What is a Private Water Supply?
A guide for users - Technical note.

March 2026

Keith Marshall, Diana Valero, Katy Joyce with the collaboration of Tim Pittaway

Acknowledgements

This report is an output of the project **JHI-D2-1 'Emerging Water Futures'**, funded by the Scottish Government RESAS Strategic Research Programme 2022-2027. It corresponds with the deliverable 4.2 Practice Brief, arising from the activities WP4.1 and 4.2, exploring the resilience of private water supplies.
We thank Dr Tim Pittaway for the elaboration of the infographic representing a PWS system and Louise Jacquemain for her assistance in the development of the workshop series, on the results of which this guide builds.
We thank Carol Kyle and Ruth Wilson for reviewing this document and their feedback on the report and brochure. We also thank all stakeholders who provided comments on earlier versions of the brochure.

Further information and contact details

- For more information about the content of this document, please contact Keith.Marshall@hutton.ac.uk or Diana.Valero@hutton.ac.uk
- For further information about this part of the project please visit our the website https://www.hutton.ac.uk/project/emerging-water-futures-resilience-of-private-water-supplies/ or contact Diana.Valero@hutton.ac.uk
- For further information about the Emerging Water Futures project please visit the project website https://www.hutton.ac.uk/project/emerging-water-futures/ or contact the project lead Miriam.Glendel@hutton.ac.uk

Contents

Introduction 3
How did the practice guide come to be? 4
Methods and Rationale 4
Content and Format 5
Design process 6
What is in the practice guide for PWS users? 7
What is next? 8
Disseminating the guide 8
Upcoming outputs and further research 10
References 10
Appendix 1. Guidance pdf/html version 11
Appendix 2. Brochure version 15

Introduction

Rural drinking water is one area of supply that is significantly impacted by the emerging threats to Scotland's water resources and services that are posed by pollution and contamination, low levels of user awareness, and climate change impacts. Users and managers of these supplies must contend with the increasing regularity of low flow conditions and drought, health and social impacts of poor drinking water quality, as well as the need to respond to changing policy and regulatory environments. Although these impacts play out across multiple scales, rural households and businesses dependent on private water supplies (PWS) experience these challenges in very material ways and often find themselves tasked with developing coping strategies and innovating in the face of growing uncertainty.

The project 'Emerging Water Futures' has looked into rural PWS as an appropriate case study for examining vulnerability to water shortages and water quality issues, attitudes and perceptions of risk associated with water supplies, and the feasibility of self-monitoring to support a wider self-supply management model[1].

Research has highlighted the need for improving PWS users' knowledge about PWS practice as an important enabler for resilience (Geris et al. 2024, Valero et al. forthcoming). The aim of this guide is to contribute to such capacity building, filling an information need identified by PWS stakeholders (Citizens Advice Scotland 2020, Ash 2023, Geris et al. 2024).

Building on evidence collected during the last three years on users' and stakeholder's experiences, we have developed an accessible practice guide for PWS users. This provides an introduction to what a PWS is and how to look after it from source to tap, considering water quality and scarcity, and system maintenance and affordability aspects.

There is a high level of diversity among PWS setups in Scotland shaped by the type of source (surface or groundwater), abstraction point (e.g. borehole, spring), the land use around them (e.g. agriculture, forestry), the pipework and technical assemblage of the PWS system (e.g. pump, tank, filtration system), and its maintenance (e.g. testing) and management (e.g. shared PWS). This diversity makes it impossible to cover all setup specificities. Consequently, the practice guide focuses on describing all the elements that might be combined in a PWS, and signpost to users those aspects of their setup that are important to consider.

Many stakeholders have developed resources to support PWS. Local Councils' Environmental Health Officers (EHO) teams are a key contact for PWS users. While the information available and how support is organised might vary among Local Authorities, most have developed resources for their PWS users. The Scottish Government website hosts an up-to-date hub with clear, accessible information for users/owners and links to relevant council pages. Other national-level stakeholders also provide dedicated information relevant to PWS (e.g. Drinking Water Quality Regulator for Scotland, Scottish Water, Citizens Advice Scotland). Our guide signposts to such content where relevant.

This short report describes how the guide came to be, its content and format, dissemination plans, and how it connects with what comes next in this part of the EWF project. The different versions of the guide (brochure, .pdf, and editable doc for LA websites) can be found in appendixes 1, and 2.

[1] A full report on this (Valero et al. forthcoming) will be published later in 2026.

