

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

We are already three months into the new year and it is time for another edition of the bathing water newsletter.

The newsletters are proving to be very popular, with the circulation list growing steadily each week. If you are still aware of any colleagues who do not currently receive the newsletter directly from us and you think would benefit from being kept up to date with Defra's work on the implementation of the revised Bathing Water Directive please tell them to get in contact with us so that we can add them to our mailing list (contact details are at the end of the newsletter).



Again, a lot has happened since we issued the last newsletter just over two months ago. This edition will cover the following:

- consultation timing;
- the second UK Signage Working Group meeting;
- EU Signage Working Group;
- update on developing prediction methods for short term pollution;
- blue flag and the rBWD;
- update on non-agricultural diffuse pollution;
- update on Catchment Sensitive Farming;
- England Catchment Sensitive Farming Delivery Initiative - a Catchment Sensitive Farming Officer's perspective.

1. Consultation timing

We mentioned in the October edition of the newsletter that Defra was hoping to consult on proposals for the implementation of the revised Bathing Water Directive in the Spring 2007. Our current plan is now to issue a joint English and Welsh consultation paper in June. This timing should allow us to synchronise the publication of our consultation document with Scotland and N.Ireland.

The extra time will enable us to carry out further analysis of the possible implementation options, the interactions between the rBWD and the WFD and we should also be able to commission consultants to help us produce a Regulatory Impact Assessment (RIA), which will present the costs and benefits of the proposals in the consultation paper. Publishing the consultation in the summer will still give us sufficient time to transpose the rBWD by 24 March next year. We will provide a further progress report in the next newsletter.

2. UK Signage Working Group

The second meeting of the Signage Working Group (SWG) took place on 7 February 2006.

i. Signs and Symbols

The majority of the meeting focussed on bathing water signs and symbols. The rBWD requires that up to two symbols be displayed at bathing waters, the first to inform bathers about the current water quality classification (i.e. poor, sufficient, good, excellent) and a second to advise bathers against bathing where applicable (e.g. during short term pollution). Existing signs and symbols were reviewed to ascertain whether any of them would fulfil the Directive requirements. Suggestions for new symbols were then made, which will be considered further by the group. If any of these are thought to meet the requirements in the rBWD they will be put forward at an EU signage workshop in June (further details in section 3 below).

ii. Consultation

There was also some discussion on how the SWG could help Defra to complete the signage sections in both the bathing water consultation document and the accompanying RIA. The SWG group was asked to consider whether there are any potential risks to the successful implementation of the new signage requirements and also the costs associated with updating signage etc, which will be included in the RIA. The SWG will provide their thoughts on possible risks and costs to Defra by the end of March.

3. EU Signage Working Group

In the last newsletter we reported that Defra attended the first meeting of the EU Bathing Water Committee in October last year and following that meeting we put ourselves forward to chair an EU Signage Working Group to develop beach symbols for publication by the Commission by March 2010, as required by the Directive.

The Commission has since invited the UK to co-lead an EU signage workshop, proposed by Italy, to be held in June. The UK has accepted the Commission's invitation and we shall shortly be meeting with the Commission and the Italians to discuss the content of this workshop.

4. Update on developing prediction methods for short term pollution

Following on from the report on the Defra/Environment Agency discounting work in the October newsletter, the Agency is now in a position to assess which of the predicted poor and sufficient bathing waters may benefit from the use of a discounting system, using the prediction model developed to date. This assessment will be produced by the end of March 2007. The Agency will also be providing an initial 'in principle' evaluation on whether the same model could be used at good and excellent bathing waters. An interim report on this stage of the project (Phase 2, part 1) is due at the end of April.

The Agency will continue to review the model and is working closely with SEPA to develop the prediction techniques further. To improve the rain data going into the prediction model, which is currently limited by the availability of rain gauges, rain radar data is being investigated as a means of improving the model (as part of Phase 2, part 2). This is being carried out through the SNIFFER project.

The next stage of the project will be to look at how the prediction system could work in practice at suitable sites.

