

**WRITTEN QUESTION TO THE MINISTER FOR HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES
BY THE CONNÉTABLE OF ST. JOHN
ANSWER TO BE TABLED ON TUESDAY 1st APRIL 2014**

Question

Following the exceptional rainfall over the winter period, what action, if any, was put in place by the department to encourage households not on mains water to have their domestic water supplies tested for bacteria, e coli, etc. and did any advertising take place to warn householders of the potential danger from run off from land or soak-aways getting into their private water supplies?

Does the Health department work with the Environment department to manage potable water supplies to households, in particular where very young children or vulnerable people of all ages are present? Will the Minister work with Minister for Planning and Environment to put funding in place so households can get their drinking water tested free of charge or at least review the charges with a view to reducing the current fees charged for testing?

Has the Minister raised with the Council of Ministers the issue of additional funding to extend mains water supplies to improve health during her term of office and does she support TTS' moves to extend main drains to the last 13% of the island?

What action has her department taken in response to the St John slurry contamination incident on 24th February?

Answer

In answering this question I also refer the Connétable of St John to the answer I gave to his question 1240/5(7788) of 10 September 2013.

The "mains" supply of potable water is managed by Jersey New Waterworks and water rates are paid for such supply. Where residents choose not to access this supply, or are unable to, other arrangements are made, most commonly a borehole supply. The Environment Department licences abstraction from boreholes. Clearly, properties connected to such supplies are not subject to water rates. Typically such a supply will be fitted with the necessary filters to ensure a wholesome supply, and the maintenance of such equipment is the responsibility of the owner. Similarly, the property owner is responsible for arranging for tests on their own supply. These are carried out by the Public Analyst. Where adverse results are found the supply users are referred to the Public Health Department where advice is available on remedying.

The department encourages everyone not on the mains supply to have regular tests on their water supply. This is to ensure that the water is safe and that any treatment on the supply is functioning well. Advice is available on the States of Jersey website.

Any borehole supply should have sufficient source protection to prevent direct contamination from run-off, even in the wettest of conditions. Wells may be more susceptible to direct contamination, but again suitable source protection should prevent this.

It is possible that the groundwater becomes more polluted than usual during certain climatic conditions, and we would recommend that any private water supply should have treatment fitted capable of dealing with such spikes in pollution.

No advertising took place with regard to private water supplies and potential contamination.

The Health Department does work with the Environment Department with regard to water quality. Advice is given to pregnant women and mothers of small children with regard to water quality, in particularly increased nitrate concentrations.

The charges for testing water supplies are set by the States Official Analyst. It is for the owner of the supply to ensure that a supply is safe, and a test should be part of a maintenance regime for their system. The costs would be part of ensuring their supply was safe. People on private supplies do not pay water rates and this should go some way to offsetting costs of operating a private supply.

I have not raised with the Council of Ministers the issue of additional funding to extend mains water supplies. The department would support as many properties as is practicable being connected to mains drains.

The department has been working with the responsible agency which is taking the lead on the St John incident, and is ready to give advice on health related issues should that be necessary.