

Fact Sheet

All you need to know about the revised Bathing Water Directive

Better Bathing Water Information

Every bathing water has a profile on the [Environment Agency website](#). The profile will be updated if there is a significant change (e.g. construction works, changes to infrastructure) near the bathing water. We also have a bathing water 'app' – Beach Selector - for quick access to bathing water information.

Signage

Each local authority or private beach controller must provide information at the bathing water - a sign - to inform the public of:

- the bathing water's current classification under the revised Bathing Water Directive (rBWD) (not required until 2015)
- any advice against bathing, giving reasons
- a description of the bathing water
- information on the nature/expected duration of abnormal situations affecting the bathing water
- sign-posting further information

Monitoring

We take 20 samples each bathing season (including the pre-season sample taken 1st May to 14th May). We develop a monitoring calendar prior to each bathing season (15 May to 30 Sept).

Monitoring must take place on the specified date, or up to a maximum of four days later, or the sample will be lost. Any replacement samples required (e.g. lost sample, incorrect analysis) must be retaken within the 5 day window.

What do we monitor for?

From 2012 monitoring for Total Coliforms, Faecal Coliforms, Faecal Streptococci and physico-chemical parameters stopped. This was replaced by two microbiological parameters – Escherichia Coli (EC) and Intestinal Enterococci (IE). We also monitor for blue-green algae, macro-algae (e.g. seaweed), marine phytoplankton (e.g. algal scum/foam) and other parameters e.g. tarry residues, glass, plastic, rubber and other waste.

For the years 2012 to 2014 inclusive, we will continue to report for the current Bathing Water Directive (cBWD) but compliance rules will change to:

- Imperative Compliance - at least 95% of samples conform with 2000 EC/100ml.
- Guideline Compliance - at least 80% of samples conform with 100 EC/100ml and 90% of samples conform with 100 IE/100ml

What is an Abnormal Situation?

All samples taken during routine Directive monitoring will be used for compliance/classification results, except during abnormal situations or exceptional circumstances. Abnormal situations are events impacting on bathing water quality not expected to occur on average more than once in every four years. In order to stop sampling during an abnormal situation the monitoring calendar must be suspended and the public informed of the risk during such events. For emergency situations (e.g. pumping station failure, major traffic incident affecting beach etc), provided we are informed in time and can inform the Local Authority or beach controller, the abnormal situation provisions may be applied.

What are the new standards?

From 2015, we will report rBWD classifications for the first time using data collected for the four years 2012 to 2015

Parameter	“Excellent”	“Good”	Sufficient”
Standards for inland waters			
Intestinal Enterococci ⁽¹⁾	200 ⁽²⁾	400 ⁽²⁾	330 ⁽³⁾
<i>Escherichia coli</i> ⁽¹⁾	500 ⁽²⁾	1,000 ⁽²⁾	900 ⁽³⁾
Standards for coastal and transitional waters			
Intestinal Enterococci ⁽¹⁾	100 ⁽²⁾	200 ⁽²⁾	185 ⁽³⁾
<i>Escherichia coli</i> ⁽¹⁾	250 ⁽²⁾	500 ⁽²⁾	500 ⁽³⁾

(1) Colony forming units per 100 millilitres (“cfu/100 ml”)

(2) Based upon a 95-percentile evaluation

(3) Based upon a 90-percentile evaluation

“Poor” - fails to achieve the Sufficient classification

Baseline Class

Our aim is to achieve the rBWD Sufficient Class from 2015. Our bathing waters that are likely to be Poor, or at risk of failing Sufficient, by 2015 without further action are our top priority for action. To guard against deterioration of bathing waters that are already sufficient or higher, we have introduced Baseline Class as an internal planning tool. This sets the Baseline Class where we have 80% confidence in achieving that class, with Sufficient as the minimum baseline class.

Baseline Classes have been set using data from 2008 to 2011. If in subsequent years the quality deteriorates and the classification drops below the Baseline Class a ‘No Deterioration’ action would be triggered to improve the bathing water. The 2011 initial baseline will be the benchmark until we review the system in 2015.

Predicting short term pollution and Discounting

The rBWD allows for a maximum of 15% samples to be excluded and replaced if taken during short-term pollution. This is pollution that has clear causes, can be predicted and is expected to affect the quality of a bathing water for less than 72 hours. This type of pollution occurs when rainfall washes bacteria from agriculture, urban runoff or sewage into the sea via drains, over land or through rivers

customer service line
08708 506 506

incident hotline
0800 80 70 60

floodline
0845 988 1188

www.environment-agency.gov.uk

and streams. If a short term pollution is predicted warnings are displayed at the beach and a confirmation sample is taken. When this happens water samples taken during the short-term pollution can be discounted from the assessment. We have been trialling a new system for prediction, which includes 10 sites in the North West.

Poor Waters

Where a bathing water is classified as Poor in 2015, we must take measures to prevent bather exposure to pollution, identify reasons for failing the Sufficient classification and notify the local authority or private controller. Advice against bathing must be given by the local authority or private controller on the signage at the bathing water.

If a bathing water is classified as Poor for five consecutive years, the local authority or private controller must introduce permanent advice against bathing on the signage at the bathing water. The water would be effectively de-designated as a European bathing water.

From 2015 and before the end of the five year period, the Agency, after consulting the local authority or private controller, may advise the Minister if it considers that to improve the bathing water would be infeasible or disproportionately expensive to achieve a Sufficient classification. If the Minister accepts the advice then the water would be de-designated