



THE PROBLEM

Only 14% of the UK's rivers reach good ecological status and none reach good chemical status. One of the major sources of pollution is from sewage. Over 90% of all sewer outflows in England and Wales discharge directly into rivers. In 2021 alone over 2.6 million hours of sewage discharged directly into rivers and seas across 372,533 recorded instances.

With increasing popularity for the public using inland blue spaces like rivers for swimming, paddling, kayaking and more, there is a serious threat in the population getting sick from sewage discharge. Recent consumer polling undertaken by Surfers Against Sewage found that of the one in six members of the British public that have tried wild swimming, 55% have subsequently fallen ill. Results also found that 52% of the British public are scared of swimming outside due to not knowing if the water is clean or not.

THE SOLUTIONS

Inland Bathing Waters

We want to see an end to sewage pollution in rivers. Increasing the number of inland bathing waters will play a crucial role in ending sewage pollution across the UK. Official bathing water designation has been instrumental in improving coastal water quality over the last three decades. Since coastal bathing waters were introduced, the percentage of beaches meeting minimum water quality standards rose from 27% to 98%. There are currently 600 coastal bathing waters compared to just two on rivers.

Bathing water designation creates blue spaces where water quality is monitored for harmful bacteria and viruses, with legal obligations placed on industry to reduce sewage pollution near sites. As well as holding polluters to account, the sites also allow bathers to make informed decisions regarding their safety when entering blue spaces.

**WE ARE CALLING FOR 200 INLAND BATHING WATERS
TO GAIN DESIGNATION ACROSS THE UK BY 2030.**

How

Bathing Water Designation is achieved by applying to a government agency. Historically, local authorities have taken the lead on making coastal applications. However, both of the existing river bathing waters have achieved designation by communities campaigning and applying for designation. There is now a growing community group movement pushing for bathing water designation at inland locations across the UK.

RECOMMENDATIONS

There are a number of ways MPs can support the local and national campaign for more inland bathing waters. See below for some ideas of these actions.

Today:

- Look at the [Rivers Trust sewage map](https://therivertrust.org/sewage-map) and filter it to see the number of sewage discharges in your constituency. See therivertrust.org/sewage-map

In your constituency:

- Meet with a local bathing community about designation.
- Visit a site in your constituency with a community group.
- Write a letter of support for communities currently applying for designation.

In parliament:

- Ask Parliamentary Questions on inland bathing water targets.
- Does the environment minister plan to set a target number of Inland Bathing Water Sites Designated by 2030?
- What is the government doing to increase the number of Designated Inland Bathing Water Sites?
- The UK has recently designated its first two river bathing water sites, this is compared to 1273 in France. How does the government plan to join other countries such as France as global leaders in safer inland swimming?
- Contact our Policy Office at louisereddy@SAS.org.uk to join the campaign!