How did the practice guide come to be?

Methods and Rationale

The development of the guide was informed by evidence on PWS users' practice and information needs and gaps collected in a series of qualitative interviews with PWS users developed in 2024-2025 and a series of participatory workshops with users and stakeholders in 2025. In addition, since the EWF project started in 2022, the research team has liaised with the relevant PWS policy officers at the Scottish Government and at the DWQR to discuss the study and its direction. In Summer 2025, when discussing the work ahead for delivering the deliverable 4.2 Practice Brief, these stakeholders noted the need for clarity around roles and responsibilities related to PWS. This need was taken into account in the design of the participatory workshops.

The interviews

The aim of the interviews was to collect information on lived experiences of using PWS in Scotland. We were interested in understanding how socio-economic factors shape perceptions and experiences of access to water, and how people's health, wellbeing and social relationships affect (or are impacted by) water supply issues. The interview series was designed to provide in-depth insights on the diversity of situations around PWS to better understand models of resilience.

Interviewees were recruited in two regions of Scotland (the Northeast and the Southwest) with a significant presence of PWS and where PWS are reported to be increasingly exposed to different risks (e.g. water scarcity in the Northeast, land-use change in the Southwest). There were 22 households interviewed in total (in most cases there was just one participant per interview, but in some cases the interview became a group interview with two participants from the same household.

The interviews explored the profile of PWS users and household uses, their experiences with PWS and any problems they might have had, and their experiences of support from community and institutions. Interviews were done in person or remotely between October 2024 and March 2025, recorded and transcribed, and analysed thematically.

The participatory workshops

The aim of the three workshops was to collect information on support needed and options for support, possibilities for self-monitoring, and for creating a PWS support network.

The workshops were designed to complement and triangulate the information collected in previous stages in the research, and to fill in identified gaps. They each consisted of two sets of activities. The first block focused on the topic of existing PWS support, aspirations for future support, and what changes might be needed to facilitate that aspirational support. The second block explored enablers and barriers for specific potential avenues for support.

The workshop series was organised to maximise participation from a range of stakeholders and participants across Scotland but paying special attention to the diverse situations in the Southwest and Northeast. We held two in-person workshops – one in each of the targeted

geographies, and one online to capture experiences from other locations in Scotland, and aspects relevant at national level. The workshops took place on the 18th of September 2025 (in Southern Ayrshire), the 6th of October 2025 (in Aberdeen), and the 16th of October 2025 (online).

A total of 19 participants attended the workshops: 11 stakeholders from public bodies (from diverse local councils, SEPA, Consumer Scotland, and Scottish Water), 6 representatives of private service providers to PWS (one consultancy, one plumber, two PWS specialised firms, and two from greywater solutions), and 2 users (see table 1). Participants in the workshops represented the breadth of stakeholder approaches to PWS and their understanding of issues.

Table 1. Distribution of participants in the workshops

Type of participants	Workshop South-West	Workshop North-East	Nation-wide workshop
Public bodies	*3*	*5*	*3*
Private service providers	*1*	*4*	*1*
PWS users	*1*	*1*	*0*

Content and Format

The content of the guide for PWS users has been developed drawing on the evidence collected in the interviews and workshops regarding basic information needs for PWS users.

While most of the interviewees showed a good level of knowledge about their PWS setup and the issues affecting it, the need for improving the capacity of PWS users regarding understanding their systems and PWS in general was deemed critical in all the three workshops and by all types of stakeholders. Improving the education of PWS users about PWS in general and understanding their own systems and how to take care of them was identified as one of the key priorities in all the workshops.

In particular, it was considered that such capacity building should provide a holistic understanding of PWS, covering how to access guidance and help and how to maintain and take care of a PWS, including the importance of regular servicing.

The topics discussed around such capacity building can be clustered in two pillars: development of information resources for users and increased communication about PWS.

- **Information resources for PWS users**, particularly new users, should include general information about PWS (e.g. a PWS manual, or information packs for new owners). Guidance could be based on real case studies (e.g. high-quality PWS or new management approaches) but also be based on ideal/theoretical set-up models. In any case, this guidance should cover at least spring and borehole PWS and attend to main differences and risks in the set-up of a PWS. Guidance could also crystalize as a users' manual providing basic information about PWS, contacts, and links to further resources, and checklists of good practice for maintaining a PWS system. It was noted that any information shared should be accessible, with simple messages, and written in plain English.

