



Water Health
Partnership
for Wales

NEWSLETTER

APRIL
2021

Hello Water Health Partnership members.

On behalf of the Water Health Partnership Steering Group, I am really pleased to be able to introduce this communication which is designed to provide an update on Water and Health matters to all members of the WHP.

The WHP Steering Group have been meeting every few months during 2020, but as a result of not being able to run an annual conference in 2020 (first one missed in the 12 years the WHP has been active!) we thought it would be a good idea to circulate a newsletter to all WHP members, on key developments and providing information on recent and current issues... and just to let all members know that the WHP is still active and working hard in the background looking after the interests of Water and Health, despite all the distractions brought about by the pandemic.

Each stakeholder organisation has provided an update for this newsletter and I'm grateful for the contributions from the individual Steering Group members and for the assistance of Dan Shaw and colleagues from Dŵr Cymru communications team who have spent time and effort editing and formatting this document into something that you will hopefully find interesting and useful.

We remain hopeful that we will be able to gather the Water Health Partnership members together again soon and I look forward to that day. But until then, I hope you enjoy the newsletter and look out for further communications later this year.

Best Regards,

Sharon Evans

Water Health Partnership
Steering Group Chair

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Public Health Wales /Welsh Government

Welsh Government Water team continues to manage the ongoing impacts and effects of Covid across the policy area.

The Welsh Government is also gearing up for an election on 6 May 2021, which means that policy priorities may shift depending on what the Government looks like after the election as we look to deliver a new programme for Government.

IMPACT OF COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the importance of safe water, sanitation and hygiene to protect health during disease outbreaks. Public Health Wales sit on several groups advising Welsh Government including an Environment Group looking at a range of issues relating to COVID-19 in the environment. The Technical Advisory Group Environmental Sub-group (or TAG-E) has been researching and reviewing the evidence on how the virus moves through the wider environment (including water) and how this influences disease transmission. Water related work includes pioneering research funded by Welsh Government and led by Bangor University, working with Cardiff University, Public Health Wales and DCWW, to use wastewater to track COVID-19 in the community. TAG-E has also given advice on safety of drinking water supplies and toilets, guidance on swimming pools, saunas, steam rooms and hot-tubs and is supporting research on the fate of face masks in the environment.

The Water Health Partnership is also supporting TAG-E by scoping out some of the key future water issues as we come out of the pandemic such as ensuring private water supplies and public buildings are suitably risk assessed before use. Advice from TAG-E is reviewed and published by the Welsh Government Technical Advisory Cell. For more information see <https://gov.wales/technical-advisory-cell>

The Chief Medical Officer for Wales published a special report Protecting our Health: Our response in Wales to the first phase of COVID-19 in January 2021. The report can be found here: <https://gov.wales/chief-medical-officer-wales-special-edition-annual-report-2019-2020-protecting-our-health> One of the recommendations is to focus on the health protection services and highlights how the pandemic has shown the importance of having in place strong and resilient health protection arrangements at a local, national and international level. Working together with other partners local authorities will need to ensure a robust and integrated system of health protection and surveillance of health threats is in place and able to respond to future threats.

CURRENT ISSUES & DEVELOPMENTS

Guidance for health professionals on drinking water safety.

Public Health Wales has worked with Public Health England and the Drinking Water Inspectorate to publish joint guidance to health and water professionals on drinking water. This guidance, an update on guidance produced in 2009, describes the arrangements in place for securing the quality and

safety of drinking water and provides information to support drinking water quality risk assessments and the issuing of consumer protection advice. It covers both public and private water supplies and microbiological and chemical hazards. Both the England and Wales versions are broadly very similar, but the latter recognises the different public health arrangements that exist between England and Wales and role of groups such as the Water Health Partnership. A Welsh language version is also available. This guidance, an update on guidance produced in 2009, describes the arrangements in place for securing the quality and safety of drinking water and provides information to support drinking water quality risk assessments and the issuing of consumer protection advice.

See [Guidance and codes of practice – Drinking Water Inspectorate \(dwi.gov.uk\)](#)

FLOODING & DROUGHT

We have seen several severe flooding events in Wales over the last year, including recent floods due to Storm Christoph in January which caused serious flooding in parts of North and South Wales and in Skewen, Neath Port Talbot where flooding due to mine water resulted in approx. 80 people having to leave their homes. Flooding can present a significant risk to health both from contaminated flood waters and during the clean-up. PHW has comprehensive advice and guidance on flooding which information on the main risks of flooding, cleaning up safely and the impact of mental health issue.

See [Flooding – Public Health Wales \(nhs.wales\)](#)

But what about the times when water is scarce?

