

PE1646/A

Water Industry Commission for Scotland submission of 27 June 2017

I am writing in response to your letter of 6th June inviting the Water Industry Commission for Scotland to provide its views on a petition regarding drinking water supplies in Scotland.

The Water Industry Commission for Scotland is the economic regulator for the Scottish Water Industry. In line with its statutory duty, the Commission promotes the interests of customers by setting charges for water and sewerage services that deliver Ministers' objectives for the water industry at the lowest reasonable overall costs. As economic regulator, the Commission ensures that Scottish Water has sufficient funding to deliver efficiently the investment to meet the drinking water quality and environmental standards. As such the Commission has no role or remit over the quality testing of water in Scotland.

The Water Industry (Scotland) Act 2002 (The 2002 Act) established in statute the Drinking Water Quality Regulator (DWQR) to ensure that the drinking water quality duties imposed on Scottish Water are complied with. The Commission is aware that there are protocols in place to ensure robust testing and monitoring of drinking water quality parameters. Scottish Water provides a monthly data return of all regulatory samples to DWQR which then scrutinises the information to determine Scottish Water's compliance.

DWQR may also conduct technical audits or inspections and investigate drinking water quality incidents¹. Based on its findings DWQR has a variety of options for enforcement ranging from advisory letters to submitting a report to the Procurator Fiscal.

In addition to the role of DWQR, there is UK wide accreditation scheme for laboratories undertaking the sampling and analysis of drinking water. The United Kingdom Accreditation Service (UKAS) conducts an annual audit of laboratories. Based on their findings, UKAS can make recommendations for improvement, impose sanctions or can remove accreditation entirely. It is the Commission's understanding that Scottish Water's accreditation has never been removed or suspended by UKAS.

As established in The Water (Scotland) Act 1980, Local Authorities have a duty to remain informed of the quality and sufficiency of drinking water in their area. It is the duty of the Local Authority to monitor and enforce drinking water quality standards of private supplies.

The Commission is not aware of any conflicts of interest that exist in the arrangements for testing water quality in Scotland.

I hope that this information has been useful.

¹ Information on the range of audits and inspections carried out by DWQR along with the results of previous inspections can be found at: <http://dwqr.scot/regulator-activity/audit-and-inspection/>