



Scottish Government
Riaghaltas na h-Alba

Private Water Supply Connections Project

**Information on making a connection
to the public water supply**



**Scottish
Water**
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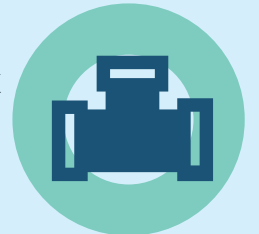
About the private water supply connections project

The private water supply connections project aims to build the resilience of private water supply communities affected by water scarcity by ensuring they have access to a reliable source of clean drinking water. Funding has been made available by the Scottish Government to determine whether a connection to the public water mains is a viable option for nominated communities. Some communities will then be shortlisted to have the public water network extended into their area so households can pay for a connection. The funding will be provided to Scottish Water to establish a programme of extending or upgrading the public water network to allow shortlisted private water supplies to connect.

The project is being piloted in Aberdeenshire and Aberdeenshire Council has nominated five communities that could benefit from the funding. Aberdeenshire was selected for the pilot since it is home to largest number of private water supplies and has experienced significant periods of water scarcity.

The first stage of the pilot was to undertake studies called water impact assessments. These assessments determine whether there is enough water available for Scottish Water to meet the demands of new customers. They determine what work is required and the costs associated with upgrading the network¹. They are a necessary first step in the process to make a connection. Two of the five nominated communities have been further shortlisted to have the public public water main extended into their area.

The water impact assessment highlighted that there is capacity in the public network to make new connections in your area. Before the work can commence, it will be important to determine whether the community is willing to pay for a connection to the newly proposed public water main. This booklet has been created to provide you with some detailed information on the terms and scope of the pilot and seeks to answer any questions you may have in making a decision.



¹ A Water Impact Assessment removes a significant cost barrier for groups (two or more properties) interested in making a connection to the public water mains and can range from between £3,000 and £25,000. Under normal circumstances, these costs are payable without any guarantee a connection can be made.

Eligibility

The communities were shortlisted using a set of criteria that selected the most severe cases of water scarcity whilst ensuring value for money. Eligibility for the funding depends on:



Lived experience of water scarcity

Candidates will have run out of water completely on at least one occasion or will not have been able to supply enough water for the supply population. They may have made use of the emergency bottled water provided by local authorities on behalf of the Scottish Government.



Being within close proximity to the public water mains

Many private water supplies are located in areas where there is limited public water mains infrastructure and the likely costs associated with connecting private water supplies in these areas will exceed what funding is available. Therefore, the funding will be invested in areas where public water mains infrastructure is nearby.



Having more than two households that can connect

Communities may be considered for connection where there are a number of different premises under separate ownership. Funding will not be available to enable the connection of single properties.

Single properties may already seek connections in line with existing arrangements, which can be found on Scottish Water's website:

www.scottishwater.co.uk

Unlike community or group connections, single properties are not required to have a water impact assessment carried out and can contact Scottish Water directly should they be interested in making a connection.



Access being available to Scottish Water to carry out public water mains extensions

Communities will be considered for connection where public water mains extensions can be made across land or along roads to which Scottish Water has access to. This can either be because there is public access or specific access has been granted to Scottish Water so that infrastructure can be maintained.



The community meets the cost threshold and is willing to pay for a connection to the public network

If the water impact assessment confirms that there is capacity in the network, communities will be further shortlisted for the public water main extended into their area using a £50,000 value for money cost threshold. The cost threshold is calculated by dividing the cost to extend the public water main by the number of properties in the area that could connect. For example, a community has 25 properties that could make a connection and the total cost to extend the public water main is £1,000,000. The cost threshold is calculated by dividing £1,000,000 by 25. This means that it will cost £40,000 per property to extend the public water main. This is below the cost threshold of £50,000 and so the community is eligible to have the public water main extended into the area.

The community will then be approached to assess their willingness to pay for a connection to the newly proposed public water main and to highlight the benefits and costs of making a connection. For the extension to the public water main to proceed, the majority of households in the community must be willing to make a connection. Willingness means that households intend to pay for the laying of a private supply pipe across land to connect to the new public water main. Willingness also accepts that there will be charges associated with making the connection and once connected, that ongoing water charges will apply.

