



guardians of drinking water quality

## DRINKING WATER INSPECTORATE

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### **NORTHUMBRIAN WATER LTD PLEAD GUILTY TO SUPPLYING WATER UNFIT FOR HUMAN CONSUMPTION**

Northumbrian Water Ltd pleaded guilty, on 11 September 2012 at Newcastle Magistrate's Court, to four counts of supplying water unfit for human consumption. The case related to the supply of water with an objectionable appearance to consumers in Newcastle, North Tyneside and South East Northumberland

The charges were brought under Section 70 of the Water Industry Act 1991 (as amended).

The Company was fined £2,000 on each of four counts totalling £8,000 and paid £14,512.96 towards prosecution costs and a victim surcharge.

In response, Professor Jeni Colbourne, Chief Inspector of Drinking Water, said: *"This case was brought in the public interest following the repair of a burst main which resulted in a large number of consumers receiving untreated water which they rejected because of its appearance. Regardless of the need to resume supplies to customers as quickly as possible, this case reminds Northumbrian Water that in the process, water quality cannot be compromised"*.

#### **Notes to editors:**

1. Section 70 of the Water Industry Act 1991 (as amended) makes it criminal offence for a water company to supply water which is unfit for human consumption. The Drinking water Inspectorate (DWI) investigates all drinking water quality events in England and Wales and will bring prosecutions if it believes that it has reliable evidence that an offence was committed, where the company does not have a defence that it took all reasonable steps and exercised all due diligence, and when such a prosecution is regarded as being in the public interest.
2. The prosecution follows an investigation by DWI of an incident involving the supply of discoloured water to consumers in the Newcastle, North Tyneside and South East Northumberland between 15 and 20 July 2010.

Northumbrian Water Ltd experienced a burst to a very large main carrying untreated water to Horsley water treatment works. The works was shut down, a deep trench dug and a treated water main cut open to gain access to effect the repair.

On completion of the repair, the works was restarted but the repair was not sound and untreated water flooded the trench. The flood water entered the main and network carrying treated drinking water as this had not been sealed off effectively.

Insufficient pumping capacity was provided at the repair trench which was not in accordance with industry best practice for hygiene arrangements. These actions, combined with the restarting of the works, resulted in the supply of water which was discoloured. A number of consumers found the appearance of the water so unpleasant that they rejected it for drinking and food preparation purposes.

3. The Drinking Water Inspectorate was set up in January 1990. Its main task is to check that water companies in England and Wales supply wholesome drinking water and in doing so comply with the requirements of the Water Supply (Water Quality) Regulations 2000 (as amended).

#### **MEDIA ENQUIRIES:**

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