

DEFRA CONSULTATION ON DESIGNATION OF 27 SITES AS BATHING WATERS

Closing date: 10th March 2024

BACKGROUND

Defra are currently consulting on the designation of 27 new bathing waters across England. SAS have supported 13 of the 27 applicants to apply for bathing water designation and are currently campaigning for the UK Government to designate 200 new inland bathing sites across the country by 2030. We are in support of all 27 applications.

If you wish to support the designation of these new bathing waters, we have written some guidance to support the designation. You can respond to as many or as few applications as you wish and edit our guidance as much or as little as you like.

When responding to the consultation you might want to think about:

- Have you surfed, swam, kayaked or paddle boarded at the proposed bathing sites?
- Your personal experiences of the proposed bathing sites.
- How important is it to you knowing the water quality at well-loved stretches of waterway?
- Your thoughts on increasing the number of designated bathing sites at rivers, lakes and reservoirs.
- Only swimmers are considered when designating a bathing site.

You can learn more about each of the bathing applications and respond to the government's [consultation here](#).

GUIDANCE

QUESTION 8

What is your view on the proposal to designate this site as a bathing water?

Suggested response:

I agree with the proposal

Context:

Surfers Against Sewage agree with the proposal to designate more bathing waters. Bathing Water Designation provides a legal obligation to improve water quality, which has significant benefits to both human health and the health of ecosystems.

Designated bathing waters are the only stretches of waterways where there is a statutory requirement to monitor water quality for bacteria harmful to human health. It is essential that more inland bathing waters are designated to ensure water users who use rivers are provided with water quality information which is currently not openly available. With this information water users are then able to assess the health risk of using a specific bathing water. The discharge of sewage into the environment puts water users at risk of harmful illness such as ear nose and throat infections and gastroenteritis through exposure to E. coli amongst other harmful pathogens.

Without data provided by designated bathing water routine water quality testing, very little information is available to water users regarding the state and quality of this water body.

WHY YOU AGREE WITH THE PROPOSAL TO DESIGNATE THIS SITE.

QUESTION 9.

Suggested response:

Select all options.

Context:

Surfers Against Sewage believe bathing water designation would support all of the above. We are particularly supportive of bathing waters given the crucial information bathing waters can give water users around the safety of accessing popular swim spots and the requirement designation puts on polluters to clean up pollution impacting popular bathing sites.

QUESTION 10.

You have the opportunity when responding to this question to select "Other" and to explain your connection to the bathing site.

FACILITIES AND INFRASTRUCTURE

QUESTION 14

Are there facilities at or near this site which promote bathing at the site?

Context:

When applying to Defra for bathing water status applicants have selected bathing sites to ensure that facilities are near to the swim spot that fulfil Defra's criteria for designation which can be found [here](#).

Applicants have listed the required facilities close to the bathing site which include toilets that are 500m away. A summary of the facilities that applicants included in their application at each location can be found [here](#). As part of the application process applicants are required to conduct a local consultation which asks if communities are supportive of the bathing water application. An overwhelming number of people supported each application during the consultation. This shows the community is supportive of the bathing application at a local level.

The purpose of designating a bathing site isn't to promote it as a new destination to attract increased numbers of bathers, but will protect existing water users by increasing the monitoring of harmful pathogens in bathing areas and requiring improvements to water quality at sites designated as poor.

All 27 sites currently being consulted on have demonstrated in their application that there are the facilities required to support the designation of a bathing water as set out by Defra.

QUESTION 16.

Is there infrastructure at or near this site which promotes bathing at the site?

Context:

Designated bathing waters are a mechanism to improve water quality at well-loved swim spots. Currently there is no regular or consistent water quality monitoring that takes place to shine a light on the bacteria levels that are harmful to human health in these popular stretches of water used by young people and adults. Therefore, the full extent of the water quality issue at each of the potential bathing sites is unknown. If improvements to the water company infrastructure or changes to farming practises are required, bathing water status is the important step to enforce these.

Improvement to water company infrastructure or farming practises will become more transparent once a site is designated, as the regulator has an obligation to monitor water quality at the location and identify sources of pollution as a result of this monitoring.

In the 1990s over 600 designated beaches were introduced with just 27% of them meeting minimum standard. The requirement to ensure polluters prioritise

improvements to water company assets at designated bathing waters has led to 98% of designated bathing waters meeting the minimum standard in 2023.