



Department  
for Environment  
Food & Rural Affairs

# Application for designation as a bathing water **River Wharfe, Ilkley**

**August 2020**



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## Background

Popular beaches and inland waters that attract a large number of bathers are designated as bathing waters under the Bathing Water Regulations 2013 (S.I.2013/1675) (“the Regulations”) to protect bathers’ health against faecal pollution. During the bathing season, which in England runs from 15 May to 30 September, the Environment Agency monitors the water quality to test for intestinal enterococci and *E.coli*. Bathing waters are classified annually as Excellent, Good, Sufficient or Poor, based on an assessment of the level of bacteria in the water over the preceding four years.

The Regulations define a bathing water as a surface water where “...*the Secretary of State expects a large number of people to bathe, having regard in particular to past trends and any infrastructure or facilities provided, or other measures taken, to promote bathing at those waters.*” (Reg. 3(1)). We have not defined a “large number” because there is a wide variety of bathing waters in England that attract a level of usage proportionate to their size and location and setting a minimum number could exclude smaller sites. Designation also takes into account any facilities that are provided to promote and support bathing (for example, lifeguarding, first aid facilities, public toilets, shops and cafes) because the presence of such facilities demonstrates that the site is an established bathing area and is promoted and managed for bathing.

The Ilkley Clean River Group, with the support of Ilkley Town Council and Bradford City Council, has applied for an area of the River Wharfe, between Ilkley Main Bridge and Beanlands Island, to be designated as a bathing water. If the site is designated as a bathing water, the Environment Agency will determine a sampling point on the basis of where the greatest number of bathers go into the water. The annual classification would reflect bathing water quality at this point on the river.

This consultation seeks your views on the proposal to designate this area of river as a bathing water.

## Location and facilities

The area used for swimming and paddling is close to the town centre and has easy access to shops, cafes, car parking and public transport.

Lifesaving equipment is available on the riverbank. There are public toilets at the nearby Lido, an outdoor swimming pool managed by Bradford City Council, which is open from May to early September.

# Usage numbers and methodology

The Defra guidance on applying for a new bathing water designation asks for a numerical survey of beach usage covering a minimum of 20 days during the bathing season. The survey must include 10 weekend or bank holiday days and half of the survey days must be during school holiday periods. The guidance asks for the numbers of adults and children paddling to be shown separately, as children are more likely than adults to become immersed and ingest water and for that reason are counted as a bather.

The Ilkley Clean River Group has provided a survey of usage at the river taken over 46 days between 14 May and 14 September 2019. Separate counts were taken in two areas, from Ilkley Main Bridge to Ilkley Swing Bridge and from Ilkley Swing Bridge to Beanlands Island, and we have combined the two area counts for the purpose of assessing the level of usage. Ilkley Main Bridge to Ilkley Swing Bridge is the more heavily used area.

The 49 counts taken during the survey registered a total of 1792 bathers (i.e. adults and children swimming, and children paddling), 6958 adults and children on the riverbank, 198 using the river for other activities (for example, boating or fishing) and 489 adults paddling in the water. However, on three dates, two counts were taken (29 June, 23 July and 24 August) therefore to be consistent with the usual approach of a single count on each survey date in this consultation we have used the figures from the higher count on each of these dates.

The river is used for recreational activities such as fishing and boating, as well as swimming and paddling. The survey included the number of people fishing or using boats.

The breakdown of numbers reported over 46 counts were:

- 1478 bathers (adults swimming and children swimming or paddling)
- 417 adults paddling
- 158 using the water for other recreational activities
- 5569 on the riverbank

This gives an average per count (rounded to the nearest whole number) of:

- 32 bathers
- 9 adults paddling
- 3 using the water for other recreational activities
- 121 on the riverbank

If the unrounded daily averages are multiplied by 20, to give a comparison with a 20 day survey, the figures are:

- 641 bathers
- 181 adults paddling
- 69 using the water for other recreational activities
- 2421 on the riverbank

The total number of bathers for each count is shown in Table 1.

