

Site Visit Report

Under the *European Union (Drinking Water) Regulations 2023*, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is the supervisory authority in relation to Uisce Éireann and its role in the provision of public drinking water supplies. This audit was carried out to assess the performance of Uisce Éireann in providing clean and wholesome water to the public water supply named below.

The audit process is a sample of the performance of a water treatment plant and public water supply on a given date.

Water Supply Zone	
Name of Installation	Skibbereen Ballyhilty
Organisation	Uisce Éireann
Scheme Code	0500PUB4605
County	Cork
Site Visit Reference No.	SV35433

Report Detail	
Issue Date	29/07/2026
Prepared By	David O'Malley

Site Visit Detail			
Date Of Inspection	02/07/2026	Announced	Yes
Time In	10:30	Time Out	12:00
EPA Inspector(s)	David O'Malley		
Additional Visitors			
Company Personnel	Uisce Éireann: Alan Harrington, Sharon O'Dwyer, Claire Hurley and John Conneely. Cork County Council (working in partnership with Uisce Éireann): Fionn Lupton.		

> Summary of Key Findings

1. On the 21/06/2026 the sludge blanket in clarifier No.2 rose and was carried over into the rapid gravity filters due to a rise in temperature in the raw water supply. Following consultation by Uisce Éireann with the HSE a Boil Water Notice was put in place on the 22/06/2026. The Boil Water Notice was lifted on 01/07/2026.
2. The audit determined that, due to the turbidity alarms and shutdowns not being engaged on the rapid gravity filters that the protozoal barrier was not properly maintained on the 21/06/2026 for approximately three hours and a half hours.
3. The audit found that the incident was not escalated in a timely manner to management.

Uisce Éireann should submit a report to the EPA on or before 28/08/2026 detailing the actions taken and planned, with timescales, to close out the four recommendations in this audit report.

> Introduction

The Skibbereen Regional Public Water Supply (PWS) serves a population of 8,121 and produces on average 5,200 m³/day. The supply is sourced from the River Ilen and treatment takes place at the Ballyhilly Water Treatment Plant (WTP). Treatment includes coagulation, flocculation, clarification, filtration, disinfection, fluoridation, final pH correction and sludge treatment.

> Supply Zones Areas Inspected

The audit consisted of a review of the incident response to the sludge blanket carry over from the clarifier to the rapid gravity filters.



1.1

Was the incident suitably alerted to the plant operators, escalated and managed in order to maintain water quality and protect public health?

Answer

No

Comment

1. On 23/06/2026 the EPA was notified by Uisce Éireann of an incident relating to elevated turbidity in the rapid gravity filters (RGFs) due to a sludge blanket carry over on the 21/06/2026. On the evening of 21/06/2026 the operator became aware that the sludge blanket in clarifier No.2 was rising. The operator opened the drain in the clarifier in an attempt to stop the sludge blanket from rising. However, this was unsuccessful and the sludge blanket carried over to the RGFs. The turbidity alarms and inhibits on the RGFs were disabled for an unknown length of time. Combined filter turbidity trends viewed at the plant, displayed elevated turbidity (> 0.3 NTU) for approximately three and half hours on the 21/06/2026 which meant that the protozoal barrier was not maintained during this time.

2. Operational staff worked on resolving the issue until the early hours of the 22/06/2026. At 08:00 on 22/06/2026 the plant manager arrived at the plant and investigated the issue. Uisce Éireann ran the plant to waste and a new sludge blanket was built over the day. At approximately 18.00 the plant was returned to operation under a BWN. It was concluded that elevated temperatures in the raw water supply caused the sludge blanket to rise in clarifier No.2.

3. Uisce Éireann contacted the HSE and following consultation a Boil Water Notice (BWN) was put in place on the 22/06/2026 affecting a population of 8,121. The HSE advised that the BWN was to remain in place until Uisce Éireann confirmed the incident had been fully resolved and that the plant was operating as normal. A minimum of two sets of consecutive clear microbiological samples were obtained from the WTP and the network. Following consultation by Uisce Éireann with the HSE, the BWN was lifted on 01/07/2026.

Recommendations:

1. Ensure that (i) a formal documented site-specific alarm response procedure is in place at the treatment plant and (ii) provide training to relevant staff (including relief and temporary staff) on the requirements of the alarm response procedure.

2. Ensure appropriate oversight of all alarms and inhibits by supervisory staff on an ongoing basis.

3. Ensure that plant performance issues are escalated immediately to supervisory staff.

4. Ensure the daily record keeping is maintained so the supervisory staff have full oversight of water treatment plant activities and issues.

Recommendations

Actions required by Uisce Éireann

During the audit, Uisce Éireann representatives were advised of the audit findings and that action must be taken by Uisce Éireann to address the issues raised.

Uisce Éireann is responsible for ensuring a clean and wholesome supply of drinking water and should implement the recommendations raised in this report without delay.

Response to Audit Report

Uisce Éireann should submit a report to the EPA on or before the date specified in the Summary of Key Findings detailing the actions taken and planned, with timescales, to close out the recommendations in this audit report.

The EPA advises that the findings and recommendations from this report should, where relevant, be addressed at other public water supplies.

Publication of Reports

Audit reports are published to the EPA's website, www.epa.ie, typically 1 month after the audit report is issued to Uisce Éireann.