



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

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Welsh Government
Consultation – summary of response

Bathing Water Review Wales 2023

Identification of Ogmore by Sea Beach, Watch House Bay, Burry Port West Beach and Burry Port East Beach as Designated Bathing Waters

April 2023

Mae'r ddogfen hon ar gael yn Gymraeg hefyd / This document is also available in Welsh
Rydym yn croesawu gohebiaeth a galwadau ffôn yn Gymraeg / We welcome correspondence and telephone calls in Welsh

Overview

The Welsh Government held a consultation on proposals to designate Ogmore by Sea Beach, Watch House Bay, Burry Port West Beach and Burry Port East Beach as designated bathing waters under the Bathing Water Regulations 2013. The consultation ran from 18 January to 1 March 2023.

The consultation asked respondents whether they supported the proposals to designate Ogmore by Sea Beach, Watch House Bay, Burry Port West Beach and Burry Port East Beach as designated bathing waters for 2023 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 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

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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-2023](#)

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Introduction

This document provides a summary of responses to the Welsh Government's consultation on the proposed designation of Ogmore by Sea Beach, Watch House Bay, Burry Port West Beach and Burry Port East 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 Ogmore by Sea Beach, Watch House Bay, Burry Port West Beach and Burry Port East Beach as bathing waters for the 2023 bathing season and what were their reasons/evidence to support their view.

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

Overview of Response Numbers and Respondent Type

The consultation received 190 responses. Of these, 183 were received via the online portal and a further 7 responses were received directly via email.

Respondent	Number of Responses
Individuals	165
Water company	1
Local Authority	1
Town Council/ local Councillor/Community Council	2
Professional Bodies	8
Local water using clubs and organisations	12
Non-government environmental body	1
Total	190

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 seven questions in relation to the proposed designations. These were:

Question 1: Do you agree or disagree with our proposal to designate Ogmore by Sea Beach as a bathing water for the 2023 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 Watch House Bay, Barry as a bathing water for the 2023 bathing season? What is your view on the proposal and your reason/evidence to support your view?

Question 3: Do you agree or disagree with our proposal to designate Burry Port West Beach as a bathing water for the 2023 bathing season? What is your view on the proposal and your reason/evidence to support your view?

Question 4: Do you agree or disagree with our proposal to designate Burry Port East Beach as a bathing water for the 2023 bathing season? What is your view on the proposal and your reason/evidence to support your view?

Question 5: 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 6: 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 7 - 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.

Consultation 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.
- 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 summarise the questions and the number of responses to the questions. A further detailed summary of the comments received for all of the questions is also provided.

Question 1: Do you agree or disagree with our proposal to designate Ogmore by Sea Beach as a bathing water for the 2023 bathing season? What is your view on the proposal and your reason/evidence to support your view?			
Number of respondents	Agree	Disagree	Neither or no opinion
125	112 (89.60%)	1 (0.80%)	12 (9.60%)

Question 2: Do you agree or disagree with our proposal to designate Watch House Bay, Barry as a bathing water for the 2023 bathing season? What is your view on the proposal and your reason/evidence to support your view?			
Number of respondents	Agree	Disagree	Neither or no opinion
153	142 (92.81%)	0 (0.00%)	11 (7.19%)

Question 3: Do you agree or disagree with our proposal to designate Burry Port West Beach as a bathing water for the 2023 bathing season? What is your view on the proposal and your reason/evidence to support your view?			
Number of respondents	Agree	Disagree	Neither or no opinion
139	122 (87.77%)	1 (0.72%)	16 (11.51%)

Question 4: Do you agree or disagree with our proposal to designate Burry Port East Beach as a bathing water for the 2023 bathing season? What is your view on the proposal and your reason/evidence to support your view?			
Number of respondents	Agree	Disagree	Neither or no opinion
135	117 (86.67%)	1 (0.74%)	17 (12.59%)

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			
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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?

Number of respondents	Narrative response
112	

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.

Number of respondents	Narrative response
84	

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:

Number of respondents	Narrative response
37	

Question 1

Do you agree or disagree with our proposal to designate Ogmores by Sea Beach as a bathing water for the 2023 bathing season? What is your view on the proposal and your reason/evidence to support your view?

There were 125 responses to question one, with 112 (89.60%) respondents saying they agreed with the proposal to designate Ogmores by Sea.

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

1 response disagreed with designation, citing inadequate parking for increased visitor numbers, and called for the impacts on wildlife and the environment to be further considered.

A large number of respondents identified Ogmores by Sea as a very busy and well used area for water-based activities, with regular swimming, dipping, paddle boarding, surfing, fishing and canoeing taking place at the site all year round, but particularly in the summer.

