

Practitioners Fact Sheet No. 6

Information Signage at Bathing Waters

10 July 2012

From May 2012 public information must be available at all bathing waters during the bathing season to comply with the Bathing Water Directive (2006/7/EC). Guidance on what information must be provided is available on the Defra website (see links below)

The Directive is being implemented in England in two stages. The first requirement will come into effect in 2012, with additional information required from 2015.

For the 2012 bathing season

For all bathing waters, bathing water controllers must provide:

- A general description of the bathing water
- Information on where to find more detailed information about the bathing water
- Information on abnormal situations and their expected duration

Recommended text for general descriptions, based on the bathing water profile, has been sent to all bathing water controllers. Controllers are free to use the text as supplied or use their own text, provided it meets the legal requirements. The information must be available in at least one location on or near the bathing water and can be incorporated into existing signage.

The Defra weekly sampling results poster is not part of the legal requirement for public information and its use is voluntary. We will continue to supply the poster until 2014 but we expect to discontinue its use when the classification symbols come into effect.

The “predicted classifications” that are available on the Defra website are an assessment of what the classification would have been if the new parameters and higher standards were already in force. These assessments are for information and planning purposes only and have no legal status. We do not recommend referring to them on your signs before the first classifications are issued in 2015.

From 2015

In addition to the information required from 2012, bathing waters controller must display the classification symbol that their bathing waters will receive after the 2015 bathing season.

The revised Bathing Water Directive brings in a new way of measuring water quality. Bathing Water classifications will be made using data taken over 4 years. The symbols have been agreed for use across all of the European Union’s bathing waters.

At bathing waters which only meet the “Poor” classification in 2015, the “advice against bathing” symbol must also be displayed, with information on the causes of pollution and mitigation measures being taken.

Useful links

Bathing water profiles – <http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk/bathingwaterprofiles>;
http://www.sepa.org.uk/water/bathing_waters/bathing_water_profiles.aspx;
http://www.doeni.gov.uk/niea/bathing_water_profiles.htm

Public information guidance –

<http://archive.defra.gov.uk/environment/quality/water/waterquality/bathing/documents/bathing-water-controllers.pdf>

Classification symbols (for use after 2015) - <http://ec.europa.eu/environment/water/water-bathing/signs.htm>