- On **increased communication about PWS**, the need for Local Councils to reach out PWS users was highlighted, using a combination of communication methods tailored to users, from flyers to newspaper advertisements and social media, and including seasonal campaigns and workshops.

As a result of such discussions, the PWS user guide has been designed with a view to support both pillars:

- We have developed an informational resource with general information about PWS, based on a theoretical/ideal set-up model and covering groundwater and freshwater set-ups, that includes basic good practice for looking after a PWS system, clear information on who to contact about what, and links to further resources.
- This resource has been developed in plain English to make it accessible, and it has been designed in two formats as a trifold leaflet and a short document with hyperlinks that could be used by stakeholders in print and online formats depending on their needs. The document format is also easily editable, so Local Councils can update it with specific information tailored for PWS users in their local authority area.

Design process

Once the evidence collected was analysed and the content needs identified, the research team started drafting the user guide.

The team also identified and reviewed existing resources of similar nature aiming to validate messages and avoid duplication of resources. Resources considered in this step are listed in table 2.

Table 2. Existing PWS information resources reviewed

Source	Resource
Scottish Government	• About private water supplies (May 2025) https://www.mygov.scot/private-water-supplies • Find ways to make your private water supply safer (June 2024) https://www.mygov.scot/check-private-water-supply
Drinking Water Quality Regulator for Scotland	• Owners and Users of Private Water Supplies (n.d.) https://dwqr.scot/private-water-supplies/owners-and-users-of-private-water-supplies/
Citizens Advice Scotland	• Private water supply registration and quality of supply (n.d.) https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/scotland/consumer/water/private-water-supply-registration-and-quality-of-supply-s/
Scottish Water	• Connecting your home (n.d.) https://www.scottishwater.co.uk/your-home/your-water/connecting-your-home
Scottish Forestry	• Managing forestry operations to protect private water supplies (May 2025) https://www.forestry.gov.scot/sites/default/files/pub-documents/PDF_Managing_Forestry_Operations_to_Protect_Private_Water_Supplies_V1_27052025.pdf
Scottish & Southern Electricity Networks	• Protecting Private Water Supplies (December 2025) https://www.ssen-transmission.co.uk/globalassets/projects/2030-projects/2030-project-documents/protecting-private-water-supplies.pdf

The content of the draft went through several rounds of interaction among the research team. Once the basic content was agreed, the development was split for adapting it to two different formats: a trifold leaflet (appendix 1) and a document with a more traditional format (appendix 2). Due to the space limitations the leaflet presents a condensed version of the content found in the slightly longer and more detailed text only document.

The team identified the need to develop an infographic that supported the holistic understanding of a PWS system providing visual anchoring to the content of the guide. Dr Tim Pittaway has very generously developed such a graphical representation in discussion with members of the team. The team is confident that the resulting visual (see figure 1) is a fair representation of a general PWS system that can be relatable - even if with caveats - to most PWS users and stakeholders.

Finally, a final draft of the guide has been reviewed by users and stakeholders to validate its content.

What is in the practice guide for PWS users?

The resulting guide about PWS is an introductory resource that presents, in accessible language and format, basic information about what PWS are, what parts and elements are involved in a PWS system, aspects to consider when looking after a PWS, and where to find information and support (table 3).

Table 3. Summary of the content in the guide

Section	Content and content notes
What is a PWS?	- General understanding of PWS and PWS system. - Noting special rules applying for PWS type A/regulated (although avoiding using such terminology).
Knowing your PWS and looking after it	- Abstraction point - Pipes - Pumps and tanks - Filters and UV lights - Testing - Costs
Is your water supply reliable?	- Knowing if your supply is running low
Information and support	- Registry, information and guidance. Signposted to Local Councils' EHOs. - Financial assistance. Signposted Scottish Government grant and Local Councils. - Emergency bottled water. Provided by Scottish Water via Local Councils. - Repairs, maintenance and upgrades. - Further information links

The infographic shows a simplified depiction of the components of two PWS systems -one with a surface water source, and one drawing from groundwater. It describes the parts of the system from source to tap that need to be considered by users when inspecting and maintaining their supply to improve its resilience.

