

Short Term Let Licensing

Briefing Note: Private Water Supplies

If you are applying for a short term let licence, this briefing note will help you understand the requirements relating to private water supplies.

What is a Private Water Supply?

A private water supply (PWS) is defined as water supply which is not provided by Scottish Water such as a stream, loch, spring, or borehole. Private supplies can come from a well, borehole or a spring, and are usually found in the more rural and remote areas where there is no mains water network. A PWS may serve just one home or multiple properties on a supply.

Safe drinking water is essential to good health. All private water supplies can pose a threat to health unless they're properly protected, maintained and treated. They may become contaminated with bacteria or other substances. You may not be able to tell whether your water is safe, as contamination may not change the smell, taste or colour of the water

How can I find out if my property is on a Private Water Supply?

As a general rule of thumb, if there is no Scottish Water Mains water network close to your property, then you are likely to be on a PWS. You can also check your property titles or telephone Scottish Water Customer Services to check (telephone 0800 0778 778).

What are the classifications of a Private Water Supply?

There are two types of PWS's, a Regulated (Commercial) and Exempt (Domestic) Supply. A Regulated supply includes any business that supplies water from a PWS to the public for drinking, washing, food preparation, or where the water is used in a way that is likely to enter the human food chain. This category includes holiday lets, rented properties, B & B, pubs, food production premises and campsites.

What is Highland Council's role in relation to Private Water Supplies?

The Council is responsible for the registering, assessing and sampling of supplies within its area and to ensure that the supply complies with the Regulations and does not present a risk to public health.

The Private Water Supply Register

The Regulations place an obligation on a property owner to inform the Council that their property is on a PWS. If your property is connected to a PWS, then as part of your short-term licence application, you will be asked to complete a PWS Questionnaire and return without undue delay to Environmental Health at envhealth@highland.gov.uk

The form will ask you details about the type of water supply and where the source is located; the properties on the supply, and the type of treatment in place. The information is then used to record the PWS on the Council's register. Please note that there is no fee to register.

Risk Assessment

A Regulated supply is required by legislation to be risk assessed once every 5 years by the Council. A risk assessment involves looking at the whole PWS including the source, the area the water is abstracted from and the number of consumers using it. The assessment also includes an inspection of the water source, storage tanks, water treatment and considers any potential hazards that may result in a risk and the severity of its consequence to water quality.

An officer will inspect the supply and ask you a number of questions relating to potential hazards that can affect the quality and safety of the water supplied either during or after the risk assessment site visit. Other factors, e.g. sampling and analysis results, local geology and site history are also considered as part of the risk assessment process.

The risk levels provide a way of prioritising actions that should be carried out on the PWS to reduce the contamination risk posed by any identified hazards. You will be given a copy of the risk assessment report and any actions that need to be taken will be checked by an officer during subsequent visits to the PWS. Action points could change each time a risk assessment is carried out.

You should have a suitable and effective point of entry water disinfection system (e.g. Ultra Violet treatment system or chlorination) in place to ensure that the drinking water is safe to drink.

The following links provide information about different types of treatment:-

Scottish Government <https://www.mygov.scot/treat-private-water-supply>

Drinking Water Quality Regulator <https://dwqr.scot/media/2pqjeq4c/technical-guidance-treatment-ultraviolet-irradiation.pdf>

Water Safety Plans

The supplier, owners, and occupiers of properties on the supply all have responsibilities to ensure the water is wholesome and does not pose a risk to human health. All private water supplies require proactive maintenance and management. Sources, distribution, and storage arrangements should be checked at intervals and equipment checked and maintained in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions.

As the owner/ person responsible for the water supply, you are required to demonstrate that you are managing the supply, and this is achieved by producing a Water Safety Plan (WSP). A WSP builds upon the findings of your risk assessment and helps you to produce a maintenance programme.

Your plan should look at the design, operation, and maintenance of the water system from source to tap and also identify what you should do in an emergency water situation such as loss of water or loss of power resulting in a failure of any water treatment systems.

When writing your WSP, it is helpful to use the 5 "W" and "H" questions - **Why, What, How, When, Where and Who.**

Taking an example of spring supply and the point of water collection, the 5"W" and "H" questions question may look like this:-

Why – To ensure that the point of water collection is not at risk of contamination

What - Spring source

How - Visual inspection

When - Monthly check and after storm conditions

Where – Check the spring source collection point, inlet pipe and surrounding area

Who - Mr X (or the trained and competent person for the supply)

You should repeat these questions at each stage of your water distribution system e.g. hillside tank storage, for external pipework, at the point of your water treatment systems, for all internal pipework.