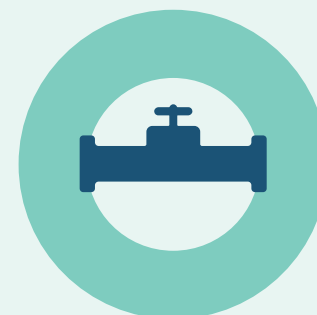
Further information on costs can be found in the charges sections of this booklet.



Benefits of connecting to the public water supply

Improved resilience

Climate change presents major challenges to Scotland's water resources and already contributes to periods of drought and flooding. Private water supplies are particularly vulnerable to these weather extremes. They are also vulnerable to land use change. Scottish Water are working to improve operational and asset capability to respond to more frequent extreme weather events. They can ensure households have access to a consistent wholesome water supply.



Funding and capacity for a connection to the public water supply is available now

The completed water impact assessment indicates that there is capacity for households in your area to connect. A water impact assessment shows capacity for new connections at the time it was carried out. It is important to note that there is no guarantee capacity or funding will be available in the future for households to connect to the public water supply. Households may have to pay for new water impact assessment if they seek a connection in the future.

Dedicated customer service

If you suffer an interruption to your water supply as a result of an issue on the public water main, Scottish Water will work to resolve it. They have service standards in place to ensure you receive an excellent level of service.



Potential longer-term cost savings

Extending the public water main to private supply communities can be expensive. While households will need to cover the costs of making a connection to Scottish Water infrastructure, the funding reduces the overall cost burden significantly. Furthermore, the costs to maintain and treat private water can be expensive. Extreme weather events like drought and flooding will likely increase the need for additional investment to maintain private water supplies to the required standards for drinking.

Improved water quality

While there are many private water supplies that comply with the drinking water standards, they can vary in quality. Generally, private supply water quality comes in lower for most of the tested parameters than the water quality offered in the public water supply. Treating drinking water to the required standards is a complex process and often requires a skilled person to carry out the work. Scottish Water are required to adhere to strict water quality standards. Every year they take samples and carry out over 300,000 tests from customers taps, service reservoirs and treatment works to ensure their customers receive consistently high-quality drinking water.

Recognised and documented water supply

There will be instances where an inconsistent private water supply may lead to problems when attempting to sell a property. All houses in Scotland must meet the tolerable standard which includes a requirement to have an adequate piped supply of wholesome water available with the property². For those experiencing water scarcity or water quality issues, being connecting to the public water supply will ensure the property meets the required standard for a house sale.

² All homes in Scotland are required by law to meet the minimum Tolerable Standard Housing (Scotland) Act 1987 ([legislation.gov.uk](https://www.legislation.gov.uk)). When selling your home, a surveyor will carry out a Single Survey as part of the Home Report. The survey assesses the condition of the home, including water supply, and applies a category; 1, 2 or 3. Category 3 identifies an urgent repair or replacement and that a failure to address the issue may cause problems to the property. It recommends that estimates for repairs or replacements are sought.

What does the funding cover?



Funding will cover the costs of a water impact assessment and if further shortlisted will fund the extension of the public water main. Shortlisted households will be required to self-fund the connection from the point of connection at the public water main to the stop valve located within a property. This is because the funding has been secured from the Government's capital meaning it must be invested in what will become a public asset.

The table below provides an overview of what the project does and does not include.

What does the funding cover?	What doesn't the funding cover?
Water impact assessments – this is a technical study to determine whether existing public networks have enough capacity to accommodate the demands of new customers and the costs associated with extending the public water main.	Supply and installation of private pipework (including the water supply pipe) or any internal fittings or pumps if they are required.
Public water main extension – installation of new pipework in the public water network to allow communities to connect.	Any domestic charges for the connection to the public network, which includes connection application fee, inspection charge, connection charge and an infrastructure charge.

