St Bathans Water Testing Results

Following concerns about the quality of the water this summer, CITILAB has tested samples from both dams and an unfiltered tap in the village. They were asked specifically to report on the following questions:

a) Is the discoloration in the water harmful?
b) Can E coli be spread by washing dishes in the unfiltered water?
c) Can E coli be screened out if there is a filter ahead of the feed tap?
d) If house pipes already contain E coli, can the water be drained and the pipes somehow sterilized before a filter is installed at a tap supplying the household?

Here are the answers reported by CITILAB following their tests:

1. Each sample showed the presence of E coli and hence the water should not be used for drinking, teeth cleaning, or even showering/bathing (unless one can ensure that the water is not being ingested).
2. The discolouration is most likely due to suspended clay or the like in the water. On present evidence, it is very unlikely that there are toxic elements or anything like that in the water.
3. The water is quite safe to use for irrigation, as the bacteria will be “killed” by exposure to sunlight.
4. Washing dishes in contaminated water gives the risk of contaminating the dishes, particularly if they are to be used relatively soon after washing. Tea towels, etc. may also be contaminated during the drying process.
5. A filter will not remove bacteria from water. Treatment with chlorine, ozone or ultraviolet light is recommended. Of these, chlorine is the simplest to do, but UV systems (that include filtration) may be the most appropriate for your scheme.
6. The easiest way to treat the water already in the pipes is to inject chlorine and then allow the water in each household to run for three to five minutes. That should remove any contamination in the lines.

These issues will be considered at the next meeting of the Working Committee. In the meantime, residents are advised to be mindful of CITILAB’s findings when using water from the town supply.