

# Coronavirus: update on bathing season 2020

On Wednesday (13 May 2020) the government [announced](#) that people would be able to spend more time outside both for exercise and recreation in England.

As part of this revised guidance, you can now go swimming in either lakes or the sea provided that you observe [social distancing guidelines](#). You cannot however use public indoor or outdoor pools.

This year's bathing season runs from 15 May to 30 September 2020.

England has high standards of water quality at its bathing waters, with 98.3% of bathing waters passing the minimum standard last year in England. Of these, 71% of bathing waters were classified as 'Excellent', the highest water quality standard.

The latest classifications for over 400 designated bathing waters in England can be found through the Environment Agency's ['Find a bathing water'](#) site. Members of the public can also access the Environment Agency's daily pollution risk forecasting service during this time which alerts people to any temporary reductions in water quality.

## **Guidance on visiting bathing waters**

There are no restrictions on how far you can travel to get to bathing waters. However, you cannot visit and stay overnight at a holiday home or second home. Before travelling, check local advice on which public spaces are open and whether public amenities are available.

Visiting may be advised against if local authorities report an influx of visitors which means that people cannot safely observe social distancing guidance. If you are concerned about visiting public places, please read the [government guidance](#) for advice on staying safe in open spaces.

## **Claire Hughes, Director of Her Majesty's Coastguard, said:**

In England, now more than ever, people need to respect the sea and the coast. Whether you're local or not, whatever your ability or experience in your chosen sport or leisure activity, the sea can still catch you out and be unmerciful when it does.

The majority of beaches will not be lifeguarded. If you get into trouble call 999 and ask for the Coastguard and we will come to your aid. But coronavirus hasn't gone away and we all need to follow the rules. Remember your choices might put people, including yourself and frontline responders, at risk. Take extra care in these extraordinary times.

## Update on bathing water sampling

This year, due to the ongoing coronavirus pandemic, the Environment Agency has temporarily paused non-essential work, including sampling to help slow the spread of coronavirus and maintain the ability to provide essential services.

This temporary suspension of bathing water sampling will not affect bathing water quality. More information can be found on the [Environment Agency website](#).

Stay updated on the latest [government guidance on social distancing](#) before visiting public places. The Cabinet Office has also published the following: [Coronavirus outbreak FAQs: what you can and can't do](#).

People living in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland are advised to follow the latest advice issued by their relevant local authorities.

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## [PM call with Taoiseach Leo Varadkar: 15 May 2020](#)

Press release

Prime Minister Boris Johnson spoke to Irish Taoiseach Leo Varadkar.



The Prime Minister spoke to Irish Taoiseach Leo Varadkar this afternoon.

They discussed the UK and Ireland's approaches to tackling coronavirus and agreed on the importance of continued cooperation going forward, given the closeness of our two countries.

On the UK's intention to impose quarantine restrictions on international travellers, the Prime Minister emphasised that there would be exemptions to these measures to respect the Common Travel Area.

The two leaders also spoke about the latest round of UK-EU negotiations. The Prime Minister said the UK will continue to work hard to reach an agreement and continues to believe that this is possible.

The Prime Minister and Taoiseach looked forward to meeting again once the pandemic is over, and to building stronger links between the UK and Ireland.

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## [Extra £35m for Wales in fight against coronavirus](#)

Press release

This takes the total amount of funding provided by the UK Government to support the effort to tackle the coronavirus in Wales to over £2.1 billion



The UK Government has committed an extra £35 million to support Wales in the fight against coronavirus, Welsh Secretary Simon Hart has confirmed today (Friday 15 May).

The devolved administration in Wales will receive the additional funding as a result of the UK Government's investment in care homes in England, designed to introduce greater infection control, ramp up testing, step up clinical support, ensure English local authorities have plans in place to support care homes and boost the capacity of the social care workforce.

This takes the total amount of funding provided by the UK Government to support the effort to tackle the coronavirus in Wales to over £2.1 billion.

**Secretary of State for Wales Simon Hart said:**

This is the latest in a series of direct funding from the UK

Government to help Wales through this pandemic, committed in tandem with a package of UK-wide measures on a scale that has never been seen before. We are doing everything we can to ensure Wales overcomes this crisis.

Today's announcement will ensure the Welsh Government can provide vital services while tackling the next stages of this devastating virus.

The UK Government continues to support people in Wales through our UK-wide PPE strategy meaning our heroic front-line workers have the protection they need to tackle the coronavirus pandemic. We have also mobilised the Armed Forces to bolster medical and logistical efforts as well as repatriating British citizens from overseas.

The Chancellor Rishi Sunak has also announced unprecedented UK-wide measures to support businesses and workers in Wales and across the UK during the coronavirus pandemic. These include:

- The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme where small and large employers can apply for a government grant of 80% of workers' salaries up to £2,500 a month. The scheme will be backdated to March 1 and is available until October this year.
- Deferral of the next quarter of VAT payments for firms, until the end of June – representing a £30bn injection into the economy.
- £330bn worth of UK Government-backed and guaranteed loans to support businesses.
- The Bounce Back Loan Scheme will provide loans of up to £50,000 to benefit small businesses with a 100% government-backed guarantee for lenders. These loans will be interest free for the first 12 months and businesses can apply online through a short and simple form.
- The Self-Employed Income Support Scheme will help eligible freelance workers in Wales to receive up to £2,500 per month in grants for at least three months.

