

# LIQUID ASSETS

Graham Mann of H2O Building Services looks at the implications of the opening up of the water retail market.

The 2014 Water Act, which came into law from April 2017, allows more than 1.2 million “eligible businesses”, charities and public sector bodies in England to choose their water supplier rather than having to rely on a supplier with a regional monopoly. The Government hopes that competition will lead to better customer service, lower costs and more innovation among suppliers as they vie for customers. The situation in Wales is slightly different in that customers who use the supply system of an appointed water company whose system is wholly or mainly in Wales, only those using more than 50 Ml of water each year will be able to choose their water supplier. In Scotland, the retail water market for businesses has been deregulated since 2008. Open Water, the public face of the Government’s water retail policy, states that, by having the freedom to choose, your business could save water, spend less and get other benefits. But, before you rush to change water supplier there are several things you should consider.

The first is water management. You know how much water your supplier bills you for and how much wastewater you discharge. But you might like to get an independent check using validated water meters just to make sure that there are no errors. A site survey of a park for a council in London, found that the water meter was not working and water bills had been estimated for over five years. Monitoring of water usage resulted in a substantial refund and an annual saving.

Then look at water use. This involves a “water audit”. How much water is used in each part of your organisation and where? There will always be water losses that you know about – for example evaporative losses from boilers and cooling towers – but

these are easily quantified. After making an allowance for these, the balance of the influent water should be equal to the effluent. If there is a significant difference then the chances are that there’s a leak. Temporary water meters can usually track down leaks quite quickly. You should compare your water consumption per unit of output against industry “benchmarks”. If you are using more water than other similar organisations then your costs will be higher. An audit of a Council’s Sports Stadium identified two water leaks, resulting in an actual saving of £10,000.

Once you are confident that you have accounted for all the water coming on to site it is time to make sure that your water bills are correct. H2O Building Services carried out a water audit for East Staffordshire Borough Council’s facilities including cemeteries, main offices and leisure facilities. Although they identified no leaks, by reviewing historical records, H2O Building Services have identified retrospective savings amounting to over £21,000.

A water strategy consultant will be able to help you to reduce water consumption and, possibly, to reuse and recycle water. Remember that recycling water reduces not only the volume of mains water that you take in but also the volume of wastewater that you discharge to sewer – a double cost saving.

When you have got on top of these issues, now is the time to consider a change of supplier but first you might want to talk to your current water and wastewater retailer(s) to see what they can offer. If you still want to change supplier you really should take some advice about the options



available. Since 1997 H2O Building Services has been helping clients to save money on water. The company provides a full range of services from bill validation to leak detection and water auditing to rainwater harvesting.

## ABOUT H2O BUILDING SERVICES

Established in 1997, H2O Building Services provides a full range of services from bill validation to leak detection and water auditing to rainwater harvesting. Based in Yorkshire and with over 20 years’ of experience and knowledge of the water supply industry the company provides consultancy and management services throughout the UK across a range of industries from large multi-national companies through to the public sector. Tel 0845 658 0948 Email [info@h2obuildingservices.co.uk](mailto:info@h2obuildingservices.co.uk) [www.h2obuildingservices.co.uk](http://www.h2obuildingservices.co.uk)