



Drinking Water Quality Regulator  
for Scotland

# Incident Summary

Spynie RSZ  
Taste and Odour Complaints  
10<sup>th</sup> January 2023

DWQR Inspector:  
Moira Malcolm

Event No. 13166

## Event Category: Serious

On 10th January consumers in the Thornhill district metered area (DMA) in Elgin reported problems with their water, reporting a 'diesel' or 'musty' taste and odour. As more contacts were reported the situation was escalated and in conjunction with NHS Grampian a 'do not drink' – then a 'do not use' notice was placed on 480 properties in the area, bottled water was delivered and samples taken from affected properties. Flushing was undertaken in the area of the complaints and after a second set of samples were returned with no PCVs or health risk values breached the water restrictions were lifted.

Between 10th – 18th January Scottish Water received a total of 30 taste and odour, 4 discoloured water and 2 health/illness contacts from the area.

Prior to the receipt of the consumer contacts, Scottish Water was undertaking planned work (categorised as 'non-complex') to replace the Thornhill DMA meter, which required a back-feed into the Spynie Regulatory Supply Zone (RSZ) to maintain supply to consumers.

Scottish Water's investigation into the incident concluded that the root cause was incorrect interpretation and error in identifying the full extent of the back-feed. The water main was not fully traced back to identify the trunk main upstream of the boundary valve, and the maps incorrectly determined the direction of flow in the main. This meant a dead leg containing 70m<sup>3</sup> of stagnant water was not identified, and approximately 30m<sup>3</sup> of this entered supply.

Analysis of the samples showed that some non-regulatory polyaromatic hydrocarbon (PAHs) and semi volatile organic (SVOCs) compounds at levels below health risk standards were detected, indicating that the source of the taste and odour complaints is likely to be a section of deteriorating coal tar or bitumen lined pipe.

The event has been categorised as serious. Scottish Water has identified eleven 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.

