

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

Once again, we have had a busy few months since the last newsletter was issued, but we are pleased to say that our hard work recently came to fruition with the launch of the bathing water consultation last month on the 12 November. You should all have received notification of the consultation launch around that time, but if not see page 2 of this newsletter.



There are a number of issues and events to report back on. This edition will cover the following:

- Consultation launch;
- 2007 bathing water results;
- EU Bathing Water Committee;
- UK Signage Working Group;
- Update on developing prediction methods for short term pollution;
- England Catchment Sensitive Farming Delivery Initiative - a Catchment Sensitive Farming Officer's perspective.

## 1. Consultation launch

We are pleased to announce that Defra, in conjunction with the Welsh Assembly Government, launched a public consultation on 12 November 2007 inviting your views on proposals for implementing the revised Bathing Water Directive (rBWD), 2006/7/EC, in England and Wales. If you have not already seen the press release announcing the consultation launch or the consultation documents (including letter to consultees, consultation document, impact assessment and draft Regulations), links to their location on the Defra website have been included below.

Press release

[www.defra.gov.uk/news/2007/071112a.htm](http://www.defra.gov.uk/news/2007/071112a.htm)

Consultation documents

[www.defra.gov.uk/corporate/consult/bathingwaters/index.htm](http://www.defra.gov.uk/corporate/consult/bathingwaters/index.htm)

Whilst you can comment generally on the implementation proposals in the consultation document, the costs and benefits of the proposals identified in the Impact Assessment and the draft Regulations, questions have been included on a number of specific issues. In particular, the Government would welcome views on:

- the number and type of bathing waters where measures should be taken to improve the water quality;
- the development of a prediction and discounting system; and
- the development of public information for beach signage.

The deadline for responses is **4 February 2008**. However, if we are to meet the transposition deadline in the rBWD of 24 March 2008, it would help us if those of you who can send in your responses early would do so. We would like to thank those of you who have already sent in your responses.

We have set up a dedicated email address for the bathing water consultation:

[bathingwaterconsultation@defra.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:bathingwaterconsultation@defra.gsi.gov.uk)

where you can send any queries you may have, requests for hard copies of the documents and of course, your consultation responses (Welsh consultees should email their responses to [water@wales.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:water@wales.gsi.gov.uk)).

## 2. 2007 bathing water results

The 2007 bathing water results were announced on 15 November by Environment Minister Phil Woolas.

Good results have been achieved again despite the record-breaking rainfall of 2007 – the wettest year since records for England began in 1914, according to Met Office data. 97.8% of bathing waters in England met the mandatory standards of the Directive, compared with the record result of 99.5% in 2006. Nine of the country's 414 bathing waters failed to reach minimum mandatory standards. These were: Runswick Bay; Sandsend; Staithes; Aldingham;

Morecambe South; St Annes; Bude Summerleaze; Mothecombe and Instow. Water quality was affected as torrential rain washed pollution from agricultural and urban sources into watercourses, and storm sewage overflows operated more frequently than usual. Despite the exceptionally wet weather, 72.5% of England's bathing waters met the tighter guideline standard, compared with last year's figure of 75.1%. The good level of compliance which has been achieved this year in spite of the poor weather conditions is encouraging for future compliance with the tighter standards of the rBWD.

Overall UK mandatory (96.5%) and guideline (70.8%) compliance was also lower than in 2006. Seven bathing waters in Scotland failed to meet mandatory standards and two failed in both Wales and Northern Ireland.

The 2007 bathing water press announcement can be found at:

<http://www.defra.gov.uk/news/2007/071115c.htm>

The news release contains a link (in the notes to editors) to the summary results tables for England and the UK and a list of results for all bathing waters in England.

