



Department
for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs

Consultation on applications for bathing water designations in Cornwall

March 2017



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Contents

Background.....	1
Water quality monitoring and classification	2
Methodology for beach usage figures	3
Local consultation	3
Responding to this consultation	4
Annex A - list of consultees.....	4

Background

Popular beaches and inland waters that attract a large number of bathers are designated as bathing waters under the Bathing Water Directive (2006/7/EC) to preserve, protect and improve the quality of the environment and to protect bathers' health.

Information about the number of people bathing at the site and the facilities that are provided to promote and support bathing are required as evidence for designation. We do not set a minimum number of bathers because there is a wide variety of beaches and bathing sites in England that attract a number of users proportionate to their size and location.

Following the 2016 bathing season, Cornwall Council applied for 10 beaches and a tidal bathing pool to be designated as bathing waters. The proposed bathing waters in the application are:

- Black Rock, Widemouth Bay
- Booby's Bay, near St Merryn
- Bude Sea Bathing Pool
- Common Towan, The Towans, near Hayle
- Godrevy, The Towans, near Hayle (this beach should not be confused with the existing bathing water known as The Towans (Godrevy)).
- Gwynver, Whitesand Bay
- Northcott Mouth, near Bude
- South Fistral, Newquay
- Mexico Towan, The Towans, near Hayle
- Tregonhawke, Whitsand Bay
- Upton Towan, The Towans, near Hayle

The Environment Agency has advised that three of the sites, Black Rock, Bude Sea Pool and Common Towan, are covered by existing designations and therefore are not being consulted on as they will not be taken forward for designation – further detail as to how this decision has been reached is set out below.

Black Rock is the name given to the area at the west end of Widemouth Bay. The designated bathing water known as Widemouth Sand and the proposed bathing water at Black Rock are both located within one water body and are very close to each other, with no physical boundaries or geographic features dividing them. The water quality sampling point for Widemouth Sand is shown on the map in the bathing water profile:

<https://environment.data.gov.uk/bwq/profiles/profile.html?search=widemou&site=ukk3104-33400> As Black Rock is the area at the opposite end of the beach and there are no physical boundaries/geographic features dividing it from the existing designation, it forms part of the existing bathing water designation.

A separate bathing water designation for Bude Sea Pool is not necessary as the pool is located within, and forms part of, the Bude Summerleaze designated bathing water. It is not a separate water body and the tide reaches the sea pool each day. As the tide comes in, the pool disappears. The bathing water profile for Bude Summerleaze can be seen here:

https://environment.data.gov.uk/bwq/profiles/profile.html?_search=summer&site=ukk3104-33500

The proposed bathing water at Common Towan and the designated bathing water at The Towans (Hayle) both sit within one water body with no physical boundaries or geographic features which divide them. For water quality classification purposes, Common Towan is part of The Towans (Hayle). Therefore, a separate bathing water designation for Common Towan is not necessary. The bathing water profile for The Towans (Hayle) can be seen here:

http://environment.data.gov.uk/bwq/profiles/profile.html?_search=towans&site=ukk3105-31300

This consultation therefore seeks your views on whether the remaining eight beaches should be designated as bathing waters. For each of the eight sites we are consulting on, a summary of the evidence submitted by Cornwall Council about the number of bathers and the facilities available to support bathing is given in the Annex :

- Annex B: Booby's Bay, near St Merryn
- Annex C: Godrevy, The Towans, near Hayle (the name of the existing bathing water known as The Towans (Godrevy) would be amended to reflect its correct location at Gwithian)
- Annex D: Gwynver, Whitesand Bay
- Annex E: Northcott Mouth, near Bude
- Annex F: South Fistral, Newquay
- Annex G: Mexico Towan, The Towans, near Hayle
- Annex H: Tregonhawke, Whitsand Bay
- Annex J: Upton Towan, The Towans, near Hayle

The consultation period will be four weeks instead of the six week period which is mentioned in the Defra guidance. This shorter period is because the consultations on designating new bathing waters are being held later than usual this year and the local authorities will need time to implement any necessary changes following the Secretary of State's final decision on designation.

Water quality monitoring and classification

During the bathing season, which in England runs from 15 May to 30 September, the Environment Agency monitors the water quality at designated bathing waters to test for a number of matters, including intestinal enterococci and *E.coli*. Bathing waters are

classified annually as Excellent, Good, Sufficient or Poor, based on an assessment over the preceding four years of the level of bacteria in the water.

Methodology for beach usage figures

The figures for beach usage that are given in each Annex were compiled by the Royal National Lifeboat Institution (RNLI) during the summer of 2015. The figures for 2016 had not been finalised when the application was submitted.

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. This must include 10 weekend or bank holiday days and half of the survey days must be in school holiday periods. The guidance also asks for the numbers of adults and children paddling to be shown separately because we categorise a child paddling as a bather for the purpose of counting bather numbers, as they are likely to become immersed and splash their face with seawater. The RNLI survey method does not distinguish between adults and children but we have accepted the figures in view of the high numbers involved.

At RNLI lifeguarded beaches the lifeguards take regular headcounts of beach users between 10am - 6pm. The survey period each day is broken into four two-hour blocks and beach users are categorised as:

- People using the beach
- Bathers, including bodyboarders
- Water craft users (surfboards, kayaks etc)

The total number for each day is divided by the number of survey periods to give a daily average.

To provide information for peak use, Cornwall Council gave detailed figures for the two-hour survey period associated with the highest number of bathers for each day of the lifeguard season. In each Annex the number of bathers has been divided by the number of days in the lifeguard season to give a daily average for the peak usage time. The average number has been multiplied by 20 to give a comparison with a 20 day survey.

Local consultation

Cornwall Council carried out individual consultations on each of the proposed bathing waters between July and September 2016. The consultees were organisations, individuals and stakeholders that may have an interest in the designation of a particular site and organisations with a general interest in all the proposals: Visit Cornwall, Marine Conservation Society, RNLI and Surfers Against Sewage.

A summary of the responses for each candidate site is given in the Annexes.

Responding to this consultation

We would welcome your views on whether the proposed sites should be designated as bathing waters. Please respond by 12 April 2017 to bathingwater@defra.gsi.gov.uk , via Citizenspace, or by post to:

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In your response please state:

- Which site you are commenting on
- Your view on the proposal
- Your reasons or evidence to support your view

Annex A - list of consultees

British Destinations and UK Beach Management Forum
British Long Distance Swimming Association
Cornwall Council
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
South West Water
Surfers Against Sewage
Visit England
Water UK