You should record all the maintenance you undertake and have a copy of your Water Safety Plan available for inspection if requested by the Council.

Useful information on Water Safety Plans can be found at these links:-

- The World Health Organisation (WHO) Guidance on Water Safety Plans [WHO- Water Safety Plan](#).
- [Highland Council - Water Safety Maintenance Plan](#)
- [Drinking Water Inspectorate ; A brief guide to drinking water safety plans](#)

Charges for Risk Assessment and Water Testing

The Council charge a fee for a risk assessment and water testing. The charge for water analysis is done on a cost recovery basis and the Council uses an accredited laboratory. The cost of the initial visit, risk assessment and water analysis are currently £340.57. Subsequent costs will be less as a risk assessment is usually carried out every 5 years.

Information Notice

An information notice providing details of the supply and a copy of the latest water test results is required to be prominently displayed in each property to which the public has access. Any advertising of the accommodation should also inform your potential customers that the property is on a PWS.

An information notice is attached at the end of this briefing note.

Grant Funding

A grant of up to £800 per property is available from the Council to improve a private water supply. The grant is for users and owners to help them improve their supplies to meet modern standards and provide safe drinking water. Please note that the grant does not cover the cost of on-going maintenance and operation of your water supply.

You can use a grant to:-

- Improve your PWS (i.e., replace a damaged tank, install a new treatment system, replace lead pipes)
- Provide an alternative PWS to an existing supply that is failing
- Set up a domestic distribution system

Before applying for grant, the PWS is required to be risk assessed by the Council and you must also meet the eligibility criteria of the grant scheme [Grant eligibility requirements](#). Please note that grant funding is not available for buildings that were built after June 2006. A condition of grant funding is that the application must have a robust Water Safety Plan in place prior to the award of grant.

You can't use the grant to cover the costs of connecting to the public water supply. If you're considering this, contact [Scottish Water](#) for more information.

If you would like further information about a grant please contact envhealth@highland.gov.uk

What's happens next?

You are required to complete the PWS Questionnaire and return this to Environmental Health at envhealth@highland.gov.uk.

The Council will check that your property/water supply is on the Register and that the water quality has been tested in the last 12 months that met with the water quality standards. The supply will also require to be risk assessed.

An officer will contact you if the property/supply is not registered and arrange a water test. Please note that a risk assessment of the supply may not be carried out at the same time as the water sample however an officer will duly advise you on this matter.

You do not need to submit a copy of Water Safety Plan, but this should be made available if the Council requests to see a copy.

Useful Information on Private Water Supplies

For further advice and guidance on private water supplies refer to the following publications and links:

- Scottish Government: [Private Water Supply Information](#)
- Drinking Water Quality Regulator: [DWQR – Private Water Supply Information Regulations](#)
- Civic Government (Scotland) Act 1982 (Licensing of Short Term lets) Order 2021 [Regulation](#)
- The Water Intended for Human Consumption (Private Supplies) (Scotland) Regulations 2017 [Regulation](#)

Relevant Contacts at The Highland Council:

Should you wish further advice from The Highland Council then please contact:

envhealth@highland.gov.uk or telephone our Service Centre on 01349 886603.



Important Information

A Private Water Supply serves this property

What is a private water supply? A private water supply is any water which is supplied to a property that is not provided by mains water supply, often situated in a remote rural area, and can be sourced from a spring, stream, well, loch or borehole. The quality of private water supplies can be variable and to ensure that the water is safe to drink the owner must provide an adequate and maintained water treatment system.

Important Information about this water supply

Source of water is from:

Treatment on this supply :

.....

Water Quality: *see most recent water test results displayed next to this poster*

Why do I need to know this information? Although the quality of this water is usually acceptable for drinking, under certain circumstances the quality may be lower than you would expect from a public supply. Germs such as E.coli can contaminate water and if swallowed can be harmful to health. The young, very old and persons with poor health are more likely to become unwell from drinking contaminated water. Whilst most owners will ensure that a treatment system is maintained, if you have any concerns about the quality of this water supply you should pre boil the water or drink only bottled water.

Concerned about the water quality? You should contact the owner of the property on tel: _____. If you think that the water has made you ill you are advised to first seek medical advice. You can also contact the Highland Council Environmental Health Team who are responsible for the enforcement of the Regulations concerning private water supplies on telephone 01349 886606 or email env.health@highland.gov.uk.

