



Department
for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs

Consultation on the proposal to remove Rock from the list of designated bathing waters

Summary of responses

May 2016



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Background

Bathing waters are popular beaches and inland waters that attract a large number of bathers and have been designated under the Bathing Water Directive (2006/7/EC). Water quality is tested during the bathing season, which in England runs from 15 May to 30 September, for compliance with the Directive's standards. The objective is to protect bathers' health against faecal pollution.

The Directive applies to “...any element of surface water where the competent authority expects a large number of people to bathe and has not imposed a permanent bathing prohibition...” (Article 1.2).

Rock is a popular boating and watersports resort. We propose to remove Rock from the list of designated bathing waters because of low usage for bathing and concerns about bathers' safety in an area that is heavily used by fast moving vessels.

A survey of beach usage in 2014 confirmed that the number of bathers is low, with an average of fewer than three people bathing per count, compared with 47 other beach users and a higher number of water sports participants than could be counted.

Analysis of responses

We received 21 responses to the consultation. Fourteen were opposed to de-designation and six supported the proposal. A reply from South West Water commented on the company's assets in the area but did not express a view on de-designation.

- Five respondents referred to water quality, which was perceived to be already low or at risk of deterioration if monitoring is discontinued.
- One respondent disagreed that boating posed a risk to bathers;
- Two respondents suggested improving management of boats and bathers

Public safety

The consultation document sets out Padstow Harbour Commissioners' views about safety at the bathing water. Their concern is that the bathing water designation and associated signage implies that Rock is suitable for swimming, and they do not believe this to be the case.

The hazard identification for marine operations in the Camel estuary lists collision between bathers and power driven vessels as a risk. The risk assessment identifies two specific hazards:

- Collision between bathers and vessels
- Swimmer swept away by tide

The harbourmaster provided information from the reports of harbour patrols about incidents in the estuary during 2014 and 2015, which are listed in the consultation document.

Water quality

Tighter water quality standards and new bathing water classifications of Excellent, Good, Sufficient and Poor were introduced in 2015. The first set of classifications was announced on 5 November 2015 and the current classifications for the Camel estuary bathing waters are:

- Rock: Good
- Daymer Bay: Excellent
- Polzeath: Excellent

South West Water's investment to help protect bathing water quality at Rock has been completed and the relevant assets already operate under existing Environment Agency permits. These assets are required to continue operating to help protect the shellfish waters in the estuary, which are designated as Shellfish Water Protected Areas under the Water Framework Directive (2000/60/EC).

Final decision

Rock will be removed from the list of designated bathing waters before the 2016 bathing season on the grounds of low usage for bathing and public safety.

The way forward

The European Commission will be notified of the decision when the annual bathing water inventory is submitted before the beginning of the bathing season.

Annex A - list of respondents

Cornwall Council
Marine Conservation Society
National Farmers Union
South West Water
17 individual replies