

BENCHMARKING WATER USE AND SETTING TARGETS

HOW TO...



Usually, the decision to participate in a benchmarking scheme, or to set property or portfolio water targets, is taken by an asset manager. The process of collating information that will inform this decision is coordinated by the property manager with input from the facilities manager.

Key considerations for benchmarking and setting energy targets are described below:

BENCHMARKING



1. COLLATE WATER CONSUMPTION DATA

Water consumption data can be collected from invoices, incoming water meters, or submeters connected to data collecting platforms.

- Smaller properties may receive invoices on a quarterly basis with estimated reads, which means these might not be the most reliable when starting the data collection processes.
- Larger properties may receive invoices on a monthly basis, but readings might still be estimated.

Obtaining the most reliable water consumption data involves taking regular readings from the incoming meters or reviewing output from automated data collection platform.



2. NORMALISE BENCHMARKING DATA

Before proceeding with a benchmarking exercise, it is important to normalise water benchmarking data, where possible. Unlike an absolute benchmark, a normalised water benchmark facilitates a like-for-like comparison with other properties or portfolios.

Normalisation can be delivered via a range of metrics, including, for example:

Annual water use in cubic meters (m³):

- Per employee.
- Per m² of occupied space.
- Per tonne/litre of product.
- Per m³ of product.

3. CONSIDER AN APPROPRIATE BENCHMARK

It is important that a benchmark aligns with a property or portfolio's business strategy. There are a number of benchmarks which cover water consumption. These include, for example:

The following are all useful benchmarking options that could be considered:

Vision	Benchmark	What and Why?
Internal	Best performing building in a portfolio	Readily accessible information and relatable to key stakeholders in the business. Potential to generate friendly competition in water conservation activity.
External	Real Estate Environmental Benchmark	A free to use resource with typical and good practice intensity metrics for energy, water and waste, plus a benchmark calculator, based on data from over 1,000 commercial properties across the UK. Useful to understand an organisation's performance as compared to the wider industry.
External	NABERS	A subscription-based association hosting intensity metrics for energy, water and waste benchmarking based on actual data from commercial properties. Useful to understand an organisation's performance as compared to the wider industry.
External	The Environment Agency	An on-line resource providing typical and best practice water consumption benchmarks for different types of properties, facilities and institutions.
External	Peer performance	Many organisations submit their water consumption performance to voluntary disclosure schemes, such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Carbon Disclosure Project. • Global Real Estate Sustainability Benchmark. • European Public Real Estate Association's Sustainability Best Practice Recommendations. • The Global Reporting Initiative.

TARGET SETTING



1. CONSIDER EXTERNAL AND INTERNAL DRIVERS

It is also important to consider how a water target is set based on what is possible within strategic, budgetary and infrastructural constraints. This includes understanding what action and investment would be required to achieve the target, and considering the extent to which this resource, and the required actions, are achievable.

Understanding the water consumption profile of a property or portfolio, and the potential contribution that may be available through different energy saving opportunities, can inform a decarbonisation pathway and incremental targets within it.

Ideally, a target should combine both external and internal drivers.

- Short to medium-term targets based on known opportunities.
- Long-term targets recognising the potential for product and service innovation that may yet involve unknown quantities, or wholesale strategic change that offer energy and carbon reduction opportunities which are not immediately available.



2. CONSIDER BOUNDARIES AND NORMALISATION

Water consumption targets should always be applied within a defined boundary. For example, organisations may decide to take:

- A whole portfolio approach, but should recognise that acquisitions and divestments may impact on performance and hence the ability to meet those targets.
- A like-for-like approach, where performance is normalised to account for acquisitions and divestments, by adding or removing associated consumption to a baseline.
- A steady state buildings approach, so that vacant buildings and those where building controls aren't fully understood or employed, represent a more consistent approach to water consumption performance and target setting.



3. COLLABORATE WITH OCCUPIERS

Collaboration between property managers and occupiers will increase the likelihood that water consumption targets will be achieved. This may include, for example:

- Early engagement with occupiers as part of the target setting process. This can provide a useful way to secure buy-in to participate in water conservation initiatives.
- Agreement with occupiers on the governance arrangements. This may involve, for example, sharing water consumption data and monitoring and reviewing the impact of projects.