

99% of English bathing sites meet required water quality standards

99% of bathing waters in England have passed water quality standards following testing at over 400 designated sites carried out by the Environment Agency (EA).

The results, released today, show that for the 2021 bathing season 94.7% of beaches and inland waters gained an 'Excellent' or 'Good' rating while 4.3% achieved the minimum 'Sufficient' rating. This compares with 98.3% passing the required standards in 2019, and is the highest number since new standards were introduced in 2015.

Bathing waters are monitored for sources of pollution known to be a risk to bathers' health, with up to 20 samples taken from each site during the bathing season. Each sample is tested for bacteria, specifically E coli and intestinal enterococci.

The EA has been monitoring bathing water sites since the 1990s, and in this time there have been significant improvements. In the early 1990s, for example, just 28% of bathing waters met the highest standards in force at that time. Based on today's data, 99% of bathing waters meet the minimum standard, with 70.7% reaching the highest standards. While progress has been made, there is still much more to be done to ensure cleaner and healthier waters for people to enjoy. We are clear that more needs to be done on the part of water companies, and we are taking robust action to support regulators, businesses, farmers and councils to help clean up our waters.

Since 2015 the EA has required water companies to install Event Duration Monitors at bathing water sites. This captures data on the frequency and duration of storm overflow discharges, with all the data published [online](#) so the public can see what is happening in their local area. More than 12,000 of England's 15,000 storm overflows now have these monitors, and the remaining 3,000 will have them by end of next year.

Knowing more about water quality helps people make informed decisions on when and where to swim. The EA's Swimfo [website](#) provides detailed information on each of the 400+ bathing waters in England, and notifies bathers when Pollution Risk Warnings have been issued.

Environment Agency Chair Emma Howard Boyd said:

"With billions spent on seaside visits every year, we know good water quality helps coastal towns prosper. Twenty years of improvements in bathing water took targeted regulation and significant investment. While this is reflected in today's results we must continue to work together to maintain this trend.

"We cannot afford to be complacent. Public confidence in water quality has faltered in recent years with new evidence of pollution incidents getting

much needed attention as a result of some excellent campaigning. The polluter must pay. To restore trust, water companies, industry and farmers need to get the basics right or face legal action.

“The prize is multiple benefits to people and nature. The Environment Agency is working to ensure £120 million is invested in coastal habitats like England’s saltmarshes, which protect against coastal erosion and also store carbon equivalent to nearly 40 million people’s annual domestic emissions.”

Environment Minister Rebecca Pow said:

“Water quality is an absolute priority. We are the first Government to direct Ofwat to prioritise action by water companies to protect the environment and deliver the improvements that we all want to see.

“But we must go further to protect and enhance water quality. Our Environment Act puts in place more protections against water pollution than ever before, we are investing in programmes to support farmers to tackle water quality issues, and we are clear that where water companies do not step up we will take robust action.”

This is the first year that part of the River Wharfe in Ilkley, West Yorkshire, has been given an official classification after being added to the list of bathing waters in 2021.

It comes as Yorkshire Water announced new investment of up to £13 million to improve water quality in the area. This will include extra disinfection measures and a new scheme to reroute the sewage network in areas upstream of the bathing water site.

While a designation is an important first step towards longer-term water quality improvement, it will take time to identify how to meet the required bathing water standard alongside the financial investment and co-operation needed to make it happen.

DIT launches trainee programme to find next generation of trade negotiators

The International Trade Secretary has today announced the second round of the International Trade Development Programme to recruit the UK’s future leaders in international trade.

The two-year scheme is designed to train and develop highly skilled trade experts with a passion for international trade.

Successful candidates will be placed in one of the Department for

International Trade's top teams, working with colleagues across the globe to craft world-class free trade agreements, develop the UK's future trade policy, or support UK businesses to export their products to the world and attract the biggest investors to the UK. Trainees will work alongside teams with decades of industry experience, who will provide expertise and support to develop the future leaders in trade.

Successful candidates will have the option to be based at the new Department for International Trade (DIT) campus in Darlington or at Old Admiralty Building in London. Their placement in a UK team will be followed by six months working overseas at one of DIT's 127 offices based across the world. Previous trainees have been based in India, Uruguay, and Australia.

The initiative aims to support social mobility, as candidates do not need a university degree to apply but will require applicants to have five GCSEs, including English Language and Maths, and must meet the relevant security clearance.

