

Time to enter your organisation for the 2009 Water Efficiency Awards

The Informed Executive is determined that, in view of the serious concerns expressed opposite about indifferent promotion of the scheme, every organisation in the UK which can make a meaningful contribution to water efficiency knows about the 2009 Water Efficiency Awards and how to apply. There are good ideas being put into practice right across the UK: it is important that these are entered in the 2009 round, which closes on 31 October 2008.



Previous entrants to the Water Efficiency Awards probably found the competition a bit of a chore filling in a detailed box-checking application form that never quite captured the essence of what a project is all about. Or that the exciting water saving measure taken by a

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small company in the West Midlands did not quite fit into one of the categories being defined. It is amazing that there were as many as 100 entrants prepared to jump that bureaucratic hurdle in 2007.

With a growing awareness of all matters environmental has come a more open platform for competition with the 2009 Awards.

There are three new categories this time round, which provide sufficient scope for the most off-the-wall – but practical – water saving measures to find a category and enter the competition.

There is no information corset into which the details of an entry have to be squeezed: what the Agency is looking for this time is a narrative explanation of what those taking part believe is worthy of public recognition.

There is a 1,000 word limit, however, which should cut down on the number of would-be PhD theses being submitted. To qualify for consideration, projects must be operational or have been operational in the period April 2006 to May 2008.

Competition categories

The three broad headings into which entries will be divided are Water Shout, Water Save and Water Solve

Water Shout

Water Shout says it all in two words. It embraces successful campaigns that have been mounted to get the water saving and efficiency message out to a target audience, however narrowly that may be defined.

The Environment Agency explained it more pedantically: it is for "...celebrating great campaigns that change the way people use water. Judges will be looking for a well planned and structured campaign, together with evidence of how much attitudes or behaviours of the target audience have changed as a result of the project."

A case of hiding lights under bushels?

The entrants here are likely to be commercial and public sector organisations which have consciously promoted the case for using less water, or using water more efficiently. How did they get their message over to their 'constituency'?

Judges will be keen to establish whether it was the campaign that led directly to the improvement, rather than a change in the weather, for example, which saw water consumption fall.

Typical entrants would be a school that has used poster campaigns to cut water consumption by 20% over two years on its site. Or a regional water company that has mailed and emailed its customer base about the benefits of selecting water-efficient appliances and checking for leaks in garden hoses.

Water Save

Water Save is intended to recognise practical measures that save water and money. According to the organisers, judges will be looking for evidence – such as meter readings - of the amount of water used both before and after the implementation of the project. It does not finish there as entrants will have to provide "... clear information on the process used and how the project was communicated and delivered within the organisation."

Entrants quoting improved water efficiency will be assessed on their merits rather than on a 'greatest efficiency wins' basis. Rob Wescott, the Water Resources Policy Manager for Demand Management at the Environment Agency, explained that the meaning of the term varied between sectors – agriculture and pharmaceuticals, for example, making any direct comparison impracticable.

Water Solve

The third category, Water Solve, is all about supporting smart solutions for sustainable water use. The volume of water saved is not

The Water Efficiency Awards are an outstanding idea. Everyone who matters in the industry agrees with that. So why does the Environment Agency make it so difficult to find out about the Awards and how to enter?

It would be difficult to describe the Environment Agency as a bundle of fun, if its current web site is any indication. A quick glance at the home page reveals a string of warnings and the dire consequences of not heeding them – like the prospect of £2,500 fines for not having a fishing rod licence. Further down the page we find Regulation Environmental Principles that the Agency is introducing for radioactive substance users.

Go a little bit deeper into the site, and read how, for the second year running, UK business has been 100 per cent compliant with the EU Emissions Trading Scheme. It is the kind of notice board that any collective farm manager in Soviet Russia would have welcomed with open arms.