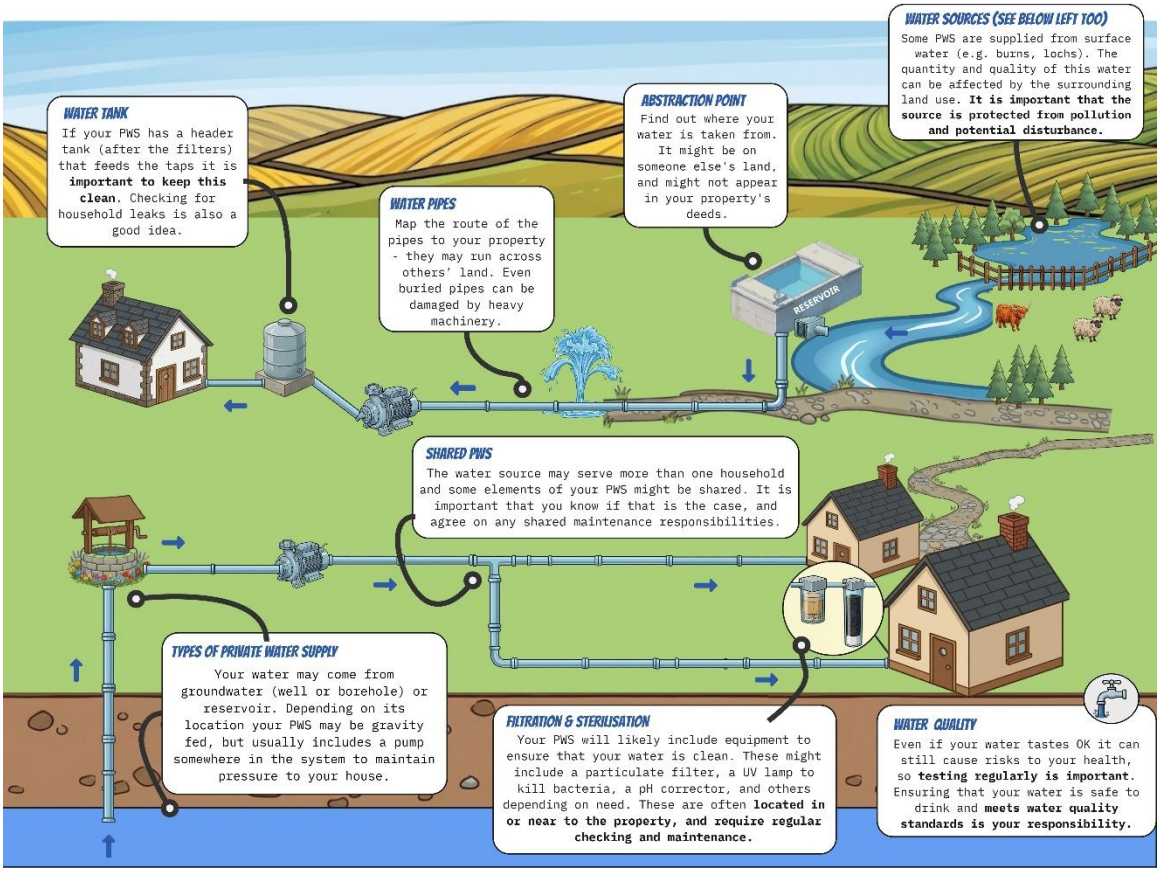


Figure 1. Infographic describing components of PWS systems

What is next?

Disseminating the guide

PWS users are the primary audience for this guide. Getting this output to them requires an important effort of target dissemination that goes beyond the scope of the research in EWF and relies on dissemination via key stakeholders, in particular Local Councils' EHOs. However, the research team has planned a series of actions to facilitate and help dissemination – see table 3.

The guide has been designed so the document format can be easily adapted in each Local Council to tailor information about resources and support available and contact details. Its content is also suitable to be used directly in adaptable html format on their websites if EHOs consider that this makes the resource more accessible to users. The leaflet version has been

designed in A4 size format and considering colour combinations that provide adequate contrast when printing in black and white. This format allows for printing batches of the leaflet at limited cost.

