

BATHING WATER NEWSLETTER

REVISED EC BATHING WATER DIRECTIVE 2006/7/EC

It's been some time since we issued a newsletter so this edition includes the 2013 results and Cleaner Seas Forum, in addition to information about the 2014 bathing season.



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Department
for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs

1. Bathing water results 2013

The monitoring results for 2013 showed that water quality had recovered since torrential rainfall during the summer of 2012 led to the low results of that year. 98.8% of the bathing waters in England met the minimum mandatory standard and compliance with guideline standard reached its best ever level of 82.4%.

Detailed results tables are available on our web page:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/bathing-waters-in-england-2013-compliance-report>

We're now in the final season of reporting under the current Directive and we'll begin issuing the new annual bathing water classifications after the 2015 bathing season. If you are interested in what the classifications would have been last year if the new standards had already been in force, the assessment for each bathing water, based on the 2010 – 2013 data set, can be seen here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/bathing-waters-2013-projected-classifications-in-england>



2. European Commission bathing water report 2013

The European Commission published its bathing water report for 2013 on 27 May. Information for all the Member States, plus Switzerland and Albania, is available on the European Environment Agency's website. The UK's individual country report includes detailed information on work currently being carried out to improve water quality.

<http://www.eea.europa.eu/themes/water/status-and-monitoring/state-of-bathing-water/state-of-bathing-water>

3. Bathing waters in 2014

We've designated two new bathing waters this year: Shoreham Beach in West Sussex and Henleaze Lake in Bristol. Two beaches in Cumbria, Askam in Furness and Roanhead, have been removed from the list of bathing waters because they were considered unsafe for bathing and attracted very little usage. We held a consultation on a proposal to dedesignate Walpole Bay in Kent and this beach is being retained on the list of designated bathing waters.

Applications for changes to the list of bathing waters in 2015 should be made by 31 October. Please contact us at the bathingwater mailbox for an initial discussion about the evidence we will need if you are considering applying for a new site to be designated or for an existing bathing water to be removed from the list.

4. Bathing water information on the government website

The transfer of information about bathing waters from the Defra and Environment Agency websites to the new government website is now complete. Policy information, the Data Explorer, and current and recent consultations have all been brought together in one collection.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/bathing-waters>

5. Cleaner Seas Forum

The Cleaner Seas Forum held its fourth annual meeting on 7 November 2013. Over 60 delegates attended from environmental NGOs, local authorities, water companies and the tourism and shellfish industries, as well as Defra and the Environment Agency. Dan Rogerson, the Minister for water, opened the meeting by announcing the 2013 bathing water results. The Minister stressed the importance of clean coastal water and the value of cooperation and voluntary information-sharing in making further improvements. He thanked key members of the Forum for their work in setting up alert systems for Combined Sewer Overflow (CSO) discharges and spoke about his recent visit to the Bude Cleaner Seas Project, which is a good example of how different sectors can work together for a common aim. He then answered a wide range of questions from the floor.

The presentations focused on the economic implications of coastal water quality for seaside businesses and communities. Kurt Janson of the Tourism Alliance spoke on the value of coastal tourism and Nikki van Dijk of Atkins Ltd presented the results of market research that

Atkins carried out for Defra during the autumn of 2013. The project looked at the views of beachside business owners and employees on the value and impact for local businesses of CSO discharge warnings. Matt Elliott of the Marine Management Organisation spoke on how the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund is improving the collection of economic data on aquaculture to help support the industry. We also heard from Environment Agency speakers about the Challenges and Choices consultation on river basin management plans and the progress of trials into applying short term pollution measures at bathing waters.

A breakout session offered delegates an opportunity to make their own suggestions for the future direction of the Forum, and the ideas that emerged from these discussions were taken forward at a meeting in March to plan work at bathing and shellfish waters during the coming year.

You can request copies of the minutes and presentations from the meeting by contacting the mailbox at the end of the newsletter. The next meeting will be held on 6 November 2014.



6. Short term pollution and pollution risk forecasting

Short term pollution can affect bathing waters when heavy rainfall washes bacteria from agricultural land, urban areas or sewerage systems into the sea via rivers and streams. The Directive has a provision that allows water quality samples taken during short term pollution events to be disregarded provided a prediction system is in place to warn the public that bathing water quality is likely to be affected by pollution.

During 2013 the Environment Agency ran a trial at 31 bathing waters to test the feasibility of a pollution risk forecasting system. The positive results from the trial have encouraged us to apply the system to many more bathing waters across England in 2014.

During this year's bathing season the system is available at all sites the Environment Agency thinks it's appropriate for - approximately 160 sites. It has two main benefits:

- People using the beaches will be warned when the water quality is likely to be lower than normal, so will be able to enjoy cleaner waters;
- Introducing a pollution risk forecasting system could help improve compliance at bathing waters.

The main consideration is that notices advising against bathing must be displayed on a daily basis when short term pollution is predicted. Local authorities are responsible for doing this, but private beach owners could also put up the necessary warning signs if their local authority is unable to do so. Some Defra funding has been available this year to provide electronic signs at a small number of beaches to give water quality forecasts and warn when pollution is likely to be present.

7. Surveys of bathing water usage

During the summer the Environment Agency is carrying out surveys on Defra's behalf at 12 sites where usage for bathing is anecdotally reported to be very low. The aim of the surveys is to assess whether the beaches are used by a large number of bathers, and depending on the outcome we will carry out a consultation during the winter of 2014/15 on whether they should be removed from the list of bathing waters. The beaches being surveyed are:

- Allonby South
- Bembridge
- Haverigg
- Ilfracombe Wildersmouth
- Instow
- Lyme Regis Church Cliff Beach
- Lynmouth
- Rock
- St Annes North
- Silloth
- Spittal
- Walney Sandy Gap

8. Survey on the length of the bathing season in England

We received 594 responses to last year's online survey on the length of the bathing season and eight written or emailed responses. The replies came from a range of organisations – NGOs, local authorities, water companies, beach owners, swimming clubs – as well as from members of the public. A majority (430) were in favour of extending the length of the bathing season.

We've decided to begin the process by asking local authorities to contact us if they would like to apply for a change to the current season dates for beaches in their area. We would ask for evidence of usage for bathing to support any change of dates, and then consult in the same way as the current process for a new designation or a dedesignation. This will help us to develop a process for making changes to season dates and to gather evidence for a future Impact Assessment and amendment to the Bathing Water Regulations.



If you have any comments or enquiries about bathing waters, we can be contacted at:

bathingwater@defra.gsi.gov.uk

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