



Department  
for Environment  
Food & Rural Affairs

# Consultation on application for designation as a bathing water

## **Manor Steps, Bournemouth**

March 2017



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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 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 have 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.

Bournemouth Borough Council has applied for Manor Steps beach in Bournemouth to be designated as a bathing water. This consultation seeks your views on the application.

# Location and facilities

Manor Steps beach is situated between Boscombe Pier and Fisherman's Walk beaches, which are both designated bathing waters.



Manor Steps beach is included in the infrastructure, cleansing and maintenance programme of all Bournemouth Council's beaches. The facilities available at the beach are:

- Royal National Lifeboat Institution (RNLI) lifeguards from May to September, with life-saving equipment also available
- First aid service provided by the Seafront Ranger team
- Public toilets
- Beach huts
- Free showers, foot washes and drinking water
- Parking at the cliff top and in a nearby car park
- Access points, including disabled access, along the seafront promenade and via a path from the cliff top
- There is a bus route along the cliff top road and a land train service along the promenade
- An ice cream kiosk, which is being developed to serve hot food

## 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.

## Beach usage numbers

Bournemouth Council has provided figures provided by the RNLI for beach usage during the 2015 and 2016 bathing seasons.

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, which runs from 15 May to 30 September. This must include 10 weekend or bank holiday days and half of the survey days must be in school holiday periods. The guidance asks for the numbers of adults in the water 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 include this level of detail but we have accepted the figures in view of the high numbers involved.

Lifeguards take regular headcounts of beach users between 10am and 6pm every day during the lifeguard season. Beach users are categorised as:

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

In 2016 lifeguards were on duty at Manor Steps beach between 2 July - 5 September, a total of 66 days. The total numbers observed by the lifeguards over this period were:

- 26479 beach users
- 4624 in the water
- 649 using surfboards or water craft

This gives a daily average (10am - 6pm) over 66 days of:

- 401 beach users
- 70 in the water
- 10 using surfboards or water craft

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

- 8020 beach users
- 1400 in the water
- 200 using surfboards or water craft

## Local consultation

Bournemouth Council's local consultation on the proposal to apply for Manor Steps to be designated as a bathing water was held following the close of the bathing season, between 1 - 24 October 2016. The beachside businesses were not consulted separately because they are owned by the council.

- Local residents were consulted via a letter drop
- Online consultations were available on the Council's website and on Snapsurveys
- Facebook and Twitter were used to alert users to the consultation

There were 15 responses to the consultation. Seven respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the proposal and eight disagreed or strongly disagreed. The main concern of the respondents who opposed designation was they felt it may lead to an increased number of visitors, putting additional pressure on parking.

## Responding to this consultation

We would welcome your views on the proposal to designate Manor Steps beach as a bathing water. Please respond by 12 April 2017 via Citizenspace, to [bathingwater@defra.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:bathingwater@defra.gsi.gov.uk) 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:

- That you are responding to the consultation on Bournemouth Manor Steps
- Your view on the proposal
- Your reasons or evidence to support your view

## **Annex A - list of consultees**

Bournemouth Borough Council  
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  
Keep Britain Tidy  
Marine Conservation Society  
National Farmers Union  
Outdoor Swimming Society  
River and Lake Swimming Association  
Surfers Against Sewage  
Visit England  
Water UK  
Wessex Water