

Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

Consultation on the proposal to remove Rock from the list of designated bathing waters

January 2016

Background

The Bathing Water Directive (2006/7/EC) is designed to protect public health against faecal pollution at popular swimming areas by setting limits for the level of intestinal enterococci and *E.coli* in the water. Beaches and inland waters are designated as bathing waters if they are used by large numbers of bathers. The safety of the location and the presence of infrastructure to support and promote bathing are also taken into account. Bathing waters are monitored for compliance with the Directive's standards during the bathing season, which in England runs from 15 May to 30 September. During 2015 the Environment Agency monitored water quality at 415 beaches and inland waters.

We have opted not to set a minimum number of bathers to define a "large number". English beaches vary from busy resorts to small bays in rural areas, and many of them attract a number of bathers proportionate to their size and location. Setting a minimum number means we could risk excluding small beaches or inland sites that have facilities for bathing but are not used by as many people as a beach in a large resort.

We propose to remove Rock from the list of designated bathing waters on the basis of public safety.

The Bathing Water Directive's standards focus on human health, and de-designation would not have an impact on fisheries or wildlife. Shellfish beds in the Camel estuary are Protected Areas under the Water Framework Directive (2000/60/EC). Water quality more generally is also protected by a number of other measures, including the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (2008/56/EC) and Urban Waste Water Treatment Directive (91/271/EEC).

The Environment Agency's bathing water profile contains a location map and detailed information about the catchment:

http://environment.data.gov.uk/bwq/explorer/info.html?_search=rock&site=ukk3104-33100

Bathers' safety at Rock

Rock is a popular watersports centre on the estuary of the River Camel with motor boat and dinghy moorings, three dinghy launching areas and a sailing school, and the beach is used for launching dinghies, powerboats, kayaks and windsurfing vessels. The sampling point is close to the slipway for the ferry that runs regularly between Rock and Padstow during daylight hours and to the channel that accesses a private pontoon and moorings. During a 2014 usage survey it was impossible to take an accurate count of the number of water sport participants because of the vast number of vessels being used.

The Padstow Harbour Commissioners consider that swimming at the beach could present a risk to human life and have expressed concern that Rock's designation as a bathing water implies that the beach is a suitable place to swim. Large numbers of boats pass through the area at high speed and there are very strong tidal currents in the estuary.

The hazard identification for marine operations in the estuary lists collision between bathers and power driven vessels as a risk. The risk assessment identifies two specific hazards:

- Collision between bathers and vessels
- Swimmer swept away by tide

The harbourmaster has provided information from the reports of harbour patrols in the estuary during 2014 and 2015:

2015

- During 75 patrols in the ski area, 273 skiers, wakeboarders or inflatables were observed being towed
- 12 swimmers were assisted or escorted back to shore
- 27 boat rescues or incidents
- 22 kite boarding incidents
- 57 incidents of speeding

2014

- During 183 patrols in the ski area, 524 skiers, wakeboarders or inflatables were observed being towed
- 41 swimmers were assisted or escorted back to shore
- 30 incidents involving members of the public stranded, injured or vessels in need of assistance
- 10 kite boarding incidents
- 29 incidents of speeding

Bather numbers - 2014 survey

During the summer of 2014 the Environment Agency carried out a survey on behalf of Defra to investigate beach usage at Rock because there was anecdotal evidence that it was little used for bathing. Bathers, water sports participants and other beach users were counted on 30 days at weekends or during the school summer holidays. The results confirm that the area is predominantly used for water sports.

Date	Time	Bathers (including children paddling)	Adults paddling	Water sports	People on beach
Fri 30 May	15.03	1	0	5	9
Sat 31 May	14.37	3	0	3	11
Sun 8 June	14.30	0	0	5	2
Sat 14 June	13.59	0	0	7	5
Sat 21 June	14.54	1	0	8	17
Sun 22 June	14.02	3	1	10+	15
Sat 28 June	12.22	0	0	8	9
Sat 5 July	13.43	4	0	10+	37
Sun 6 July	15.18	1	0	10+	62
Sat 12 July	14.09	2	0	10+	19
Sun 13 July	12.30	3	0	10+	24
Thur 17 July	15.11	2	0	10+	67
Sat 19 July	15.51	2	0	10+	49
Sun 20 July	16.41	2	0	10+	87
Mon 21 July	12.22	2	7	10+	74
Tues 22 July	15.40	9	2	10+	67
Wed 23 July	12.42	5	3	10+	63
Fri 25 July	12.24	5	3	10+	65
Sat 26 July	15.12	9	3	10+	118
Mon 28 July	14.08	0	0	6	9
Tues 29 July	16.03	7	0	10+	87
Sat 2 August	13.54	0	0	10+	52
Wed 6 August	13.32	6	6	10+	67
Mon 11 Aug	16.01	1	0	10+	35
Tues 19 Aug	16.41	0	7	10+	117
Tues 26 Aug	14.20	10	1	10+	68
Wed 27 Aug	13.30	0	0	10+	48
Sun 31 Aug	13.24	0	0	10+	48
Wed 3 Sept	12.34	7	2	10+	39
Thur 4 Sept	15.40	1	0	10+	39
Total		86	35	High number of watercraft – too many to count	1409
Average		<3	>1		47

10+ indicates that the number of water sport users could not be determined because of the vast number of vessels being used at that time, whether on the beach or recently launched and using an area in close proximity.

Facilities

There is a car park with public toilets close to the main access point to the beach and there are shops, cafes and restaurants on Rock Road, which leads towards the village.

Water quality

Bathing water quality at Rock was classified as Good following the 2015 bathing season.

Responding to this consultation

We would welcome your views on the proposal to remove Rock from the list of designated bathing waters. Please respond by 3 March 2016 to bathingwater@defra.gsi.gov.uk , via Citizenspace or by post to:

Bathing Water Team
Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
Area 3D Nobel House
17 Smith Square
London
SW1P 3JR

In your response please state:

- your view on the proposal;
- your reasons or evidence to support your view.

Annex A – list of consultees

British Destinations
British Long Distance Swimming Association
Consumer Council for Water
Cornwall Council
Country Land and Business Association
Department for Culture, Media and Sport
Duchy of Cornwall
Keep Britain Tidy
Marine Conservation Society
National Farmers Union
Outdoor Swimming Society
Padstow Town Council
River and Lake Swimming Association
St Minver Highlands Parish Council
St Minver Lowlands Parish Council
South West Water
Surfers Against Sewage
UK Beach Management Forum
Visit England
Water UK



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Any enquiries regarding this publication should be sent to us at bathingwater@defra.gsi.gov.uk

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