



BRIEFING

November 2022

Bathing water quality at Croyde Bay

Many people enjoy time in or on lakes, rivers and coastal waters, and we know the value they bring in terms of social, health and wellbeing benefits. It's vital that bathing water quality is maintained and improved.

The Environment Agency monitors water quality from May to September at over 400 bathing waters so you know how clean the water is when you swim or paddle.

There are four water quality classifications Excellent, Good, Sufficient and Poor. These are set according to the level of bacteria in the water based on guidelines produced by the World Health Organisation to protect health.

Up to four years' of results are combined to let you know the standard of water quality over that time. Due to the data gap from 2020 (due to Coronavirus), the 2022 bathing water results are based on data from 2018, 2019, 2021 and 2022.

In 2022, out of the 419 bathing waters measured in England, 407 (97.1 per cent) met at least the minimum standard of the Bathing Water Regulations.

In 2022, 302 bathing waters in England (72.1 per cent) met the Excellent standard of the Bathing Water Regulations.

In 2022, 12 bathing waters in England (2.9 per cent) did not meet the minimum standard, and were classified as Poor.

Thanks to continued investment and action the standards in water quality at our beaches and inland lakes remains high, there is still more to be done to ensure cleaner and healthier waters for people to enjoy. This requires a combined effort from water companies, farmers, regulators, councils, local businesses and the general public.

Classification of water quality

The bathing water quality at Croyde is classified as 'Excellent'.

What can affect water quality?

Our monitoring has shown that the bathing water quality can be affected by pollution from agricultural sources.

We use Pollution Risk Forecasting to advise the public when there is a risk of reduced water quality. Temporary signs are placed on the beach and pollution forecasts can also be viewed on our bathing water data explorer at www.gov.uk.

What is being done to improve water quality?

Since the drop in classification from Excellent to Good in 2019, we have carried out many investigations in the Croyde catchment to help us understand and resolve potential sources of pollution to the bathing water.

We have carried several catchment walkovers and worked with farmers in the catchment to resolve potential pollution issues, and will continue to do so during the 2023 bathing water season.

Follow up visits are planned to farms where we have given advice on cattle watering points, cattle poaching and poor silage and slurry management.

Following reports in the summer of discolouration in the stream - which flows across the beach - environment officers made checks of local private septic tanks. A suspected source of pollution was given advice on correct practices of sewage management, and we will continue to sample the stream to gather information around sources of bacteria.

In September 2022 South West Water concluded on its Bathing Water Ambition Investigation at Croyde. The investigation focused on current understanding of water quality issues at Croyde. It also quantifies what changes need to be affected on bathing water quality to achieve at least 80% confidence of 'Good' or 'Excellent' compliance. The outcomes suggested that the most beneficial interventions are likely to be ongoing vigilance with respect to misconnections, and catchment management interventions such as checking septic tank issues; improved agricultural practices, eg restricting livestock access to the stream, repositioning cattle drinkers.

South West Water also concluded that Croyde sewage treatment works storm overflow has the potential to affect the bathing water. By reducing the number of storm overflows this should minimise any risk to the bathing water quality. The restriction on the number of storm overflows will be considered in the next water industry environment programme.

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