

## IMPLEMENTATION OF THE REVISED EC BATHING WATER DIRECTIVE 2006/7/EC

This is the second in what will be a series of newsletters following their re-launch in October. We are pleased to have received a lot of positive feedback in response to our first newsletter, which confirms that the time taken to produce them is worthwhile. We even recently learnt that the newsletter reached our colleagues in the Netherlands!



A lot has happened since the last newsletter was issued two months ago, so this edition will cover the following

- 2006 bathing water results;
- the first signage working group meeting;
- the first Bathing Water Committee meeting in Brussels;
- the fourth Bathing Water Symposium in Northern Ireland;
- non-agricultural diffuse pollution;
- update on England Catchment Sensitive Farming Delivery Initiative.

## **1. 2006 bathing water results – record mandatory compliance in England and the UK**

England's best ever bathing water quality results were announced on 9 November by Environment Minister, Ian Pearson.

In 2006, a record 99.5% of all bathing waters in England met the mandatory standards required by the Bathing Water Directive, compared to 98.8% in 2005. Only 2 of England's 413 monitored bathing waters failed to reach the minimum standards. These were Staithes and Hampstead Heath Ladies Pond. 75.1% of all English bathing waters also reached the much tighter guideline water quality standards, higher than last year's figure of 73.7%.

The overall UK mandatory (99.5%) and guideline (75.0%) compliance figures were also at record highs in 2006. Both Scotland and Northern Ireland achieved 100% mandatory compliance and Wales had just one failing water.

The 2006 bathing water press announcement can be found at:

[www.defra.gov.uk/news/2006/061109a.htm](http://www.defra.gov.uk/news/2006/061109a.htm)

The press release includes a link (in the notes to editors) to the summary results tables for England and the UK and a list of compliance results for all waters in England. These excellent results place us in a good position for achieving the tighter standards of the revised Bathing Water Directive in the future.

## **2. Signage working group**

As mentioned in the October newsletter, Defra was in the process of setting up a small working group to assess the information that will be included on beach signs in the future, how or when this should be displayed at bathing waters and to start work on the development of standardised signs and symbols.

The first meeting of the Signage Working Group took place on 16 November. The group was made up of representatives from Government, Local Authorities, the Environment Agency and RoSPA. Prior to the meeting Defra circulated a discussion paper which contained an extensive range of issues and questions. It was agreed that there were too many issues to cover in the first meeting, so the group focussed on those immediate issues that would be most beneficial to the development of Defra's consultation paper and the Regulations. Discussions therefore focused on issues such as should there be standardised wording on signs, how should Defra engage local authorities and private beach operators and issues surrounding enforcement. There was general agreement that the new requirements should be seen as an opportunity to improve on current practices rather than as a burden, as most beach operators already display some beach signage. It was also agreed that the signage system developed will, as far as is practical, be consistent with existing systems, guidelines and good practice.

The potential for the UK to chair the Commission's signage working group was also discussed (see Bathing Water Committee, Brussels below). The group was in favour of the UK putting itself forward for this role. RoSPA offered to provide advice to the group on the development of

standardised signs, both in the UK and internationally, through its work on the BSI and ISO Committees.

The next meeting of the Signage Working Group will be in February 2007.

### **3. Bathing Water Committee, Brussels**

Defra attended the first meeting of the EU Bathing Water Committee on the 17 October 2006. The meeting began with discussions on data reporting and the questions that had been posed to the Commission by Member States concerning for example, inconsistencies in the dates in the revised Directive and the arrangements for switching to reporting under the revised Directive. The Commission seemed to be taking a pragmatic approach, but they are liaising with their lawyers for clarification.

The requirement for the Commission to develop signs and symbols by March 2010 was discussed. It was agreed that a working should be set up to develop these signs and symbols and the Commission asked Member States to express their interest in taking part in the group and also leading/chairing it by 30 November. Since the UK is the only Member State in Europe to have guidelines in place for beach signage we have put ourselves forward.

A working group will also be set up to design reporting sheets for bathing water data to enable it to be submitted using the Water Information System for Europe (WISE) in the future. Defra has informed the Commission that the UK would like to be involved in this working group.

