



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

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Welsh Government
Consultation – summary of response

Bathing Water Review in Wales 2022

Identification of Col-Huw Beach (Llantwit Major) and Penarth Beach as
Designated Bathing Waters

April 2022

Mae'r ddogfen yma hefyd ar gael yn Gymraeg.

This document is also available in Welsh.

Overview

The Welsh Government held a consultation on proposals to designate Col-Huw Beach (Llantwit Major) and Penarth Beach as designated bathing waters under the Bathing Water Regulations 2013.

The consultation ran from 4 January to 15 February 2022.

The consultation asked respondents whether they supported the proposals to designate Col-Huw Beach (Llantwit Major) and Penarth Beach as designated bathing waters for 2022 and provide reasons/evidence to support their views.

This document provides a summary of responses to the consultation and shows how the Welsh Government is responding to them. It does not offer a detailed opinion on individual comments.

The Welsh Government is grateful to all those who took the time to submit their views.

Context

The objective of designating a beach or inland bathing area as a bathing water is to protect bathers' health against faecal pollution and provide information to the public to enable them to make informed decisions about where and when they bathe.

Natural Resources Wales (NRW) monitors water quality during the bathing season, which in Wales runs from 15 May to 30 September.

Bathing Waters are classified each year as 'excellent', 'good', 'sufficient' or 'poor'. If water quality does not meet the legally required standards, NRW will investigate the sources of pollution and recommend remedial measures to make improvements.

Action Required

This document is for information only.

Further information and related documents

Large print, Braille and alternative language versions of this document are available on request.

Contact details

For further information:

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Additional copies

This summary of response and copies of all the consultation documentation are published in electronic form only and can be accessed on the Welsh Government's website.

Link to the consultation documentation: [Consultation Bathing-Water-Review-2022](#)

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Introduction

This document provides a summary of responses to the Welsh Government's consultation on controls on the designation of Col-Huw Beach (Llantwit Major) and Penarth Beach, as well as the Government response and policy statement that outlines next steps.

The consultation asked respondents to answer whether they agreed or disagreed with the proposal to designate Col-Huw Beach (Llantwit Major) and Penarth Beach as bathing waters for the 2022 bathing season and what were their views on the proposal and reasons/evidence to support those views.

The consultation comprised a combination of multiple choice and narrative questions.

Overview of Response Numbers and Respondent Type

The consultation received 402 responses. Of these 390 were received via the online portal and a further 12 responses were received directly via email.

Individuals	388
Water company _ Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water	1
Regulatory body - Natural Resources Wales	1
Local Authority	1
Town Council/ local Councillor response	3
Professional Bodies	1
Local water using clubs and organisations	5
Other	3

A full list of respondents is included at Annex A (minus individuals and groups who requested their response be anonymous), with a number of respondents choosing to keep their response confidential.

Questions Asked

We asked the respondents five questions in relation to the proposed designations. These were:

Question 1 - Do you agree or disagree with our proposal to designate Col-Huw Beach (Llantwit Major) as a bathing water for the 2022 bathing season? What is your view on the proposal and your reason/evidence to support your view?

Question 2: Do you agree or disagree with our proposal to designate Penarth Beach as a bathing water for the 2022 bathing season? What is your view on the proposal and your reason/evidence to support your view?

Question 3: We would like to know your views on the effects the proposals would have on the Welsh language, specifically on opportunities for people to use Welsh and on treating the Welsh language no less favourably than English. What effects do you think there would be? How could positive effects be increased, or negative effects be mitigated?

Question 4: Please also explain how you believe the proposed actions could be formulated or changed so as to have positive effects or increased positive effects on opportunities for people to use the Welsh language and on treating the Welsh language no less favourably than the English language, and no adverse effects on opportunities for people to use the Welsh language and on treating the Welsh language no less favourably than the English language.

Question 5: We have asked a number of specific questions. If you have any related issues which we have not specifically addressed, please use this space to report them:

A thematic analysis of the responses was undertaken. This categorised the opinions, comments, statements and issues raised by respondents into overarching themes, for each of the consultation questions.

