

Incident Summary

Hynish & Caolis SRs, Tiree Bacterial failures and boil water notice October 2020

DWQR Inspector:
Moira Malcolm

Event No. 11275

On 7 October 2020 Scottish Water's Scientific Services notified the Public Health Team (PHT) that two samples taken on 5 October from the service reservoirs (SRs) at Hynish and Caolis in Tiree had failed for coliforms, with 490 and 370 cfu/100ml respectively. PHT organised the response which included resample and inspection of the SRs, booster chlorination of both tanks and – in agreement with the Consultant in Public Health Medicine (CPHM) for NHS Highland - to initiate a Boil Water Notice for the Tiree Zone. The Boil Water Notice was communicated throughout the island and bottled water delivered first to the island's care home that evening and then to all properties the following day.

Following an investigation of the failures and after two days of consecutive passing samples, PHT in consultation with the CPHM lifted the Boil Water Notice on 9 October with communication of this completed by the morning of 10 October. All resamples taken during the investigation were free of coliforms. Eight consumer contacts were received during the incident.

Following Scottish Water's investigation of the SRs and their sample points a choked septic tank soakaway was found close to the Hynish SR sample tap, which analysis of the effluent showed contained the same bacterial species as confirmed in the failing water samples. It seems likely that this effluent contaminated the Hynish sample which was transferred by the sampler to the next sample taken at Caolis. Samples on remote sites are taken by the multi-functional WTW operators and not a separate sampling team.

The event has been categorised as Serious. Scottish Water has identified nine actions which DWQR accepts are appropriate and will monitor to ensure they are completed prior to signing off the incident. DWQR made two additional recommendations.