



DRINKING WATER INSPECTORATE

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21 July 2026

**To: Llyr Gruffydd MS
Cabinet Minister for Rural Resilience and Sustainability**

Dear Minister

Drinking Water 2025 on the quality of public supplies in Wales

Firstly, congratulations on your recent appointment as Cabinet Minister for Rural Resilience and Sustainability. It was a pleasure to meet with you to discuss the key challenges and my priorities for drinking water in Wales. I am pleased to provide you with a copy of our annual report on the quality of drinking water in Wales.

The function of the Drinking Water Inspectorate is to protect public health and maintain public confidence in drinking water by holding companies to account to ensure they supply safe and clean drinking water, now and for future generations. The report summarises the quality of public supplies in Wales, 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. Drinking water quality in Wales 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 Wales are protected through water safety planning, which provides a robust multi-barrier approach to preventing risks from

materialising. Through this process, risks are identified from source to tap and appropriate mitigation is put in place before there is any deterioration in quality or sufficiency, 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.

In 2025, regulatory activity highlighted the continuing importance of accurate risk assessments, representative monitoring, timely investigation and effective delivery of legal instruments. The report also demonstrates the need for companies to maintain effective risk assessments, operate treatment processes within control, keep accurate data, and ensure that assets remain in a condition capable of protecting water quality. Summary details of the Inspectorate's regulatory activity during 2025 are presented in my report, and further details of company improvement programmes are published on the Inspectorate's website.

While consumers should have confidence in the quality of drinking water in Wales, there are significant performance issues in the largest water company in Wales, Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water. In comparison with the wider industry, the company remains an outlier in terms of poor performance, and this continues to be a matter of concern. The Inspectorate will continue to hold the company to account for delivery of the improvements required to protect consumers and restore confidence.

The sector continues to face significant challenges. This report highlights the need for companies to improve asset health and resilience, with particular focus on service reservoirs, treated water tanks, air valves and distribution mains. Legacy issues such as lead pipes and nickel in domestic dwellings, PFAS and other environmental threats, together with infrastructure, security and operational technology, remain critical issues that need to be addressed. 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.

Our water supply system is also under increasing 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. 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 Welsh Government in 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.

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 to better 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.

The UK Government is working at pace on regulatory water reform to reset the relationship between consumers, water companies and the environment. I look forward to working with your officials to take the opportunity to think ahead and develop sustainable solutions which will meet the challenges facing Wales. This work is essential to 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.

Your sincerely

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

Dr Marcus Rink OBE
Chief Inspector of Drinking Water