

Council pulls plug on office water coolers



Sri Carmichael, Evening Standard

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It could spell the end for the water cooler moment.

Although coolers have become a traditional place for office workers to exchange the latest gossip, a London council has deemed them - and bottled water - environmentally unfriendly and is insisting that staff switch to the tap variety instead.

Islington council believes it will save more than £8,000 a year on bottled water and thousands more on coolers after it agreed to stop paying for them.

The council, which says the move will reduce its carbon footprint, is now calling on the Greater London Authority and other London boroughs to follow suit.

The ban was approved this week after being proposed by Liberal Democrat council leader James Kempton.

He said: "What sense does it make to have water shipped around the world to use in bottles when we can just turn on the tap?"

"London's tap water is good, so to me bottled water is a mystery. It's also a matter of the environmental damage caused by the transportation of bottled water, not to mention the production and disposal of the bottles.

"I'm proud that Islington is the greenest place in London and I'm calling on other councils and the Mayor to ensure that bottled water is not used in public buildings in the city." Water coolers have been criticised for the energy required to run them and the delivery of refills by road.

Mr Kempton hopes that restaurants and businesses will consider providing only tap water for diners and staff.

Westminster council also plans to get rid of water coolers by replacing them with chilled tap water at its Victoria headquarters within the next year.

Camden council is replacing water cooler in all its buildings with mains water filters.

A Kensington and Chelsea spokesman said: "The council has provided mains drinking water facilities for nearly all staff for many years. Only the water dispensed is cooled and the plastic cups provided are fully recyclable."

Jenny Bates of Friends of the Earth welcomed the moves, saying: "Transporting bottled water across the world increases carbon emissions and is also a staggering waste of resources."

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