

Plans set out for two new bathing waters

Two popular swimming areas in the [Isle of Wight](#) and the [River Thames in Oxford](#) could become new bathing water sites under plans set out in consultations today.

Designated bathing waters are coastal or inland waters used by large numbers of people for swimming or paddling and have facilities to promote and support bathing, as set out in the Bathing Water Regulations 2013.

If the applications are successful, it means the sites would be monitored regularly during the bathing season, which in England runs from 15 May to 30 September, for bacteria detrimental to human health.

The Environment Agency takes water quality samples throughout the season before sites are classified annually as 'excellent', 'good', 'sufficient' or 'poor' based on an assessment of the level of bacteria in the water.

The area in Oxford under consideration is Wolvercote Mill Stream on the River Thames at Port Meadow, and the area in the Isle of Wight under consideration is East Cowes Esplanade on the north coast of the island.

Local residents, including farmers, businesses and swimming groups, are invited to give their views on the respective sites until 2 March. After three weeks the responses will be reviewed and a final decision will be made by the Environment Secretary.

Environment Minister Rebecca Pow said:

Bathing waters in England are a success story, with almost 95% achieving 'good' or 'excellent' status last year – the highest since new standards were introduced in 2015. We protect people's health at popular swimming spots across the country by requiring the water quality at those sites to be regularly monitored and improvements made if they don't meet the minimum standard.

It is great to see people getting involved in efforts to increase the number of designated bathing sites and I encourage local residents and swimmers to take part in these consultations so we can have as many views as possible to inform our final decision.

Any surface water can be designated as a bathing water if it is used by a large number of people and meets the requirements for designation. Designation does not indicate that the water quality is of bathing water standard as that is not considered in the assessment. There are currently 419 designated bathing waters in England.