Kristian James at Public Health Wales has undertaken a review of health impacts that may arise from drought in Wales, informed by Water Health Partnership member's experiences of drought and supply issues during 2018.

The review found that drought is difficult to define and can mean different things to different stakeholders at different times. The risk of drought is increasing, and more resilience is required. Mains water users (the majority) are the most protected from drought by current arrangements than private water supplies, agricultural and recreational water users. Members provided recommendation to improve response, resilience and the management of drought going forward.

Since the review, PHW has worked with the private water supply task and finish group to help inform risk assessments and identify those potentially vulnerable to drought. PHW has also published a range of advice on extreme weather including advice for coping without a private water supply.

See [► Extreme Hot Weather – Public Health Wales \(nhs.wales\)](#)

PHW welcomes feedback on the content and use of its extreme weather advice. Please supply any comments to publichealth.environment@wales.nhs.uk

LEAD PIPE REPLACEMENT

Andrew Kibble is representing Public Health Wales on the Water UK Lead Strategy Project Board which is developing a cross sector strategic approach to remove lead from drinking water supplies in the UK. Its purpose is to work with Government, public health bodies, water companies and regulators to ensure that the UK meets the planned new regulatory standard for lead in drinking water and to work to establish UK tap water as lead free. Objectives include to promote action to replace lead supply pipes, mandate for the use of low-lead lead plumbing materials and raise awareness of the impact of lead in drinking water within the water and plumbing industry and the public. Andrew has also been part of the steering group for a DWI funded study looking at long-term strategies to reduce lead exposure from drinking water.

This study, undertaken by the Water Research Centre (WRC), modelled the costs and benefits of several potential future policy scenarios around lead pipe replacement in England and Wales. Adverse health effects from lead exposure such as neurodevelopment, cardiovascular disease and chronic kidney function were quantified as part of the analysis. The recommendations of the report are currently being considered by DWI and the Water Industry.

The report can be found at [► Long-term Strategies to Reduce Lead Exposure from Drinking Water – Drinking Water Inspectorate \(dwi.gov.uk\)](#)

A video presentation of the study and its findings is also available [► Long term strategies for reducing lead exposure from drinking water – from DWI Webinar Recording – YouTube](#)



Natural Resources Wales (NRW)

Have your say on improving our water environment.

A consultation into how the water environment in the Dee and Western Wales river basin districts can be protected and restored in the future has been launched by Natural Resources Wales (NRW).

The updated Severn river basin management plan will be published by the Environment Agency. The current river basin management plans were published in 2015. They are reviewed and updated every six years.

Updated draft river basin management plans for the Western Wales and Dee river basin districts have been produced by NRW working in partnership with a wide range of public, private and voluntary organisations, including water companies, local authorities, eNGOs, business and industry.

The plans set out how organisations, stakeholders and communities will work together to improve the water environment and will:

- Describe the pressures facing the water environment for the river basin district;
- Set objectives for rivers, lakes, estuaries, coastal and ground waters from 2021 to 2027;
- Outline proposed actions needed to improve the water environment and the benefits that could be achieved.

The consultation is open until 22 June 2021 and asks everyone to consider the issues impacting upon the water environment in the Western Wales and the Dee river basin districts and the actions needed to protect and restore the water environment.

The consultation documents can be found on the [► Natural Resources Wales Consultation Hub](#)

SIGNIFICANT ENVIRONMENTAL INCIDENTS – THE LLANGENNECH TRAIN DERAILMENT

On 26th August 2020 a freight train carrying diesel from Milford Haven to Port Talbot derailed at Llangennech, Carmarthenshire. Ten wagons each containing around 75 tonnes of diesel left the track, spilling their contents, which subsequently caught fire. A major incident was declared, and 300 residents of the nearby village were evacuated as a precaution in case of explosion. The fire burned for approximately 24 hours before being extinguished (see [► Llangennech: Diesel spill after train derails catching fire – BBC News](#)).



As soon as the crash site was made safe, contractors were mobilised to prevent a further 300,000 litres of diesel released into the environment spreading beyond the site into the surrounding area, much of which is classified as SSSI, and to the nearby Lloughr estuary, containing significant commercial shell fisheries. These prompt actions contained most of the oil, although shell fisheries were closed as a precaution.

Shell fisheries reopened before the end of 2020 following confirmatory testing results. A 6 month programme of soil remediation and environmental monitoring followed initial containment, with removal of 45,000 tonnes of impacted soil to a licensed waste facility and reinstatement with clean materials.

