

# Hydrogeology of Wales: Management and regulation of groundwater - groundwater abstraction

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**This page is part of a category of pages that provides an updated review of the occurrence of groundwater throughout Wales.**

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Groundwater currently contributes around 3 per cent of the total public water supply ([Environment Agency, 2008](#)). This corresponds (Environment Agency Wales abstraction data for 2009) to an actual abstraction volume of around 11 000 Mla<sup>1</sup>.

Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water is the largest abstractor with 22 active groundwater abstractions, and a further 15 standby sources which are used in times of drought or emergency. These are a mixture of boreholes, springs and wells. In total it is licensed to abstract around 45 000 Mla<sup>1</sup>, but also has abstractions in the licence-exempt areas of Wales. Individual abstraction volumes range from a few tens of cubic metres per day from small spring sources to 8000 Mla<sup>1</sup> abstraction from the Carboniferous Limestone aquifer near Bridgend. Dee Valley Water is licensed to abstract 270 Mla<sup>1</sup> of groundwater from a borehole installed into Carboniferous sandstone near Wrexham. Severn Trent is licensed to abstract 6000 Mla<sup>1</sup> for public supply from river gravels near Newtown.

A further 16 000 Mla<sup>1</sup> is abstracted for industry, irrigation, agriculture, and food production.

Records held by environmental health departments indicate there are at least 21 000 private water supplies in Wales. Private water supplies, any supply which is not provided by a water undertaker or a licensed water supplier, are abundant partly due to the historic abstraction licence-exempt areas. The additional exemption from licensing in the *Water Act, 2003* for abstraction > 20 m<sup>3</sup>d<sup>-1</sup> has further increased the number of private supplies as several thousand abstraction licences were de-regulated.

The *Private Water Supply (Wales) Regulations, 2010* places a duty on local authorities to keep a register of these sources and regulate that the water is fit for human consumption.

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