



DRINKING WATER INSPECTORATE

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8 July 2026

To: Emma Hardy MP
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for the Environment

Dear Minister

DRINKING WATER 2025 ON THE QUALITY OF PUBLIC SUPPLIES IN ENGLAND

I am pleased to provide you with a copy of our annual report on the quality of drinking water in England. This was presented to the water industry on 7 July. The report summarises the quality of public supplies in England, setting out water company performance and the regulatory work of the Inspectorate in 2025.

The provision of clean drinking water is fundamental to public health, wellbeing and economic prosperity, and access to clean water is recognised by the United Nations as a basic human right. Advances in water safety planning and systems management, underpinned by robust water quality regulation, continue to provide some of the best drinking water in the world.

Drinking water quality in England remains excellent, with public supplies consistently meeting the stringent regulatory standards for drinking water. Compliance with the standards in 2025 was 99.97%, providing strong assurance that consumers continue to receive wholesome water, although the challenge remains to achieve full compliance with the regulatory standards.

Drinking water supplies in England are protected through water safety planning, which provides a robust multi-barrier approach from source to tap. Through this process, risks are identified and mitigation is put in place before there is any deterioration in quality or impact on consumers. The quality of supplies is further verified through extensive random sampling. Where things go wrong, the Inspectorate investigates, assesses compliance failures and events, and takes enforcement action where necessary to prevent recurrence.

The annual report sets out the Inspectorate's regulatory activity during 2025, including enforcement, company improvement programmes, technical audits, consumer contacts, PFAS, lead, service reservoir integrity, security and network and information systems. It also includes a summary of the Inspectorate's findings from the Brixham Cryptosporidium outbreak and the resultant fine to South West Water. Such events are thankfully extremely rare; however, the investigation and prosecution demonstrate that, when failings occur, there will be serious consequences.

Following the Government's Independent Review of the water system in England and Wales, the Inspectorate has been working with fellow regulators to realign the regulatory regime so that it is better able to address the pressing challenges facing the sector. These include climate change, population growth, new and emerging risks, national security, the resilience and sufficiency of supplies, and the safe development of water recycling and reuse schemes.

In March this year, I made recommendations to Ministers in relation to safe practices for rainwater harvesting and greywater reuse systems. The recommendations for drinking water quality standards put to you in January 2025 have also formed the basis of guidance to water companies. The ultimate objective is to update the regulations to meet modern standards of quality, ensuring that consumers remain confident in the quality of their drinking water and are protected from exposure to contaminants. My team continues to work with your officials to introduce these standards into legislation.

Our water supply system is under pressure from a range of long-term and interconnected threats. Systemic changes are needed to enable the water industry to become more resilient and to support long-term investment decisions. Legacy issues such as lead pipes and nickel in domestic dwellings, PFAS and other environmental threats, as well as infrastructure, asset health, security and operational technology, remain critical issues. The Inspectorate has worked closely with Ofwat through the five-yearly price review to ensure there is adequate investment in these areas, but much remains to be done to improve asset health and resilience.

The Government has continued to work at pace on regulatory water reform to reset the relationship between consumers, water companies and the environment. This is an opportunity to think ahead and develop sustainable solutions which will meet the challenges facing the sector. I am confident that this work will lay the foundations to provide safe, secure and high-quality drinking water now and for future generations, balancing the needs of consumers, protecting the environment and ensuring bills remain affordable.

My team continues to work hard to support this work, and I look forward to working with renewed energy and purpose to protect and improve drinking water supplies today and for future generations.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Marcus Rink', with a stylized, cursive script.

Dr Marcus Rink OBE
Chief Inspector of Drinking Water