This was a serious incident and NRW were significantly involved in the response effort. Remedial works are now successfully complete, and a programme of longer term environmental monitoring has been initiated to ensure ongoing recovery of the site. The rail line was reopened by Network Rail on the 8th March 2021 (see [► Llangennech: Railway reopens six months after train derailment – BBC News](#)) Public Health Wales and Public Health England Centre of Radiation, Chemical and Environmental Hazards Wales team provided public health advice to tactical and strategic co-ordination groups throughout the initial incident and the longer term remedial and recovery phases and provided representation to the Wales Environment Group,

a technical advisory group stood up when pollution may impact coastal and marine settings. This included advising on risks from the initial fire, advice to local communities regarding ongoing pollution concerns and contributions around public health management of remedial programmes.

Water Companies

IMPACT OF COVID-19

Both Dŵr Cymru and Hafren Dyfrdwy have made significant changes to processes as a result of the impact of COVID-19. Both companies have had to adapt to the COVID-19 challenge to ensure that they can continue to function effectively operationally. A multitude of measures have been put in place (such as additional PPE, social distancing, screens for desks and temperature checks) and these are kept under constant review. Robust procedures for entering customer premises have been implemented and numbers in offices have been limited, with those colleagues able to work from home doing so.

The great news is that the measures put in place have meant that we have continued to deliver operationally on all fronts and maintain excellent customer service.



CURRENT ISSUES/CHALLENGES

We have set ourselves an ambitious "Lead Free Wales" strategy which focusses on replacing any lead that we own but also lead on the customers' side. In the first year of AMP7, we overdelivered on the OFWAT target and even went beyond our internal stretch target. This has benefitted our customers by reducing their risk to lead exposure and has also helped build relationships with our external stakeholders such as Wrexham Council and CCW.

We are very pleased with this performance given that this was delivered during the COVID-19 pandemic and the team responsible for delivery were acknowledged at our company Awesome Awards.

We had a large supply interruptions event in Wrexham in 2020 and have made huge progress on improving performance for our customers. As of today, we have seen a 38% improvement on the same position last year and have improved training, continuous supply provisions (such as tankers and overlander trailers) and have implemented an audit programme to assure the condition of our supply interruption tool kits.

PRIORITIES/ EMERGING ISSUES

Improving our customer communications during incidents has been a real focus for us and we have been working closely with the North Wales Resilience Forum and Wrexham Council to help us gain contact information.

Innovation has been a real focus for us over the last year driving improvements in a more efficient and less intrusive manner. Two recent trials of new technologies have been successful: We've been refurbishing our water mains using Aqualiner which is a more efficient process of improving the water quality our customers receive.

We've also been making our network smarter with an AVK trial which provides flow, pressure and temperature data. We have correlated water temperatures with increased pipe busts and are now looking into how we can better predict burst times and locations.



CURRENT ISSUES/CHALLENGES

The issue of entering customer premises during current restrictions is still proving challenging. This has significantly impacted the locations of samples taken to monitor water quality in the distribution system, (which under 'normal' circumstances would have been taken from customers taps within their homes, business premises or public buildings) and the requirement in the Water Supply (Water Quality) Regulations for random sampling.

DWI issued Regulation 7 sampling waivers in March 2020 to all water companies that waived the requirement to comply with the regulation requiring random sampling during COVID-19 restrictions. These initial set of waivers expired on 16th September 2020. From September 2020 DWI introduced a new system of reporting each month on the status of random sampling for each water quality zone to reflect the changing picture of national COVID-19 restrictions and local lockdown arrangements and subsequent waivers have been issued on that basis.

DWI Information Letter 04/2020
http://dwi-content.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/24102449/IL04_Covid-19.pdf sets out the expectations that companies will revert to random sampling from properties when the sampling waivers expire in September 2021. Dŵr Cymru has been clear that visiting customers' properties at random will not resume while COVID-19 restrictions are in place.



Following the implementation of a third lockdown on 20th December 2020, sampling has reverted to fixed assets plus the use of samplers' own homes only and this remains the case at the time of writing, whilst lockdown restrictions remain in place.

WELSH WATER & COVID-19

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has been unprecedented and has been felt through all areas of the company. The challenge to maintain our services and protect public health since the imposition of national lockdowns in March 2020 (as well as subsequent regional and local variations) has been significant – and our frontline operational teams as well as support teams have responded to it in an extraordinary fashion.

We put in place extensive planning and preparation months before the initial lockdown in March 2020, investing significantly in personal protective equipment (PPE) for staff and revising working practices (such as introducing virtual inspections of customers' homes to resolve issues without needing to go to their property), health and safety procedures and policies to reflect changing work circumstances and social restrictions. The welfare of colleagues will always remain our top priority and we owe it to them to keep them safe while working in the communities we serve.

