

Practitioners Fact Sheet No. 1

Revised Bathing Water Directive Implementation Timeline 10 July 2012

This document is designed to be used for practitioners in Bathing Waters as a reference document for responses to queries from the public or the media.

Revised Bathing Water Directive

The revised Bathing Water Directive (2006/7/EC) came into force on 24 March 2006 and replaces the current Bathing Water Directive (76/1160/EEC). The overall objective of the revised Directive is the protection of public health whilst bathing, but it also offers an opportunity to improve management practices at bathing waters and to standardise the information provided to bathers across Europe.

The directive introduces a new classification system with more stringent water quality standards and puts an emphasis on providing information to the public. Whilst we will first report water quality under the revised directive in 2015, other parts of the directive must be implemented earlier and some are already in place.

Timeline For Bathing Water Directives

Date	What is Happening ?	Who is Leading ?
March 2011	Bathing Water Profiles published on agencies websites	EA, SEPA, DOENI
May 2012	Change in monitoring and analysis for Bathing Waters	EA, SEPA, DOENI
May 2012	standard signage required by the directive at beach locations	Administrations/LAs
Dec 2014	Current Bathing Water directive repealed	Administrations
Sep 2015	New classes will be used to classify bathing waters at the end of 2015 season.	EA, SEPA, NIEA
	Different data set used to assess the water quality	EA, SEPA, NIEA
May 2015	Revised Bathing Water Directive fully implemented.	
	- Report water quality standards against the revised Bathing Water Directive classifications .	EA, SEPA, NIEA
	- Advice against bathing to be issued if water quality is classified as poor	LAs EA, SEPA, NIEA
	- Four year data set used to assess the water quality	

UK Environment Agencies

The three UK environment agencies (EA – Environment Agency for England and Wales, SEPA – Scottish Environment Protection Agency & NIEA – Northern Ireland Environment Agency) implement the Bathing Waters Directives on behalf of Defra and the devolved administrations.

Profiles

A bathing water profile has been produced by the relevant environment agency for each of the UKs designated bathing waters. These are intended to provide useful information to the public, and are written in accordance with the requirements of the revised Bathing Water Directive. Each profile includes:

- a description, map and photograph of the bathing water;
- information on potential pollution sources and risks to water quality;
- descriptions of measures being taken to improve water quality;
- information on reporting and responding to any pollution incidents;
- local contact details for sources of further information.

Signage

From the beginning of the bathing 2012 season it will be a legal requirement of the revised Bathing Water Directive (2006/7/EC) for information about water quality and potential sources of pollution to be displayed at beaches and inland waters throughout the European Union, that have been identified as bathing waters.

The signs must have a brief general description of the bathing water, in non-technical language, based on the bathing water profile. From 2016 the signs will also include the classification of the bathing water under the revised bathing water directive.

When bathing is temporarily advised against, a notice must advise the public of the nature and expected duration of the pollution. The environment agencies would continue to sample the bathing water in line with the monitoring calendar.

Change in Monitoring

From 1976 until 2011 the UK environment agencies have monitored all designated bathing waters in the UK in line with the requirements of the current EC Bathing Waters Directive 1976. This included microbiological parameters (total and faecal coliforms and faecal streptococci) and physico-chemical parameters (e.g pH and temperature).

Changes will be made from 2012 (2013 in Northern Ireland) to the bacterial entities monitored. These arise from requirements of the revised Bathing Water Directive, based on recommendations from the World Health Organization. In place of coliform and faecal streptococci standards, the revised directive sets standards for [Escherichia coli](#) and [intestinal enterococci](#). While slightly altering the microbiological analytical techniques necessary, the differences in the values obtained are anticipated to be minimal. The physico-chemical parameters will no longer be measured.

During the period 2012 to 2014 we will continue to report compliance against the standards in the 1976 directive, as in previous seasons. During this time, we will be monitoring the new bacterial entities. The table below shows how compliance will be determined.

Table 1: Interpretation of microbiological values for bathing waters in the period 2012 to 2014.

	Escherichia coli (previously faecal coliforms)	Intestinal enterococci (previously faecal streptococci)
Mandatory / Imperative pass (M)	95% of samples should not exceed 2,000 E. coli per 100 ml If a site is sampled 20 times, at least 19 samples must meet this criteria. If a site is sampled less than 20 times, all samples must meet this criteria	The 1976 directive contains no mandatory standard for this parameter
Guideline pass (G)	80% of samples should not exceed 100 E. coli per 100 ml If a site is sampled 20 times, at least 16 samples must meet this criteria Proportional reductions apply at sites with reduced sampling	90% of samples should not exceed 100 intestinal enterococci per 100 ml If a site is sampled 20 times, at least 18 samples must meet this criteria Proportional reductions apply at sites with reduced sampling

Analytical techniques have changed allowing us to get results faster giving the public better protection.

The Monitoring frequency will stay the same with weekly samples being collected at the bathing waters monitoring points. However a pre-season sample taken in May will also be included in the compliance test.

New bathing water classifications from 2015

There will be four new classes for bathing waters used for the revised Bathing Waters Directive. These will be:

Excellent - approximately twice as stringent as the current guideline standard. Also the standard required for a Blue Flag from 2013.

Good - broadly equivalent to the current guideline standard.

Sufficient - will be approximately twice as stringent as a current mandatory pass.

Poor – those waters which are below the sufficient classification. Bathing waters classified as poor will have advice against bathing throughout the following season. If a bathing water remains classified as poor for 5 consecutive seasons the advice will become permanent.

Escherichia Coli

E. coli is one of the new indicators that is being used to measure water quality.

E.coli is found in the intestines of animals and humans and therefore the presence of the bacteria indicates that human or animal excretions may be present in bathing water alongside other potentially harmful organisms that could cause illness.

Occasionally, usually during heavy rainfall, soil containing E.coli bacteria is washed into, rivers, streams, lakes, or groundwater leading to bathing waters. E.coli bacteria is an indicator that harmful bugs could be present. Most strains are harmless but if ingested some can cause gastro intestinal symptoms.

Intestinal Enterococci

Enterococci is one of the new indicators under the directive that is being used to measure water quality.

Enterococci are found in the intestines of animals and humans and therefore the presence of the bacteria indicates that human or animal excretions may be present in bathing water alongside other potentially harmful organisms that could cause illness.

Occasionally, usually during heavy rainfall, soil containing Enterococci bacteria is washed into, rivers, streams, lakes, or groundwater leading to bathing water and the presence of the bacteria can indicate that harmful bugs can be present.