increase in bottled water sales?**

**Shop smartly:** First, residents should shop smartly for their bottled water – clear, uncoloured plastic bottles are recycled easier than those with printing directly on the bottle, metal caps/lids, paper labels or shrink wrap labels.

**Re-use:** According to the Polyethylene Terephthalate Recycling Company (PETCO), the PET (clear and uncoloured) bottles that the bottled water is bought in, are safe and convenient for further storage of water, but need to be rinsed (or washed if dirty) before reuse, as with any other container.

**Donate:** Many residents in the City aren't able to afford bottled water or containers. Rather than throwing away your empty (5 litre or similar) water bottles, consider donating them to fellow residents who may need containers for their water. Alternatively, contact your local charity to see if they are in need of additional water containers.

**Recycle:** The City's Think Twice programme collects recyclables (including plastic bottled water bottles) from households in certain areas. Visit the waste recyclers' app to see if you qualify; or to find private or community recycling companies, at <http://web1.capetown.gov.za/web1/wasterec/map>

The City's drop-off facilities also accept recyclable materials. To find your closest drop-off facility, visit [www.capetown.gov.za](http://www.capetown.gov.za).

The City's drop-off facilities will be key. We have diverted more than 50% of our waste from landfills already, and we expect this practice to continue.

**13. Is the City talking to retailers about possibly collecting bottles back from residents to ensure recycling?**

The City has engaged with PET Recycling Company NPC (PETCO), who agrees that the above-mentioned drop-off or recycling sites are the best place to take your water bottles. The sites are already connected to recycling companies, who provide jobs through recycling the Polyethylene Terephthalate (PET) bottles.

**14. There is a lot of talk of 70 water springs in the city. Is this true? Are all these locations known?**

The City has explored in detail whether 69 identified springs on Table Mountain could be incorporated into the drinking water system. The City does currently produce 2, 8 million litres of drinking water per day from the Albion Spring in Newlands, and has recently commissioned a new project to produce approximately 2 million litres drinking water per day from the Oranjezicht Main Springs Chamber. This has been done under existing water licences.

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However, in the case of other springs it has been found that flow is too small to justify the cost of staff and infrastructure required to treat the water to drinking standards. In the interests of ratepayers, the City must ensure that augmentation schemes offer value for money. Procuring greater volumes of water could be done more economically, for instance via aquifer abstraction or wastewater treatment, and the City is pursuing these options. Please note that even if all water from the springs could be incorporated into the drinking water system they would only be able to service a tiny fraction of the City's water requirements.

In terms of the unused spring water, the City is exploring whether this water could be used for non-potable purposes such as irrigation, as this does not carry the same associated infrastructure costs, and would also take pressure off potable water reserves. The City has applied to the National Department of Water and Sanitation to authorise us to use the water in this way.

### **15. Should spring water be treated?**

The City is advising that water collected directly from springs is boiled before use, as this is water is not quality-controlled, and could be contaminated.

### **16. Is anybody allowed to sell unmodified Municipal water?**

The resale of unmodified municipal water without prior permission from the City of Cape Town's Director: Water and Waste Services is prohibited and no permission for applications will be granted during this drought period. The use and selling of modified municipal water whether through filtration, ozone, carbonation and related methods, bottled or not, where the end product remains water, is hereby also prohibited during this period.

It should be noted that this prohibition excludes sodas and flavoured water (with additives), ice teas and related drinks. This restriction does not apply to water from alternative sources, e.g. springs.

### **17. What does the regulation state regarding sale of ground water?**

All users of groundwater and surface water must comply with the National Water Act and its regulations. With regard to the regulations around springs; boreholes; well points; rivers; streams and vlei water, we would like to emphasise that residents must obtain permission from the National Department of Water and Sanitation (NDWS) in order to take water from a resource, i.e. ground or surface water. The City would like to remind residents that the National Department of Water and Sanitation has emphasised that water from private boreholes is not meant for sale and that commercial and industrial entities must still seek the necessary authorisation from the department to sell surface and groundwater. Businesses that are selling groundwater and/or surface water must declare the source and display proof of authorisation from NDWS on any vehicle/transportation mode and retail outlet dispensing such water.

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### 18. How should we store water?

- Store the water in a cool, dry place.
- Make sure that the containers are closed and sealed during storage. Boil the water before use when in doubt.
- The container must have a top that can be tightly closed.
- Containers must be made of durable, unbreakable material (i.e. not glass).
- Do not use containers which have previously been used to store chemical or toxic substances.

## Disease and Health

### 19. Has the city put in place a public health program to address potential health problems, e.g. water borne diseases such as cholera?

The City is part of an established outbreak response team together with Provincial Government.

All notifiable cases of disease are investigated thoroughly to determine the source and to ensure that appropriate containment measures are enacted, where necessary.