We also launched a strong drive to encourage customers, who may be finding it difficult to pay their water bills, to get in touch to find out what support is available through the social tariffs. We built on our industry-leading support for customers who need the most

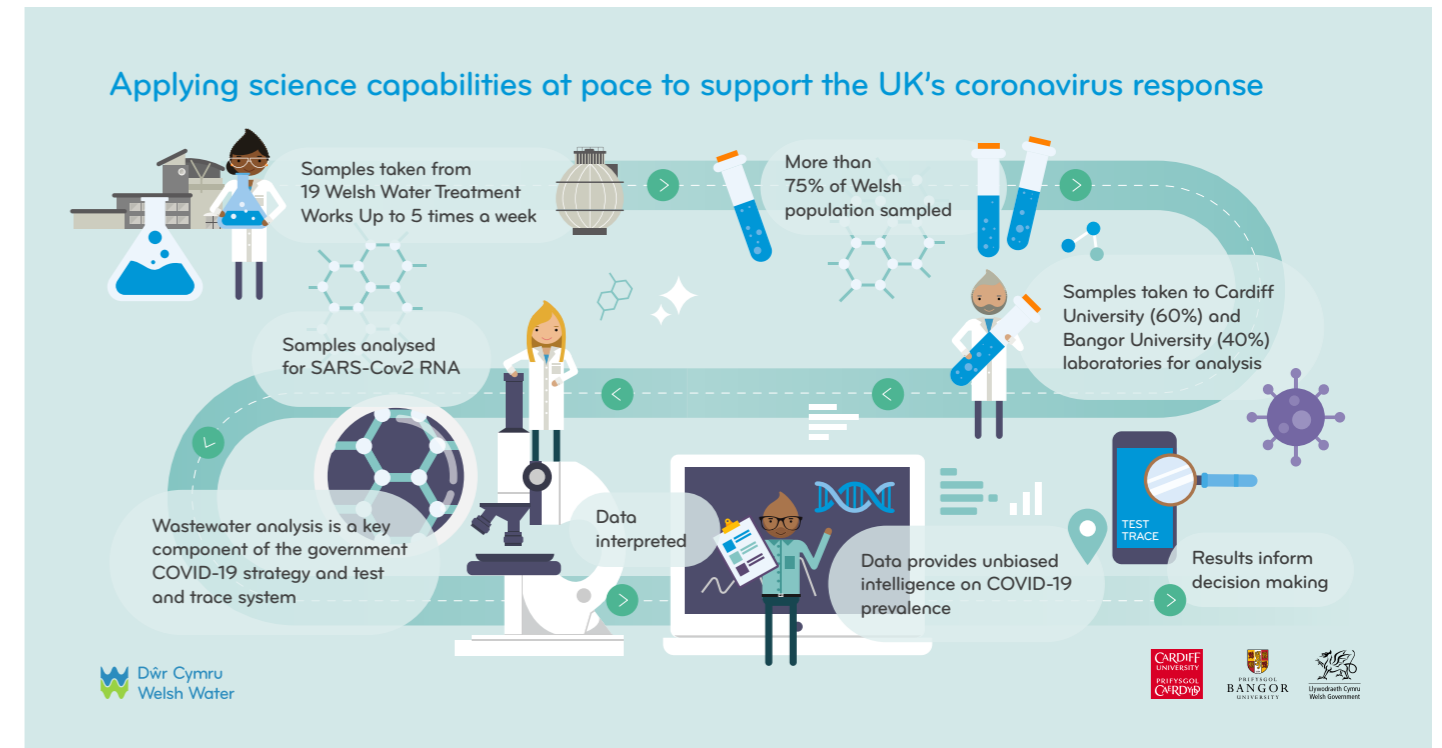
assistance in paying their bills and now support nearly 140,000 customers with our range of social tariffs. This is partly funded by the company and our customers and means that we continue to have the highest support available in England and Wales.

Given the extraordinary circumstances created by the pandemic, we also temporarily added more than 330,000 customers to our Priority Services Register, meaning that more people than ever have been able to access extra help during service interruptions for those with illnesses that need water, help when a customer has a baby or young child, to alternative ways for customers to get in touch with us.