Some Member States were keen to develop a common format for bathing water profiles, therefore the Commission agreed to arrange a workshop before the summer break next year, to enable Member States to share their work and experiences. It is likely that this event will be attended by the 3 UK Environment Agencies.

The meeting concluded with a presentation given by Phil Heath from the Environment Agency on the "Improving coastal and recreational waters" (ICREW) project. Findings of the work are available at

<a href="http://www.icrew.info">www.icrew.info</a>
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### **4. Bathing Water Symposium, Northern Ireland**

A Bathing Water Symposium took place in Newcastle in Northern Ireland on the 21 and 22 November and was once again a well-received and informative event.



It was the fourth symposium since 2002 and as before was organised by the Agencies, primarily for the benefit of their area officers. Whereas the theme of the earlier events was improving compliance with the 1976 directive, this time the specific aim was the challenge of preparing for the new revised Bathing Water Directive.

The symposium was attended by 140 delegates with representation from EA, SEPA, EHS, Defra, Scottish Executive and DOE (NI) and invited representatives from the European Commission, DOE (Eire), UK Water Industry Research Ltd, Dwr Cymru, NERC, Universities, Consultants, USA -state and city institutions, ENCAMS, Marine Conservation Society and Clean Coast Scotland.

## **5. Links with the Water Framework Directive**

As mentioned in the October edition of the bathing water newsletter the implementation of the Bathing Water Directive and the Water Framework Directive (WFD) are linked because bathing waters are “protected areas” under the WFD. Consequently, actions under the WFD to improve water quality will include measures to achieve the new bathing water quality standards. Further examples of linked implementation work are:

### **i. Non-agricultural diffuse pollution**

Non-agricultural diffuse pollution covers a broad range of both sources and contaminants. In order to fulfill our obligations under the Water Framework Directive, it will be necessary to prioritise those areas which are considered to pose the greatest risk to water quality. The non-agricultural diffuse pollution steering group, which was set up by Defra to consider measures for England and Wales, has identified five priority areas for action, which are: industry, transport, abandoned mines, sewage and sediment.

The choice of priority areas will be the subject of a public consultation in early 2007. The consultation will also suggest some broad options for possible mechanisms to tackle non-agricultural diffuse pollution, subject to stakeholder endorsement of the five priority areas. The suggested options for possible mechanisms might also address pollution which could cause bathing water failures. In the meantime, Defra will continue to strengthen the evidence base to support the introduction of mechanisms to mitigate non-agricultural diffuse pollution, with a view to carrying out a second public consultation on specific measures.

## ii. **England Catchment Sensitive Farming Delivery Initiative (ECSFDI)**

The ECSFDI is now well under way in forty catchments in England, see

[www.defra.gov.uk/farm/environment/water/csf](http://www.defra.gov.uk/farm/environment/water/csf)

The objective of the ECSFDI is to raise awareness of, and encourage farmers to tackle, diffuse water pollution from agriculture. In a number of catchments this will include dealing with faecal indicator organisms (FIOs) which can cause bathing water failures.

FIOs are being specifically targeted in a number of ECSFDI catchments including Slapton Ley, Salcombe to Knightsbridge; West Cornwall catchments; Yealm & Erme Estuaries.

In addition as part of the monitoring and evaluation of the ECSFDI benefits we will be monitoring loads of key pollutants in selected catchments. FIOs will be monitored within the Hampshire Avon, River Yealm (Devon), River Wyre (Lancashire) and Deben, Alde & Ore (Suffolk) catchments. Samples will be collected weekly and also during peak flow events in the more 'flashy' catchments, during 2007.

## **6. Further information**

Further information on the Bathing Water Directives can be found on the Defra website at

[www.defra.gov.uk/environment/water/quality/bathing/default.htm](http://www.defra.gov.uk/environment/water/quality/bathing/default.htm)

## **7. We would like to hear from you too...**

If you have a particular point of interest or concern which you would like to discuss with the Department, or perhaps there is an area you would like us to cover in a future edition of the newsletter then we would like to hear from you. You can email James Biott in the Water Quality Division, Defra – [James.Biott@defra.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:James.Biott@defra.gsi.gov.uk)

**Water Quality Division  
Defra**

**December 2006**