

WATER EFFICIENCY - PEOPLE AND COMMUNITIES

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1. INTRODUCTION

How and why people use water in their everyday lives is central to the challenge of improving efficiency and reducing consumption. Approaches to water efficiency have evolved in recent years to recognise that water use is shaped by technology, infrastructure, culture and the environment, and that these factors underpin individual choices and habits about water using behaviours. Interventions to change how much water people use and waste include education of individuals, households and school children, water metering and pricing, provision of water saving technologies, social marketing and changing social norms, highlighting environmental impacts of water use, and community scale engagement campaigns. Research and practice in engaging with people and communities in water efficiency are constrained by a lack of data and evidence to evaluate impacts and identify factors for success, and inconsistency in theoretical approaches that underpin interventions and strategies. Debates amongst academics and practitioners about the validity of conceptual models that focus on individual behaviour change compared to those that emphasise wider social and cultural change have enabled a richer understanding about how people use water and how to achieve change, but have contributed to confusion and inconsistency in approaches.

The People and Communities technical committee was formed to address these challenges. It brings together academics and practitioners from different sectors and disciplines to provide evidence and develop strategies for addressing social, behaviour and cultural elements of water efficiency. This note provides an update of activities since the committee was formed in February 2015, and plans for future work.

2. ACTIVITIES IN 2015

The People and Communities technical committee is the most recent addition to the work of the WATEF network, with the first meeting held at UCL in London on 16 February 2015. The network members include water efficiency practitioners and educators, engineering consultants, housing providers, designers and academics.

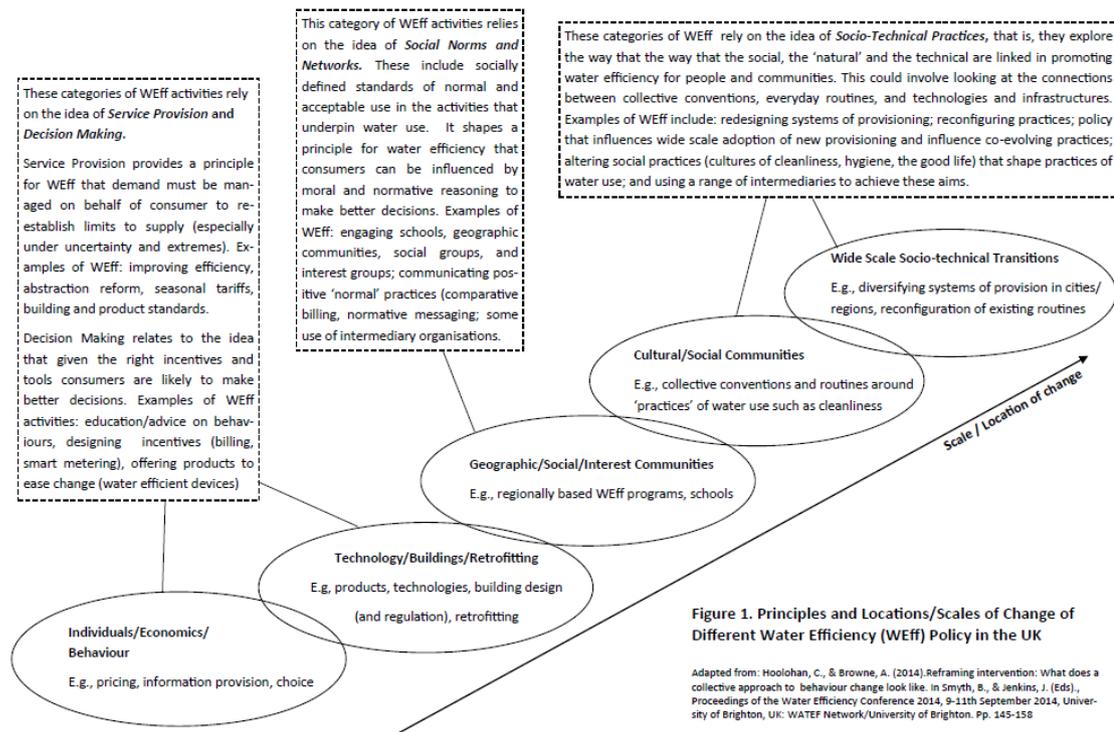
2.1 Scope of Activity: The focus of the committee for its first year is on clarifying different approaches to the role of people and communities in achieving water efficiency, and developing case studies of best practice.

2.2 Technical Committee Meetings: The inaugural meeting of the committee confirmed its scope and membership. A subsequent meeting on 23 April discussed a conceptual framework developed by Alison Browne and Claire Hoolohan at the University of Manchester to clarify how different approaches to human and social issues at different scales of water efficiency, from individual behavior to large scale socio-technical change (figure 1). Committee members agreed a template for case studies of water efficiency at different scales, with the framework providing a means to categorise and analyse different

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approaches. The minutes of both meetings are available on the WATEF website <http://www.watefnetwork.co.uk/67-333>.



3. FUTURE WORK

The key objective for the People and Communities Technical Committee for the remainder of the year is to gather case studies of water efficiency to demonstrate the different approaches identified in the conceptual framework. This will draw on existing resources of water efficiency case studies and programmes, including water company, DEFRA, BRE and other programmes. However, the intention of the committee is to extend understanding of water efficiency beyond water companies and buildings, to incorporate a wider range of actors and approaches. Case studies under development include work undertaken by a housing association and addressing diverse communities including travelers and faith communities in London.