To help protect public health, we also took part in a programme monitoring coronavirus in our sewage systems to help identify potential spikes in the number of cases within communities. The Welsh Government's Minister for Health and Social Services, Vaughan Gething, explained:



To halt the spread of the coronavirus we needed a way to measure it within our communities and monitor any changes. This pilot programme has allowed us to develop an independent system capable of providing an early warning notification and to provide signals on the levels of coronavirus infections in our communities. This project is already complementing our wider public health programmes, including our successful Test Trace Protect programme. This programme has already proved to be yet another opportunity to strengthen the existing partnerships we have in Wales in our environmental sciences, disease surveillance and pathogen genomics.



PRIORITIES/ EMERGING ISSUES

Introduction of COVID-19 Lateral Flow (LF) Testing – As part of the mitigation plan to protect colleagues, Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water introduced LF testing for COVID-19 for laboratory colleagues from January 2021. This has been implemented at both DCWW laboratories, one in North and one in South Wales and requests that colleagues in laboratory teams undertake testing twice a week, with anyone else entering laboratory sites to undertake work are tested before access to site is granted.

The issue of managing Water Quality in buildings has been subject to much discussion during 2020 and into 2021, as certain categories of buildings have been effected by lack of occupation and use during the various lockdown restrictions. A number of guidance documents have been developed and published by Dŵr Cymru on this topic and links to these are provided below;

• [How to restore your drinking water system](#)

Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water Impact on business: • <https://business.dwrcymru.com/en/help-advice/covid-19-impact-on-businesses>

And how to restore your drinking water Supply: • <https://business.dwrcymru.com/en/help-advice/covid-19-impact-on-businesses/how-to-restore-your-drinking-water-system>

Water UK • <https://www.water.org.uk/publication/recovering-drinking-water-supplies-in-buildings-and-networks-after-prolonged-inactivity/>



Local Authorities

Local Authorities have faced significant challenges over the past year as they have continued to deliver services to their communities, such as waste collection, housing maintenance and repairs, highways improvements and social care, while being at the frontline in the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic by involvement with contact tracing through the Test, Trace, Protect system, Mass Vaccination Centres and with the changes in education settings and care homes.

Where it has been possible a lot of services have moved online and developing IT solutions has been key, however in some areas this has not been possible where we have to visit people in their homes, such as to carry out housing repairs or to take drinking water samples. We have adapted practices to ensure they are Covid-secure.

Local authorities have worked with many other partner agencies such as Welsh Government, Public Health Wales, health boards and water companies during the past year, and Councils have had to adapt services they provide as restrictions have evolved to continue to support members of the public within their areas.

This will continue to be a priority throughout 2021 as we start to re-open services and the public realm. Detailed planning arrangements, both internally, with partner agencies and through the Local Resilience Forums, are well underway to ensure that Councils are as well placed as possible for whatever new challenges we may face.

DWI

The Drinking Water inspectorate (DWI) have written an article summarising their challenges and successes of 2020 along with their vision for 2021 and beyond. Some highlights are below, followed by the full article:

WHAT'S BEEN GOING ON

Like all of us, the DWI have had to adapt to a different way of working due to COVID-19 restrictions, including working mainly from home and using new video technology.

During 2020 DWI undertook a mixed programme of audits, some of which were remote and others on site. In 2020 a total of 255 enquiries were answered, including 153 from local authorities and 102 from private water supply users, owners, prospective owners, and other stakeholders. Many of those received from authorities were seeking clarity on their sampling obligations when the Pandemic struck.

DWI have been collecting all the data returns in preparation for the publication of the Private Water Supplies (PWS) 2020 report. The current guidance on PWS can be found on DWI website. [Guidance Documents - Drinking Water Inspectorate \(dwi.gov.uk\)](#) Activities around Network and Information Systems (NIS), chemical resilience, Regulators' Alliance for Progressing Infrastructure Development (RAPID), Green Recovery and water efficiency.

CHALLENGES

Changes in water demand and supply with increased usage in the home and a notable decrease in places such as business parks.

DWI has produced guidance on the latest information on COVID-19 and water supply, as well as a series of information letters and advice notes to help water companies adjust their sampling whilst still collecting data to show water remained wholesome.

DWI also produced advice notes for building owners and local authorities on the measures they needed to take to risk assess buildings and mitigate risks. Considerations have included fittings in buildings being constructed as temporary hospitals.

• <http://dwi-content.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/24102459/Advice-Letter-ALO2-2020.pdf>

Changes to site visits – DWI have been testing staff for COVID-19, before and after, as a precaution.

SUCCESSES

The first virtual Chief Inspector's Report launch – a great success. The launch of new DWI website – a key milestone in their digital strategy. A new tool has been designed to allow the Local Authority users to upload or enter their own sample results, which will enable users to enter results as they become available, therefore saving time and effort. DWI will be running a pilot of the tool during 2021 where they will demonstrate how to use it and answer any questions you may have.

