

**Validating the cause of coliform failures**  
**in drinking water**  
**Summary report of Workshop**

On completion of the collaborative project between UKWIR and DWI on Validating the Cause of Coliforms in Drinking Water (UKWIR Report 09/DW/02/58) in 2009, it was recognised that there would be benefit, at a future date, to assess whether water companies had found the guidance developed by the project useful, and if it had led to improvements in identifying the origin of coliform bacteria.

A workshop was held on the 26<sup>th</sup> of March 2012 to provide an opportunity to review water company's experiences with the guidance and for DWI to present their feedback on the situation. Information on implementation of the guidance was obtained from a questionnaire survey of water companies carried out by WRc.

The objectives of the Workshop were:

- To assess the experiences of Water Companies and DWI on investigating and reporting of coliform occurrences following publication of the UKWIR report 09/DW/02/58
- To appreciate different approaches, difficulties and benefits in implementing the recommendations
- To provide a forum for sharing lessons learnt.

On the basis of the evidence from both water companies and DWI, the introduction of the guidance has brought improvements in the success of investigations into the origin of coliform bacteria. Largely, this has been achieved by sharing experiences on good practice which enabled a more consistent approach to be adopted across water companies. The Workshop provided an opportunity for companies to discuss their use of the procedures and any changes made to their existing procedures and to identify successful approaches for determining the cause of coliform failures.

One of the key elements to emerge from the Workshop was the assessment of the certainty of the evidence obtained during investigations. An improvement in the robustness of the evidence would not only provide water companies with reassurance over the quality of their investigations, but could assist in determining the root causes. Such an approach would allow the correct actions to be implemented to avoid a recurrence of the water quality events. The discussions and findings from the presentations and breakout sessions are being taken into consideration in the forthcoming UKWIR project "A forensic approach to understanding bacteriological infringements in the Water Network"