

WATER MANAGEMENT

Whether for a hotel or boarding school, a continuous supply of water for washing and showering is regarded as essential today. At Wellington College in Berkshire, the school's boarders expect good showers 'on tap' at all times.

"Everyone wants a power shower - no-one wants just a trickle of water," observes Gerald Burbidge, the works bursar. However, maintaining an adequate flow rate can be a challenge - and water is a costly resource. Getting the water supply right was one of the issues facing him when he took control of the works management department at this exclusive educational establishment.



The obvious solution was to install a new, higher capacity system to guarantee water flow at the required rate. However, this would have been extremely expensive and - equally important - disruptive to the teaching environment. New pipework, larger water storage tanks, plus pumps and other equipment would all have to be put in place while teaching was taking place.

Wellington College has a sports club on site which is open to members of the local community. The bursar found that the club had faced a similar problem but had solved it with the installation of an innovative type of showerhead. This had reduced water consumption and cut bills.

The principle behind the Elless showerhead is to aerate the water droplets within the showerhead itself. It is only the surface of the drops that performs the wetting and cleansing action: in a real sense the 'interior' is wasted. The Elless process replaces that 'wasted water' at the centre of the droplets with air. The result is that the shower experience feels the same and the cleaning process is just as effective - but the amount of water necessary is dramatically reduced.

While this worked at the smaller sports club, Burbidge wanted to be sure that this would provide the answer before committing the whole school to it. So TL Aquarius, supplier of the Elless showers, fitted several trial units. "There was a surprising difference - water flow rates were virtually half that of the previous conventional showers," says Burbidge. "By the end of a six month trial period, we had received no complaints from the users."

The savings are not purely in terms of water costs. Hot water requires energy for heating and this is reduced in proportion. In addition, the showers are very low maintenance and are resistant to 'liming' or 'scaling',

How to keep schoolboys clean, without soaring water bills!

School students are not the most water-conscious of people. So ensuring the water bills do not soar is a challenge for residential schools and colleges. One has found an answer.

Wellington College was opened in 1859 as a national memorial to the Iron Duke and rapidly developed a reputation as a leading boarding school. It stands in a 400-acre woodland estate in Crowthorne, Berkshire, and provides a varied curriculum for its 800 students, over 90 per cent of whom go on to take degree courses.

Water use had risen over recent years and the existing infrastructure was reaching its limits. "We were facing a situation of water starvation," recalls Burbidge. "Demand was beginning to exceed supply, with water being drawn off at a faster rate than it could be replenished. The situation was being noticed by the students and staff too. The works department was beginning to receive complaints about water pressure," he adds.

reducing the need for maintenance. The company has now installed 140 of the units. The projected savings, assuming every student takes an eight-minute shower every day, come to over £20,000. On top of this, of course, the large capital outlay required for the larger, pumped system was avoided completely.

"Efficiency is not part of the adolescent male culture, especially when it comes to water," observes Burbidge wryly. "Showers have to happen on demand and costs are not a factor for them. We've been able to find a solution that gives them the benefits of good quality showers without the disruption a totally new installation would have involved - and it is one that has helped us make significant savings on our water and energy bills." ■

FURTHER INFORMATION

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