GOING FORWARD

DWI are looking to the future by commencing work on the PWS data return to report in this year's Chief Inspectors Report (CIR). PWS activities were greatly reduced in 2020, so to gather more information on the size and shape of this, DWI have sent out a further survey to authorities. The feedback gathered will be used to provide commentary in CIR and help DWI to focus resources during 2021.



FULL ARTICLE

The supply of drinking water, be that from a public supply or a private supply, is crucial to maintaining health not just through the delivery of good quality wholesome water, but also because it is pivotal to maintaining our wellbeing through hydration, sanitation and cleanliness. This is none so more than during a period where the public are asked to wash their hands to prevent communicable disease, whilst we experience a pandemic.

The onset of the pandemic in Wales at about this time last year, presented a number of challenges to all of us in our work and home life, some of which becoming blurred, as the margins became less clear. Nevertheless, from the perspective of a water quality regulator during 2020, the priority was clear-water not only had to be supplied, but confidence in drinking water had to remain.

Confidence in water supply comes in many forms, but it often starts with quantifying water is safe to drink. For the public, this means being assured that water is not a transmission route for the virus; it means that independent data shows no change in the quality. For water companies, it means maintaining their staff to supply water and deliver their duties under legislation. For many areas, the shift from workplace to home changed water supply, with increased usage in the home, and a notable decrease in places such as business parks. For building owners, confidence is in maintaining their systems which may not be being used or used as much.

In response to all these challenges, we produced guidance on the latest information on COVID-19 and water supply, as well as a series of information letters and advice notes to help water companies adjust their sampling whilst still collecting data to show water remained wholesome. Additionally, we produced advice notes for building owners and local authorities on the measures they needed to take to risk assess buildings and mitigate risks. Among other considerations, on which advice was provided, were fittings in buildings being constructed as temporary hospitals and mortuaries, as well as the less prominent issues such as chemical supplies.

It is fair to say that the work of the DWI has been substantial during 2020 and beyond, as all these points of reference converged meaning we had to maintain our operations. We were in the fortunate position of working a flexible working pattern which meant that by 16th March 2020 we had completely exited our office and were working at home. However, like other businesses we had to adapt to the virtual environment using video technology. Some of the great successes included the first virtual Chief Inspector's Report launch, which really was a great example of team DWI working together to deliver for our stakeholders. We launched our new website, which was another key milestone in our digital strategy. We forged ahead with many activities including NIS, chemical resilience, RAPID and green recovery and water efficiency, as well as welcoming in nine new members of staff since the first lockdown.

We heard and listened to a clear stakeholder expectation, for the regulator to actively maintain confidence in our water supply. This required direct interaction with water companies, both through data gathering and checking through audit. During 2020 we undertook a mixed programme of audits, some of which were remote and others on site. We will be reporting these in the Chief Inspectors Report for 2020 in July. Needless to say, we tested our staff on their way out and back for COVID-19 to ensure there was no symptomless carriage to company sites. Our interaction with authorities was slightly different because we are not the primary regulator for Private Water Supplies (PWS). In this, we did not visit PWS sites in support of authorities, since this would add an additional and an unnecessary layer of risk.

The focus on PWS has been on updating our guidance and technical advice (Information notes). Whilst the guidance has been aimed at authorities, other interested parties use it too, such as commercial users, private users and academics. The logic behind this is that most common enquiry we get about PWS is for interpretation aspects of the regulations.

Interpretation of the regulations can be a source of stress to some, and our guidance is intended to reduce this by making it easier to understand and follow the requirements correctly. Incorporating feedback from key stakeholders in both England and Wales the new sets of revised guidance and notes are on our website. They have been substantially streamlined and simplified wherever this has been possible. We hope they are a useful resource to everyone that uses them. Matters relating to private water supplies and their regulation are not always straight forward, and we spend considerable time each year responding to questions and enquiries on private water supplies. These vary widely and volumes received can be high for the very small team that deals with them. Anyone that is involved in private water supplies in any capacity will know the headaches they can cause and the grey areas where situations don't always neatly fit the regulations, especially when civil and legal aspects add further layers of complexity. In 2020 we took 153 enquiries from authorities and 102 from private water supply users, owners, prospective owners and other stakeholders. Many of those received from authorities were seeking clarity on their sampling obligations when the Pandemic struck. We responded with specific guidance on our website.

