# Urgent reforms needed as UK water supply faces potential rationing by 2030s



The United Kingdom's water supply faces significant challenges, with urgent reforms necessary to avoid potential rationing by the 2030s, according to Environment Secretary and Labour Party MP Steve Reed. In a recent interview with The Mail on Sunday, Reed expressed concerns that households might soon have to share baths and rely on bottled water unless substantial actions are taken to enhance the current system.

Reed highlighted the inertia in building new reservoirs, noting, "We haven’t had a new reservoir in this country for 37 years," and projected that by the mid-2030s, the demand for clean drinking water could exceed supply, leading to possible rationing. He plans to legislate changes to the current legal framework surrounding reservoir construction, which currently allows three attempts for public objections to be raised in court. Reed is advocating for this to be reduced to one for cases deemed without merit and a maximum of two attempts for substantial challenges.

In addition to addressing reservoir construction, Reed also unveiled a commitment to improving the state of England's waterways, following alarming statistics from the Environment Agency revealing a staggering 3.6 million hours of raw sewage spillage in 2022, a sharp rise from 1.75 million hours the previous year. Reed recounted his childhood memories of enjoying beach trips in the West Country, lamenting that current environmental conditions jeopardise similar experiences for future generations. He stressed, "If there is a big red flag flying, that means it's been contaminated with raw sewage... What a terrible thing to have to say to a child."

Reed's comments come amidst a growing concern about the impact of climate change on water availability, particularly in the southern regions of England, where the pressure on water resources is already severe. By 2050, projections indicate a potential shortfall of nearly 5 billion litres of water daily, surpassing one-third of the total water currently supplied to the public.

In the midst of these warnings, voices from other political factions have raised additional concerns. Adrian Ramsay, co-leader of the Green Party, has cautioned against prioritising water consumption by artificial intelligence (AI) datacentres, positing that these facilities could consume water equivalent to six times the needs of Denmark's population. Academic insights from Prof Hannah Cloke of the University of Reading have reinforced these worries, pointing to anticipated changes in the climate that will exacerbate water demand amid a growing population and industrial expansion.

The future of the UK's water supply system hinges on the government's response to these issues, as lawmakers and experts work to address anticipated challenges presented by both environmental and infrastructural pressures.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://www.watermagazine.co.uk/2025/01/30/water-scarcity-could-cost-uk-economy-25bn-over-five-years-in-undelivered-housing-reveals-ciwem/> - This article supports the claim that water scarcity poses significant economic challenges, particularly in housing development, and highlights the need for water-smart solutions to mitigate these impacts.
* <https://www.waterlinepublication.org.uk/articles/the-future-challenges-facing-the-water-industry/> - This article discusses the broader challenges facing the UK water industry, including climate change and resource sustainability, which align with concerns about future water availability and supply.
* <https://waterscan.com/2025/01/30/securing-our-future-tackling-the-uks-water-challenges/> - This piece emphasizes the urgency of addressing water challenges in the UK, particularly in light of climate change impacts such as increased flooding and drier summers, which affect water supply and demand.
* <https://www.mass.gov/guide-to-evidence/article-xi-miscellaneous> - Although not directly related to water supply, this source highlights the importance of reliable evidence in policy-making, which is crucial for addressing environmental challenges like water scarcity.
* <https://apcentral.collegeboard.org/media/pdf/ap20-seminar-task-2-iwa-directions-and-stimulus-materials.pdf> - This document provides a framework for analyzing complex issues, such as water scarcity, by emphasizing the need for diverse perspectives and evidence-based arguments.
* <https://www.noahwire.com> - This source is mentioned as the original article's source, providing context for the concerns raised by Environment Secretary Steve Reed regarding the UK's water supply challenges.