International Trade Secretary Anne-Marie Trevelyan said:

There has never been a more exciting time to join the Department for International Trade.

2022 will be a five-star year for trade as we begin negotiations with India, plan to launch negotiations with Canada, Mexico and the Gulf, and secure accession to the £8.4 trillion CPTPP trade bloc.

We're looking for highly motivated, talented individuals from different backgrounds who can learn how to design and negotiate first-class deals in the years to come, as the UK leads the way as an independent trading nation.

Ben Gruenberg completed the trade programme last year and now works as a Senior Clean Growth Adviser at the British High Commission in New Delhi. **He said the following on the programme:** "DIT is certainly a great place to start your career and really gives you space to learn and develop.

"There has been a huge variety in the types of work I have done whilst on the programme, ranging from ministerial briefings, supporting trade negotiation sessions to running trade promotion events overseas to create export opportunities for British businesses."

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The last programme ran from 2019-2021 and attracted over 2000 applicants, and the successful candidates are now all senior executive officers (SEOs). Potential candidates who are not appointed to the training programme may be considered for other roles in the department.

Further information:

Applications close 31 January. For more information and how to apply please visit [Civil Service Jobs](#).

The trade development programme is part of the wider recruitment campaign for exciting roles based outside of London. Since June 2021, 378 roles have been advertised externally across our offices in Darlington, Belfast, Edinburgh, and Cardiff, with a further 120 DIT roles being advertised in these locations in January. These include a variety of roles such as South Asia Policy Advisor and Director for Trade Advocacy, based at the DIT Darlington Campus.

DIT is offering online sessions for external candidates on the process of applying to the Civil Service. Please visit the [DIT recruitment site](#) to find out more on how to apply and how to join a session.

[Foreign and Defence Secretaries visit Australia for AUKMIN](#)

Foreign Secretary Liz Truss and Defence Secretary Ben Wallace will visit Australia this week, as the UK forges closer defence and security ties with the nation.

Truss begins the first leg of an official visit to Australia today, using her trip to focus on economic, security and technology interests as well as standing up against malign aggressors.

Defence Secretary Ben Wallace will join the Foreign Secretary in Sydney to hold talks with their counterparts, Foreign Minister Marise Payne and Defence Minister Peter Dutton.

In the first AUKMIN since the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic, Ministers will discuss security and defence capability, building on AUKUS, and commit to tackling state and hybrid threats and jointly supporting maritime security.

The visit comes in the face of growing aggression from Russia, which is waging to destabilise and threaten its sovereign neighbour Ukraine, and increasing threats in the Indo-Pacific. It also comes during crucial days for the Tongan relief effort, as the UK works urgently with Australian and New Zealand counterparts to support those affected.

Foreign Secretary Liz Truss said:

With malign forces threatening global peace and stability it is vital that close allies like the UK and Australia show robust

vigilance in defence of freedom and democracy.

The AUKUS partnership between the UK, Australia and the United States is a clear demonstration of how we will defend our values, protect trade routes and increase stability across the Indo-Pacific.

In Australia, I will be strengthening our economic, diplomatic and security ties – making our country safer and more competitive – in order to win the battle for ideas as part of our network of liberty.

Defence Secretary Ben Wallace said:

The UK and Australia share one of the oldest and strongest Defence and security alliances.

Operating and exercising side by side, we continue to work together to promote stability, and tackle our shared threats with our like-minded ally head on.

Truss will also agree to closer cooperation with Australia to boost opportunities for honest and reliable infrastructure investment for Indo-Pacific states – to end strategic dependency on malign actors in the areas of energy, investment and technology.

And on technology, the Foreign Secretary will discuss how best to strengthen global technology supply chains and tackle malign actors who disrupt cyberspace.

On the second leg of the visit, the Foreign Secretary will travel to Adelaide to build on the recently signed free trade deal, including by signing an agreement to boost UK-Australia business links for key industries including space, cyber, science and technology with the State of South Australia. This is alongside the UK's work to join the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for the Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP).

Truss will also be visiting the BAE Systems shipyard to see how British business expertise is responsible for building frigates for the Australian Navy.