For some years, we have been developing and facilitating a PWS sampling accreditation scheme to assist authorities achieve the accreditation requirements of the 2017 regulations. This was reaching fruition and going well until everyone was largely prevented from travelling due to the pandemic restrictions. This meant that any sampling training and certification for these purposes had to be put on hold, along with any planned or due sampling or risk assessment site visits, until restrictions were lifted. We recently sent out a survey to local authorities to evaluate just how big an impact this has had, and the outcome will determine next steps. It is hoped that the sampling training and certification of local authorities in Wales will take place as soon as restrictions allow.

Private water supply data and information is collected by authorities each year and submitted to the Inspectorate. In the first part of this year, 2021, we have been collecting all the data returns in preparation for the publication of the PWS 2020 report. We want to thank all the LAs in providing these returns so quickly and completely, as this helps tremendously in preparing the report. Equally, risk assessment and sampling form an integral and important part of assuring the quality of drinking water used by the more than 71,000 people in Wales who live or work in premises which has a private supply. This is an onerous task!

Previously, a spreadsheet was used by local authorities to demonstrate regulatory compliance but we're looking forward to modernising the approach with an easy to use, online tool which logs the details of each supply, sample results and incorporates a risk assessment. This tool, accessed through a web browser, produces a visual location map of the supply based on the coordinates provided and takes the user through a series of questions which are specific to the type of water being used and the type of infrastructure which has been selected.

In addition, the tool has been designed to allow the users to upload or enter their own sample results, which will enable local authorities with small numbers of private water supplies to enter results as they become available, therefore saving time and effort in compiling a spreadsheet at the end of the year. We'll be running a pilot of the tool during 2021 where we'll be able to demonstrate how to use it and answer any questions you may have. As we write this article, we are looking to the future by commencing work on the PWS data return to report in this year's CIR. We're aware that PWS activities were greatly reduced in 2020, so to gather more information on the size and shape of this, we have sent out a further survey to authorities. The feedback we gather, will be used to provide commentary in CIR, and help us focus our resources during 2021.

Task and Finish Groups (TaFs)

INTRODUCTION

The TaF groups are an essential part of the WHP. They bring together members with responsibility and interests in specific areas of water and health for discussion and development of ideas through collaborative working. The work of the TaF groups has continued throughout 2020. Here is an update from our active TaFs. If you would like to find out more about the work of a particular TaF or are interested in joining, please contact the Steering Group sponsor listed below.

Bathing Water

(Steering Group Sponsor
– Sam Naylor
sam.naylor@swansea.gov.uk)

CURRENT ISSUES

- Need to continue to work together to maintain and improve water quality classification at all Bathing Waters in Wales to protect public health.
- Use all the tools available to manage Bathing Waters in Wales.

PRIORITIES

- Continue to carry out sampling throughout the season.
- Run prediction water quality models and provide information to the public at all appropriate beaches to protect public health and manage the Bathing Water.

COVID-19 IMPACT

- Bathing season (2020) shortened because of conflict between promoting beaches and travel restrictions for the public. Reduced water sampling due to restrictions, time and resources.
- Planning for Bathing season 2021 – with the potential for Welsh beaches to be busier than ever with high numbers of holidaymakers staying in the UK, the monitoring and management of Bathing Waters is essential.

ACHIEVEMENTS IN 2020

- No Welsh Bathing Waters classified as poor.
- Both NRW and EU funded bespoke Water Quality Prediction Models run and information provided to the public at some appropriate beaches.

Lead

(Steering Group Sponsor
– Carol Weatherley
carol.weatherley@dwrcymru.com)

As part of the lead TaF activities, Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water (DCWW) has committed to replacing 7,000 lead pipes during 2020 to 2025 with a focus on areas with known greater vulnerability.



ACHIEVEMENTS

DCWW has developed a statistical model to predict the location of lead service pipes based on location data, house age and type and water quality.

Areas of higher vulnerability have been identified and prioritised using data such as: The Index of Multiple Deprivation; the number of children aged 0-5 years old; and birth rates per household. The number of lead pipes replaced by DCWW during 2020-2021 is approaching 1,400, which is on course to meeting year 1 targets. This has been achieved despite challenges presented by the restrictions on operations and access to customer's properties during the COVID-19 pandemic.

A strategy for improving the engagement with childcare facilities has been developed by DCWW in collaboration with the Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW).

A lead leaflet has been produced that will be on DCWW's website to support the CIW website information. DCWW will offer childminders the replacement of lead pipes up to the internal stop tap, free of charge, if the level of lead detected in the water is above 5 micrograms per litre (the current lead standard is 10 micrograms per litre).

WaterUK have formed a Lead Forum to develop a Water Industry strategic approach to removing lead from the UK drinking water supply system. All water companies in England and Wales are involved.

