

Every year at Historic Thermal Towns we celebrate the United Nations World Water Day on 22nd March. It's a time when our water sources, at the centre of each of our thermal spa towns and thermal regions are celebrated and promoted with talks, tours, concerts and events.

While we celebrate our thermal water springs it is difficult not to be reminded millions of people do not have good access to clean stable water sources, for drinking, sanitation, food production and industrial processes. We are also mindful of the thousands of people in the Ukraine and other areas affected by war and conflict that cannot access clean water.

The United Nation's theme for World Water Day this year is "Groundwater, making the invisible visible". Almost all of the liquid fresh water in the world is groundwater. It is everywhere but in many places it is overexploited, leading to ground shrinkage, and water shortage and insecurity for local communities.

One of the many industries that uses huge amounts of water is of course the leisure and spa industry – swimming pools, baths and showers, using precious resources, with the added problem of being treated with chemicals that then pollute the waste water that's left over.

In our historic thermal towns, many of our thermal waters come from sources that flow, bubble and gush freely to the surface, with waters that have travelled for thousands of years, picking up their healing minerals and salts on the way. These waters, which are also often heated naturally to quite high temperatures have given our thermal towns a sustainable natural resource, needing no input of energy to heat it and keeping away from groundwater that's needed for other uses.

However we can't be complacent, and we need to keep discussing the sustainable use of thermal water resources and thermal energy from our water sources so that we innovate to ensure that our thermal towns and regions are attractive sustainable destinations.

On World Water Day this year I would like to remind everyone in our Historic Thermal Towns to celebrate our unique and health-giving waters, and to marvel at the buildings that give our water sources such

magnificent settings for bathing and drinking the waters. We should also be grateful for the scientists and doctors that also work behind the scenes to find out how to use waters to help us to be well, and to recover from all sorts of diseases, especially the ones that we have come to know very well during the pandemic.

From Ourense, from the Province of Ourense in Galicia, Spain, a town, province and region which is blessed with hundreds of thermal water sources, I send you thermal greetings and hope that you find a way to celebrate your thermal water sources on World Water Day 2022.