



Drinking Water Quality Regulator
for Scotland

Incident Summary

Greenock SZ Loss of water and discolouration February 2021

DWQR Inspector:
Matt Bower

Event No. 11551

Event Category: Significant

The freezing weather of February 2021 caused a build-up of ice around the intake to Greenock Water Treatment Works from Loch Thom. This blocked the flow of water, which dropped off sharply to zero, and meant that the works could not produce water. Scottish Water employed contractors, including divers, to try to clear the inlet. Contingency measures were also put in place to provide alternative supplies of water to the population. The works was able to re-start production that evening and the system recharged, although the change in flow caused some 60 consumer complaints of discolouration and regulatory iron and manganese failures. There were also a number of burst mains at this time, which contributed to the complaints. Tankered water was used to assist with the recharge of the system. The issue was largely resolved within 36 hours.

The freezing of the intake was completely outside of Scottish Water's control and is not thought to have happened previously. Although the change in flows caused when the works started up and water began flowing again through depressurised water mains were controlled to some extent by Scottish Water, a relatively low number of complaints were received given the scale of the issue and size of the population supplied.

The event has been categorised as significant. Scottish Water has identified zero 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.

