



Department
for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs

Application for designation as a bathing water

Annex D Gwynver, Whitesand Bay, Cornwall

March 2017



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Any enquiries regarding this publication should be sent to us at

Bathing Water team
Defra
Area 3D Nobel House
17 Smith Square
London SW1P 3JR

Email: bathingwater@defra.gsi.gov.uk

Tel: 020 8026 3462

www.gov.uk/defra

Location and facilities

This Annex summarises the evidence for the designation of Gwynver as a bathing water.

Gwynver beach forms part Whitesand Bay in Cornwall and is close to the designated bathing water at Sennen. The beach is lifeguarded by Royal National Lifeboat Institution (RNLI) lifeguards between May and September and is close to a small privately owned car park.



Beach usage in 2015

The figures provided by Cornwall Council were compiled by the RNLI and cover the 2015 bathing season because the figures for 2016 had not been finalised when the application was submitted. Defra's requirements for evidence of the number of bathers are explained in the main consultation document and in the guidance on applying for a new bathing water designation, which is available on Citizenspace. The RNLI's methodology for its counts of beach users is also explained in the consultation document.

In 2015 lifeguards were on duty at Gwynver between 16 May - 27 September, a total of 135 days, which means that the numbers appear higher than in the 20 day survey that is usually provided in the evidence for designation. The figures for the peak two hour period each day in the 2015 lifeguard season give an estimated total of:

- 35262 beach users
- 9021 in the water
- 3959 using surfboards or water craft

This gives an average for a daily two hour survey over 135 days of:

- 261 beach users
- 67 in the water
- 29 using surfboards or water craft

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

- 5220 beach users
- 1340 in the water
- 580 using surfboards or water craft

Local consultation

Between July and September 2016, Cornwall Council held individual consultations for each of the proposed bathing waters. The consultees were local County Councillors, parish councils and local stakeholders, individuals and organisations that may have an interest in the designation of the site as a bathing water. The Council also consulted the Marine Conservation Society, the RNLI, Surfers Against Sewage and Visit Cornwall for their views on all the proposals.

Eleven organisations were consulted for their views on the designation of Gwynver. There were nine responses to the consultation.

- Two respondents supported designation
- One respondent supported designation provided there were no water quality issues
- One respondent stated that they had no objection to designation
- Five respondents were opposed to the beach being designated as a bathing water

The reasons that were stated for opposing designation were:

- Public safety: there are strong currents at the beach that could be life threatening. Three of the respondents who commented on safety were concerned that designation could imply that the beach is safe for swimming
- Three respondents felt that designation as a bathing water would lead to an increase in the number of visitors
- There is heavy traffic because of the high number of visitors to the beach, and only limited parking
- There are no toilets, showers or rubbish collection

Defra does not hold any water quality data for Godrevy. The objective of designating a beach as a bathing water is to ensure that water quality meets the legally required standards and put improvements in place if they are needed.

Beach safety at Gwynver

The Bathing Water Directive is designed to improve water quality and to protect the health of bathers against faecal pollution. The main criterion for a beach or inland water to be designated as a bathing water under the Directive is a high level of usage. Although the safety aspect of the bathing area is not recognised as part of the designation process, lifeguarding is one of the facilities that is taken into account as part of the supporting evidence to demonstrate that there is established usage at the bathing site.

The RNLI provides a lifeguard service at Gwynver during the bathing season and has prepared a risk assessment which is reviewed at regular intervals. A range of potential hazards are taken into account and the overall risk level is based on the assessed severity of the risk from these hazards multiplied by the likelihood of an event actually occurring. Gwynver has been assessed by the RNLI as a “higher risk” beach, making it comparable to the adjacent beach at Sennen. However the risk at both sites is managed by the provision of lifeguards throughout the summer.