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TESTS PROVE CUSTOMERS PREFER TAP WATER TO BOTTLED

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Nearly 3,000 Sutton and East Surrey Water customers took part in 'blind' water taste tests this summer, which revealed that most could not tell the difference between bottled water and their tap water and that most consider their tap water to be as good as, if not better than, expensive bottled waters.

The water tastings were held at fairs, shows and carnivals throughout the supply area. Customers were asked to taste three unlabelled waters: Evian, Volvic and the local tap water; to identify the tap water and to then indicate which one they preferred (still not knowing which was which).

Of the 2,735 people who took the test, 44 per cent correctly identified the tap water while 29 per cent thought the Evian sample and 25 per cent thought the Volvic sample were from the tap. Two per cent were 'don't knows'.

When it came to expressing a preference, 38 per cent chose the tap water as their preferred taste, while 33 per cent choose Volvic and 27 per cent the Evian. Two per cent had no preference.

Phil Holder, Sutton and East Surrey Water's Managing Director, said: "*We really put our customers' taste buds to the test. Each water sample was presented to the customer in exactly the same way, and all were the same temperature. The only differences that would have been apparent to the interviewee would have been differences in taste.*"

"These results agree with our previous water-tastings, and show that tap water tastes as good as, if not better than, any mineral water. The big difference is tap water is about 1,000 times cheaper."

But not all customers used their taste buds! Catharine Fortlage and Elizabeth Phillips, of the Surrey Dowsers Association, used their dowsing skills to identify which water was the best to drink when they visited the company's water tasting marquee at the Carshalton Environment Fair. They identified the local tap water as the best drinking water on two separate occasions.

Catharine Fortlage, who lives in Croydon, said: *"Given the choice, we would drink the tap water instead of the other two. By using our crystals, which identify the water's healing qualities, we can say that the water in this area is good for your well-being."*

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