

Important information for event organisers

Water-based events take careful planning and preparation. As an event organiser you are likely to liaise with local authorities, police and RNLI in carrying out a risk assessment. As part of your risk assessment, you may also wish to look at the different factors that can impact bathing water quality on the day of your event.

Having a contingency plan

There are many reasons why you might need to change plans close to the date of your event. Having a contingency plan will make it easier to manage tasks like contacting participants, handling suppliers and making an insurance claim if you need to.

Sources of information

WaterFit Live (South West Water) – www.southwestwater.co.uk/waterfitlive

This interactive map shows where bathing waters may be temporarily affected by storm overflows, which are typically used when heavy rainfall means the volume of wastewater exceeds the capacity of the system.

The information allows you to see:

- Near real-time data about the impact of the wastewater network on water quality
- Details of when storm overflows were last used
- Location of storm overflow outlets

Swimfo website (Environment Agency) – environment.data.gov.uk/bwq/profiles

- Water quality testing data for 151 designated bathing waters during peak bathing season
- Daily pollution risk forecasts, calculated using weather forecasts (heavy rain usually reduces water quality)
- Daily updates on whether the Environment Agency advises against bathing in a particular place
- Incorporates Environment Agency Pollution Incident Reporting Tool (PIRT) warnings in response to pollution incidents such as slurry spills, asset failures and algal blooms

Swim Healthy Leaflet (DEFRA) – www.gov.uk/government/publications/swim-healthy-leaflet/swim-healthy

Explains the risks of open water swimming and ways to mitigate them.

Factors that can impact bathing water quality

Water quality at designated bathing waters can be impacted by a whole range of factors, including:

- Storm overflow operation, typically after heavy rainfall
- Agricultural run off containing fertiliser, pesticides and animal slurry
- Algal blooms that discolour water and can be harmful to humans
- Run off from roads containing pollutants like oil, diesel and petrol
- Misconnected pipes on private property that send untreated sewage into waterways
- Factories and other industrial sites discharging toxic by-products into rivers
- Waste from dogs, cats and wild animals

Please email waterfitlivehub@southwestwater.co.uk if you have any questions.