**Table 1**

Date of count	Adults swimming	Children swimming	Children paddling	Totals
Tuesday 14 May	0	0	0	0
Friday 17 May	0	0	2	2
Sunday 19 May	0	0	0	0
Tuesday 21 May	0	0	3	3
Thursday 23 May	2	0	0	2
Sunday 26 May	0	0	0	0
Friday 31 May	0	0	0	0
Saturday 1 June	0	1	4	5
Thursday 6 June	0	0	2	2
Sunday 9 June	0	0	5	5
Sunday 16 June	0	0	2	2
Tuesday 18 June	1	0	0	1
Saturday 22 June	0	3	1	4
Sunday 23 June	4	2	2	8
Thursday 27 June	6	0	3	9
Saturday 29 June*	4	49	82	135
Tuesday 2 July	0	0	1	1
Thursday 4 July	0	0	0	0
Saturday 6 July	3	13	7	23
Sunday 14 July	0	1	5	6
Tuesday 16 July	0	0	0	0
Thursday 18 July	0	0	3	3
Saturday 20 July	0	0	1	1
Tuesday 23 July*	5	141	106	252
Wednesday 24 July	6	54	58	118
Thursday 25 July	22	186	173	381
Monday 29 July	0	0	0	0
Thurs 1 August	3	0	5	8
Sunday 4 August	0	2	25	27
Monday 5 August	0	3	12	15
Wednesday 7 August	0	0	8	8
Thursday 8 August	0	14	13	27
Tuesday 13 August	0	0	10	10
Saturday 17 August	0	0	4	4
Friday 23 August	0	0	5	5
Saturday 24 August*	4	0	88	92
Sunday 25 August	2	23	46	71
Monday 26 August	9	13	145	167
Tuesday 27 August	0	4	58	62
Thursday 29 August	0	0	10	10
Friday 30 August	0	2	4	6

Monday 2 September	0	0	0	0
Wednesday 4 September	0	0	0	0
Sunday 8 September	0	0	2	2
Monday 9 September	0	0	0	0
Saturday 14 September	0	0	1	1
<b>Totals</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>511</b>	<b>896</b>	<b>1478</b>

\*Two counts were taken on this date and we have used the figures from the higher count

## Local consultation

The Clean River Group carried out an online survey between 7 July - 28 September 2019 to gather views from local residents and businesses, service providers, local voluntary and civic groups, and visitors to the town on the proposal to apply for designation as a bathing water. The survey was publicised in the local press and via Facebook and Twitter. There were 527 responses, predominantly from local residents:

- 513 respondents supported having clean water in the river to paddle, play and swim in;
- 9 opposed the proposal;
- 5 neither supported nor opposed the proposal.

Ilkley Town Council held two public meetings in 2019 to consider the condition of the river and review the data gathered by the Clean River Group: in February, when it was agreed to apply for designation as a bathing water, and in July, when there was continuing support for the proposal.

## Responding to this consultation

We would welcome your views on the proposal to designate this riverside area in Ilkley as a bathing water.

In your response please state:

- That you are responding to the consultation on whether an area of the River Wharfe at Ilkley should be designated as a bathing water
- Your view on the proposal
- Your reasons or evidence to support your view

Please respond by 2 October 2020 via Citizenspace, by email to [bathingwater@defra.gov.uk](mailto:bathingwater@defra.gov.uk) or by post to:

Consultation Co-ordinator  
 Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs  
 Kings Pool  
 Foss House  
 1-2 Peasholme Green  
 York YO1 7PX

## **Annex - List of consultees**

British Destinations and UK Beach Management Forum  
British Long Distance Swimming Association  
Consumer Council for Water  
Country Land and Business Association  
Department for Culture, Media and Sport  
Marine Conservation Society  
National Farmers Union  
Outdoor Swimming Society  
River and Lake Swimming Association  
Surfers Against Sewage  
Visit England  
Water UK  
Yorkshire Water