



Bathing waters

Every summer, water quality is assessed at popular beaches that have been designated as bathing waters under the European bathing water directive.

Bathing season sampling

During the bathing season, from 15 May to 30 September, twenty samples are taken (approximately once a week) by the Environment Agency and tested for bacteria. These samples indicate the presence of pollution from either sewage or animal and bird waste.

At the end of the bathing season, bathing waters must meet the legal minimum 'mandatory' standard, which sets values for escheria coli that must be achieved by 95% of the samples taken.

Beaches should also endeavour to meet the stricter UK 'guideline' standard. This sets tighter values for Escheria Coli to be achieved by 80% of samples and a value for intestinal enterococci to be achieved by 90% of samples.

Changes to the bathing water directive

The revised bathing water directive will be fully implemented in 2015. Samples taken between 2012 and 2015 will be used for the first classification under the new directive.

The revision means that more information about the quality of bathing water will be made available to members of the public.

The Environment Agency has issued a profile for each bathing water that can be accessed online at www.environment-agency.gov.uk/bathingwaters.

The profiles include maps, potential sources of pollution, sampling points, photos and links to the latest water quality results to help the public make more informed choices about the best locations to visit and enjoy.

- Excellent:** approximately twice as stringent as guideline
- Good:** comparable to guideline
- Sufficient:** approximately twice as stringent as mandatory
- Poor:** non-compliance with the revised directive standards

The timeline for implementation of the revised directive are:-

- 2006** The revised bathing water directive (2006/7/EC) was introduced
- 2008** Bathing water regulations 2008 came into force in England and Wales
- 2011** Bathing water profiles for each bathing water have been published
- 2012** Beach signage and public information to be made available
- 2012** The first year of monitoring towards the first classification in 2015 starts
- 2014** The current bathing water directive is repealed at the end of the year
- 2015** The first classification for each bathing water is published
- 2016** Standard EU symbols are used across all bathing waters

