

## Winterhope WTW MCPA Failures June & July 2023

DWQR Inspector:  
Colette Robertson-Kellie

Event No. 13534

### Event Category: Significant

A scheduled sample from the 22nd June 2023 from a property within the Winterhope distribution network failed the regulatory standard for the herbicide MCPA (2-methyl-4-chlorophenoxyacetic acid), with the Scottish Water laboratory detecting 0.131 µg/l. While the regulatory standard is 0.10 µg/l, the health based 24 hour significant no adverse response level (SNARL) is 3000µg/l and the 7 day SNARL is 1500 µg/l, so it is unlikely that the exceedances would have been of significant risk to health. Resampling of the network and Winterhope WTW was arranged and operational staff were sent to the catchment to look for any obvious issues or signs of spraying, but nothing was found. There were further detections from samples taken between the 28th June and the 11th July - seven samples breached the standard with concentrations between 0.101 and 0.197 µg/l. There are no treatment processes to remove pesticides at the treatment works.

The source of the MCPA in has now been identified and Scottish Water's Sustainable Land Management (SLM) are to investigate ways that thistle growth can be managed in the catchment.

MCPA has previously been detected at concentrations in excess of the regulatory standard on thirteen occasions in the Winterhope supply – three times in 2017, nine times in 2019 and once in 2021. Scottish Water visited the catchment in May 2021 and found that the catchment had been sprayed with the herbicide. Scottish Water were unaware this was happening. SLM put in a system to minimise this risk but it has not worked on this occasion.

The cause of the incident was a lack of treatment to remove MCPA at the treatment works.

The event has been categorised as significant. 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 zero additional recommendations.

