

Press release: 388 top-rated beaches after scorching summer boosts visitors to seaside

97.9% of bathing waters passed tough standards following a programme of water quality testing at 420 bathing spots carried out by the Environment Agency (EA) from May to September.

The results coincided with a boost to tourism as visitors to the seaside enjoyed England's hottest summer on record.

The results, released today, also show that 92.4% of the beaches and inland lakes tested were given the top rating of 'Excellent' or 'Good.' Beaches at Whitby (Yorkshire), Sidmouth Jacobs Ladder (Devon) and Skegness (Lincolnshire) have all kept their Excellent rating for the fourth year in a row.

In the early 1990s just 28% of bathing waters would have met today's standards but dramatic improvements have been made to water quality over the last two decades, in part due to EA regulation reducing pollution from water companies and industry, and the work of local councils and communities.

Environment Minister Thérèse Coffey said:

This is great news for anyone who enjoys a trip to the seaside. We want everyone to be confident in the quality of our bathing waters and that's why the Environment Agency carry out regular tests to protect the health of visitors.

Britain's beaches are visited around 130 million times each year, generating over £7 billion for the economy. Working together we can all keep driving up standards to reduce pollution, ensuring everyone can continue to enjoy our iconic coastline.

Emma Howard Boyd, Chair of the Environment Agency said:

Seaside tourism is worth over £7 billion to the economy and good water quality is essential for people to visit and enjoy our beautiful beaches.

The Environment Agency's hard work has helped 388 beaches achieve the top Excellent or Good ratings this year and at beach cleans throughout the summer I've seen the commitment of local communities and campaigners to reduce pollution and protect our environment.

Everyone can take small steps to help us protect water quality as

we continue work with water companies, councils and local communities to maintain high bathing water standards.

Throughout the bathing water season from May to September, staff from the Environment Agency take up to 20 samples at each designated bathing spot. These are tested in Environment Agency laboratories and the results are published online.

This year, more people than ever checked out the EA's bathing water website the [Bathing Water Data Explorer](#) which includes a searchable map allowing you to check the water quality at beaches and bathing waters before making a visit. The website, featuring the latest test results available was visited 109,400 times – more than double the amount from 2017.

The general public can help keep bathing waters clean by following this advice:

- Always put litter in the bin at the beach or take it away with you to dispose of at home;
- Check your drains at home aren't misconnected, sending dirty water from toilets, showers and dishwashers into the wrong pipes and into rivers and the sea. Use a ConnectRight accredited plumber;
- Wet wipes, cotton buds and sanitary items should go in the bin not be flushed.
- Don't pour fats, oils and grease down the sink, these can pollute rivers and coastal waters and can set hard in pipes which causes blockages.