

[New bathing water status in the Isle of Wight and Oxford](#)

Part of the Wolvercote Mill Stream at Port Meadow, Oxford, and the East Cowes Esplanade on the Isle of Wight will be added to the [list of bathing waters](#) in England from next month.

This follows public consultations which ran from 9 February to 2 March on designating the sites, which are popular swimming and paddling spots for both local residents and visitors to the area.

The new status means that the Environment Agency will regularly take samples from the sites to assess the level of water quality and whether action is needed to cut bacteria levels. Monitoring will begin at both sites from May 15, the beginning of the bathing water season. Results of water quality testing will be used to classify the bathing waters in the autumn.

Environment Minister Rebecca Pow said:

The residents of Oxford and the Isle of Wight have shown their overwhelming approval for these sites as places to enjoy and connect with nature, so I am pleased to see these locations receiving designated bathing water status. While bathing water quality has improved in recent years and England now has the cleanest bathing waters since records began, we know that water quality at these sites won't change overnight. It will take time and all those with a role to play must commit to achieve the necessary improvements.

We are continuing to drive up the quality of lakes, rivers and seas for the public to enjoy through the measures in our Environment Act, and I would encourage more applications for popular bathing areas, both inland and coastal, that may also be suitable for designation.

The Environment Agency has been monitoring and driving improvements at coastal and inland bathing waters since the 1990s, and in this time there have been significant improvements to water quality. In 2021, 99 per cent of England's bathing waters met the minimum bathing water standard and of these, 95 per cent met the highest standard of Excellent or Good. This compares with 98.3% passing the minimum required standards in 2019 and is the highest number since new standards were introduced in 2015.

Responses to the consultations were received from a wide of range of interested parties across the country, including residents, NGOs and conservation groups.

In total there were 1,267 responses to the [Wolvercote Mill Stream consultation](#), the largest response to date for a proposed bathing water designation, with 1,260 of respondents in favour of making the site a designated bathing water area.

The [East Cowes Esplanade consultation](#) received 132 responses, with 131 of respondents supporting the proposed designation.

Today's announcement follows [new plans unveiled by the Government in March to tackle the number of discharges of untreated sewage from storm overflows by water companies](#), including discharges into bathing waters. Under the proposed plan, there will be over 70% fewer discharges close to bathing waters by 2035 during the bathing season, with significant reductions expected outside the bathing season as well.