

Drinking Water Inspectorate Response to the Consultation on the draft Water Resources Planning Guideline (Version 1, November 2015)

1. Introduction

The Drinking Water Inspectorate (DWI) is the independent regulator of drinking water quality in England and Wales. We protect public health and maintain confidence in public water supplies by ensuring water companies supply safe clean drinking water that is wholesome, and that they meet all related statutory requirements. Where standards or other requirements are not met, we have statutory powers to require water supply arrangements to be improved.

We publish information about drinking water quality and provide technical advice to the Secretary of State for the Environment, Food & Rural Affairs, and to Welsh Ministers.

2. Background

DWI does not have a direct role in the development or appraisal of Water Resource Management Plans (WRMP), but at the request of individual companies we have had informal discussions about drinking water quality matters arising during development of previous Plans, and we would be happy to continue that dialogue.

The considerations for drinking water quality within Water Resource Planning are generally well exposed and understood, and the importance of public health protection, wholesomeness and public confidence in drinking water quality remain central to the legitimacy of every company's WRMP.

3. Comments on the draft Guideline

We have comments relating to 2 sections of the guidance document:

Section 2.1

- i. We would welcome inclusion of the Drinking Water Directive in the list of legal requirements to take account of.
- ii. Additionally, a reference to section 68 of the Water Industry Act 1991 (the Act) would be appropriate.

Under section 68(1)(a) a water company has a statutory duty to supply wholesome water. Wholesomeness requirements are set out in the Water Supply (Water Quality) Regulations 2000 (in England) and the Water Supply (Water Quality) Regulations 2001 (in Wales), and associated amendments.

In addition, section 68(1)(b) of the Act also places the following statutory duty on a company that may have implications for how it develops its WRMP:

It shall be the duty of a water undertaker.....

so far as reasonably practicable, to ensure, in relation to each source or combination of sources from which water is so supplied, that there is, in general, no deterioration in the quality of the water which is supplied from time to time from that source or combination of sources.

These duties may have an impact on the WRMP development process both for transfers of water within a company's supply area, and for exports and imports across a company's boundary, and we would welcome recognition of these requirements in the Guideline. Our current advice to companies, that also sets out the context within which decisions might be made on issues like this, is contained in the following sources:

- Information Letter 1/2014 on Metaldehyde and other pesticides
<http://dwi.defra.gov.uk/stakeholders/information-letters/2014/01-2014.pdf>
- DWI PR14 Guidance - Water Resource Planning here:
<http://dwi.defra.gov.uk/stakeholders/price-review-process/PR14-guidance-wrmp.pdf>
- Information Letter 1/2012 on Regulation 15 Compliance Arrangements here:
<http://dwi.defra.gov.uk/stakeholders/information-letters/2012/06-2012.pdf>

Section 6.5

Regarding the assessment of feasible options when deciding on future options, we would welcome a requirement for the specific assessment of the management of the drinking water or raw water quality of the option being considered.

This should include the whole life costs of treatment, pumping, storage, networks, maintenance and operation. Routine operational matters to be considered should include:

- o control measures necessary to mitigate the impact of the option on optimisation of phosphoric acid dosing, pH and colour for plumbosolvency control;
- o fluoridation practices;
- o other chemical stabilisation processes;
- o aesthetic impacts on consumers, and
- o control of disinfection by-products

Transfers of water, or commissioning of new sources, that increase the risk of non-compliance, such as by discolouration, nitrates or pesticides, should not be permitted until steps to mitigate those risks are in place.

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