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Sir Julian Smith MP
House of Commons
London
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via email to: julian.smith.mp@parliament.uk

29 October 2025

Dear Sir Julian

**HG3 Water Quality Concerns**

Thank you for your email dated 27 October, requesting to be kept informed about the water quality concerns currently affecting some of your constituents.

I appreciate that this matter has been ongoing for some time and I apologise for this. There are, however, two distinct issues at play, so I thought it would be helpful to provide an overview of both in one letter. I've asked the Public Affairs Team to continue keeping you updated.

**Boil Water Advice**

On 10 October, our routine sampling of drinking water detected low levels of coliforms. While coliforms themselves do not pose a direct safety risk, they can indicate a potential issue if not addressed.

As a precaution, on that date, we've issued a boil order notice to a number of your constituents in the following postcode areas: HG3 2R, HG3 2Q, HG3 2J, and HG3 2L.

We've begun tracing the source of the contamination and are taking several proactive steps, including flushing the network, testing private supplies to rule out any contribution to the reading, and fitting non-return valves where needed.

Unfortunately, identifying the source of coliforms is rarely straightforward and can take time, which I completely understand is frustrating for you and your constituents. Pinpointing the cause involves testing across various parts of the network and narrowing down the possibilities. Using a structured approach, we have a number of experts in the area to ensure that this happens as quickly as possible. Once the cause of the failure is confirmed, we must test the water (which takes 24 hours) and then obtain two consecutive days of clear samples before we can lift the boil water advice.

Under a boil water advice, the water can be consumed safely if it is boiled and cooled beforehand. Additionally, it can still be used for cleaning purposes, including washing dishes and bathing, without the need for boiling. As such, we have generally only delivered bottled water to our vulnerable customers on the Priority Services Register.

However, as a gesture of goodwill we delivered a pallet of bottled water for customers at Trafalgar Square HG3 2RB. I have also arranged for a further pallet to be delivered today for those who need it; it should be onsite by early evening.

We have a dedicated webpage, containing advice for the impacted customers, which can be found here.

**Do Not Drink Advice**

*Summary*

During our investigation into the source of the coliforms, we've been conducting additional water sampling, as is normal protocol. These tests have identified elevated physiochemical anomalies in one area. In accordance with regulatory requirements and our internal procedures, we have advised customers in that area not to consume the water under any circumstances. This is known as issuing Do Not Drink advice.

This advice has been issued to 34 properties within your constituency.

The issue came to light over the weekend, and I understand that our Communications colleague, Dan emailed you and the ward Councillor at the time to notify you of the change of circumstances – I hope you found this helpful.

To determine the source of the issue, we've continued our investigations. The area is rural and there are a number of properties that have both Yorkshire Water supplies and their own private supplies. We are working to ensure that the Water Regulations are being met in these properties and that there are no cross connections between the two that could give rise to the issues experienced.

*Action taken to date*

The 34 properties (including 33 households) affected by the Do Not Drink advice have all been contacted individually.

Each impacted customer has received a hand-delivered letter, and a member of our Customer Experience team has visited in person, knocking on every door to speak directly with residents.

We have been making daily bottled water deliveries to all affected customers, not just those on the Priority Services Register, and will continue to do so for as long as necessary.

We've also updated the website referenced above to ensure impacted households have access to the latest advice and information.

As you may be aware, one of the properties impacted is Menwith Hill RAF base, which is operated by the United States Air Force. This base is not a Yorkshire Water customer and has its own supply of water, but we are working with the base to ensure that they also have the water they need.

So far, 22 of the 34 properties have been connected to a temporary alternative water supply and, as per the regulatory process, we're carrying out tests and samples to determine whether the risk has been eliminated. While these customers remain under the Do Not Drink advice for now, we are hopeful that later this week, we will be able to transition them to a Boil Order advice. We are working hard to connect the remaining 11 properties too.

We will not lift the Do Not Drink advice until we have two consecutive days of clear sample results confirming the water meets our quality standards.

**Management of Incidents and Communication**

We are treating both incidents with the utmost seriousness and are managing them in line with our Company Incident Management Plan. Cross-functional teams involved in the response are meeting at least daily to coordinate efforts and ensure progress is closely monitored, and the Leadership team is aware and involved in this process.

Following each meeting, I've asked the Public Affairs Team to keep you updated with any developments, even if there is no new information to report, so that you remain fully informed throughout.

Should the situation escalate and require a meeting outside of standard office hours, this approach has also been communicated to the wider Communications function, which includes colleagues beyond the Public Affairs Team.

If you have any further questions or would like to discuss the matter in more detail, please don't hesitate to get in touch.

Yours sincerely

N. Shaw

**Nicola Shaw CBE**
**Chief Executive, Yorkshire Water**