

Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

Dedesignation of bathing waters

Summary of evidence for dedesignation of Heysham Half Moon Bay, Lancashire

Owner: Lancaster City Council

Date of application: 8 February 2013

The Environment Agency (EA) profile of Heysham Half Moon Bay contains detailed information about the beach and a location map:

http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk/static/documents/bwprofiles/BW_43100_Heysham_Half_Moon_Bay.pdf

Background

Heysham Half Moon Bay is being considered for dedesignation because there is little usage for bathing. It is at risk of eventually being dedesignated if it receives five consecutive Poor classifications after 2015. Following local consultation, Lancaster City Council has applied for dedesignation at this stage because of very low usage for bathing at the site.

Water quality

Since 1988 bathing water quality at Heysham Half Moon Bay has recorded 14 passes and 11 failures of the mandatory standards of Directive 76/160/EEC. It passed mandatory standards in 2012 but failed in 2010 and 2011. It has been assessed as having a projected Poor classification under Directive 2006/7/EC each year since the first set of projections, which was based on the 2001 - 2004 dataset.

Information from the Environment Agency

The EA North West region has commented: "*The bathing water...is adjacent to the town's industrial area. This area consists of the docks, freight companies, firms catering for off-shore oil and gas platforms and the nuclear facility. The beach is overlooked by the imposing concrete buildings housing the nuclear reactors of Heysham 1 and 2... The beach itself is around 300m long and is accessed via an 8ft set of steps down from the sea wall. It is predominantly frequented by dog walkers who walk alongside the beach and around the headland. Indeed, dogs are the only bathers for the majority of the time as there are two boulder fields which are submerged at high water and make it difficult to walk let alone swim. There is also abundant plant life among the rocks which although*

aesthetically pleasing in some respects is not conducive to paddling or swimming as it easily becomes fragmented or caught on the feet and makes the rocks slippery. Furthermore there is an outfall which discharges directly onto the beach on the dock side and also a sign warning of un-exploded ordnance being occasionally washed up which is displayed on the slipway wall. Although the beach is used, it is not used as a bathing beach and nor is it suitable to be one. "

The outfall is not relevant to the application, although the sign warning of unexploded ordnance may be a deterrent to bathing.

Evidence for dedesignation

Beach usage and bather numbers

The City Council carried out a survey of beach user and bather numbers on 46 days (including 17 weekend days) during the 2012 bathing season, beginning on 7 July. Swimmers, paddlers and other beach users were counted twice on each day in the survey.

	No. of days in survey	Swimmers	Paddlers	Beach users	Total usage
July	16	3	6	178	187
August	23	0	6	464	470
September	7	0	0	39	39
Totals	46	3	12	681	696

The observations of EA samplers support the survey's findings. Between 2000 and 2012, bathers were seen in the sea on 37 occasions during the weekly sampling runs. There were fewer than 10 bathers on all but two occasions. Beach users were present during most of the samplers' visits, usually fewer than 20 people, although 60 were observed on one occasion. Dogs were present on most of the dates when beach users were counted, supporting the EA's comment that the beach is used by dog walkers.

Facilities

There is a cafe at the beach but no public toilets. It is not lifeguarded and is not patrolled by Council beach staff.

Local consultation

Lancaster City Council has consulted widely on the proposal to dedesignate the bathing water, through poster displays, face to face questionnaires, an online survey, and an online “Voice your views” panel. Local councillors have been consulted by email and the proposal was publicised through the Heysham Neighbourhood Council.

Posters explaining the proposal and requesting feedback were displayed on the promenade and locally in shops, cafes and restaurants and in the post office, library and church hall. Two responses were received, one in favour of dedesignation and one opposed.

The face to face survey was conducted with 247 people on the promenade and beach area, in the library and in local businesses. Most of the interviewees were from the local area, with only 33 coming from outside the district.

- 141 people had been in the sea;
- 108 knew that the beach is designated as a bathing water
- 200 were in favour of dedesignation (The question asked was: *Do you feel that it is better to de designate the beach now before the beach is classed as a failing bathing water beach?*)

An online survey was also carried out via Survey Monkey, which received seven responses. Four respondents had been in the sea at Heysham Half Moon Bay; six knew that it is a designated bathing water, and five were in favour of the proposal to apply for dedesignation. (The question asked was “*How do you feel about the proposal to dedesignate the beach now before the beach is classed as a failing bathing beach?*”)

NOTE: Defra recognises that these are leading questions and may bias the results.

28 February 2013