FACTSHEET 1

Your water explained

Scottish Water
Trusted to serve Scotland

We use water every day, to live and work; at home; in the office; in factories and industry in every part of the country. It's vital your water is clear and fresh. It is also important as a customer that you understand the role of Scottish Water in providing various services across Scotland. We have therefore produced a number of factsheets on various aspects of water quality to keep you informed.

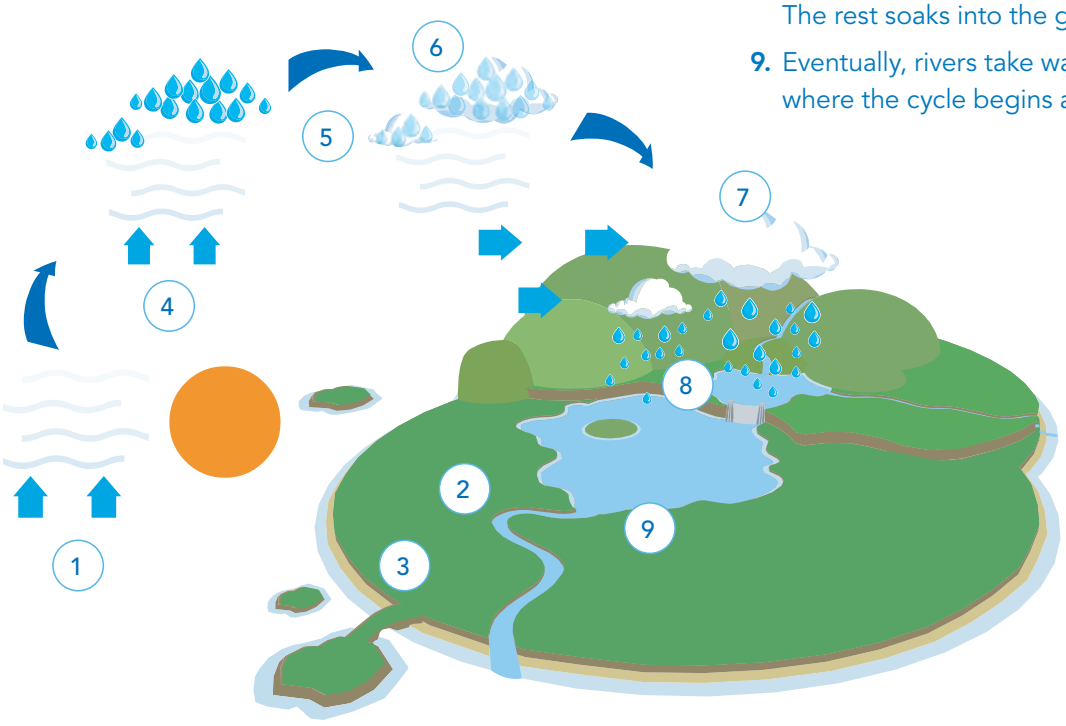
This factsheet provides you with information on:

- Where your water comes from
- Sources of water
- How we get water to your home
- How and why we monitor the quality of your water
- The water industry in Scotland
- How we are investing in a cleaner future
- How you can use your water wisely
- How to contact us

1 Where your water comes from

Water covers roughly 3/4 of the earth's surface. Of this 97% is salt water and 2% is frozen. That leaves just 1% as fresh water, which everyone on the planet has to share. With such a small percentage, why do we rarely run out of the fresh water that we need to live on? The answer lies in the water cycle – nature's way of recycling this scarce resource. The diagram below shows how the water cycle works.

1. Water evaporates from seas (leaving the salt behind).
2. Fresh water evaporates from rivers.
3. Trees breathe out water vapour through their leaves (known as transpiration).
4. All this water vapour rises into the sky.
5. As the vapour rises it gets cooler and condenses to form clouds.
6. The tiny water droplets that form the clouds group together into bigger droplets.
7. Eventually these big water droplets are too heavy and fall back to the earth as rain, snow or hail.
8. Some of this water feeds plants, trees and animals. The rest soaks into the ground and flows into rivers.
9. Eventually, rivers take water back out into the sea, where the cycle begins again.



2 Sources of water

Essentially all of the water you use comes from rain. We treat 3 types of source water: ground water, upland catchment water and lowland river water. The way that we treat your water depends on where it has come from, because the level of treatment necessary to meet the required standards of safety and quality depends on the source water quality. Generally, the poorer the quality of the source water, the complexity and cost of treating the water increases. You can be assured that whatever quality the source water is, all public mains drinking water in Scotland is disinfected.

At Scottish Water it is our duty to make sure that your water is safe for you to use and drink. Each water source will have unique characteristics and requires tailored treatment processes to ensure that it is safe for you to drink. Some of these processes are briefly explained in **Scottish Water Factsheet 3 Water treatment explained**.

3 How we get water to your home

We pipe water from reservoirs to our treatment works across the whole of Scotland. Once treated, the water flows through our vast network of pipes to your home so that you have an uninterrupted supply of clean, safe drinking water. Water is also stored within closed tanks in our network to ensure there is a continuous supply. We aim to ensure your water is supplied at an adequate pressure to allow you to use your showers, washing machines and dishwashers. This should allow you to fill a 1 litre bottle in 7 seconds.

We care about our customers and work 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, to provide an uninterrupted supply of high quality water to you. In an unforeseen emergency or during planned interruptions, to minimise disruption, we will make every effort to redirect supplies from neighbouring networks to maintain your supply where possible. This forms part of our overall risk management strategy.