### **3. EU Bathing Water Committee**

The third EU Bathing Water Committee meeting took place on 26 November 2007. The main items on the agenda were:

- i. Future reporting under Bathing Water Directives 76/160/EEC and 2006/7/EC. As mentioned in the last bathing water newsletter it is intended that Member States will, in the near future, provide bathing water data to the Commission using the Water Information System for Europe (WISE). The main outcome of the discussion was that a new reporting system will be developed for bathing water data during 2008, that should be consistent with reporting through WISE and take account of the current and new bathing directive requirements and cope with the transitional arrangements.
- ii. Development of a sign or symbols informing the public of the bathing water's classification and any bathing prohibition or advice against bathing. The Commission reported the findings and conclusions from a signage workshop which took place at Pisa from 11 - 12 June 2007 (see the July edition of the bathing water newsletter for a workshop summary). It was agreed that potential signs or symbols should be trialed during the 2008 bathing seasons at sites in Northern and Southern Europe. A contract will be let for the work.
- iii. Bathing water profiles. The Commission reported the findings from the bathing water profile workshop which took place at Namur from 27-28 June 2007 (see the July edition of the bathing water newsletter for a workshop summary). It was agreed at the workshop that a working group should be set up to identify best practice across Europe and to produce guidance which Member States can use to produce their profiles if they wish. The Commission is still to set up the working group, but it is expected that the UK will participate.

### **4. UK Signage Working Group**

The third meeting of the UK Signage Working Group (SWG) meeting took place on 7 August 2007. The group had not met for some time, so it provided an opportunity to take stock of where we had got to with the development of beach signs and symbols and bathing water profiles following the European workshops in Pisa and Namur (see above), the Environment Agency's

prediction and discounting project and the Defra/WAG bathing water consultation. The next SWG meeting is still to be arranged.

## **5. Update on developing prediction methods for short term pollution**

We reported in the last bathing water newsletter that the Environment Agency had recently completed phase 2, part 1 of its project to develop a method of predicting bathing water quality to allow the use of the discounting option in the rBWD. At a meeting with the Environment Agency on the 19 November we learnt that we should receive the final report for phase 2, part 2 at the end of March 2008.

## **6. England Catchment Sensitive Farming Delivery Initiative - a Catchment Sensitive Farming Officer's perspective**

### ***Developments on the Yealm Catchment***

In the March edition of the bathing water newsletter, Lizbe Pilbeam explained a little about her role as one of England's Catchment Sensitive Farming Delivery Initiative Officers and she has kindly provided an update on her work for this newsletter.

The England Catchment Sensitive Farming Delivery Initiative (ECSFDI) is a two-year joint initiative between Defra, the Environment Agency and Natural England, aimed at reducing diffuse water pollution from agriculture.

You may remember that some key issues were highlighted in the Catchment Appraisal that Lizbe completed in September 2006, for example, nutrient enrichment, sedimentation and E-coli. E-coli contamination has health implications when discovered at bathing waters and it also affects the sale-ability of shellfish. It is caused by faecal contamination – but does it originate from livestock or humans? When Lizbe recommended that farmers fence livestock out of watercourses to prevent them defecating into the water (eventually reaching the estuary, bathing and shellfish waters) the farming response was that it was not livestock, but sewage contamination. However, the sewage industry blamed the farming industry. Obviously, this impasse could not continue if Lizbe wanted to improve the water quality.

In order to determine whether the E-coli, in this case affecting the shellfisheries (although similar methods could be applied for bathing waters) in Lizbe's catchments was being caused by livestock or human faecal contamination, she commissioned a DNA Analysis, which examined freshwater, estuary water, and shellfish flesh for E-Coli.

In summary,

- 45 samples analysed so far (approx. half of the samples to be taken)
- 0% e-coli found in 26 of the 45 samples
- Undetermined source of e-coli found in 5 of the 45 samples (birds?)
- Determined sources of e-coli in 14 of the 45 samples
- Of the 14 determined sources, 13 were over 90% ruminant.

This points to a clear culpability – livestock. However, it must be emphasised that this represents only half of the samples; the others are yet to be collected and analysed, so it could all be human next time.

If you would like more information, please feel free to contact Lizbe directly. Her contact details are:

Address: Natural England, Renslade House, Bonhay Road, Exeter, EX4 3AW

Tel: 01392 889770 / 07748 105971

Email: [lizbe.pilbeam@naturalengland.org.uk](mailto:lizbe.pilbeam@naturalengland.org.uk)

## **7. Further information**

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

<a href="http://www.defra.gov.uk/environment/water/quality/bathing/default.htm">www.defra.gov.uk/environment/water/quality/bathing/default.htm</a>
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## **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](mailto:James.Biott@defra.gsi.gov.uk)

**Water Quality Division**  
**Defra**

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