ENDS

Devon project showcases the future of our coasts

- LORP project is working in tandem with a similar scheme in France
- Both projects are examples of work being discussed this week at the Coastal Futures conference

Organisations looking at how climate change is affecting our coasts are coming together this week for an online conference, Coastal Futures.

One example of adaptation work that can be done to meet the challenges of rising sea levels is Promoting Adaptation to Changing Coasts (PACCo). An innovative project, funded in part by the ERDF's Interreg France Channel England fund, PACCo has 2 arms – in England the Lower Otter Restoration Project at Budleigh Salterton, Devon and in France, the Basse Saône: 2050 project at Quiberville in Normandy.

The €26 million twin projects are both managed realignments – returning the floodplains to how they were 200-plus years ago, before land at both sites was reclaimed for agricultural use – designed to adapt to the changing climate. The embankment built on the Lower Otter and the dykes built at Quiberville are no longer fit for purpose, with both sites having flooded on a number of occasions. Without action now, both sites are at risk of catastrophic failure.

The work, due to complete in March 2023, will result in 100 hectares of mudflats and saltmarshes being created across the 2 sites. These will improve biodiversity, offering new habitats for a variety of wading birds and act as carbon sinks, with saltmarshes sequestering an estimated four tonnes of carbon per hectare each year.

Estuarine and coastal habitats are among our most valuable natural assets but they are under significant threat due to the impacts from climate change.

With the predicted one-metre sea level rise in parts of England by the end of the century, action is needed now to protect the habitat and biodiversity that connects land and sea. Turning this around will require a society-wide effort and water companies, industry, government, regulators, landowners and individuals all have roles to play.

As part of the PACCo project, a “how to” guide will be developed setting out all of the aspects of the 2 schemes, in order for other bodies in coastal regions to assess whether a similar managed realignment scheme might be suitable for their areas. It is thought up to 70 estuarine sites in southern England and northern France may benefit from this kind of scheme.

The Coastal Futures conference is supported by the Environment Agency – the

lead partner in the PACCo project. Information on the Coastal Futures conference is available at: <http://coastal-futures.net/>.

[New digital identity checking for landlords and employers to tackle immigration abuse](#)

Landlords, letting agents and employers will be able to use certified new technology to digitally carry out vital right to work and right to rent checks aimed to crack down on abuse of the immigration system.

The government has announced that, from 6 April, certified identity service providers (IDSPs) will be able to use [Identification Document Validation Technology \(IDVT\)](#) to conduct right to work checks and right to rent checks on behalf of British and Irish citizens.

IDSPs allow people to verify their identity remotely and prove their eligibility to work or rent, which will reduce the costs of recruitment and letting processes. The same process is being enabled for DBS pre-employment checks.

Working time and hours spent undertaking the checks will be slashed as landlords and employers who use an IDSP will no longer need to physically examine documents. IDSPs will also be able to carry out checks on behalf of employers and landlords at scale, for example in large recruitment campaigns when a high number of new employees are recruited.

The right to rent and work schemes are a key measure to tackle and deter illegal immigration, as part of the government's New Plan for Immigration and move to a digital immigration system.

They are intended to prevent individuals without lawful immigration status in the UK from working and accessing accommodation, as well as supporting efforts to tackle those who exploit vulnerable migrants, often housing them in very poor conditions.

Minister for Safe and Legal Migration, Kevin Foster said:

Online checks make it quicker, easier and more secure for employers and landlords to carry out right to rent and right to work checks and stop those looking to abuse our immigration system.

These changes will make the checks more secure, quicker to do and will better support remote working practices.

Minister of State for Media, Data, and Digital Infrastructure, Julia Lopez, said:

We are determined to seize the potential of new technology to boost the economy and make people's lives easier.

Trusted and secure ways for people to confidently verify themselves online will be a game-changer and offer an alternative to time-consuming and complex paper-based processes.

I'm delighted people will now be able to take advantage of our new digital identity trust framework to prove their eligibility to work, rent, or undergo criminal record checks.

Keith Rosser, Group Director, Reed said:

Digital innovation to a previously manual process will revolutionise the way UK employers hire, operate, and structure their business in future. Digital right to work checks are more secure and faster meaning as we build back better from the pandemic, UK hiring will be quicker and safer.

The use of technology means companies across the UK can hire from any talent pool regardless of location aiding the levelling up agenda and helping UK companies compete internationally.

[Further details on how organisations become certified is available here.](#)