Table 4. Dissemination plan for the guide – actions of the research team

Dissemination channel	Action	When
Email	To send the guide to everyone who participated in the workshops and all users who engaged in previous stages of the research and who gave their consent for staying in touch with them.	By the end April of 2026
	To send the guide to the Scottish Government and DWQR contacts and all Local Councils' EHOs explaining how to use it and edit it. It will include an invitation to a dedicated webinar (see below).	By the end of April 2026
Webinar	Launch of the guide with presentation to stakeholders and explaining how to use it and edit it.	By the end of May 2026
Website	To give the guide a prominent place in the project's website.	By the end of April 2026
	To write-up a post for the external Hutton website blog on PWS that links to the guide.	By the end of June 2026.
	To include it as resource in the dedicated online hub that the Scottish Rural Association is developing for PWS (https://www.ruralwater.scot/)	By the end of April 2026. Launch of the Hub tbc by SRA
Social media	To disseminate the guide via social media through different channels:	
	- Hutton's LinkedIn profile - SEGS Bluesky account	To time with launch of blogpost and/or webinar
	- Facebook posts on the project's page	By the end of April 2026 and recurrently until end of project
Events	To disseminate the guide at rural community events the research team might participate in when the topic is relevant for the audience (e.g. Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire Community Resilience Conference)	Throughout the year, as appropriate
	To disseminate the guide with stakeholders when participating in relevant seminars/conferences. The team will liaise with the Scottish Government and DWQR officers to explore opportunities for this.	2Q-3Q 2026, in alignment with the launch of forthcoming outputs of the project

Upcoming outputs and further research

Drawing on the discussions in the workshops and additional information needs flagged up in discussions with the PWS policy officers in the DWQR and Scottish Government, the research team is preparing a policy brief on supporting the resilience of PWS users. This policy brief will describe a series of improvements or changes considered necessary in policy and practice to support and increase the resilience of PWS to water scarcity and quality risks and other factors that increase the vulnerability of users, including awareness raising and education for PWS users. We foresee this policy brief to be delivered by the end of May 2026.

A full report integrating the learnings form the research done over the last four years, including the insights from a survey to PWS users, the interviews with PWS users and the workshops (Deliverable 4.1.1 – Valero et al. forthcoming), will be delivered by the end of October 2026.

Building on the work done in EWF, the team is currently developing additional research to assess water insecurity in households connected to mains and PWS in central Scotland under the project WISE4Forth. This research will complement the results of the work done in EWF providing evidence from other Scottish regions and detailed information about water poverty aspects.

Research insights have flagged up the need for the development of case studies that explore the management capacity of EHOs who might be under critical stressors (e.g. water scarcity in the North East in 2025) and that pilot new forms of governance of PWS. Further research should attend to those, considering opportunities for participatory-action-research when possible.

References

Ash, E. (2023). Advice, support and funding needs of private water supply users. Consumer Scotland. https://consumer.scot/publications/advice-support-and-funding-needs-of-private-water-supply-users/

Citizen Advice Scotland. (2020). Finding the right solution. Supporting individuals and communities using private water supplies to make informed treatment choices. Citizens Advice Scotland (CAS).

Geris J., Loerke E., Valero D., Marshall K., Comte J.-C., Rivington M., and Wilkinson M. 2024. Understanding the relationship between water scarcity and land use in private water supply catchments – a review. CRW2022_05. Centre of Expertise for Waters (CREW). https://www.crew.ac.uk/sites/www.crew.ac.uk/files/publication/CRW2022_05_Main_Report_and_Appendices.pdf

Valero, D., Marshall, K., Joyce, K., Martinez, G., Juarez-Bourke, A., Jacquemain, L., and Ellis, R. (forthcoming). Resilience of private water supplies – final report. JHI-D2-1 Emerging Water Futures Deliverable 4.1.1. [in preparation]

Appendix 1. Guidance pdf/html version

(The documents that follow will be provided to Local Authorities as pdf version and as editable document).

What is a Private Water Supply? A guide for users

Introduction

If your household is not connected to the mains supply, you will most probably have what is known as a private water supply (PWS). If you do have a PWS, this document contains some information to help you:

- Understand what a PWS is
- What you can do to maintain it so that it provides you with clean water
- Who you might ask for technical help, water quality testing, and other available support
- Be aware that **it is your responsibility to manage your PWS, ensure that your water is safe to drink, and understand any risks to it**

If you are on a domestic supply serving fewer than 50 households, and your property is not registered as a business, you will likely be on what is called an unregulated, or "Type B" supply. Businesses and larger communities served by one water source or abstraction point are regulated (Type A), and the local Council has a responsibility to check these annually.

What does your PWS involve?

Your PWS system takes water from a source to the taps in your property. This involves different parts, each requiring some checking and maintenance.

- The water you use is most likely piped from somewhere on your or a neighbour's property. Sometimes this abstraction point can be some distance away, perhaps on land used for agriculture, forestry or other developments.
- Your water will normally be pumped from an abstraction point such as a well, borehole, spring, reservoir, loch, or river. Water piped from this source may supply just your property or be shared with other households.
- In between this source and your house (often in an outbuilding) there will probably be a filtration and sterilisation system to clean your water and make it safe to drink. Depending on the quality of the water coming from your source these might include a pH corrector, a UV steriliser to kill bacteria, a particulate filter to capture sediment, and others depending on need.

