

# Forward thinking

*With consumers increasing demands for eco-friendly options, it is vital that merchants offer sustainable water softeners, according to Kevin Johnson, Managing Director of Monarch Water, and Technical Director of the UK Water Treatment Association.*

**S**ustainability is an important issue for today's consumers who are on the look-out for more energy and water efficient household appliances. Of course, many consumers are concerned about the planet and the negative impact that wasting its precious resources has on our environment, but the cost savings associated with greater efficiencies are driving demand.

Wasting water has long been an area of concern in the UK, so much so that the Government has ranked its conservation high on its list of priorities.

In fact, it has plans to reduce individuals' water use from 140 litres per person, per day to 100 litres by 2045 and just 50 litres in 50 years' time.

With even greater focus on water efficiency, consumers will be opting for products that will not only reduce their water and energy consumption, but cost them less to run too. This means that members of the heating, ventilation and plumbing industry will be looking to merchants to stock products that meet consumers' environmental expectations.

As the first port of call for many installers, builders' merchants are expected to be able to tell them which units are the most sustainable option for their customers. Therefore, it is essential that merchants know exactly which water softeners are the most sustainable and why.

The average family living in a hard water area produces around 70kg of limescale a year, resulting in pipes and heating elements in boilers, kettles, dishwashers, showers and washing machines caked in scale.

According to British Water, just 1.6mm of limescale on a heating element reduces its efficiency by up to 12%, which can lead to increased likelihood of breakdowns, decrease longevity of equipment and cost more to run.

Merchants should be tapping into the sustainable trend and spreading the word about the latest water softening options available.

those who had adopted a more frugal attitude to water were driven by the financial benefits and environmental considerations and were likely to have already taken steps to reduce their consumption.

The industry has taken note and innovations in technology have brought more efficient and sustainable water softeners to the market. The next generation of high efficiency water softeners not only use less water than equivalent existing models, but less energy too. In fact, the very latest models on the market use 24% less water and 12% less salt than their counterparts.

Consumers are now able to protect their homes and appliances from the negative effects of limescale while conserving more water and energy than previously. This not only benefits the environment, but consumers' bank balances too.



## Soft sell

Offering the very latest in water softening technology presents merchants with a great potential upselling opportunity while also giving installers the chance to increase their own customers' spend.

In order for merchants to secure sales, it is essential that they are armed with the knowledge to help installers sell to their customers.

Installing the latest generation of water softener will not only protect end users' homes from the ravages of limescale build-up 24 hours a day, 365 days of the year, but it will remove any that has already accumulated. This will improve appliances' efficiency, increase their lifespan and save money on running costs.

Merchants highlighting these key points will help installers sell the idea to their customers whatever project they are undertaking. Water softeners should be seen as an insurance policy to protect end users' homes with quick payback times.

To put it into perspective a units running costs simply equate to the price of salt blocks or tablets, which is around £8-10 per person, per year, with electric units costing just a few pounds a year. With the savings that these units offer, the running costs are negligible.

With the industry taking note and focussing their efforts on more sustainable options, merchants have greater potential to upsell water softeners.

By stocking sustainable water softeners and arming installers with selling tips, merchants can profit from eco-conscious consumers. ■

Sharing information and selling tips about the issues limescale causes and the sustainable solutions available will not only provide installers with a comprehensive service, but will increase sales too.

Whether installers are fixing a toilet, installing a bathroom or fitting a tap, there is always an opportunity for them to discuss the problems limescale causes with their customers and how water softeners can help.

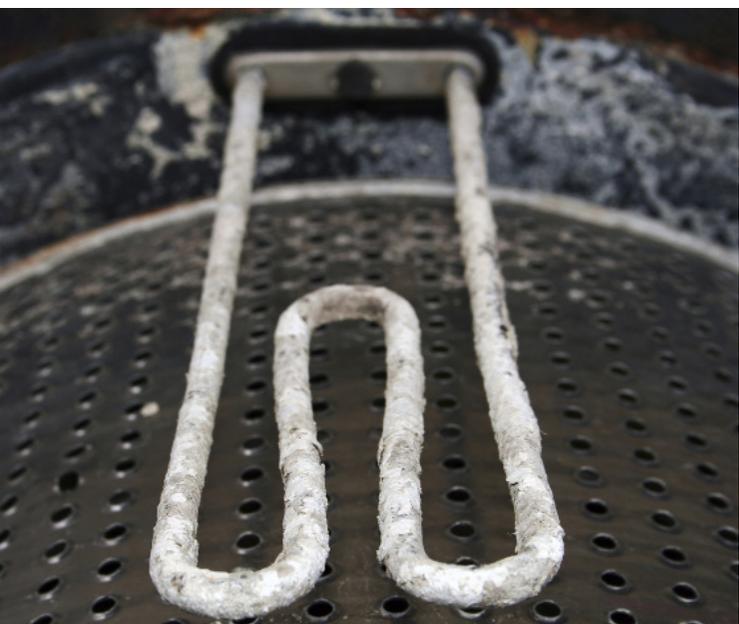
## Collective conscience

The Consumer Council for Water claims people's attitudes to using water wisely has changed over the last three years with 66% of English and Welsh adults having made a conscious decision to use less water compared to 53% in 2015.

It is therefore important that merchants stock the very latest technology so installers can bring their customers the most up-to-date sustainable water softeners.

"Industry must innovate and change behaviours in order to reduce demand and cut down on wastage," said Emma Howard Boyd, Chair of the Environment Agency. "We all have a duty to use water more wisely at home."

The consumer watchdog concluded that



## Hidden horrors

Limescale is a big issue in the UK with 60% of homes situated in hard water areas, where scale build up is evident around the home. However, it is the hidden scale that is lurking inside pipes, boilers and household appliances that causes the serious issues.