#

**WAT-G-054**

**EASR Guidance: Registration Activity: Abstraction from a borehole less than or equal to 5000m3/year for testing or sampling**

Version 1.0, August 2025

If you would like this document in an accessible format, such as large print, audio recording or braille, please contact SEPA by emailing equalities@sepa.org.uk.

# Purpose

This document provides information and guidance for anyone undertaking the abstraction from a borehole of less than or equal to 5000m3/year for testing or sampling which requires a registration under The Environmental Authorisations (Scotland) Regulations.

This guidance does not cover any other permissions that may be required.

# What activity does this guidance apply to?

This guidance applies to the abstraction of groundwater, other than below the bed of coastal or transitional waters, from a borehole or boreholes and any subsequent discharge of the abstracted water, where the total volume of water abstracted is:

1. more than 50 cubic metres (m3) per day but less than or equal to 500 cubic metres (m3) per day; and
2. more than 150 cubic metres (m3) per year but less than or equal to 5000 cubic metres (m3) per year,

and the purpose of the abstraction is to:

* test the yield of the borehole; or
* determine the hydraulic properties of the aquifer, or
* sample the water quality.

# Understanding the activity

You may want to carry out the temporary abstraction of groundwater for the purpose of

* Working out how much water a borehole will supply.
* Gaining information on the aquifer. Sometimes this is required to help determine the impact that the abstraction may have on the water environment and other water users. You may be required to supply this kind of information to support any abstraction permit application. You can find out about the sorts of information SEPA may require to support a permit application on our abstraction of inland water for all non-hydro power of more than 50m3 per day webpage.
* To determine the water quality.

If you want to abstract more than 500 cubic metres (m3) per day or 5000 cubic metres (m3) per year you must apply for a permit. If you want to abstract less than or equal to 50 cubic metres (m3) per day and less than or equal to 150 cubic metres (m3) per year your activity may be covered by water GBR 4.

This activity does not apply to the abstraction of groundwater below the bed of coastal or transitional waters.

This registration activity also allows the subsequent discharge of the abstracted water and there are conditions related to this to protect the water environment.

The abstraction can be from:

* One borehole only; or
* More than one borehole if each borehole is within 150m of one of the other boreholes. In this case the maximum permitted abstraction rate must be as a total from all the boreholes.

# Understanding and minimising the risks to the water environment

## Risks to the water environment

The abstraction of groundwater can reduce the flow of groundwater to rivers and burns. This flow is especially important during dry spells and helps to keep our watercourses flowing. Abstraction of groundwater can also the reduce:

* The flow of nearby springs.
* Water levels in nearby wells and boreholes.

This can reduce the amount of water that is available for others to abstract. When determining your application SEPA will consider whether your abstraction may reduce the flow of or level in other nearby abstractions.

The activity allows the discharge of the abstracted water. If substances are added or allowed to enter the abstracted water prior to discharge this can pose a risk of polluting the receiving waters. In addition, natural contaminants in groundwater or contaminants that are in groundwater as a result of human activity may be present. For example, water contaminated as a result of historic mining. The discharge of this water into a surface water or uncontaminated groundwater poses a risk of pollution.

To minimise risks to the water environment and to help you comply with the standard conditions for this activity, you should follow the Dos and don’ts below.

## Dos and don’ts

* Do make sure you check what information you need to support any water abstraction permit application before carrying out any testing. This will ensure that you design the test so as to collect any required supporting information.
* Do measure the total volume of water abstracted daily and annually. For example, by installing a meter.
* Do take all reasonable steps to secure efficient and sustainable water use.
* Do regularly check your abstraction equipment to make sure it’s in good condition and fix any leaks straight away.
* Don’t add or allow any substances or heat to enter the abstracted water prior to discharge.
* Don’t discharge contaminated groundwater to any surface water or uncontaminated groundwater.
* Don’t abstract groundwater within 50m of any spring well or borehole that supplies water for human consumption.

# Glossary

A full list of terms is available in the main Glossary

**Coastal water** means water (other than groundwater) within the area extending landward from the 3 mile limit up to the limit of the highest tide or, where appropriate, the seaward limits of any bodies of transitional water, but does not include any water beyond the seaward limits of the territorial sea of the United Kingdom adjacent to Scotland.

**Groundwater** means water which is below the surface of the ground in the saturation zone and in direct contact with the ground or subsoil.

**Transitional water** means water (other than groundwater) in the vicinity of river mouths which is partly saline in character as a result of its proximity to coastal water, but which is substantially influenced by freshwater flows.

# Disclaimer

Whilst every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of this guidance, SEPA gives no warranty, covenant or undertaking (express or implied) regarding the fitness for purpose of, or any error, omission or discrepancy in this guidance. Reliance on its contents and the contents of any websites that are linked to or from this guidance is entirely at the user’s own risk. SEPA is not liable for any loss or damage that may come from using this guidance. This includes:

* any direct, indirect and consequential losses
* any loss or damage caused by civil wrongs, breach of contract or otherwise

SEPA reserves the right to depart from this guidance and take appropriate action as it considers necessary or appropriate. Operators are responsible for ensuring that they are compliant with the law. If necessary, independent legal / specialist advice should be sought.