

Self-sufficient? The water figures they didn't share



Xlinks tells residents Data Centre would be “self-sufficient” in water, recirculating it to absorb heat and topping up mainly from rainwater. Its own briefing to the council tells a fuller story, and it lands at the worst possible moment.

- Southwest Water introduced a hosepipe ban across the whole region, including North Devon, from 8 August 2026, with reservoir storage down to around 69 per cent and falling.
- In an extreme dry year, (P1 scenario) the developer's own briefing states annual water consumption across **the full campus could reach approximately 2.9 billion litres.**
- Nationally, existing UK data centres already consume at least **10 billion litres** of water a year, according to a 2025 investigation by Foxglove and The Times based on water company data. Data centres are not required to report their own water use, so this figure is likely an underestimate.
- This one campus's own worst-case figure, 2.9 billion litres, would be close to a third of that entire existing national total, on its own.
- The developer's briefing also confirms “**all wastewater discharge will be treated to Environment Agency permit standards.**” **A permitted discharge is still a discharge, despite the FAQ's claim of no discharge into any waterway.**
- Data centres are classed as Critical National Infrastructure, **a status that can limit a water company's powers to restrict supply to homes during a drought.**
- **They told us they like this area and describe it as a “goldilocks” area, this centre does sound like a fairy tale.**

Key point: In the middle of a live drought, with a hosepipe ban across Devon and Cornwall, this one campus's own worst-case water figure would add up to nearly a third of everything the UK's existing data centres already use in a year.

Sources: Arthian Ltd, “Valeon Data Centre Campus, Update for Torridge” (Doc Ref 319327-REP-LPA-001, 13 April 2026), sections 4.2 and 8.3. Xlinks FAQ, devondatacampus.com/faqs. Environment Agency drought declaration, 29 July 2026. Southwest Water hosepipe ban, 8 August 2026. Foxglove/The Times data centre water investigation, 2025.

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