

Incident Summary

Clatto East RSZ Taste and Odour Complaints 22 December 2020

DWQR Inspector:
Bill Byers

Event No. 11444

Event Category: Serious

Work to install a branch connection for a new housing development in Carnoustie was planned to be carried out overnight on 22 December. The valve operation to isolate the section of water main was carried out at midnight on 21 December and shortly after this, a number of calls were being taken in the contact centre reporting no water from consumers outside the area expected to be affected by the shut off. Investigations found a valve on a water main providing the alternative supply route to be only partially open, causing a severe restriction on flow. The attending Network Service Operator (NSO) opened the valve fully to restore flow but a decision was then taken to abandon the branch installation work. The opening of the valve had the effect of transporting water, which had been contained in a largely dormant old cast iron 10" diameter section of pipe, into the wider network. Just after 6:00am, calls started to come in reporting taste and odour concerns with the water supply and extensive flushing of the water mains was carried out to resolve the problems. The issue persevered however, with more reported complaints and response flushing lasting into 24 December. Ultimately 107 contacts were taken regarding water quality over the period.

It is clear that the opening of the line valve creating the flow restriction was the cause of the taste and odour issues experienced in this supply area. Consumers reported TCP, chlorine, metallic, solvent or earthy and musty type tastes and odours in their supply. Although there were no failures of water quality standards in samples taken to monitor the situation, one sample recorded a low level of naphthalene and this, together with the complaint descriptions, is characteristic of water that has been retained in dead end, or very low flow situations, within old cast iron water mains.

The event has been categorised as Significant. Scottish Water has identified three actions which DWQR accepts are appropriate and will monitor to ensure they are completed prior to signing off the incident. DWQR made one additional recommendation.