Looking after your water supply

- Make sure that you know where your abstraction point is, and ideally the route of pipework to your property. This is often not obvious as it is often on someone else's land and may not be mapped on the deeds to your property.
- Once you know where it is you can more easily check its condition, identify the source of any leaks, and arrange any maintenance needed. Please note that if you have a borehole, these tend to have an electricity supply to power the pump at the bottom, so there will also be underground cabling.

- It is important that the abstraction point and surrounding area is well protected from contaminants from surrounding land-use (e.g. farming, forestry, construction), and to check and maintain any protection in place (well caps, fencing, etc.).
- Check your filtration system regularly, and particularly if your water tastes, smells, or looks different to normal. For example, particulate filters clog up and need regular replacing, UV lamps do not last forever, and pH correctors lose their ability to neutralise water over time.
- While you might be able to carry out some of the maintenance yourself (such as replacing a particulate filter), in many cases you will need to contact local tradespeople experienced in working on PWS. As well as maintaining the system to keep your water safe for use they should be able to check and replace other components such as water pumps and pipework. They may also be able to advise on other issues such as the location of your abstraction point, or alternatives to your existing one if it is unreliable.
- PWS maintenance, water quality testing, and improvements, all involve some costs, so you might consider putting some money aside every month towards this.

Is your water supply reliable?

- It is important to know if the amount of water your system supplies is reliable. For example, things like drought and changes to drainage or land management can result in less water being available to you.
- If your supply does run low, or you suspect that it might do so (e.g. by monitoring the water depth in a shallow well), consider reducing your household consumption by, for example: installing water butts to collect rainwater to flush toilets, or having briefer or less frequent showers.
- If you have neighbours on PWS, they may be able to share advice based on their experience.

Responsibilities and Regulations

- Even if your water tastes OK it can still cause risks to your health and **ensuring that your water is safe to drink and meets water quality standards is your responsibility**. To help with this, your Council will have an Environmental Health Officer (EHO) who has a duty to collect and analyse a sample from your supply if you request one, for a fee. Tests check for contamination by bugs (bacteria etc.), metals, chemicals, along with pH levels, cloudiness, and colour. If your water fails against any of these then you need to take remedial action prior to re-testing.
- If your abstraction point is on land not owned by you (e.g. in a neighbour's field) you have the right of access to check and maintain it. However, it is advisable to introduce yourself so that you can liaise over any needs so as not to disrupt their activities.
- See **Owning or using a private water supply - mygov.scot** for more details.

Support to help manage your PWS:

Local Councils Environmental Health Officers are the first point of contact for PWS users wanting support and you can find their contact details on your Council's Environmental Health webpage.

- As well as testing your water quality your Council may also risk-assess your supply, from source to tap, whether this is requested or not. These risk assessments cover a wider range of potential issues than just water quality.

- You are responsible for your emergency water provision if your supply runs out. However, in some cases (e.g. due to drought or frost) Scottish Water may supply bottled water at Council specified locations. Contact your EHO for advice.

Repairs, maintenance, upgrades:

Identify local tradespeople experienced in working on PWS for installation, maintenance, repair, and advice. While Councils cannot recommend contractors, Watersafe provides contact details of approved providers who may be able to help – but make sure they have PWS expertise: Find a Local Approved Plumber | WaterSafe

Financial assistance:

You may be eligible for the Scottish Government's Private Water Supply Grant, currently worth £800, via your EHO. Your Council may be able to provide hardship grants towards necessary upgrades for your PWS, and advise on possible loans or other sources of support.

Regulatory advice:

- Your Council EHO is your first point of contact. Check that your PWS is registered with them.
- The Scottish Government website has further information on PWS advice, support, and regulations: **Owning or using a private water supply - mygov.scot**.
- The Drinking Water Quality Regulator website has also detailed information about regulations: DWQR PWS

Further information and contact

This guidance is an output of the research project JHI-D2-1 Emerging Water Futures, funded by Scottish Government's Rural and Environmental Science and Analytical Services Division (RESAS). Detailed results will be published in the project report on the vulnerabilities and resilience of PWS users in 2026, along with the findings of in-depth interviews and the participatory workshops conducted by the research team during 2024-2025.