Process for making a connection



1. A water impact assessment is carried out and capacity is confirmed



2. Householder commits to connecting to proposed public water main



3. Scottish Water carry out public water mains extension



4. Householder follows Scottish Water connections process



Important factors to consider

To connect to the public water supply, you will need to install a suitable supply pipe. This is the pipe which connects your property to the public water main and is the property owner's responsibility.

You may need to consider if you are required to lay your pipework across land which is not in your ownership. In order to do this, you must obtain permission from the owner of the affected land prior to commencing work. Scottish Water will request a copy of this documentation for reference and review.

Due to factors including distance to the public water main, ground conditions and elevation (more factors may apply), it can be difficult to quantify costs for private pipework, however examples can be found here: **SW Private to Public (www.scottishwater.co.uk/connections)**

Charges

When a supply pipe has been installed, some standard costs for connection to the public water main apply.

These are the:

1. Connection application fee
2. Inspection charge
3. Connection charge
4. Infrastructure charge



Connection charges (2024/25)³:

Element	Cost (2024/25)
Connection charge (Water 25mm/32mm connection)	£464.70
Inspection charge	£146.60 (for first hour)
Infrastructure charge	£508.60
Application charge	£116.70

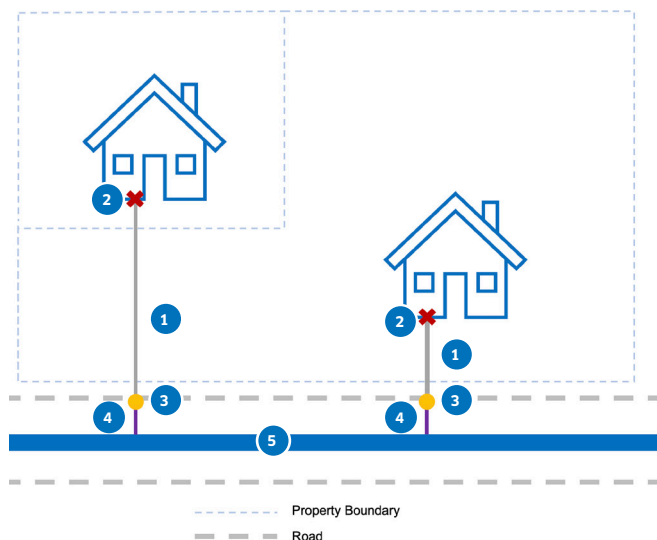
More information can be found in Scottish Water's Scheme of Charges document, on their website:

www.scottishwater.co.uk

³ These charges are subject to change and only indicate the charges for the period of 2024-2025

Pipework responsibilities

The example below shows the typical pipework arrangement for a property. It shows how the property connects to the public water main through the communication pipe and the water supply pipe. The quick reference table will help you identify exactly what you are responsible for⁴.



Number	Infrastructure Type	Responsibility
1	The water supply pipe	Homeowner
2	Stop valve	Homeowner
3	Stopcock/meter	Scottish Water
4	The communication pipe	Scottish Water
5	The public water main	Scottish Water

⁴ Note that this diagram is simplified to explain pipework responsibility. Pipework infrastructure may connect at different points and will depend on the property specific design of the network.

In more rural areas, water supply pipes often reach beyond the property boundary. However, it is still the responsibility of the property owner to maintain them. Further information about pipework responsibility can be found on the Scottish Water website: www.scottishwater.co.uk/responsibility



Installing private pipework

Scottish Water don't install private pipework. This is the responsibility of the home owner. The use of a licensed plumber is recommended. Scottish Water supports and promotes the WaterSafe scheme. WaterSafe is a dedicated online search facility to help customers to find the nearest qualified plumbing professionals in their area. To find a licensed plumber in your area, visit WaterSafe at www.watersafe.org.uk

It is important to note that any replacement pipework carried out by a property owner must comply with the Scottish Water Byelaws 2014. The main aim of Water Byelaws is to prevent contamination of the public water supply, and also to help you prevent waste, misuse and undue consumption of water. Any new supply pipe will require a Byelaws inspection prior to the pipe track being backfilled.

