

CIPR PRide Awards 2011

Region: **Wessex**
 Category 7: **Best Campaign £10,000 and Under**
 Entrant: **Southern Water**
 Entry: **Drip, Drip, Drip**

Campaign Brief

With water resources in the South East under pressure from a growing population, the Government has officially declared the region to be a water-stressed area, giving water companies the authority to compulsorily install meters.

Meters are vital to help preserve resources because their installation generally results in customers cutting their water use by 10%. However, imposing them on 500,000 customers – half of whom could face higher bills – had the potential to be a disaster for Southern Water, the first company to be given consent by Government to compulsorily install meters.

In November 2010, to inform customers how they can adopt water-efficient techniques to reduce their bills, Southern Water launched a huge communications campaign (Save Water, Save Energy, Save Money) in Southampton which is being rolled out across Hampshire.

Although that campaign is aimed at householders, the pressure of peer-power from children cannot be underestimated. If we could grab the imagination of children, we could depend on them to take some powerful messages home to their families.

Therefore, the campaign brief was to launch a campaign in Hampshire and the Isle of Wight aimed at children to supplement the 'Save Water, Save Energy, Save Money' campaign.

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 "I thoroughly enjoyed The Drips play. It's a commendable way to spread the message to children – and adults too – that water is a vital commodity that we can't afford to waste."

Dr Alan Whitehead,
 MP for Southampton Test



Objectives

To promote an understanding among children and enlist their help in stressing to their parents the need not to waste that most precious of natural resources – water.



"I was delighted to be able to attend Southern Water's 'Are you a Drip' show at Nursling Primary School. The children were fully engaged and obviously enjoyed it as much as I did. It's a great way to deliver a

key message that water is a vital commodity that we should try not to waste"

Caroline Nokes
 MP for Romsey and Southampton North

Strategy and Tactics

We launched the 'Drip, Drip, Drip' campaign – based on a strategy of taking the metering message directly into schools. This would be achieved via an entertaining school play in which the characters concentrate on simple water-saving tips and a programme of Waterwise school talks.

We worked with a team of expert set designers, mask and puppet makers and costume designers to create an ingenious set and bring to life the characters in a colourful cartoon style. We commissioned a theatre company which worked in collaboration with a composer to produce original music and songs.

The play tells the story of the likeable Drip family. A colourful, cartoon-style set is the backdrop for the family who are depicted through masks and puppetry. A spellbinding atmosphere is created through mood lighting, music and mechanical props.

The Drips are water-wasters. Dad puts only one sock in the washing machine. The dishwasher has only a couple of plates in it and Mum is always languishing in a deep, luxurious bath. One day the appliances get fed up and refuse to work properly until the family learn to change their habits.

There is a lot of slapstick fun, with plenty of interaction between the actors and children, but the play delivers serious messages to a water-stressed region – such as "If you turn off the tap while brushing your teeth you will save a bathful of water a day".

Each performance is followed by an interactive workshop in which the cast explain the importance of saving water and children ask questions and identify ways in which they can save water, such as running dishwashers and washing machines with full loads to save water, energy and money.



"The whole class enjoyed the play. It was really funny and exciting but educational too. We know now that if you save the rainwater the world will have some left to survive."

Ten year-old Abigail Deane,
Marchwood Junior School, Southampton.

This advice is then taken home by the children who tell their parents, for example, that they can save 45 litres of water if they take a shower instead of a bath – pester power at its most effective.

We also trained a small army of volunteer staff to visit schools and other places where children gather, such as cub and Brownie packs, to deliver Waterwise talks where again simple messages are reinforced.

More than 20 staff became Waterwise speakers, giving 45-minute interactive talks, pointing out simple ways to save water, such as fitting a trigger to a hose to halve your water use in the garden.

Our tactics centred upon concentrating the schools activity in towns where metering is being carried out. For example, half of the Waterwise talks to date have taken place in the Southampton area (the first city to be affected by metering) but the metering programme will move into the New Forest area next – as will our Drip, Drip, Drip campaign.

Tactics also stressed that the Drip, Drip, Drip campaign would be more successful if it was delivered entirely free to schools.

Outputs

From July 2010 to June 2011:

- Eight performances of the school play 'Are You a Drip'
- Eight interactive workshops at schools
- Waterwise talks to date delivered at 47 schools, after-school clubs and children's groups.
- MPs visit school play
- Film made of Drips play which can be viewed at www.southernwater.co.uk/DripsFilm

Outcomes

- School play seen by 1,200 children.
- 95% positive feedback from children to school play, measured via feedback forms.
- Waterwise talks heard by 1,531 children.
- 98% positive feedback from teachers to Waterwise talks, measured via feedback forms.
- Positive media coverage.
- Praise from MPs.
- Return visits requested by schools.
- Campaign so successful it is being repeated in 2011/12.

If each child who has seen the play or listened to a WaterWise talk persuades their parents to adopt just one water-saving tip, enormous savings would result from the Drip, Drip, Drip campaign. For example, if those families used a water butt instead of a hosepipe they would save 3.5 million litres of water in a year. That's enough to meet the demands of a city the size of Southampton for a day.

Budget

£8,400

Pictured below:
Waterwise speaker Dominic Ratcliffe



“The children and staff were amazed at the knowledge of your Waterwise speaker – a truly worthwhile learning experience for all.”

Sharon Humphreys, Teacher,
Nursling Primary School



“The performance of The Drips show was incredibly well done. It made important points very simply but despite the young audience, it was actually relevant to all ages. I found the show very entertaining and the impact of the messages being communicated was enhanced by the way in which humour was used so effectively to deliver them.”

Clr Eileen Berry,
Winchester City Council