

Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

Dedesignation of bathing waters

Summary of evidence for dedesignation of Askam in Furness, Cumbria

Owner: Barrow in Furness Borough Council

Date of application: 7 February 2014

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

http://environment.data.gov.uk/bwq/explorer/info.html?_search=Ask&site=ukd1102-44590

Background

Askam in Furness is being considered for dedesignation as a bathing water because of the risk to public safety and very low usage for bathing. Bathing is actively discouraged by the local authority, Barrow in Furness Borough Council, because of its concerns about safety, and a sign on the beach warns about swift currents and deep gullies.

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

Evidence for dedesignation

Bather numbers

The Environment Agency samplers' observations over 14 years confirm that Askam is the least used bathing water in Cumbria. Between 2000 – 2013 EA staff observed 10 bathers and a total of 416 beach users during their sampling visits. This is an average of <1 bather and 34 beach users per season (data for 2008 is missing from this dataset).

A short survey carried out by Barrow Council on five days in May and June 2011 counted 13 beach users but no bathers.

Beach safety

Barrow Council has installed a sign at the beach reading "*Danger - Beware of swift currents and gullies - Take care - In emergency dial 999 coastguard*". As a designated bathing water, Askam in Furness 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.