Charges once connected to the public water supply

The vast majority of domestic properties in Scotland are liable for unmetered water charges as set out by Water Industry (Scotland) Act 2002. These charges form part of an occupier's Council Tax bill which is collected by the Councils on behalf of Scottish Water. Once you have connected to the public water supply, your charges will automatically be added to your Council Tax bill. Unmetered water charges are based in the banding of your property and are updated each year. Charges for the year 2024/25 can be found in the table below and further information can be found online at: www.scottishwater.co.uk/charges

Council Tax Band	Water Supply Charges 24/25
Band A	£168.60
Band B	£196.70
Band C	£224.80
Band D	£252.90
Band E	£309.10
Band F	£365.30
Band G	£421.50
Band H	£505.80



Water pressure

Scottish Water aim to provide at least 1.0 bar of pressure at the point of connection or stopcock. This level of pressure should provide enough flow to fill a one-litre bottle with water from the cold water kitchen tap in around seven seconds. Factors such as length and quality of the supply pipe, and elevation of land can impact the pressure that is received at your property. It is important to check this when arranging your connection in the event that a pump may be required to be installed. A licensed plumber will be able to support you in determining this.

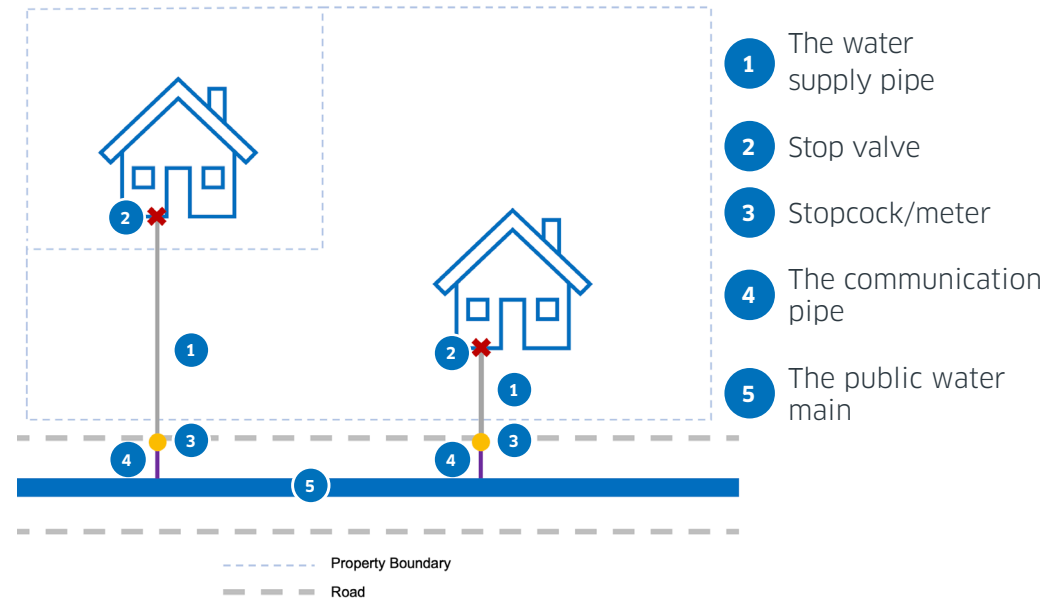
Existing pipework

Existing pipework currently used to carry water from your private source to your property cannot be reused. When planning to make a connection to the public water main please ensure you factor in plans to lay new pipework from the public water mains location into your property.



Case studies

The case studies in this section have been designed to help households better understand the process and varying factors you may have to consider when making a connection to the public water network.



Case study 1

A resident had a private supply which had sufficiency issues during summer months. Their property was remote and significant distance to any public water main. Scottish Water had plans in place to extend the public water main to allow rural residents in the area to connect. However, the proposed solution was still 500m from the property and in order to connect, the residents' supply pipe would need to cross land which was not in their ownership.

The resident liaised with the landowner, who agreed to allow the water supply pipe to be laid on their land. A legally binding deed of servitude was drafted and the resident also supplied Scottish Water with written approval from the landowner.

Due to the elevation of the property, the resident also engaged a local plumbing contractor, who in conjunction with Scottish Water recommended a pump and storage setup would be required to ensure they received sufficient pressure and flow at the property.