CHALLENGES SO FAR

The number of customers taking up the offer of lead supply pipe replacement is disappointingly low. A main concern of customers is the reinstatement of driveways following pipe replacement.

The engagement of customers in any lead pipe replacement scheme is vital and DCWW have tried to make sure the process is as straight forward and clear as possible.

Customers are given a single point of contact to start the booking process and are provided with a brochure describing the work to be undertaken. Encouragingly, the response from the customers after the work has been completed is extremely positive and it is expected that this endorsement, which will be captured in the brochure, will result in an increase in take up.



Lovely job! The boys who did the job were very polite they kept us informed of what they were doing, they made minimum mess and completed the job to a high standard of workmanship all round a cracking job.



– Happy Customer

WHAT'S NEXT?

- Targeted social media campaigns to further encourage customer take-up.
- Raising awareness of lead in water with customers and with organisations such as childminder organisations, schools, and housing associations.
- Collaboratively working with Welsh Government and Arbed am Byth on a process to include a lead pipe survey in their Arbed funded housing refurbishments. Where a lead supply pipe is identified, DCWW will contact the customer and offer to replace the lead supply pipes.

FUTURE CHALLENGES/SUMMARY

It is widely recognised that the success of any initiatives to produce a meaningful reduction in lead pipes needs a multi-agency approach and societal support. The TaF have had mixed success with the engagement of housing associations, schools, and childcare services on lead. While there is initial enthusiasm to hear about lead; economic and logistical barriers hinder subsequent progress particularly as there is no statutory obligation to remove lead pipes.

The agreement of CIW to highlight lead issues to childminders on their website and DCWW offering to replace lead pipes is positive progress that we want to build on. The TaF always welcome any new ideas or help on how we can engage stakeholders to encourage lead pipe replacement so please get in touch.

Private Water Supplies

(Steering Group Sponsor
– Diane Watkin
diane.watkin@powys.gov.uk)

COVID-19 IMPACT

- LA officers re-assigned to COVID-19 related work; TTP and business advice, therefore less PWS work carried out.
- PWS sampling reduced due to restrictions, time and resources, however, information was issued to PWS owners.

- PWS sampling procedures risk assessed, and additional measures put in place during sampling – social distancing, extra disinfection, PPE. Some sampling points changed to include external taps, etc.

ACHIEVEMENTS IN 2020

- Guidance on PWS Insufficiency – was produced and circulated which includes proactive guidance, practical steps and agreements for assistance from the water companies.
- Worked with Welsh Government. Drought Liaison group to provide updates on PWS insufficiency and get up to date information regarding dry weather, COVID-19 vulnerable groups, etc.

CURRENT ISSUES

- LA's starting to sample again – preparing for restrictions to be lifted, mailshot to Reg.9 (commercial supplies e.g. holiday accommodation), and sampling on a risk-based approach in line with DWI advice.
- Sampling Accreditation – training/examination of LA sampling officers to meet the requirements.

PRIORITIES

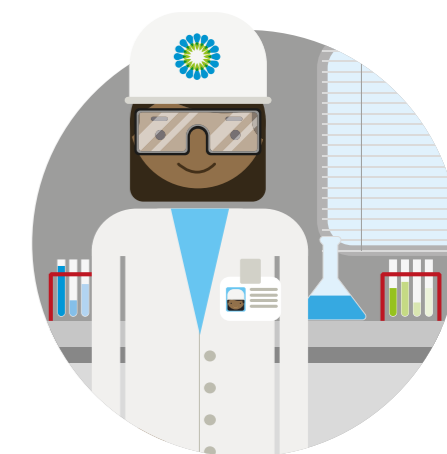
- Providing advice on bringing buildings/PWS back into use in line with DWI, HSE, water companies information.
- Ensuring PWS sampling/risk assessment is prioritised due to the risk associated with the supply.

WHP and TaF group has helped raise the profile of PWS in Wales to DWI and WG, which has helped with funding (sampler accreditation; Reg.9 sampling).

WHP Going Forward

You may notice that the Water Health Partnership website is currently out of action. It is currently being transferred from the Public Health Wales domain to the Dŵr Cymru domain where it will be hosted in the future. We hope to go live with the new website by the end of this month.

The WHP Steering Group will meet (virtually) again next month and will be considering future communications and ways of hosting a 2021 WHP conference, be it virtual or in person. We would all love to be able to meet up again and enjoy the networking that is such an important part of the success of the WHP. We are committed to make this happen as soon as it is possible to do so. In the meantime please stay safe and keep in touch with each other.



 Water Health Partnership
for Wales