5. Blue Flag and the rBWD

The Foundation for Environmental Education (FEE), the international administrators of the Blue Flag scheme, have set up a water quality working group to look at future Blue Flag criteria in light of the rBWD. Keep Scotland Beautiful is the UK representative on this group. Defra and the Devolved Administrations are working with Keep Scotland Beautiful to ensure that future Blue Flag criteria are compatible with the rBWD requirements, in particular, for sampling frequency, signage and discounting.

6. Links with the Water Framework Directive

As mentioned in previous editions 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. In previous editions of the newsletter we referred to the work that our colleagues in Defra are undertaking to reduce both agricultural and non-agricultural diffuse pollution and the England Catchment Sensitive Farming Delivery Initiative. We will provide a brief update on where all of these have now got to below.

i. Non-agricultural diffuse pollution

Defra and the Welsh Assembly Government went out to consultation on mechanisms to tackle non-agricultural diffuse water pollution on 28 February 2007. The consultation paper was published on the Defra website, simultaneously with a paper on mechanisms to deliver Water Framework Directive requirements on hydromorphology. Copies of the two consultation documents and a covering context document can be found at:

www.defra.gov.uk/corporate/consult/nadwp-hydromorphology/index.htm

The deadline for responses to both consultations is 28 May 2007.

ii Catchment Sensitive Farming (CSF)

As mentioned previously (in the October newsletter), Defra's CSF Programme aims to develop policy mechanisms to tackle diffuse water pollution from agriculture (DWPA) to meet WFD requirements. Several packages of policy mechanisms that would deliver the mitigation measures necessary to reduce DWPA are now being finalised for consultation in June 2007. Originally scheduled for December 2006, this consultation has been put back to take account of other WFD-related consultations that are also imminent.

In the meantime, the England Catchment Sensitive Farming Delivery Initiative (ECSFDI) has continued apace. Launched in April 2006 and expected to run until at least 2008, the Initiative identified 40 priority catchments most at risk from DWPA (see last newsletter for further information). The aim of the Initiative is to encourage early voluntary action by farmers in these catchments to tackle DWPA in advance of any longer term policy mechanisms required to meet WFD diffuse pollution requirements. Catchment Sensitive Farming Officers (CSFO) oversee awareness raising activities for farmers and encourage their uptake of diffuse pollution mitigation measures.

iii. England Catchment Sensitive Farming Delivery Initiative (ECSFDI) - a Catchment Sensitive Farming Officer's perspective

Lizbe Pilbeam works for Natural England and was appointed the CSFO for Slapton Ley, Salcombe to Kingsbridge and the Yealm and Erme Estuaries in June last year. Lizbe has kindly provided some information on what she has been up to since then and her future work, below.

Lizbe began last year by:

- carrying out a stakeholder analysis (identifying those most likely to hold an interest in the project);
- establishing a Steering Group;
- preparing a Local Communications Plan, Project Plan and Delivery Strategy; and
- interviewing all of the relevant partners and stakeholders as well as several farmers.

Lizbe has also completed Catchment Appraisals for her catchments. This involved gathering data on climate, slope, land management, designations, pollution incidents, hydrology, abstraction and discharges, water quality, etc. Broadly speaking, this provided a catchment characterisation, which allowed her to identify the main areas of concern for diffuse water pollution from agriculture.

The key issues highlighted by the Catchment Appraisals were:

- nutrient enrichment;
- sedimentation;
- E-Coli;
- red tides.

Lizbe will now work on a one to one basis with farmers, as well as working with specialist advice providers to deliver workshops, farm visits, walks and demonstrations to encourage best practice.

A Catchment Sensitive Farming capital grant scheme is available in 2007-2008. Due to the limited budget this will be highly targeted to prioritise works to tackle diffuse water pollution from

agriculture to address issues in individual catchments. Eligible items include: relocating gates; roofing for manure, slurry and silage storage; watercourse fencing; clean and dirty water separation.

The scheme opens for applications on 2 April. Beneficiaries will have to fund about half of the cost of the capital items.

Lizbe will also be signposting farmers towards other sources of advice, support and funding, such as Environmental Stewardship.

7. Further information

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

<p>www.defra.gov.uk/environment/water/quality/bathing/default.htm</p>

8. 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

Water Quality Division
Defra

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