The resident had access to an excavator and carried out the excavation work themselves along with the landowner, which saved on costs. The plumbing contractor then laid the supply pipe and liaised with Scottish Water to ensure the pipework was acceptable and compliant with the water byelaws, prior to it being formally connected to the new public water main.

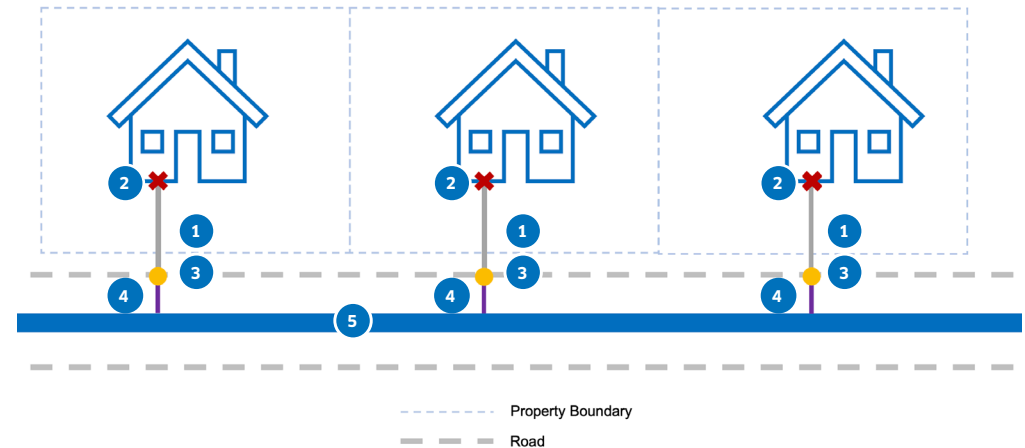
Costs to consider

- Legal agreement
- Local plumbing contractor time
- Pipework and associated fittings
- Pump and storage materials and installation
- Connection fees

Estimated total costs per property

£15,000 – £30,000⁵

⁵ Please note that costs can vary based on the contractor, ground conditions, height, number of properties, materials, distance and other factors specific to each scenario.



Case study 2

A public water main extension was planned in a rural area which would allow customers along a stretch of road to be able to connect to the public supply. The properties were in relatively close proximity (20-50m) to each other, so the group of residents worked together to engage a local plumbing contractor to provide a quote to carry out the work for every property.

Each resident individually submitted an application to Scottish Water to connect to the public water main and settled their respective connection costs. They were also invoiced separately by the contractor for the work completed.

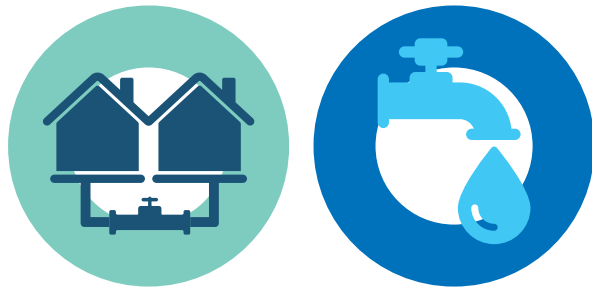
As a single contractor carrying out the work on customers behalf, there was a single point of contact to liaise with Scottish Water to arrange formal connection to the public water main. This approach also helped reduce costs for each resident and the time required to carry out the formal connection to the public water main.

Costs to consider

- Local plumbing contractor time
- Pipework and associated fittings
- Connection fees

Estimated total costs per property

£4,000 – £12,000⁶



⁶ Please note that costs can vary based on the contractor, ground conditions, height, number of properties, materials, distance and other factors specific to each scenario.



Further information and contacts

www.scottishwater.co.uk Scottish Water website with information on pipework responsibility, connecting to the public water main, charges and more.

<https://www.gov.scot/policies/water/private-water-supplies/> Scottish Government website with information on the Private Water Supply Connections Project

<http://www.watersafe.org.uk> The national body for approved plumbers. The dedicated online search facility can help you to find the nearest qualified plumbing and heating professionals in your local area. Scottish Water supports and promotes the WaterSafe scheme.



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