

The Drinking Water Inspectorate has been engaged with the Council of the Isles of Scilly, the Duchy of Cornwall, Tresco Estates and owners/operators of private water supplies on the five main islands. This engagement started in 2006 and commenced with DWI completing a risk assessment for supplies provided by the Council, moved on to risk assess supplies provided by small managed systems owned by the Duchy of Cornwall and following that, engaged with a large number of residents relying on private supplies. Consequently DWI has detailed knowledge of the water supply systems on the Islands.

Public supplies

There have been improvements in the public supplies provided by the Council over the years however one key issue for the Council has been the ability to fund development and replacement of assets due to the small base of bill payers on the Islands. Funding has been provided from unsustainable arrangements. The extension of South West Water's area of appointment would allow the Islands to enter the funding mechanism owned by Ofwat which will allow for long term planning. Additionally, South West Water will be required to include the Isles of Scilly in their Water Resource Management Plans. Creation of the plan will require an understanding of current resources and look at providing for any future growth. This is something the Council has not had resources to carry out or a formal requirement to consider and it is in the interests of residents that this is carried out.

The team of water operators on the Isles is small but dedicated but too often overstretched and under-resourced with a potential risk to supplies on the Islands. The involvement of South West Water will bring the team into a better resourced arrangement.

While the Council have been voluntarily complying with the same standards as the mainland, resources for sampling and analysis required of a modern supply have been severely limited but South West Water have the capacity and intention to develop this capability which could lead to quality employment for local residents and more reliable analysis.

The current arrangements on the Islands mean that DWI do not currently have a statutory role in respect of the Isles and no powers to act on behalf of residents with regard to drinking water supplies. Incorporation of the Isles into the area of appointment involve activating the relevant legislation which will in turn bring the benefit of both the Drinking Water Inspectorate and the Consumer Council for Water having a formal role to protect the interests of consumers.

Private Supplies

Some private supplies have quality issue which require investment in order to provide wholesome water to residents. The Inspectorate's view is that the safety of water is improved where it comes from a single properly operated system. While the Duchy of Cornwall have expanded their small community systems, they are limited in their ability to develop these and operate them in line with modern standards. While South West Water May not ultimately be able to provide a single supply to all properties on St Agnes and St Martin's due to logistics and consumer choice, there is scope to ensure that supplies are properly managed and provision of new connection considered.

For the reasons provided above, I am in favour of the extension of South West Water's area of appointment to include the Isles of Scilly