Health officers are actively monitoring the incidence of cases during the diarrhoea season to pick up trends in order to ensure rapid responses to disease outbreaks

Healthcare facilities ensure that individuals who are sick and dehydrated (especially children) receive priority treatment to prevent disease progression.

### 20. Will the national and provincial Government play a role to assist the City should there be a water-related disease outbreak?

Critical services (for example hospitals) will continue to receive drinking water through normal channels. We will implement significant monitoring and enforcement measures to ensure that water usage at these points is significantly reduced. Any water-borne disease outbreak will be jointly managed by the City, Provincial and National health departments.

### 21. What measures have the City put in place to combat disease outbreaks during a drought?

Preventative measures:

- Increased health and hygiene programmes
- City clinics have regular health talks about the prevention of water- and food-borne diseases and diarrhoea danger signs
- Posters at Water Collection Sites

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People should not stop their normal precautionary health measures during this crisis.

- The public is encouraged to continue with their routine visitations to health clinics and ensure all immunisations of all family members are up to date.
- The City will continue to promote childhood vaccinations at all its healthcare facilities.
- When persons display symptoms of dehydration they should drink a sugar/salt solution (Half a teaspoon of salt, eight teaspoons of sugar in one litre of water) and if the symptoms persist then proceed to the nearest clinic for treatment.

### **22. Will the City provide information of the need to keep hands clean above all else during a drought and discourage handshaking?**

Yes, the City will provide sanitary guidelines.

The City is advising the following:

Preventative measures:

- Increased health and hygiene programmes
- City clinics have regular health talks about the prevention of water- and food-borne diseases and diarrhoea danger signs.
- Health posters at water collection sites.

People should not stop their normal precautionary health measures during this crisis

- The public is encouraged to continue with their routine visits to health clinics and ensure that immunisations of all family members are up to date.
- The City will continue to promote childhood vaccinations at all its healthcare facilities
- When persons display symptoms of dehydration they should drink a sugar/salt solution (Half a teaspoon of salt, eight teaspoons of sugar in one litre of water) and if the symptoms persist then proceed to the nearest clinic for treatment.

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### **23. What can we do to contain disease outbreaks?**

The City is part of an established outbreak response team together with Provincial Government.

All notifiable cases of disease are investigated thoroughly to determine the source and appropriate containment measures are enacted, where necessary.

Health officers are actively interrogating any information during the diarrhoea season to pick up trends in order to ensure rapid responses to disease outbreaks.

Healthcare facilities ensure that individuals who are sick and dehydrated (especially children) are fast-tracked to prevent disease progression.

### **24. Is the City stockpiling antibiotics?**

The City's clinics will be capacitated to see to those in need.

### **25. What health risks become more prevalent during a drought?**

Water-borne diseases will likely become more prevalent, linked to the improper storage of water where contaminated containers are used. These include: Diarrhoea, Hepatitis A, and Typhoid Fever.

Handwashing and washing of fruit and vegetables is imperative

Food-borne diseases will likely become more prevalent, due to cross contamination and insufficient sanitisation of foods and food preparation surfaces.

The five key food safety tips are:

- Wash your hands with your allocated water
- Separate raw and cooked food
- Cook food thoroughly
- Keep food at safe temperatures
- Use clean water and fresh food

## Fires

### **26. Where will the water come from to fight big vegetation fires, which are characteristic of this time of year?**

The current water crisis necessitated the Fire and Rescue Service to rethink the current strategy around how we will manage fires over this period.

The Fire and Rescue Service also has five Compressed Air Foam System (CAFS) vehicles that use a foam/water concentrate mix. These vehicles are being dispatched first where possible to contain fires and limit the use of potable water. We are looking to retrofit some of our other vehicles to perform in a similar manner in the months ahead, although this is budget dependent.

Treated effluent is also being used to an extent where possible.

For vegetation fires, the helicopters contracted for the summer season will use seawater to fight flames in areas that are inaccessible to firefighters. On the ground, greater emphasis will be placed on perimeter firefighting and monitoring. Fire and Rescue Services will always consider life and property as a first priority, and should drinking water have to be used in these instances, we will do so to save same. In addition, the Fire and Rescue Service is ramping up its education and awareness campaigns around fire safety in the home, but also in public and the maintenance of fire breaks.

The summer season, coupled with the water shortage, requires that the public seriously consider their actions around the use of fire during this period. They are requested to be cautious and vigilant, and to report fires as soon as they are witnessed in order that the emergency fire-fighting services can reach them as quickly as possible. The public are also assured that the Fire and Rescue Service will do all in their power to combat fires if and when they occur, using the most convenient alternate water sources available.

### **27. How will fires in buildings and businesses be handled?**

The City advises all businesses and facility managers in the public and private sector to get up to speed about how to treat fires during a period of extreme drought especially when water pressure may also be lowered dramatically in an effort to suppress demand.

