

Practitioners Fact Sheet No. 4

Beach Awards

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Blue flag

Bathing Water quality on beaches must meet the highest, recommended European guideline standards. The beach must be clean, well managed and promote sound environmental management.

There are 32 Criteria for Blue Flag beaches covering:

- Water quality
- Cleanliness
- Management
- Safety
- Information and Environmental Education

The Blue Flag can only be flown when all the criteria are met.

Quality Coast Award

Keep Britain Tidy's prestigious Quality Coast Award recognises and rewards beaches in England that achieve high standards of beach management.

This award has been designed to provide beach managers with an effective management tool to achieve this, helping them to plan for future improvements and to generate funding to carry out developments.

Beach managers are provided with a three year action plan to help identify areas which may require improvement and help maintain the infrastructure currently in place to manage the beach. Although Quality Coast Award beaches can often be very different, the flag is a symbol of quality which guarantees to visitors that the beach is one of the best in the country.

The Quality Coast Award is designed to reflect the many different uses of the coastline. Whilst there is only one Quality Coast Award, applications can be made through three different award categories. The award offers a range of benefits, from raised profile, enhanced position to attract funding for development and positive media coverage.

Good Beach Guide

The Good Beach Guide is a comprehensive guide to bathing water quality around the UK and one of the drivers for positive change in UK water quality. 'MCS Recommended' is a UK beach award for excellent water quality. It focuses entirely on water quality standards and the risk of sewage pollution.

To obtain this award, beaches must meet the following criteria;

During the previous bathing season the Guideline water quality standard was met, with the inclusion of any samples taken during wet weather which may have been removed from government assessments by legal means of the 'abnormal weather waiver'.

100% of samples taken during the previous bathing season, including samples taken during wet weather, must not have exceeded values set in the Mandatory standard.

Local continuous sewage discharges must be appropriately treated to remove the majority of bacteria and viruses using, as a minimum, secondary treatment.

Green Coast Award

The Green Coast Award is a symbol of environmental excellence, established to acknowledge, promote and protect the environment of rural beaches in Wales.

The aim of the Green Coast Award is:

'To acknowledge those beaches which meet Guideline water quality and are prized for their natural, unspoiled environment'

The award is unique in that it recognises Guideline water quality (Guideline is the EU designation for excellent water quality) as well as Best Practice in environmental management for beaches, which may not have the facilities associated with resort beaches. It is managed in Wales by Keep Wales Tidy and in Northern Ireland by TIDY Northern Ireland.

The Green Coast Award was piloted in Wales in 1998 following demand for recognition of rural beaches which achieved Guideline Water quality but which did not have the infrastructure required to meet Blue Flag or Seaside Award 'Resort' status.

Seaside Award

The Seaside Award programme runs in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. Because beaches are all very different in character, the Seaside Awards are split into two categories, resort and rural.

A Seaside Award 'RESORT' beach attracts many visitors with its facilities and activities. Usually found in or near towns, resort beaches provide toilets, car parks, access and facilities for disabled people and restrict access for dogs.

There are 29 different criteria which are checked at each resort beach before the award is made.

A Seaside Award 'Rural' is awarded to beaches which have limited facilities but which are clean, well managed and meet mandatory water quality.

Comparison of Beach Awards showing the main criteria required

Award	Water Quality Standard	Facilities	Discharge proximity	Litter	Pollution
Blue Flag - International	E Coli 250 IE 100	Blue Flag information board, Litter bins, toilets, Lifeguards, first aid, drinking water,	No discharges in the area of the beach	Clean beach, dog controls	Emergency plans
Good Beach Guide - UK, Channel Isles and Isle of Man	Guideline cBWD & 100% of samples comply with Mandatory limits.		Local continuous discharges must be appropriately treated using, as a minimum, secondary treatment.		
Green Coast Award - Wales	Guideline cBWD TC 500 FC 100	A list of criteria was produced for Green Coast, similar to that of the Seaside Award Rural. However, after further investigation, it was decided that due to the nature of these remote rural beaches, strict criteria were not flexible enough to account for the enormous variations between them and so the scheme became objective-led.			
Seaside Award (Resort) - Scotland, Wales, NI	Mandatory Current directive	Bins, access, drinking water, phone, toilets, parking, first aid, information signs	Information on discharges within 1 mile	Adequate cleansing of beach. Dog Controls	Emergency plans
Seaside Award (Rural) - Scotland, Wales, NI	Mandatory Current directive	Bins, access, parking, information signs	Information on discharges within 1 mile	Adequate cleansing of beach.	
Quality Coast Award - England	E Coli 250 IE 100				