

Press release: Environment Agency confirms Blue Green Algae in three locations across the Lake District

Following hot, dry, weather across Cumbria, the Environment Agency has confirmed reports of Blue Green Algae in three locations across the Lake District.

Ullswater, Coniston and Killington Lake have all tested positive for potentially toxic Blue Green Algae which can have a negative effect on the appearance, quality and use of the water.

Throughout the summer months, the Environment Agency test water samples and confirm if Blue Green Algae has been found. They then inform landowners of the blooms, so they can take the necessary steps to warn the public of any potential dangers. This could may be the local authority, or a private landowner.

Jim Ratcliffe from the Environment Agency says:

As always, if people see any environmental impacts due to dry weather, such as fish in distress, or Blue Green Algae, please report it to the Environment Agency incident line on 0800 80 70 60 open 24/7, so we can investigate and take appropriate action to protect people and the environment.

If our sampling confirms Blue Green Algae is present in a lake or river, we inform the landowner, and they are encouraged to take the necessary steps to inform users of the water, by way of posters, notices or other means.

The Environment Agency continues to work with water companies, businesses and farmers across the country to provide advice, helping to balance the needs of water users and minimise impacts on the environment of any dry weather.

Water bodies affected by Blue Green Algae, or Algal Blooms may be green, blue-green or greenish brown and can produce musty, earthy or grassy odours. Blooms can also cause foaming on the shoreline, which can sometimes be confused with sewage pollution. During a bloom, the water also becomes less clear, blocking sunlight and stopping plants in the water from growing.

Blue Green Algae naturally occurs in inland waters, estuaries and the sea.

Blooms can form when their numbers become excessive. Once algal numbers are high, the bloom is likely to persist throughout the season, declining only on the onset of winter conditions.

Bloom and scum forming blue-green algae can produce toxins. Toxin producing blooms are called Harmful Algal Blooms. These toxins can be harmful to wild animals, farm livestock and domestic pets. In humans, they have been known to cause rashes after skin contact and illnesses if swallowed. Not all blue-green algae blooms and scums are toxic, but you can't tell just by looking at them, so it's best to assume they are.

For further information visit

www.gov.uk/government/publications/algal-blooms-advice-for-the-public-and-landowners/algal-blooms-advice-for-the-public-and-landowners.

Water is a precious resource and it is always helpful, in terms of future supplies and protecting the environment, for everyone to follow advice on saving water from their water company and use water wisely– especially during a period of dry weather.

Advice on what to look out for, and the effects of blue-green algae, can be found at www.lakedistrict.gov.uk/caringfor/policies/algae.