



Title: **Update on Bathing Water Quality and the revised Bathing Water Directive**

Public Agenda Item: **Yes**

Wards Affected: **St Marychurch, Wellswood, Tormohun, Cockington with Chelston, Preston, Roundham with Hyde, Goodrington with Roselands, Churston with Galmpton, Berry Head with Furzeham, St Marys with Summercombe**

To: **Overview and Scrutiny Board** On: **29 June 2011**

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## 1. Key points and Summary

- Torbay's response to the revised Bathing Water Directive (rBWD)
- Designated Bathing Water signage
- Update

The forthcoming revised Bathing Water Directive will introduce a number of changes including requirements for public information and the criterion used to assess the quality of bathing water.

In May 2011 Torbay gained the highest total of Blue Flag and Quality Coast Awards for any area in the UK.

All awards are based on a number of criteria including safety, quality of management, cleanliness, and water quality.

The awards requiring the highest water quality are the Blue Flag Award and the Good Beach Guide recommendation from the Marine Conservation Society.

All Torbay's managed beaches have the Keep Britain Tidy Quality Coast Awards.

Torbay Council, Environment Agency (EA) and South West Water (SWW) continue working together to improve bathing water quality and address the various objectives identified within the directive.

## 2. Introduction

The main objective of the revised Bathing Water Directives (76/160/EEC and 2006/7/EC) is to protect public health and the environment from faecal pollution at bathing waters. Member States are required to identify popular bathing areas and to

monitor water quality at these bathing waters throughout the bathing season, which runs from the beginning of May to the end of September in England.

The revised Bathing Water Directive places a strong emphasis on providing information to the public on the quality of bathing waters to allow them to make an informed choice where to bathe. As part of this, the Bathing Water Regulations require certain information to be available at all bathing waters.

These Regulations apply to all beaches and inland waters in England that have been designated as bathing waters under the Directive.

Following the introduction of signs in 2012, there will be an additional requirement to show the “classification” of bathing water quality, which will replace the Directive’s standards and will come into effect in 2015 . Standard symbols will be used to display the water quality classifications and, where appropriate, to advise against bathing. The first classifications for each bathing water will be announced in the Defra bathing water report of 2015 and must be displayed on the signs from the beginning of the 2016 bathing season.

## **Updates:**

### **Liaison with partners**

One of the outcomes of the Bathing Water Directive and the level of partnership working we enjoy with EA and South West Water, is the Torbay Project. This comprises an officer funded by SWW, employed by EA for the year 2010-11 and now extended to 2012 concentrating on the misconnections that affect the catchments draining into some of Torbay’s bathing water. This project and the relationships that exist between partner organisations is now viewed as national best practice.

We continue to liaise through a number of forums including The Bathing Water and Urban Drainage Group and the management team for the Torbay Project. Officers have also attended the SWW Bathing Waters Forum.

### **Designated Bathing Water Signage**

From the beginning of 2012 bathing season it will be a legal requirement of the revised Bathing Water directive for the information about water quality and potential sources of pollution to be displayed at beaches, throughout the EU, that have been designated as bathing waters. Under the new directive each designated bathing water must have a “Controller” who has the statutory responsibility for the provision of required public information. Torbay Council through the Beach Service is identified as the Controller for the 15 bathing water within the authority’s area.

As this is a new requirement, the Local Government Act places a responsibility on Defra to provide funds to assist local authorities to comply. The funding of one sign per bathing water will be paid in the formula grant 2011/12; however the signs must be in place before the start of the 2012 bathing season. Additional funds will be required from the council to provide the Beach Service budget with sufficient resources to provide adequate signage.

Initially this was suggested to be in the region of £1000 per bathing water. This would have enabled Torbay to place a new sign on each beach that also complied with the

RNLI Guide to Beach Signage (likely to become a British Standard), eventually providing a commonality around the coast of the UK.

Defra has re-evaluated their position and have now suggested that the amount per bathing water will now amount to something in the region of £200. They have explained this by saying that they have revised the signage to just comply with the statutory requirement.

