



Department
for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs

Proposal to remove Silloth from the list of designated bathing waters

May 2016



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Contents

Background.....	1
Bathers' safety at Silloth	1
Survey of bather numbers 2014.....	2
Outcome of 2014 survey.....	3
Facilities.....	4
Water quality.....	4
Responding to this consultation	4
Annex A - list of consultees.....	5

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 presence of infrastructure to support and promote bathing is taken into account, and the safety of the location for bathing may also be a factor in considering applications for designation or de-designation. 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. In 2016 the Environment Agency is monitoring 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.

Allerdale Borough Council has applied for Silloth to be removed from the list of designated bathing waters on the grounds of low usage for bathing and concerns about public safety.

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

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

http://environment.data.gov.uk/bwq/profiles/profile.html?_search=silloth&site=ukd1101-46300

Bathers' safety at Silloth

The monitored bathing water area is to the south of Silloth harbour. The harbour master has advised that there are strong tidal currents that run along the shore line which are visible to the experienced eye but may not be apparent to the casual visitor, making the area hazardous for bathing.

Survey of bather numbers 2014

During the summer of 2014 the Environment Agency carried out a survey on behalf of Defra to assess beach usage at Silloth because there was anecdotal evidence that it was seldom used for bathing. The methodology was for counts of bathers, water sports participants and other beach users to be taken over 30 days at a time between 12 noon and 4pm or whenever local conditions, such as the tide, permitted. We asked for any known local usage patterns, such as early morning or evening swimming, to be taken into account.

Twenty of the survey days were at weekends or during the school summer holidays. There were people on the beach on most days of the survey, but only five people were observed bathing and seven paddling.

The area of the beach where the survey was carried out is shown between blue lines on the map and the sampling point is indicated by a red dot. The outcomes are shown in the table below.

The weather during the surveys was a mixture of sunshine and light winds, with occasional showers. The temperature ranged between 14 and 24 degrees Centigrade.



Outcome of 2014 survey

Date	Time	Bathers (including children paddling)	Paddlers	Water sports	People on beach
Sat 17 May	15:00	0	0	0	4
Sun 18 May	16:12	0	0	0	0
Sun 25 May	13:08	0	0	0	0
Mon 26 May	12:10	0	0	0	6
Thur 29 May	14:00	0	0	0	4
Sat 31 May	Not recorded	0	0	0	5
Sun 1 June	14:30	0	0	0	0
Tue 10 June	10:40	0	0	0	0
Sat 14 June	12:30	1	1	0	5
Sun 15 June	15:45	0	0	0	4
Wed 18 June	15:30	0	0	0	6
Wed 25 June	11:20	0	0	0	6
Sun 29 June	13:55	0	0	0	6
Thur 10 July	10:40	0	0	0	6
Sat 12 July	12:00	0	0	0	0
Sun 13 July	13:40	0	2	0	3
Wed 23 July	10:20	0	0	0	0
Sat 26 July	12:05	4	1	1	9
Sun 27 July	13:15	0	0	0	4
Thur 31 July	15:10	0	0	0	3
Fri 8 August	13:05	0	0	0	5
Tue 12 Aug	13:50	0	0	0	0
Sat 16 August	12:30	0	0	0	0
Sat 23 August	14:40	0	0	0	6
Sun 24 Aug	11:25	0	0	0	21
Mon 25 Aug	12:20	0	0	0	0
Thur 28 Aug	14:45	0	0	0	0
Sat 30 Aug	14:20	0	3	0	5
Sun 31 Aug	12:18	0	0	0	12
Sat 13 Sept	16:50	0	0	4	8
Total		5	7	5	128
Average		<1	<1	<1	>4

Local consultation

Allerdale Council held a local consultation between 30 November 2015 - 18 January 2016. The consultation was available online and notices were placed at the beach and in Silloth library and Tourist Information Centre. The consultees were:

- Local councillors
- Port of Silloth
- Silloth and District Chamber of Trade
- Silloth Tourism Action Group
- Silloth Town Centre Manager
- Silloth Town Council
- Solway Coast Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

Four replies were received, three in support and one opposed to de-designation.

The Defra guidance on applying for designation or de-designation of bathing waters asks for a consultation to be carried out during the bathing season, but we agreed to these dates in view of the safety concerns and the strong evidence that has been provided. The current consultation offers an opportunity for responses to be sent during the bathing season.

Facilities

There is a car park but no specific beach facilities. The bathing water is approximately 15 minutes' walk from the village.

Water quality

Bathing water at Silloth was classified as Poor following the 2015 bathing season.

Responding to this consultation

We would welcome your views on the proposal to remove Silloth from the list of designated bathing waters. Please respond by 17 June 2016 to bathingwater@defra.gsi.gov.uk, via Citizenspace or to:

Bathing Water Team
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
Country Land and Business Association
Department for Culture, Media and Sport
Keep Britain Tidy
Marine Conservation Society
National Farmers Union
Outdoor Swimming Society
River and Lake Swimming Association
Surfers Against Sewage
UK Beach Management Forum
United Utilities
Visit England
Water UK