

'Very high risk' of crypto contaminating Portlaoise water - EPA

The country's environmental watchdog has again warned that the Portlaoise water supply is at a very high risk of being contaminated with Cryptosporidium which would make the town's water undrinkable.

In a statement to the Leinster Express the Environmental Protection Agency said Portlaoise water was added to the EPA Remedial Action List in quarter 3 2014 - as it currently has "inadequate treatment for Cryptosporidium".

While county council officials believe that there is no issue, the EPA has re-iterated a warning issued in January.

"The Cryptosporidium risk assessment score for the supply was assessed as very high risk," it told the Leinster Express last week.

The EPA said it understands that Irish Water commenced a 12 month programme of raw water monitoring, online UVT monitoring and sampling for Cryptosporidium in January 2015. The agency indicated that there is no shield in place to prevent contamination at present but testing was underway. It said this monitoring will inform Irish Water of "the treatment required to prevent the entry of Cryptosporidium into the supply (for example – the design of the UV system), should it be present in the raw water".

The EPA said it has received no notification of the presence of Cryptosporidium in this supply, nor is there any restriction of use of the water in this supply.

The Leinster Express sought a statement from the EPA as Irish Water declined to confirm that there is no shield in place. It also stopped short of committing to installing a shield but instead said it was preparing a study.

"Irish Water and Laois County Council have carried out testing for Cryptosporidium in the drinking water supply in Portlaoise and there has not been any evidence of Cryptosporidium found. Monitoring for Cryptosporidium continues to be carried out.

"The wells supplying water to the Portlaoise Public Water Supply Scheme are located in a karstified limestone area and as a result a desktop Cryptosporidium Risk Assessment has identified these wells as being at risk of Cryptosporidium.

This study was carried out on a whole aquifer basis.

"Irish Water intends to engage a Hydrogeologist to carry out a study on each well supplying water to the Portlaoise Water Supply Scheme to assess their Cryptosporidium Risk and on receipt of the

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report on this study, Irish Water will inform the EPA of the results of this study," concluded the statement.

Earlier this year Portlaoise's water supply was on a list of supplies around Ireland identified by the EPA as needing attention to ensure that water was safe for human consumption.

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