I have now reviewed our plans and expect that I will be able to comply with the basic specification from the Defra funding. The signage will vary again with the requirement to publish the beach classification when it is introduced in 2015 ready for the 2016 bathing season. Compliance with this should be possible from existing budgets. The signage requirement for beach awards and the revised directive should be more settled by 2015 when the position should be reviewed and funding sought to begin upgrading signage to RNLI standard the following year.

### **Sample draft sign for Meadfoot beach**

*Meadfoot Beach is a designated European bathing water monitored by the Environment Agency between 15 May – 30 September each year.*

*The quality of bathing water may be adversely affected by heavy rain. The Ilsham Stream runs through the valley and enters the sea at the far north east end of beach. It is not a known source of pollution.*

*More information about water quality is available from Torbay Council's Beach Service on 01803 207975 or the council's website [www.torbay.gov.uk](http://www.torbay.gov.uk)*

*Or*

*Environment Agency website [www.environment-agency.gov.uk](http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk)*

### **Sample draft sign for Paignton beach**

*Paignton Beach is a designated European bathing water monitored by the environment Agency between 15 May – 30 September each year.*

*There are two combined sewer overflows that may adversely affect the quality of bathing water following heavy rain. The Victoria Stream that runs through the park and enters the sea near the pier may sometimes be the source of poorer water quality than usual after heavy rainfall.*

*More information about water quality is available from Torbay Council's Beach Service on 01803 207975 or the council's website [www.torbay.gov.uk](http://www.torbay.gov.uk)*

*Or*

*Environment Agency website [www.environment-agency.gov.uk](http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk)*

The finished design will be included within the existing signage provision situated on all designated bathing waters.

## Reports from Partners

1. Sewerage System Modelling. The sewer network computer modelling of all the sewerage system draining to Torbay STW, including all the storm sewage overflows, is complete. The model has been run to predict how often the overflows on the system operate during wet weather, and how much storm sewage is being spilled to the urban watercourses, or direct to the sea.
2. Sewer Overflow Monitoring. Over the last 12 months, monitors to record spills occurring have been installed in the majority of the overflows in Torbay, and all of the overflows will be monitored by the end of March 2012. To date we have little data of interest, mainly because the very dry weather has meant that overflows have not been operating!
3. Hydrodynamic Marine Model of Torbay. The development of a hydrodynamic model of the bay is almost complete. The model, which shows how plumes of pollution move around in the bay, has been run with pollutant load inputs from the storm sewage overflows (as predicted by the sewerage system computer model), and from polluted urban streams (based on our long term water quality monitoring of the streams). We have a copy of the draft final report. This describes how the model shows which sources of pollution have the greatest impact at the bathing waters. Both South West Water and ourselves are still reviewing the content of the report, and the findings, and a detailed summary of findings is not yet available. However, the work does suggest that both sewer overflows and polluted urban streams contribute to poor bathing water quality, but that the greater source of pollution is from polluted urban streams.
4. Cleaning up Torbay's Streams. A project has been running in Torbay for about 18 months to identify and remove sources of pollution into Torbay's urban streams. For the last 12 months a dedicated Environment Agency officer has been working on this, with funding from South West Water, and additional support work by Torbay Council's Environmental Health Team. The project has met with considerable success in identifying and removing sources of gross pollution, and we estimate a significant reduction in the volume of pollution to the stream in the last 6 months, which we expect to see reflected in future bathing water quality results.

**Charles Uzzell**  
**Environment Commissioner**

**Derek Singleton**  
**Resort Services Manager**

### Appendices

None

### Documents available in members' rooms

Overview and Scrutiny Bathing Water briefing March 2010

Water quality results for 2010

Signage at bathing waters - Defra

### Background Papers:

The following documents/files were used to compile this report:

Revised Bathing Water Directives (76/160/EEC and 2006/7/EC)

Guidance for Bathing Water Controllers in England (Defra 2010)