**ENDS**

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**[The United Kingdom announces two COVID-19 response services for](#)**

# eligible developing countries to help combat the impact of the virus on international trade.

World news story

Aid-for-trade will play a crucial role in responding to the various challenges of COVID-19



Aid-for-trade will play a crucial role in responding to the various challenges of COVID-19

The UK has updated its aid-for-trade programme portfolio in order to better respond to COVID-19, resulting in 2 new offers that eligible developing countries are encouraged to take advantage of. The first is through the Trade and Investment Advocacy Fund (TAF2+), which is providing support to help eligible developing countries in three areas: to better understand the trade-related impacts of COVID-19 on developing country economies, to notify COVID-related measures to the WTO's monitoring exercise, and to engage on virtual WTO meeting platforms.

Secondly, through funding to the World Bank Trade Facilitation Support Programme (TFSP), the UK is also helping developing countries tackle the COVID crisis through better trade facilitation, helping to expedite the movement, release, and clearance of goods, including goods in transit. This is particularly important with regards to the movement of critical goods such as medical supplies and personal protective equipment (PPE) in developing countries. Support also includes virtual training, workshops and support to National Trade Facilitation Committees.

Ambassador Julian Braithwaite announced at the General Council on Friday 15th May, noting "We are keenly aware that many developing country partners, as well as small island states and other vulnerable economies, are experiencing a serious period of trade shock, as currency depreciations combine with sharp declines in important export sectors like tourism. This potentially

jeopardises decades of hard-fought, trade-led prosperity. Today I'd like to announce that, through the UK's Trade and Investment Advocacy Fund and our funding to the World Bank, we are providing support to eligible developing country Members to better understand the trade-related impacts of COVID-19 on their economies, notify COVID-related measures to the WTO's monitoring exercise, and tackle the COVID crisis through better trade facilitation."

Aid-for-trade will play a crucial role in responding to the various challenges of COVID-19 and the UK stands ready to play its part in supporting developing country governments during this unprecedented time in global trade.

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## Government publishes latest R number

R number range for the UK  $0.7-1.0$  (Up to date as of 22 May 2020)

The reproduction number (R) is the average number of secondary infections produced by 1 infected person.

The Scientific Pandemic Influenza Group on Modelling (SPI-M), a sub-group of the Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies (SAGE), has built a consensus on the value of R based on expert scientific advice from multiple academic groups. This has been reviewed by SAGE.

The range of  $0.7-1.0$  is an estimate based on latest data available to determine infection and transmission rates. Data such as contacts, hospital admissions, ICU admissions and deaths generally takes 2 to 3 weeks for changes in R to be reflected in these data sources, due to the time between infection and needing hospital care.

As data on infection is estimated through data on symptomatic cases, hospitalisations, or deaths, there is a delay of around 2 to 3 weeks because as there is a lag between people becoming infected, entering hospital, and dying. Consequently, this range applies to data before the recent adjustments to the restrictions the government has put in place earlier this week.

An R number of 1 means that on average every person who is infected will infect 1 other person, meaning the total number of new infections is stable. If R is 2, on average, each infected person infects 2 more people. If R is 0.5 then on average for each 2 infected people, there will be only 1 new infection. If R is greater than 1 the epidemic is generally seen to be growing, if R is less than 1 the epidemic is shrinking.

SAGE is confident that overall the R is not above 1. This means that the number of infections is not increasing, and is very likely to be decreasing.

R can change over time. For example, it falls when there is a reduction in the number of contacts between people, which reduces transmission.

In the coming weeks and months, the R number will be updated every week on the [GO-Science website](#).

Sir Patrick Vallance, Government Chief Scientific Adviser said:

R is one of the most important things you can track to understand an epidemic. If you can estimate R, then you have part of a reliable tool for planning how to combat the virus.

If the R is higher than 1 that means this disease is growing exponentially and will keep on spreading to more and more people. To keep R below one and control the virus, it is vital that people stay alert and continue to follow the latest government guidelines to the letter.

In the coming weeks we will update this estimate regularly.

R is not the only important measure of the epidemic. R indicates whether the epidemic is getting bigger or smaller but not how large it is. The number of people currently infected with COVID-19 – and so able to pass it on – is very important. It is estimated by ONS and available on their [website](#). ONS will publish this figure regularly, so as to enable tracking of whether it is going up or down.

R should always be considered alongside the number of people currently infected. If R equals 1 with 100,000 people currently infected, it is a very different situation to R equals 1 with 1,000 people currently infected.

## **Limitations of R**

R is an average value that can vary in different parts of the country, communities, and subsections of the population. It cannot be measured directly so there is always some uncertainty around its exact value.

## **How is R estimated?**

Individual modelling groups use a range of data to estimate R including:

- epidemiological data such as hospital admissions, ICU admissions and deaths – it generally takes 2 to 3 weeks for changes in R to be reflected in these data sources, due to the time between infection and needing hospital care
- contact pattern surveys that gather information on behaviour – these can be quicker (with a lag of around a week) but can be open to bias as they

often rely on self-reported behaviour

- household infection surveys where blood samples and swabs are performed on individuals which can provide estimates of how many people are infected – longitudinal surveys (which sample the same people repeatedly) allow a direct estimate of the infection rates

Different modelling groups use different data sources to estimate R using complex mathematical models that simulate the spread of infections. Some may even use all these sources of information to adjust their models to better reflect the real-world situation. There is uncertainty in all these data sources, which is why R estimates can vary between different models, and why we do not rely on one model; evidence is considered, discussed and R is presented as a range.

## **Who estimates R?**

R is estimated by a range of independent modelling groups based in universities and Public Health England (PHE). The modelling groups present their individual R estimates to the Science Pandemic Influenza Modelling group (SPI-M) – a subgroup of SAGE – for discussion. Attendees compare the different estimates of R and SPI- M collectively agrees a range which R is very likely to be within.