Responses

There were a number of themes arising from individual responses in relation to designation

- Mental health benefits of open swimming in these locations
- A perception that designation supports government drivers for health e.g. increasing exercise and reducing obesity.
- A way of connecting people with nature to make them care more about the environment
- The increasing popularity of open swimming as a sport

- Optimism that designation would help catalyse the improvement of water quality and infrastructure at these beaches.
- Several observations of a number of people already swimming in these locations, meaning designation would at least give them data on the quality.
- A strong desire to be informed of the water quality so water users are able to make informed risks before entering the water.
- The ability to access these beaches due to their locality. Many respondents noted they travelled further to Barry and West Wales to swim in the sea and had a desire to see more local options so they could swim more frequently.
- A belief that designation would make it easier to improve the quality if the quality is known in the first place.

Table of responses

The tables below summarises the questions and the number of responses to the multiple-choice questions. A further detailed summary of the comments received for all of the questions follow the table.

Question 1: Do you agree or disagree with our proposal to designate Col-Huw Beach (Llantwit Major) as a bathing water for the 2022 bathing season? What is your view on the proposal and your reason/evidence to support your view?			
Options	Agree	Disagree	Neither
Number of respondents - 338	314 (93%)	1 (0.3%)	23 (7%)

Question 2: Do you agree or disagree with our proposal to designate Penarth Beach as a bathing water for the 2022 bathing season? What is your view on the proposal and your reason/evidence to support your view?			
Options	Agree	Disagree	Neither or no opinion
Number of respondents - 395	379 (96%)		15 (4%)

Question 3: We would like to know your views on the effects the proposals would have on the Welsh language, specifically on opportunities for people to use Welsh and on treating the Welsh language no less favourably than English. What effects do you think there would be? How could positive effects be increased, or negative effects be mitigated?	
Options	Narrative response
Number of respondents	

Question 4: Please also explain how you believe the proposed actions could be formulated or changed, so as to have positive effects or increased positive effects on opportunities for people to use the Welsh language and on treating the Welsh language no less favourably than the English language, and no adverse effects on opportunities for people to use the Welsh language and on treating the Welsh language no less favourably than the English language.

Options	Narrative response
Number of respondents	

Question 5: We have asked a number of specific questions. If you have any related issues which we have not specifically addressed, please use this space to report them:

Options	Narrative response
Number of respondents	

Question 1: Do you agree or disagree with our proposal to designate Col-Huw Beach (Llantwit Major) as a bathing water for the 2022 bathing season? What is your view on the proposal and your reason/evidence to support your view?

There were 338 responses to question one with 314 respondents (93%) saying they agreed with the proposal to designate Col-Huw Beach.

23 respondents stated they either had no opinion on the designation or were not specifically familiar with the site for swimming.

One response was against designation with concerns of sewage outfall along this section of the coast.

A significant number of responses provided detailed examples of individual, family, group and organised bathing at the site. Evidence of usage of the site, including specific swimming numbers for the 2021 bathing season and other water based activities, including surfing.

Many responses advised that there had been a substantial increase in recent years in swimmers at Col-Huw Beach and reported having witnessed hundreds of swimmers, surfers, paddle boarders and other water and beach users during the summer of 2021. The beach was identified by many responses as a site, which attracted families, locals, visitors and people of all ages for swimming, paddling and other water recreation activities, which was supported by good facilities at the site.

A large number of responses raised the importance of Col-Huw beach as a valued and beautiful natural environment to enjoy the outdoors by both the local community and visitors. Designation was also seen as a way to support local businesses and tourism.

Over half of responses raised the importance of water quality testing and monitoring at the site, so that information would be available to swimmers to know whether it was clean and safe to bathe.

A significant number of responses also felt the availability of information on water quality at the site would increase the uptake of swimming and other recreational activities by both the local community and tourists.

A high number of responses identified the important contribution which swimming has on improving peoples' well-being and physical and mental health. Many of these responses identified Col-Huw Beach as an area where people can also enjoy the natural surrounding environment.

A small number of responses raised the issues of possible water quality pollution, whilst other responses seen designation as a way to identify any potential issues of pollution and address them. In contrast, a many responses were of the view that the bathing water quality at the site was good.

Dŵr Cymru Welsh believe their assets will have minimal impact on the bathing water quality at Col-Huw and that any potential bacterial pollution at this site is likely to be from Agricultural pollution and poorly managed septic tanks.

NRW are supportive of designation and believe there is sufficient evidence of their popularity for bathers in the local community at this beach. NRW note that at present they do not know the quality of the water at this site, but that designation would drive that monitoring.