The 2009 Awards

So where do we go to look for the Water Efficiency Awards 2009, the next biennial competition to encourage better use of water in the UK? Searching brings up historical references to previous awards, but you have to go to the Press notices – probably the ultimate source of Government Speak – to discover anything of interest about the 2009 round which closes on 31 October 2008.

The low profile is quite unfortunate because the Awards have been welcomed by Environment Minister Phil Woolas MP and Elliot Morley MP, the Chairman of the All Party Parliamentary Water Group; both of whom see them as making a positive contribution to lowering water usage and increasing efficiency.

To be fair to the Environment Agency, there is a dedicated page buried deep on its site which explains in reasonable detail what the Awards cover and how to apply – it involves emailing for an entry form. We provide that link overleaf.

Not giving public money away

The minimal exposure for the 2009 Awards would be understandable if the Agency had to give money away as the prize, but there is no cash incentive on offer here. True, the Agency has to spend time evaluating the entries it will receive – assuming that any business hears about the Awards in time to apply – and then commissioning case studies on the winners in each of the three categories. But there is no £30,000 Man Booker prize or the like to be distributed out of the public coffers.

entering the competition

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the issue here, as the judges are looking to see how the project – it can still be in the research phase – came about and has been put into practice.

We asked Rob Wescott to help organisations decide which category would be the more appropriate if they saw an overlap between the last two. “Water Save is about the amount of water consumption that a project can cut and would be of interest to any organisation that can demonstrate the savings achieved. Water Solve is really about innovation and the ability to roll it out into other applications.”

Water Solve is not, unfortunately, a competition for companies which have designed a new technology for which an Environment Agency accolade would boost their chances in the marketplace – a kind of Queen’s Award for Water Saving.

Cannot endorse a solution

Being funded by the Government, the Agency is not permitted to endorse a company’s product or solution. It would follow that an organisation taking advantage of such an offering would be the one to enter the competition, and cite the technology it had employed.

If that competitor were to win one of the three awards in its category, the case study which would then be written would be allowed to quote the technology that had been used, and hence its developer would receive favourable coverage that could be exploited.

The Environment Agency started the scheme off ten years ago. It is, as the organisation states, “... aimed to increase awareness about water efficiency and offered a platform to share good practice and demonstrate that water-saving measures could be cost effective.”

Why you should enter your organisation for the 2009 Water Efficiency Awards

The reasons should be obvious, but we have decided to quote directly from the elusive Awards page on the web site:

- Case studies of the winning entries will be posted on our website and used in leaflets and presentations to show examples of best practice for others to follow.
- Winning entries will receive an electronic certificate for use on their web site and in presentations to potential customers
- Winners will receive an Award trophy to display on their business premises

Previous winners have told the Environment Agency that the Awards helped to boost their environmental credentials, promote their business, secure their position with existing customers and attract new ones and further raise the profile of water conservation among their staff and others in their industry.

Does your organisation stand a chance in winning the 2009 Award?

The overall winner of the Water Efficiency Awards 2007 was The Malvern Hotel and The Blues Grill, in Kent. The organisation managed to reduce its water use by 46%, or around 320 cubic metres per year, simply by raising awareness of the need to save water with guests. Apart from winning the award, this family-run hotel achieved annual savings of £840.

The winner of the 2007 Business & industry category was Pitstop, a drive-through hand car wash and valeting centre in Swansea. As water is 85 per cent of Pitstop’s consumable costs their project included resolving the disposal of foul water, saving money on water bills and making the business more efficient and profitable. Since the company installed a closed loop water recycling system its use of mains water has fallen by 60 per cent. Annual savings on both water and electricity bills means the system will have paid for itself in less than four years.

Words into action . . .

The link for specific information is:
www.environment-agency.gov.uk/subjects/waterres/287169/2011066/?version=1&lang=_e

You can also contact us by email to request more information, register interest and request an application form: savewater@environment-agency.gov.uk

Or contact Paula Wood on 01903 832073 to request an application form.