According to building regulations sprinkler systems need to be installed however, during the disaster phase no water will feed into a fire sprinkler system. Businesses must please check their insurance.

Tips:

- Ensure that water pressure remains adequate for your needs.
- Ensure all fire hydrants are in working condition and serviced and acquire more if required.

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- Ensure that all staff and occupants know the emergency processes that are related to a fire i.e. conduct regular fire drills.
- Speak to your insurer to ensure that you are aware of all requirements and consequences of pressure management/flooding and fires.
- Conduct ongoing staff and occupant awareness initiatives.

### **28. What will happen if there are fires in informal settlements?**

The City aims to ensure that water supply and pressure remains as adequate as possible in informal settlements. Informal settlements which are responsible for approximately 4% of our water usage are also at a high risk of fire-, floods and disease due to the informal nature of these settlements and the high densities.

## Events

### **29. How much does the events and film industry contribute to the local economy? Is it justified to bring more people into the City with these events and through the film industry?**

The events and film industries provide enormous benefit to the local economy. Eight of the signature events hosted in the city annually contribute more than R3 billion to the local economy and create more than 20 000 temporary jobs.

The film industry contributes approximately R5 billion to the local economy annually and has created more than 35 000 jobs over a three-year period.

While some of the jobs related to these industries are temporary, they afford people the opportunity to gain experience and acquire skills for future permanent employment.

Given the scale of the City's supply system, it is unlikely that tourists visiting Cape Town for sporting events will have any noticeable impact on overall consumption. They would only account for a tiny fraction of overall usage.

While the City appreciates the concern of residents, we cannot take a blanket decision to shut down these two industries that collectively contribute over R8 billion annually to the local economy that benefits small business owners. Being labour-intensive industries, there will be serious consequences that will be detrimental to many residents' livelihoods if these sectors are curtailed.

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### 30. What is the event (in particular the Two Oceans Marathon and Cycle tour) and film industry doing to adapt their operations to meet the stringent requirements of the water crises?

#### Old Mutual Two Oceans Marathon

- Water for the race day has been sourced from a natural spring, allocated and approved by the National Department of Water and Sanitation. This water will be used in the sachet and non-sachet water delivery system for all race participants.
- The event organiser has engaged with runners to use hydration packs and to fill up at the start of the race instead of using their daily household allocation of potable water.
- Of special note is the use of recycled water for ice to keep the race water sachets cool – kept in sealed bags and marked 'not for consumption'.
- All sponsors and sponsor partners have been requested to invest in similar strategies. A key decision has been taken to remove all showers for after the race. Caterers have committed to supplying their staff and crew with liquid refreshments that include bottled water. Water from the spring supply will be used in food preparation, and grey water will be utilised in clean-up operations after the event concludes.
- All chemical toilets brought to the various sites will have certified recycled water from the respective service providers
- Participants will be bound by the water savings initiatives of the event's venue partners and accommodation sponsors.

#### Cape Town Cycle Tour

- Water will be brought in from outside the province for drinking and ice on the route. Locally produced desalinated water will be used for all cleansing purposes. The number of water stations along the route will be reduced to 14 essential stations, which are necessary from a medical point of view.
- In addition, suppliers to the cycle tour will sign service level agreements that specify their usage and where their water will be sourced. Suppliers will not be allowed to use water from the city's grid.

#### Film industry

As a labour-intensive industry that usually has a large crew, the film industry has implemented significant water savings initiatives that are yielding positive results:

- Table cloths have been replaced with reusable plastic table covers that can be wiped clean. This has reduced water usage from 10 litres to 50 ml per table cloth translating into savings of 500 litres per day. Approximately 15 000 litres of water is saved monthly.
- Biodegradable and disposable crockery and cutlery have replaced non-disposable items. This shift has cut consumption for washing dishes to about 250 litres per day from 1 500 litres which was used previously. Approximately 45 000 litres of potable water has been saved monthly.



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- Miscellaneous water saving measures includes steaming instead of boiling and reusing boiled water to clean the kitchen and toilets. Kitchens are equipped with alcohol sanitizers for washing hands, and the grey water from frozen goods is used to clean floors. All of these measures have realised a saving of 30 000 litres per month.

### **31. Who will coordinate the use of fields that are still in a playable condition?**

It has been agreed that sporting federations and not individual clubs will coordinate the use of fields which are still in a playable condition for matches and practices to continue. The fields will be assessed and scored on a weekly basis to determine their suitability for continued use. This assessment is being done to ensure that the best interests of all parties are considered.

We recognise that the current water crisis is negatively impacting on the functioning of the various sports codes and we are committed to working with them to ensure that the impact is minimised, whilst still taking the necessary steps to preserve the city's remaining water resources.