

Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

## Dedesignation of bathing waters

# Summary of evidence for dedesignation of Roanhead, Cumbria

**Owner:** National Trust

**Applicant:** Barrow Borough Council

**Date of application:** 7 February 2014

## Background

The Environment Agency profile of Roanhead contains detailed information about the beach and a location map:

[http://environment.data.gov.uk/bwq/explorer/info.html?\\_search=Roan&site=ukd1102-44500](http://environment.data.gov.uk/bwq/explorer/info.html?_search=Roan&site=ukd1102-44500)

As part of a review of bathing waters Barrow Borough Council has applied for Roanhead to be removed from the list of designated bathing waters, together with Askam in Furness, on the basis of:

- Low volume of bathers
- Dangerous nature of the coastline and open channel

A sign on the beach warns about swift currents and deep gullies.

## Evidence for dedesignation

### Bather numbers

Roanhead is promoted as a visitor destination for its location and scenery, for opportunities to watch wildlife and for the activities arranged by the NT to encourage people to enjoy the outdoors.

In 2012 the National Trust carried out a survey of beach users. More than half the dates were during the school summer holiday, and two weekend dates and one bank holiday were included.

Bather numbers and beach usage at Roanhead during 2012:

Date	Time of survey	Bathers	Paddlers	Other beach
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				<b>users</b>
Mon 4 June*	11.00	0	4	19
Mon 4 June*	12.15	0	11	32
Thur 19 July	13.10	0	1	4
Thur 26 July	14.15	0	3	42
Thur 26 July	15.47	0	0	52
Fri 27 July	12.30	0	0	4
Tue 31 July	13.54	0	6	37
Thur 2 Aug	13.30	0	3	32
Mon 6 Aug	14.15	4	0	53
Wed 8 Aug	15.15	8	6	89
Thur 16 Aug	13.10	0	3	24
Thur 23 Aug	15.00	0	7	85
Sat 25 Aug	15.00	0	0	2
Sun 26 Aug	10.10	0	0	16
<b>Total</b>		<b>12</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>491</b>

\* Bank holiday

The Trust also carried out 128 face-to-face surveys with beach users during the 2012 bathing season. There was a high level of local usage; 51% of interviewees visited the beach at least once a month, with 4% visiting daily.

- 1% gave paddling as the main reason for their visit (some of the other reasons were dog walking, exercise, nature, events, picnic)
- 71% had paddled from Roanhead beach
- 68% considered paddling “quite safe” or “very safe”
- 22% had swum from Roanhead beach
- 25% considered swimming to be “quite safe” or “very safe”
- 47% had read the safety information in the car park

Between 2000–2013 Environment Agency staff observed 122 bathers and a total of 2570 beach users during their sampling visits. This is an average of nine bathers and 184 beach users per season (data for 2008 is missing from this dataset).

A short survey carried out by Barrow Council over six days in May and June 2011 counted 56 beach users and no bathers.

The Environment Agency North West region has surveyed bathing waters in the area. Cascade Consulting collected data as part of this survey during August and September 2012. No bathers were observed at Roanhead during this period.

## **Public safety**

Barrow Borough Council has installed a sign at the beach reading “*Danger - Beware of swift currents and deep gullies - Take care - In emergency dial 999 coastguard*”.

As a designated bathing water, Roanhead is subject to the requirement in the revised Bathing Water Directive (2006/7/EC) for water quality information to be publicly available at the site. A sign giving information about bathing water quality implies that the beach is suitable for swimming and therefore the signage that is present sends a confusing and potentially hazardous message to the public.

Several beach information websites state that swimming at Roanhead can be dangerous. Barrow Council's own website comments that "...*strong currents make it unsuitable for swimming...*" The Good Beach Guide comments that "*Due to the strong tides and currents at this beach, bathing is not encouraged.*"

<http://www.barrowbc.gov.uk/Default.aspx?page=153>

<http://www.goodbeachguide.co.uk/search-results>

<http://www.coastradar.com/beach-guide/beach.php?beach=1334>



As part of the dedesignation process the Council carried out a consultation by placing information on its website and on notice boards at the main access points to the beach. The consultation was sent to local councillors, Askam and Ireleth Parish Council, Duddon Inshore Rescue, National Trust, English Heritage and other stakeholders, and was also reported in the local press.

There were responses from the Parish Council, National Trust, Duddon Inshore Rescue and three members of the public.

- Duddon Inshore Rescue was in favour of dedesignation for safety reasons.
- The Parish Council accepted Duddon Inshore Rescue's view on safety but was concerned that lack of water quality testing would be detrimental to tourism.

- The NT did not oppose dedesignation.
- The three public responses were not in favour of dedesignation.