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Data centres putting strain on water supplies – 18th August 2025

Level 4

The UK's National Drought Group has said data centres are causing water shortages. The group did not say to what degree these facilities are causing drought conditions. Data centres in the UK use up to 10 billion litres of water per year to cool their facilities. A large centre can use as much water as 50,000 houses. Despite environmental concerns, the UK is building more centres. The UK said the centres would drive economic growth.

The NDG asked people to cut back on water usage. People should delete unwanted emails. This could cut the demand for the huge amounts of water data centres need to cool their systems. The NDG said deleting email could "really help the collective effort to reduce demand and help preserve the health of our rivers and wildlife". However, experts say the water saved from deleting emails is a drop in the ocean and may not help with water shortages.

Level 5

The National Drought Group (NDG) in the UK has warned that data centres are putting a strain on the water supply. This is also a worry in many countries. The group did not say to what degree these facilities are causing drought conditions in parts of the UK. The centres use up to 10 billion litres of water per year to cool their facilities. One water company said a large data centre can use as much water as 50,000 households. Despite environmental concerns, the UK is pushing ahead to build many more data centres. The UK said the centres were essential for economic growth.

The NDG has asked people to cut back on the water they use. One measure is to delete unwanted emails and large images. This could cut the demand for water as data centres require huge amounts of water to cool their systems. The NDG chairperson said a simple everyday action such as deleting email will "really help the collective effort to reduce demand and help preserve the health of our rivers and wildlife". However, experts say the water saved from deleting files stored in the cloud is merely a drop in the ocean and may not help with water shortages.

Level 6

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.