



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 household who we helped live in The Rodings. Do read below to learn a little about them, how the meter was installed and how much they are now saving.

Address: The Rodings
Property: 3 bedroom house
Number in household: 2 adults



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.

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.

Properties built before 1990 will not necessarily have water meters fitted. But it is free to have one fitted (in most situations) and they can be put into all types of properties. The residents in The Rodings had been thinking of getting a water meter as their children have now left home - so they thought they would probably save money. They hadn't gone ahead already partly because they thought they would be charged to have one installed.

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 looked at the options for fitting the water meter inside the house and agreed with the residents that the best place would be just outside the kitchen window. The plumber checked with Cambridge Water that this was acceptable and would still be free, and then returned a few weeks later to install the meter under a small black cover (see photo). It is possible to open this cover and read the meter, but Cambridge Water do visit every 6 months and read it from in front of the house (using wireless technology), so the residents do not need to do this themselves.



Although in this case the meter was put outside, most water meters are installed inside - often under or near the kitchen sink or in a downstairs cloakroom.

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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 taken a reading to make the adjustments.

Based on how much water the residents have used in the first nine months, we have estimated that they will save about £190 per year. This has included the summer months when they water hanging baskets and tubs in the garden.

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.



Photo of a meter installed under a kitchen sink in another property

The residents said:

“A very painless experience, just came home and it was fitted. Now happy we are only paying for our own water usage and nearly halving our costs already.”

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

- * you pay the water bills
- * you live in your own home or a rented home (with the landlord’s permission)
- * you pay for water based on either 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>