

Lead in Drinking Water – DWQR Project Update

The Drinking Water Quality Regulator for Scotland (DWQR) has established a project to develop a policy and strategy for the reduction of exposure to lead in drinking water. The project looks to identify enablers and strengthen or introduce mechanisms with a range of stakeholders and influencers for the removal of lead service pipes and plumbing.

Progress against the specific aims of the project

Confirmation has been provided by the Minister for Environment, Climate Change & Land Reform, in January 2015, of the need to review lead policy in Scotland and of support for the direction and aims of the project.

Engage with health officials to identify common themes and to align drinking water quality policy with health policy

- Work has been undertaken to align health messages between Scottish Government Health and Scottish Water's information media and formal letters.
- Websites have been surveyed with the aim of progressing towards providing clear links and search results for information.

Work with stakeholders to identify areas where policy can be aligned to ensure the risk of exposure to lead in the environment is minimised

- Support has been assured from both Historic Scotland and Scottish Government Estates for the provision of information and positive encouragement to remove lead from the drinking water supply route to their properties
- Facility has been provided within the recently tendered Scottish Government Water Management Contract for surveying of incoming pipework, if required by building managers and owners, to establish the presence of lead material in the drinking water supply route.

Investigate the various policy options available and work with our Scottish Government colleagues in determining the best way forward

- Scottish Water are to undertake a pilot project to inform on the issues of disturbance to property and householders, practicality, costs and consumer attitudes associated with full lead supply pipe replacement. Findings from the pilot are expected to be available by summer 2016.
- Comment provided on the recent Scottish Government Home Report Consultation highlighting issues with lead in drinking water and identifying opportunities to encourage removal of lead piping tied to change of property ownership.
- Engagement with Scottish Government Common Housing Quality Standards review to influence appropriate measures to drive removal of lead piping across all housing sectors
- Engagement with Scottish Housing Best Value Network to understand grant utilisation across Scotland for lead pipe replacement within the overall requirements for housing improvements.

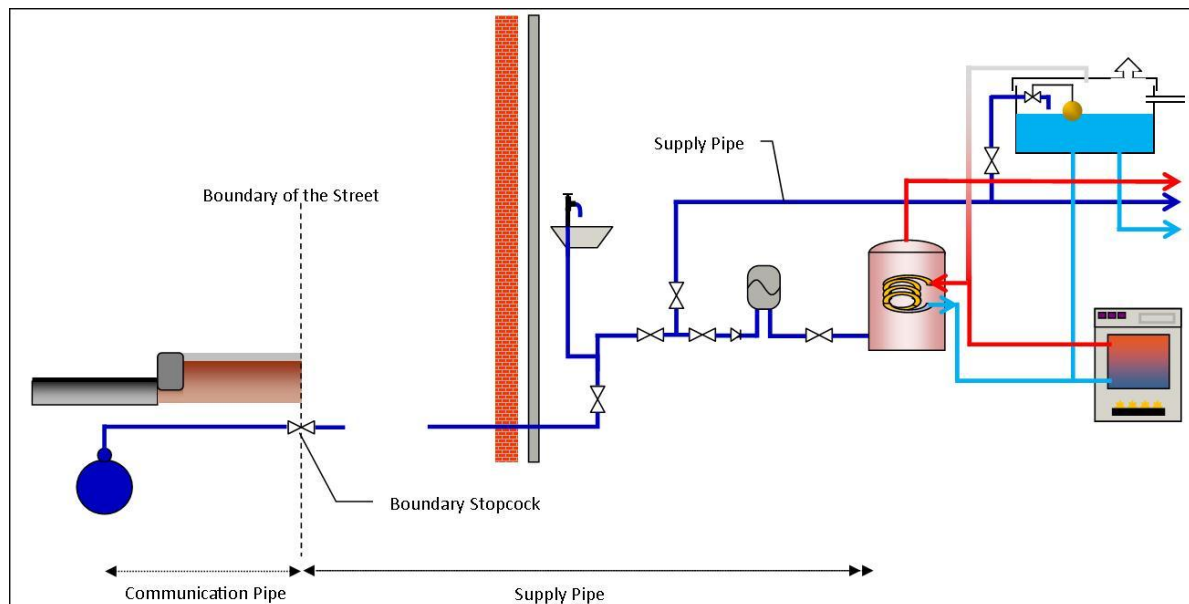
Why Lead is a problem

Lead is toxic and it accumulates within the body over a lifetime through exposure to lead sources in the environment. Sources include lead-based paint, contaminated soil, dust, petrol, drinking water, food and related products. The World Health Organisation (WHO) has allocated 50% of lead exposure as arising from drinking water. Their guidance is that lead piping be removed from the drinking water supply route.

In drinking water quality legislation, the limit for lead in drinking water has progressively reduced over the past 30 years to 10µg/l (micrograms per litre). Over the same period however, concerns have developed within Scotland's health professional community that even the 10 standard may be too high and there is an increasing view that we should strive to reduce lead levels in drinking water as far as is practicably possible.

Who is responsible?

For anyone on the public supply, the supply route is formed of pipes in the ownership of both Scottish Water and property owners. Scottish Water has responsibility for communication pipes (the part of the connection within the street). Supply pipes and any pipes internal to the property are the responsibility of the property owner(s).



For the purpose of meeting the requirements of Drinking Water legislation, the elements of the service pipe subject to this strategy is that which provides water to the kitchen tap in a domestic property. In establishments and public buildings, it is that which provides water to a drinking water point or food preparation area.

For properties on a Private Supply, ownership of the pipes and the responsibilities for care and maintenance of supply systems and property connections is, in many cases, more complex.

Key stakeholder organisations identified for communications and contributions in relation to the project include Scottish Government Health, Health Protection Scotland, CPHMs, EHOs, SG Water Industry, WICS, Scottish Water, SG Procurement, Housing, Building Standards SG Estate, Historic Scotland, Citizens Advice Scotland, Care Inspectorate, COSLA.

If you require further information or wish to provide comment, please contact DWQR

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