Question 2: Do you agree or disagree with our proposal to designate Penarth Beach as a bathing water for the 2022 bathing season? What is your view on the proposal and your reason/evidence to support your view?

There were 395 responses to question one with 379 respondents (96%) saying they agreed with the proposal to designate Penarth Beach.

The remaining 13 respondents stated they either had no opinion on the designation or had not visited the site. Two of these 13 respondents were of the view that sewage pipes discharging into the site meant that the water was not suitable for swimming and the site requires significant cleaning before bathing is allowed.

A large number of responses in favour of designation identified Penarth Beach as a well-used bathing site, which attracted a wide range of users including a strong outdoor swimming community, and other water-based activities including rowing and sailing. With many responses identifying a significant increase in swimming at the site in recent years, particularly during the pandemic.

More than half the responses emphasised that it was essential for regular water quality testing at Penarth Beach. With many feeling they needed to know that where they were swimming was safe and that the water was protected from pollution.

Some responses also felt that the site should also be designated because of the high population of Penarth and nearby Cardiff, further opening up the opportunity to existing swimmers and new swimmers.

A significant number of responses raised the importance of swimming in supporting and improving well-being, physical and mental health of people using such sites. There was also references to the sense of community and the opportunity to socialise.

Some responses also highlighted the value of the historical site of the beach from a tourism perspective, with the improved beachfront and the Pier and Promenade, which is valued and enjoyed by the community and visitors alike. Some responses felt that the area could benefit from some swimming based facilities, such as outdoor showers.

Several responses raised concerns about the safety of the water quality at the site, due to water infrastructure, the beach's proximity to the Barrage and usage of the channel for shipping. The majority of these respondents saw designation as a way in which poor water quality could be identified and addressed by those responsible for the pollution.

Some respondents noted a specific concern regarding the Hinkley point sediment disposed of at the Cardiff Grounds sandbank, looking for assurances and testing to ensure the waste sediment is not having a detrimental impact from its previous proximity to the nuclear power plant.

Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water noted they have multiple wastewater assets in the proximity of Penarth Beach, which support the heavily urbanised area of Cardiff and Penarth. They would want to carry out assessments on the potential impacts of their operations on the water quality using the latest coastal modelling to understand whether upgrades to the infrastructure are required.

NRW supports the designation of Penarth beach and believes there is sufficient evidence of the beach's popularity for bathers in the local community. They note that at present they do not know the quality of the water at this site, but that designation would drive that monitoring. NRW expect there to be challenges in terms of water pollution due to diffuse urban pollution and water company assets in the vicinity and expect investment will be required from various stakeholders including Government to improve the water quality at these sites in the longer term.

Question 3 & 4

Question 3: We would like to know your views on the effects the proposals would have on the Welsh language, specifically on opportunities for people to use Welsh and on treating the Welsh language no less favourably than English. What effects do you think there would be? How could positive effects be increased, or negative effects be mitigated?

Question 4: Please also explain how you believe the proposed actions could be formulated or changed so as to have positive effects or increased positive effects on opportunities for people to use the Welsh language and on treating the Welsh language no less favourably than the English language, and no adverse effects on opportunities for people to use the Welsh language and on treating the Welsh language no less favourably than the English language.

The Welsh language is one of our national treasures; it is what makes us unique as a nation and it's an important part of our culture and economy. It is encouraging to see so many positive responses regarding the Welsh language in our bathing water review.

It is clear from the responses collected that everyone enjoyed and supported the use of these areas as bathing waters. There was a definite support shown for use of Welsh and recognition of the benefits of being able to use the language socially though some responders were unable to see how the review would impact the language.

We welcome these responses. Responders noted the use of the language in our communities, both as the language of those living in the locality and as the opportunity to promote Wales and our language to visitors. The use of the Welsh in our public spaces is important to us - Cymraeg belongs to us all. Some responses specifically mentioned the positive experiences of learning; using and being inspired to learn Welsh because of their involvement with swimming groups in these locations proving that just a little bit Welsh can have an impact.

We are pleased that clean bathing water can contribute to our wider policy aims, by working together with local authorities and their communities; we will ensure the use of bilingual signs in these areas. We will also continue to work with partners such as the Mentrau Iaith and the Urdd. These partners support the use of Welsh within our communities to give everyone the opportunity to use Welsh wherever they may be – at home, at work or simply having a chat with friends. We hope that by doing so we can help the community of bathers who use these waters feel connected to their language and culture in a way that supports their wellbeing.

