



**DRINKING WATER INSPECTORATE**

Floor 2/D1, Ashdown House  
123 Victoria Street, London SW1E 6DE

Direct Line: 020 7944 5990

Enquiries: 020 7944 5956

Facsimile: 020 7944 5969

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guardians of drinking water quality

To

The Rt Hon Margaret Beckett MP  
Secretary of State for the Environment,  
Food and Rural Affairs

and

The Rt Hon Carwyn Jones AM  
Minister for Environment, Planning and Countryside,  
National Assembly for Wales

I am pleased to submit the Inspectorate's 13th Annual Report covering the year ended 31 December 2002. It provides an account of the audits undertaken by the Inspectorate during 2002, and an assessment of the quality of drinking water supplied by the 26 water companies of England and Wales. More detailed technical information can be found on the Inspectorate's web site [www.dwi.gov.uk](http://www.dwi.gov.uk)

During 2002 nearly 3 million tests were carried out by water companies to check compliance with drinking water standards and 99.87% of these tests gave entirely satisfactory results. The number of tests failing to meet drinking water quality standards in 2002 was 3,741 compared to 50,476 failures in 1992. This represents a very considerable improvement in the quality of drinking water supplied by water companies over the past decade.

I am also able to report a reduction in the number of incidents affecting drinking water quality, which have fallen from 138 in 2001 to 112 in 2002. Likewise the Inspectorate received 41% fewer contacts from consumers complaining about the way the water company had dealt with their water quality concerns. The Inspectorate has monitored its own performance in responding to consumer enquiries and complaints about drinking water quality and I can report that performance was 99.3% against the published target.

Whilst all these statistics seem very encouraging as regards consumer confidence in drinking water quality, both the water companies and the Inspectorate find that about one quarter of complaints cannot be investigated quickly or easily and a significant number cannot be brought to a satisfactory conclusion. More needs to be done to understand consumer perceptions and to improve how we can respond to their concerns. This will be a focus of the Inspectorate's activities going forward.

I am grateful to Michael Rouse, my predecessor, for preparing the 2002 statement which covers his last year as Chief Inspector. I am pleased to formally acknowledge the achievement of Michael and his team – a decade of year on year improvement in compliance with the drinking water standards by the water companies.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jeni Colbourne', written in a cursive style.

Jeni Colbourne  
Chief Inspector