Plan to DESIGNATE [Insert location here] AS AN OFFICIAL BATHING WATER to tackle sewage pollution

[Insert date here]

[Insert your community group here] are applying for bathing water designation for the [Insert location here] in order to shine a light on local water quality issues and ensure regulators can hold polluters to account.

Supported by Surfers Against Sewage, an environmental charity that has been campaigning to end sewage pollution for over 30 years, [insert your community group here] is part of a movement of communities UK wide who are looking to use bathing water designation as a mechanism to drive up water quality standards.

[Insert any detail about your specific site and the situation re: water quality e.g. "The river at XXX is affected by sewage discharges from the combined storm overflow at XXX. In 20XX there were XXX discharges into the river and anecdotal evidence of local bathers suffering poor health because of their exposure to the water." You can use the following resources to help with this section – SAS water quality report. Top of the Poops. The Rivers Trust Sewage Map.]

When a location is officially designated, the Environment Agency has a responsibility to test the water quality during the bathing season. A bathing site will then receive a classification of Excellent, Good, Sufficient or Poor at the end of the bathing season as an outcome to the water quality testing. The regulator has a responsibility at Poor classified sites to prevent, reduce or eliminate the causes of pollution, as well as identify the reasons it didn't receive a higher classification.

There are over 600 coastal designated bathing areas in the UK but only 15 rivers are designated. Campaigners say that more inland locations are needed to be designated to improve the health of the UK's rivers.

Rivers are vital ecosystems that people rely on for mental and physical health benefits. However, at present, only 14% of the UK's inland waterways are in a good ecological status due to pollution from untreated sewage and agriculture waste.

In the bathing water designation process, a site needs to demonstrate a large number of bathers use the water, alongside other requirements. The application process involves a consultation with the local community as well as counting the number of bathers during the bathing season. Surfers Against Sewage are helping [Insert community name here] and other UK communities through the process through formal guidance and regular meetings. Other communities seeking to get their bathing water designated can find out more at www.sas.org.uk/designation

Kirsty Davies, Community Water Quality Manager from Surfers Against Sewage says: "Passionate communities like [insert community name here] are leading the way in applying for bathing water status to protect the health of their local waterways, and people's health. We know that inland waterways achieving bathing water designation isn't a silver bullet to improve water quality. But it is a vital next step in our plans to lift the lid on polluters, force regulators to act and end sewage pollution for good."

[Insert your own quote here, using the template for Kirsty's quote above – any local commentary, insights will be valuable for local press]

-ENDS-

For local enquiries please contact [insert community email address and phone number, if applicable, here].

For enquiries with Surfers Against Sewage, please contact kirsty@sas.org.uk 01872 555945.

About Surfers Against Sewage

Surfers Against Sewage is a grassroots environmental charity that campaigns to protect the ocean and all it makes possible. It was created in 1990 by a group of Cornish surfers, fighting to clean up the sea that was making them sick. Now, Surfers Against Sewage campaigns on all that threatens the ocean - plastic pollution, the climate emergency, industrial exploitation and water quality – by taking action on the ground that triggers change from the top.

https://www.sas.org.uk/

Notes to Editors

- Information on why we need to see more inland bathing waters can be found here: Apply for Bathing Water Designation - Surfers Against Sewage (sas.org.uk)
- Surfers Against Sewage bathing water toolkit can be found here: SAS-Bathing-Water-Designation-Toolkit-2022.pdf
- Information on the formal application process to Defra can be found at: Bathing waters: apply for designation or de-designation - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)
- Existing bathing water in England can be found here: Bathing water quality (data.gov.uk)