



Swamped by your water bill?



Your neighbours switched to a water meter and saved money

In the Autumn of 2015, the City Council started a project to switch a number of residents on to water meters. One couple who we helped live in a council house on Northfield Avenue. Do read below to learn a little about them, how the meter was installed and how much they are now saving.

Most people pay for water in one of two ways:

1. using the rateable value of the property they live in
2. using the amount actually used as displayed on a water meter

If you do not have a water meter, you will be paying a fixed amount regardless of how much water you use. If you don't use a lot of water, you may be still be paying quite a lot of money.

Address: Northfield Avenue

Property: 1-bedroom attached bungalow

Number in household: 2 adults



In Cambridge, Cambridge Water Company supplies our clean water. We also pay them for the removal of waste water. Water meters can only be installed by Cambridge Water (using their chosen plumbers) and the meters are the property of the water company.

Older couples living in small one- or two-bedroom properties often worry that switching to a water meter will be complicated and will not save any money. We were keen to show this retired couple that even though their rateable value is quite low, we estimated they would still save money by paying for the water they use. The Northfield Avenue residents were also concerned that it would be too difficult to install a water meter. Their stop cock was behind kitchen cabinets and the council had already helped by putting in an electric switch to turn off the water. We explained that the plumber used by Cambridge Water would work out the best place to put it - either inside or outside.

A water meter was requested by phoning Cambridge Water's customer services. They put us through to the plumbing company to book an appointment - just a couple of weeks later. At this appointment, the plumber was able to fit the meter. It did have to be put behind the kitchen cabinets but as it can be read from outside the house (using wireless technology), the residents do not need to get to the meter themselves.

Installing the water meter took about an hour. During this time the water had to be turned off, and there was a little smoke from soldering the pipes. The plumber then explained to the residents how to read the meter, and that Cambridge Water would read it from outside their bungalow every six months.



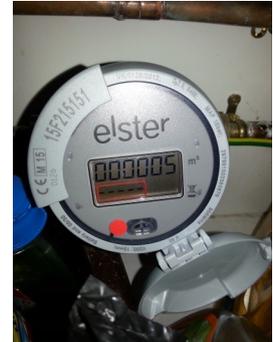
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Within a couple of weeks, the residents had received a new bill from Cambridge Water. This confirmed that they were now on a water meter and showed an actual reading - Cambridge Water had already done a reading to make the adjustments.

Based on how much water the residents have used in the first six months, we have estimated that they should save over £130 per year.

We are continuing to monitor their water use - taking readings every month - so we have a clear record of how much money they will save in a year. We have also given them hints and tips on how to save water, and shown them the free water saving devices they can get from Cambridge Water.



The residents said:

“It was a bit of a surprise when we saw what we were paying compared to before. A nice surprise.”

You can apply to Cambridge Water to have a water meter if:

- * you pay the water bills and live in your own home or a rented home
- * you pay for water based on the rateable value of your property or assessed rates
- * you live in a house or a flat

You can opt to switch back to paying water rates if you are not saving money on a water meter, as long as you inform Cambridge Water within 1 year of the meter being installed.

You should save money on a water meter if there are 1 or 2 people in the household and you may save money if there are 3 - especially if you are careful with how much water you use.

Once you have a water meter, you may be eligible for special tariffs from Cambridge Water if you have certain medical conditions or you are on particular benefits.

Contact Cambridge Water on 01223-706050 to switch to a water meter. Or if you would like our help, please contact Philippa or Elizabeth on 01223-457676 or email us at philippa.hughes@cambridge.gov.uk or elizabeth.bruce@cambridge.gov.uk

For more information go to:

<http://www.cambridge-water.co.uk/customers/water-in-the-home>

<https://www.cambridge.gov.uk/reducing-water-use>

<http://www.waterwise.org.uk/pages/how-to-save-water.html>