Question 5: We have asked a number of specific questions. If you have any related issues which we have not specifically addressed, please use this space to report them:

In addition to the two named beaches, a number of responses were generally supportive of the designation of as many beaches as possible in Wales.

A number of respondents also expressed a desire to see more rivers with designated bathing areas. A few responses also called for more ambitious outdoor bathing policy including additional lido sites across Wales mirroring Iceland's approach.

Water Safety Wales highlighted their "Drowning Prevention Strategy", which was published in 2020 and expressed a desire to see more targeted public awareness and consistent messaging and education around water related risks. They have also requested that consideration be given to reassessing the risk to water users in both locations and potentially the need for additional or different control measures with designation increasing the number of users of these beaches.

Some responses indicated a desire for real time water quality data at bathing water sites advising bathers whether the water quality was likely to be at time of bathing.

A number of respondents also commented on a desire to see more evidence of more enforcement and prosecution of water polluters and litterers at beaches.

Government Response

Following full consideration of all responses received and information and evidence provided, the Welsh Ministers are satisfied that Col-Huw Beach and Penarth Beach has met the criteria as set out in regulation 3(2) of the Bathing Water Regulations 2013. Therefore, the Welsh Ministers have taken the decision to identify these beaches as a bathing water from the 2022-bathing season.

When reaching a decision on identifying a bathing water the main consideration is numbers of bathers. However, we have not set a formal numerical figure, as all bathing waters are different and one figure may not be suitable for all sites. We look for evidence of numbers of swimmers, people paddling at the water's edge and people on the beach. We also look at past trends, any infrastructure or facilities provided or measures taken to promote bathing as set out in the Bathing Water Regulations 2013.

Anyone can recommend a surface water area used for bathing for identification as a bathing water. In the first instance, we recommend approaching the Local Authority as they will often hold helpful information about a beach in their area and will be responsible for meeting various requirements under the Bathing Water Regulations 2013 in the event of the water being designated as a bathing water.

Monitoring of designated bathing waters

Natural Resources Wales has responsibility for monitoring bathing water quality at designated bathing water sites in Wales. Where a surface water is designated as a bathing water, Natural Resources Wales is required to produce a detailed profile and monitoring programme, as it does for each identified bathing water in Wales.

Bathing water profiles include a description of the bathing water and surrounding area, any rivers and streams feeding into each site and details about how they will manage pollution at the site.

These profiles also set out bathing water quality compliance results and explain the work they are undertaking with other partners to identify where water quality improvements are needed. This includes working with water companies, agriculture sector and Local Authorities to identify problems that could affect bathing water quality.

In addition, every Local Authority, which controls an identified bathing water, must ensure that detailed information about the bathing water is available in an easily accessible place in the near vicinity of the bathing water during the bathing season (15 May to 30 September).

Local Authorities are also required to display further information in the form of water quality classification symbols during the bathing season at each identified bathing water.

Concerns regarding Hinkley point

The disposal of mud dredged from Hinkley point was carried out in accordance with regulatory requirements and international guidelines to safeguard the environment and human health.

Natural Resources Wales as the regulator acting on behalf of the Welsh Ministers, issued the relevant licences once they were satisfied that the sediment sampling and analysis were appropriate to support a marine licence application for the disposal of dredged material.

Disposal no longer takes place here as the licence has now expired.

Next Steps

We will advise Natural Resources Wales of the Welsh Ministers' decision to identify Col-Huw and Penarth Beach as a designated bathing water and ask them to prepare a bathing water profile and to keep the profile under review.

The Welsh Government would like to thank those who responded to the consultation on the 'Review of Bathing Waters in Wales 2022'.

Annex A – List of Responding Organisations

This list of responding organisations is not exhaustive and is based on those that declared their Organisation. This may include responses from individuals who are members of specific organisations and therefore does not necessarily reflect that organisation's views. This list also does not include those that asked their response to be kept confidential or those that did not include the name of the organisation.

- Natural Resources Wales
- Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water
- Water Safety Wales
- Penarth Yacht Club
- Clwb Achub Bywyd Llanilltud Fawr
- Vale of Glamorgan Council
- NRW
- Llantwit major town council
- Penarth Town Council
- Institution of Civil Engineers Wales Cymru
- Associated British Ports
- A number of individual responses from members of a number of open swimming clubs