



Department  
for Environment  
Food & Rural Affairs

# Consultation on the proposal to designate eight beaches in Cornwall as bathing waters

## **Summary of responses**

March 2018



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# Background

Beaches and lakes that attract a large number of bathers are designated as bathing waters under the Bathing Water Regulations 2013 (S.I.2013/1675) (“the Regulations”) and water quality is tested during the bathing season, which in England runs from 15 May to 30 September. The objective is to protect bathers’ health against faecal pollution.

Cornwall Council applied in October 2016 for eleven beaches to be designated as bathing waters. Three beaches were not taken forward for designation because the Environment Agency assessed that they were effectively already designated because of their proximity to existing bathing waters within the same water body. The remaining eight applications met the criteria set out in Defra’s guidance on how to apply for designations by giving detailed information about usage, facilities and local consultations. The proposed bathing waters were:

- Booby’s Bay, near St Merryn
- Godrevy, The Towans, near Hayle (this beach should not be confused with the existing bathing water known as The Towans (Godrevy)).
- Gwynver, Whitesand Bay
- Northcott Mouth, near Bude
- South Fistral, Newquay
- Mexico Towan, The Towans, near Hayle
- Tregonhawke, Whitsand Bay
- Upton Towan, The Towans, near Hayle

On 15 March 2017 Defra launched an informal consultation by publishing the evidence for designation online and emailing it to key stakeholders. The consultation ran until 12 April 2017.

## Summary of responses

Defra received 153 replies to the consultation. Many related to beaches with which the respondents were familiar, and some respondents gave generic support to the designation of all eight beaches, so each of the proposed bathing waters received a different number of responses.

A response from South West Water outlined possible future investment needs for bathing water protection but did not comment on whether individual beaches should be designated.

The Marine Conservation Society supported the designation of all eight beaches.

The Country Land and Business Association was content with the proposal to designate all eight beaches as bathing waters on condition the landowners had been consulted and would not incur any liability relating to designation. Consultation with landowners was undertaken by Cornwall Council in the initial stages of the application and landowners do not have any responsibilities under the Regulations.

Table 1 shows the number of responses that supported or did not support the designation of individual beaches. The remainder did not state a view.

**Table 1 Responses for individual beaches**

Proposed bathing water	Support for designation	Does not support
Booby's Bay	113	4
Godrevy, The Towans	130	4
Gwynver	117	5
Mexico Towan	117	6
Northcott Mouth	108	6
South Fistral	115	4
Tregonhawke	120	4
Upton Towan	121	4

## Booby's Bay

Of the four respondents who did not support designation, one explained that they did not know the beach and the others gave no reasons.

## Godrevy, The Towans

One of the four respondents who did not support designation said that they did not know the beach and two gave no reasons. The fourth respondent commented on the discharges of sewage that occur in certain weather conditions. Designation as a bathing water would have the effect of ensuring that water quality at the beach is monitored for bacteria from sewage and requiring improvements to sewerage infrastructure if they are found to be necessary.

One respondent who supported designation commented that there should be a special dispensation for the situation to change at short notice in the event of hard rock mining resuming at South Crofty mine. However there is no provision in the Regulations for a bathing water to be de-designated because of nearby industrial activity. A site may be removed from the list of bathing waters if there is evidence of low usage for bathing. A local authority submitting an application for de-designation on this basis would be required to carry out a survey of beach usage and a consultation with local stakeholders.

Permanent advice against bathing would be issued for any bathing water that is classified as Poor for five consecutive years, resulting in the site being de-designated and removed from the list of bathing waters.

There was a high number of comments from respondents who supported the designation of this beach that showed an awareness of occasional sewage discharges into the Red River.

## Gwynver

Of the five respondents who did not support designation, one said that they did not know the beach and three gave no reasons.

The fifth respondent opposed the designation of Gwynver for public safety reasons and because of the lack of facilities and limited access along a single track road. Concerns about the safety risks at Gwynver caused by rip currents and large waves have been considered throughout the designation process. Lifeguard services at Gwynver and the adjacent beach at Sennen, which is a designated bathing water, are provided by the Royal National Lifeboat Institution (RNLI). As part of this the RNLI prepares risk assessments for lifeguarded beaches, which are reviewed at regular intervals. Gwynver and Sennen have been assessed as having a comparable level of risk. Cornwall Council manages the physical risk to bathers at Gwynver by the provision of lifeguards throughout the bathing season, together with Public Rescue Equipment in the form of a life-ring in a housing unit. Permanent RNLI safety signage identifying the hazards associated with the beach is also located at the primary access points.

## Mexico Towan

One of the respondents who did not support designation said that they did not know the beach and five did not give a reason.

## Northcott Mouth

One of the respondents who did not support designation said that they did not know the beach and five did not give a reason.

## South Fistral

Three of the four respondents who did not support designation gave no reasons. The other respondent questioned whether designation is necessary because Fistral is already a bathing water. However the monitoring point for Fistral is at the north end of the beach, which has the greatest density of bathers, but the southern area of the beach also attracts a high number of bathers and the Environment Agency has assessed that designation is appropriate.

## Tregonhawke

No reason was given by any of the four respondents who did not support designation.

## Upton Towan

One of the respondents who did not support designation said that they did not know the beach and three gave no reasons.

As at Godrevy, a respondent who supported designation commented that there should be a special dispensation for the situation to change at short notice in the event of hard rock mining resuming at South Crofty mine. There is no provision in the Regulations for a bathing water to be de-designated because of nearby industrial activity. A beach or inland water may be removed from the list of bathing waters if there is evidence of low usage for bathing, and a local authority submitting an application for de-designation on this basis would be required to carry out a survey of beach usage and a consultation with local stakeholders. Permanent advice against bathing would be issued for any bathing water classified as Poor for five consecutive years, resulting in the site being de-designated and removed from the list of bathing waters.

## Final decision

The eight beaches will be designated as bathing waters with effect from 15 May 2018.

## The way forward

The Environment Agency will begin monitoring water quality at the eight newly designated bathing waters in the 2018 bathing season. The European Commission will be notified of the decision when the annual bathing water inventory is submitted before the beginning of the bathing season.

The names of the bathing waters will appear on the list in Schedule 2 Part 1 to the Regulations as:

- Booby's Bay
- Fistrail South
- Godrevy Towans
- Gwynver
- Mexico Towans
- Northcott Mouth
- Tregonhawke
- Upton Towans

## Annex A - list of respondents

Cornwall Seal Group Research Trust  
Country Land and Business Association  
Flat Dog Productions Ltd  
Hayle Canoe Club  
Marine Conservation Society  
Pool Academy Surf Club  
Rame Peninsular Beach Care  
South West Water  
Surfers Against Sewage  
Towans Partnership  
Trevedra Campsite  
One unidentified local business (holiday letting agent)  
141 private individuals