For more information about the content of this document, please contact Keith.Marshall@hutton.ac.uk or Diana.Valero@hutton.ac.uk

The James Hutton Institute

Scottish Government
Riaghaltas na h-Alba

This research is funded by Scottish Government's Rural and Environmental Science and Analytical Services Division (RESAS).
The views expressed are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the Scottish Government.

Appendix 2. Brochure version

Getting to know your Private Water Supply, and looking after it:

Abstraction point

- It is important that you know where your water comes from. Please find out, and check that your supply is registered with your Council.
- Abstraction points might be on someone else's land – this is not always obvious and may not be mapped on the deeds to your property.
- It is important that the abstraction point is protected from contaminants from surrounding land-use (e.g. farming, forestry, construction). Check and maintain the state of well caps, fencing, etc.

Pipes

- Knowing the route of the pipes from the abstraction point to your house is useful.
- Following the pipes may help to identify the location of any leaks or other damage.

Pumps & tanks

- Most supplies include a pump to move water to the house. Make sure it works properly and consider what to do if it fails (e.g. in a power cut).
- It is important to keep clean any tanks (e.g. header tanks) that hold filtered water that feeds your taps.

Filters and UV lights

- Check your filtration and sterilisation equipment regularly, particularly if your water tastes, looks, or smells different to normal. Maintenance will normally involve cleaning or replacing the appropriate filters or UV light.

Testing

- It is important to regularly test the water coming out of your tap. Experts recommend testing at least twice a year (e.g. in winter and summer). To help with this, your Council Environmental Health Officers (EHO) have a duty to collect and analyse a sample from your supply if you request one, for a fee.
- Tests check for contamination from bugs (bacteria etc.), metals, chemicals, along with pH levels, cloudiness and colour. If your water fails against any of these, remedial action must be taken prior to re-testing.

Costs

- PWS maintenance, improvements, and testing all involve some cost. It is good practice to consider putting some money aside every month towards this.

Information and support

Registry, information and guidance:

- **Councils hold a PWS register and are the first point of contact for PWS users**. Their Environmental Health Officers (EHO) can provide information, guidance and support. Their contact details will be on your Council website's Environmental Health page.
- Council officers can also risk-assess your supply.

Financial assistance:

- The Scottish Government's Private Water Supply Grant, currently worth up to £800, might support improvements in your PWS (e.g. installing treatment, replacing lead pipes). You can contact your EHO for more information.
- Your Council may provide hardship grants or other forms of support. Check with your EHO about this.

Emergency bottled water:

- You are responsible for your emergency water provision. However, in some cases (e.g. due to drought or frost) Scottish Water may supply bottled water at Council locations. Contact your EHO for advice.

Repairs, maintenance, upgrades :

- In cases when you cannot do the maintenance yourself, contact local tradespeople. It is important to use technical providers who are experienced with PWS.
- Neighbours on a PWS may be able to share advice based on their experience.

Further information:

- **The Scottish Government website has official information on PWS with useful up-to-date resources** https://www.mygov.scot/private-water-supplies
- The Scottish Rural Association is developing a website dedicated to all things PWS https://www.ruralwater.scot

What is a Private Water Supply? A guide for users

In Scotland, particularly in rural areas, there are properties where potable water comes from a Private Water Supply (PWS) rather than the public water mains**. It is the owner/user's responsibility to understand their PWS, and any risks to it, and to ensure that their water is safe to drink.**

A PWS system will incorporate several different components from source to tap that require appropriate management and regular maintenance. There are a diversity of types of PWS and almost every system is different. For this reason, it is very important that users get to know in detail how their PWS is arranged.

This leaflet summarises PWS basics and signposts where to find further information and specific guidance.

Note that in addition, there are special rules for PWS that provide water to a business or rental property (including holiday lets) or supply more than 50 people or more than 10m^3 of water a day. These PWS are obliged to:

- register the supply with the Council
- have the council test the supply at least once a year (fee applies)
- have the Council risk assess the supply at least once every 5 years (fee might apply)
- let any user (e.g. tenant, customers) know that water comes from a private supply