4 How and why we monitor the quality of your water

There are very strict laws governing drinking water in the UK. In fact, drinking water in the UK is subject to some of the tightest regulations in the world. In Scotland, drinking water standards are set down by law in The Public Water Supplies (Scotland) Regulations 2014, which is in line with all European Community (EC) requirements. It is the Drinking Water Quality Regulator's (DWQR) job to make sure that we meet these standards.

As a result we regularly test our water quality at our:

- treatment works
- service reservoirs
- customers' taps

In addition to this, some water quality parameters are continuously monitored at major treatment works. Across Scotland laboratory quality tests are carried out on water samples each year for regulatory purposes. Many more samples are taken by staff for operational reasons (e.g. bursts, new mains, complaints). The percentage of all regulatory samples complying with the relevant standards in Scotland is over 99%. The small minority of tests that do not meet these standards action is immediately taken to resolve the problem. For more information, please see **Scottish Water Factsheet 2 Water quality standards explained.**

5 The water industry in Scotland

Scottish Water provides the public water and waste water services across the whole of Scotland, and helps to ensure that all customers enjoy improved standards and quality of service while offering best value from water and waste water charges.

- We answer to the Scottish Government through the First Minister.
- The Water Industry Commission for Scotland (WICS) is the economic regulator of the water industry in Scotland.

- The Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) is the final stage for complaints about most organisations that provide public services within Scotland, including Scottish Water. Their service is independent, free and confidential. The SPSO will normally only consider a complaint after you have completed Scottish Water's complaints review process.
- The Drinking Water Quality Regulator (DWQR) monitors and regulates the quality of the water which we deliver to you. On the DWQR's website it is possible to check the quality of water where you live at www.dwqr.org.uk

They ensure that we provide high quality water to our customers across the whole of Scotland under the Public Water Supplies (Scotland) Regulations 2014. The DWQR carries out this function by:

- Maintaining a very close liaison with various parts of the business
- Conducting audits
- Overseeing all PCV* failures and any water quality incidents
- Annual reporting
- Orders investigation where appropriate
- We also regularly interact with other organisations concerning the quality of your water including health boards, environmental health, local councils, Scottish Environmental Protection Agency (SEPA), Health Protection Scotland (HPS), and the Food Standards Agency (FSA).

* PCV – prescribed concentration or value of a parameter. These are tabulated within the Regulations.

water industry commission FOR SCOTLAND

SCOTTISH PUBLIC SERVICES OMBUDSMAN
People Centred | Improvement Focused

dwqr

* Source: Waterwise 2010.

6 How we are investing in a cleaner future

One of our biggest challenges is to improve our services to meet the needs of our customers as well as statutory legal requirements. We are improving the quality of drinking water across the whole of Scotland to meet strict standards set out in legislation. Much of our work is governed by European legislation which has been interpreted into Scottish Law.

Scottish Water's capital investment programme will help secure the future of services to our customers. Through this we are working even harder to deliver clear benefits through environmental improvements, reduced supply interruptions and better quality drinking water. For more information on our capital investment programme visit **www.scottishwater.co.uk**.

7 How you can use water wisely

Water is something that we often take for granted. It is a vital commodity in every Scottish household for drinking, washing and cleaning. Each person uses approximately 150 litres a day.

Scottish Water encourages everyone to do their bit for the environment and use water wisely. It doesn't need a major lifestyle change. It's not about the water we use, it's about the water we waste. You can take a few simple and effective steps to help you use water wisely. These include:

- Take a shower instead of a bath – it uses around a 1/3 of the water and saves time and money. You can use a shower timer to try and cut down the time and energy you spend in your shower and watch out for power showers as they use as much water as a bath!
- Wait until you have enough dishes or clothes for a full load before you use your dishwasher or washing machine. If you must do smaller washes use the half load cycle.
- A dripping tap wastes at least 15 litres a day that's 5,500 litres of water a year - in a year that's enough to fill a paddling pool every week for the whole summer.*
- Use a watering can instead of a hose pipe for your plants – it's more accurate, placing the water where it is most needed.

For more information on water quality enquiries visit **www.scottishwater.co.uk** and download the following factsheets:

Scottish Water factsheets in this series:

- **Factsheet 1** Your water explained
- **Factsheet 2** Water quality standards explained
- **Factsheet 3** Water treatment explained
- **Factsheet 4** Colour, taste and odour explained
- **Factsheet 5** Chlorine explained
- **Factsheet 6** Chloramination explained
- **Factsheet 7** Lead explained
- **Factsheet 8** Biofilms and staining explained
- **Factsheet 9** Manganese explained
- **Factsheet 12** Hardness in drinking water

We want to make it easy to contact us – here's how:

We always have someone here to take your call, you can write to us or alternatively you can contact us through our website.

Alternative formats of this leaflet can be made available free of charge. For information on Braille, large print, audio and a variety of languages, please contact us.

If you have a disability, medical condition or other reason where you will need additional assistance from Scottish Water then please contact us and we can add your name, address and requirements to our confidential Priority Services Register.

We record all calls for quality and training purposes.

www.scottishwater.co.uk

help@scottishwater.co.uk

facebook.com/scottishwater

@scottish_water

Customer Helpline **0800 0778778**

Please quote this reference code when contacting us: **SWFact WE5 05/20**