

Data centres putting strain on water supplies

18th August 2025



The National Drought Group (NDG), an environmental organization in the UK, has warned that data centres are putting a strain on the country's water supplies. This is also a concern in many other countries. The group did not indicate to what

degree these facilities are contributing to drought conditions in many parts of the UK. It is estimated that the centres use up to 10 billion litres of water per year to cool their giant facilities. One water company reported that a large data centre can use as much water as 50,000 households. Despite concerns from environmentalists, the UK is pushing ahead to build many more data centres. Deputy Prime Minister Angela Rayner said they were essential for economic growth.

The NDG has urged Britons to take measures to cut back on their water consumption. One such measure is to trash unwanted emails and large images. The group claims this will lessen the demand for water. A government website suggested deleting old emails and pictures "as data centres require vast amounts of water to cool their systems". NDG chairperson Helen Wakeham said a simple everyday action such as tidying up one's inbox and spam and trash folders will "really help the collective effort to reduce demand and help preserve the health of our rivers and wildlife". However, it is likely that the water saved from people deleting files stored in the cloud is merely a drop in the ocean.

Sources: theverge.com / gov.uk / bbc.com

Writing

There should be a limit on how long emails can be stored. Discuss.

Chat

Talk about these words from the article.

drought / environmental / data centres / water supplies / water company / growth / measures / water consumption / unwanted emails / inbox / rivers / wildlife / ocean

True / False

- 1) A U.K. group that studies draughts warned of a strain on water supplies. T / F
- 2) Every data centre uses about 10 billion litres of water a year. T / F
- 3) The UK has shelved plans to build more data centres. T / F
- 4) The UK prime minister said the data centres were essential for growth. T / F
- 5) An environmental group suggested people delete mails to save water. T / F
- 6) Data centres need a huge amount of water to keep their windows clean. T / F
- 7) The environmental group said deleting mails could help wildlife. T / F
- 8) The group said deleting mails will be a huge help to save water. T / F

Synonym Match

(The words in **bold** are from the news article.)

- | | |
|--------------------------------|------------------|
| 1. strain | a. actions |
| 2. facilities | b. collaborative |
| 3. cool | c. worries |
| 4. concerns | d. enormous |
| 5. essential | e. chill |
| 6. measures | f. crucial |
| 7. lessen | g. burden |
| 8. vast | h. trivial |
| 9. collective | i. reduce |
| 10. a drop in the ocean | j. centres |

Discussion – Student A

- a) What do you think about what you read?
- b) How bad are data centres for the environment?
- c) What can we do to reduce the amount of data we have in the cloud?
- d) How important is online storage to you?
- e) How important is AI to you?
- f) Would you pay a water fee to help cool data centres?
- g) Should we all greatly reduce the amount of stuff we store online?
- h) What questions would you like to ask a data centre owner?

Phrase Match

1. The group did not indicate to what
 2. 10 billion litres of water per year to
 3. use as much water as
 4. the UK is pushing ahead to
 5. they were essential
 6. The NDG has urged Britons to take
 7. The group claims this will lessen
 8. data centres require vast
 9. help preserve the
 10. merely a drop
- a. amounts of water
 - b. build many more
 - c. the demand for water
 - d. measures to cut back
 - e. 50,000 households
 - f. in the ocean
 - g. degree
 - h. for economic growth
 - i. cool their giant facilities
 - j. health of our rivers

Discussion – Student B

- a) What do you know about data centres?
- b) How important are data centres?
- c) What effect will AI have on data centres?
- d) How should data centres be more responsible with water usage?
- e) What would you do if your area experienced a drought?
- f) Should data centres be required to pay more for water?
- g) How essential are data centers for growth?
- h) What will our data needs be like in 20 years from now?

Spelling

1. a astnir on the country's water supplies
2. indicate to what edreeg
3. these cfsatiilie are contributing to drought
4. use as much water as 50,000 eouslhhdso
5. pdyetu prime minister
6. they were eelsnasti for economic growth
7. cut back on their water pcunonitms
8. One such uemear is to trash unwanted emails
9. require avts amounts of water
10. help the eoelctlcvi effort
11. preevres the health of our rivers and wildlife
12. eeylrm a drop in the ocean

Answers – Synonym Match

1. g	2. j	3. e	4. c	5. f
6. a	7. i	8. d	9. b	10. h

Comprehension Questions

Listen to / read the news article. Answer these questions.
(Answers are on p. 27 of the 27-page PDF.)

1.	What is the name of the environmental group mentioned in the article?
2.	Where else are data centres putting a strain on water supplies?
3.	How much water might a large data centre use in a year?
4.	What is the UK pushing ahead with?
5.	Why did the UK's deputy prime minister say data centres were needed?
6.	What does the NDG want people to cut back on?
7.	Why do data centres need enormous amounts of water?
8.	What position does Helen Wakeham hold in the NDG?
9.	What might deleting emails help to preserve?
10.	What did the article suggest deleting files in the cloud might be?

Speaking – Data Storage

Rank these with your partner. Put the most important things to store online at the top. Change partners often and share your rankings.

- Emails
- Photos
- Social media data
- Documents
- Backups
- Music
- Movies
- Blogs

Answers – True False

1	T	2	F	3	F	4	F	5	T	6	F	7	T	8	F
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Answers to Phrase Match and Spelling are in the text.