The James Hutton Institute

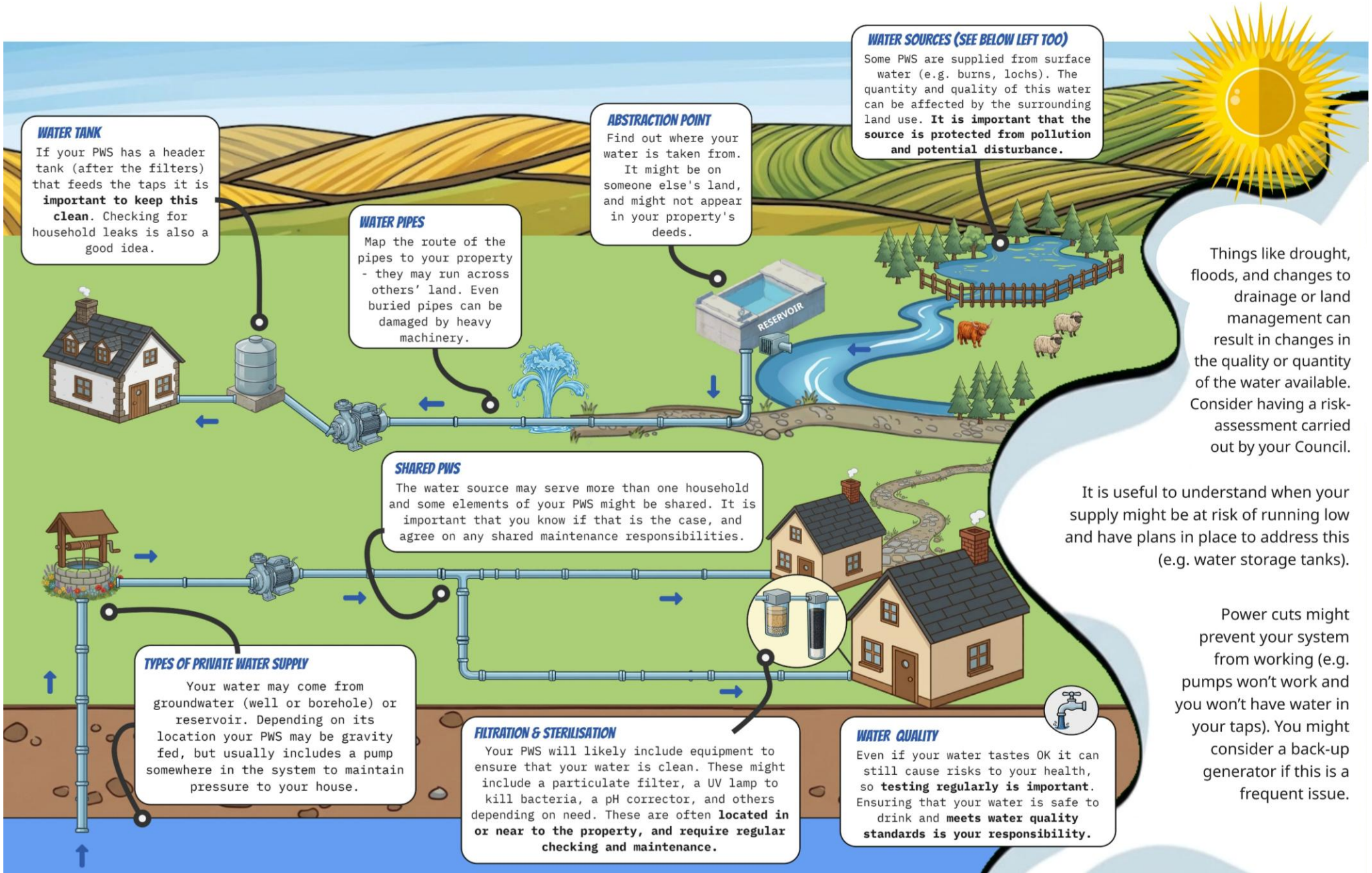
Scottish Government Riaghaltas na h-Alba

This brochure is an output from the research project JHI-D2-1 Emerging Water Futures funded by Scottish Government's Rural and Environmental Science and Analytical Services Division (RESAS) and developed by researchers at The James Hutton Institute.

More information and materials at https://www.hutton.ac.uk/PWS

Understanding your Private Water Supply (PWS)

The James Hutton Institute



Things like drought, floods, and changes to drainage or land management can result in changes in the quality or quantity of the water available. Consider having a risk-assessment carried out by your Council.

It is useful to understand when your supply might be at risk of running low and have plans in place to address this (e.g. water storage tanks).

Power cuts might prevent your system from working (e.g. pumps won't work and you won't have water in your taps). You might consider a back-up generator if this is a frequent issue.