Several respondents identified the beach as particularly popular with families, children and the local community, as well as visitors of all ages. Some respondents identified themselves as daily swimmers at the site, with a high number regularly using the site for water-based activities.

A significant number of responses identified a broad range of health and wellbeing benefits from engaging in water-based activities at this site, particularly swimming. Some respondents highlighted that there has been a significant increase in water activities at this site since the COVID-19 pandemic, and it is also identified as a location used for cold water therapy.

There was also clear recognition in many responses of the valuable social opportunities water-based activities create. This was raised in particular by respondents who belong to swimming groups where they regular meet and have formed friendships through their shared enjoyment of swimming. The site and its water-based activities were also seen as contributing to a sense of community and providing a network of support.

It was also highlighted that there is a surf lifeguard club which operates from this beach and patrols it during some of the summer months. The club has nearly 300 members and provides training on a regular basis. It was also recognised that the Royal National Lifeboat Institution (RNLI) provide a valuable service at the site during part of the year.

The majority of respondents welcomed testing of the water quality at the site, identifying its importance to the health of water users and the need for provision of information about how clean the water is. Several respondents highlighted that designation of this site would mean regular water quality testing at Ogmore by Sea and give confidence to those using the site that it was safe.

Also noted was the presence of a sewage treatment works near to the beach. Several respondents also highlighted the need for information on pollution incidents as well as water quality to be available so they can make an informed decision about when to swim. Some responses said they would like to see water quality testing all year round.

Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water (DCWW) noted that a nearby wastewater treatment works already has a process to minimise the amount of bacteria in the effluent discharged through the use of an ultraviolet process, however further assessment of potential impacts on water quality of the area (including non-company sources) would be needed.

Question 2

Do you agree or disagree with our proposal to designate Watch House Bay, Barry as a bathing water for the 2023 bathing season? What is your view on the proposal and your reason/evidence to support your view?

There were 153 responses to question two, with 142 (92.81%) respondents saying they agreed with the proposal to designate.

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

No responses disagreed with the designation of Watch House Bay, Barry.

A high number of respondents identified Watch House Bay, Barry as a well-used site for swimming and water-based activities which is highly valued by the local community. Many respondents who are members of swimming groups said they use the site all year round and provided significantly high figures of participation in swimming at the site on a regular basis.

A high number of respondents advised they take part in, and have witnessed, a wide range of water-based activities at the site, including swimming, dipping, paddle boarding, surfing, kayaking, rowing and canoeing.

Responses also identified this site as well used by local families and children and by various water activity based groups on a regular basis who are made up of a wide age range. It was reported that it was not unusual to see hundreds in attendance at the beach and in the water on some days.

A high number of respondents raised the importance of Watch House Bay in terms of providing mental, wellbeing and physical health benefits, with cold water therapy also being practiced at the site. The site and the water activities undertaken there was also seen as connecting people to nature and encourages friendship and combats loneliness.

Also highlighted in some responses was that participating in swimming at the site is free and can be enjoyed by locals and visitors alike.

Regularly water quality testing at the site was seen as not only benefiting people who use the site for water-based activities, but also provided benefits to wildlife and identified the potential for the site to become a wildlife asset for the town and visitors to the Bay, broadening recreational opportunities. It was also noted that cleaner beaches and water would benefit tourism and provide local economic benefits.

Some respondents said they would also like to see more and improved facilities at the site for visitors, such as toilets and parking.

Some respondents raised concerns about motorised water sport at the Bay. Others raised concerns about the impact of sewage entering the bay area, especially during periods of heavy rainfall, and felt that regular water quality testing and monitoring as part of the designation process will help alleviate water users concerns and should lead to improvements. Designation of the site and subsequent testing was seen as way to let swimmers know when it was not safe to swim.

DCWW noted that this site is within a heavily urbanised area and while significant investment has taken place in this area in recent years, discharges from wastewater assets are likely to be a main source of bacteria.

Question 3

Do you agree or disagree with our proposal to designate Burry Port West Beach as a bathing water for the 2023 bathing season? What is your view on the proposal and your reason/evidence to support your view?

There were 139 responses to question three with 122 respondents (87.77%) saying they agreed with the proposal to designate Burry Port West Beach.

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

1 response was against designation with concerns of safety and potentially poor water quality at times.

A significant number of responses provided detailed examples of individual, family, and groups that use the site for swimming, paddle boarding and other water-based activities. Many responses also reported having witnessed hundreds of swimmers, paddle boarders and other water and beach users during the summer of 2022. The beach was identified by many responses as a site that attracted families, locals, visitors and people of all ages.

There were a number of responses from representatives of local swimming groups that regularly swim at Burry Port West Beach. Many of these responses recognised the valuable social opportunities created by regularly meeting with others and forming friendships through their shared enjoyment of swimming. The site and its water-based activities were also seen as contributing to a sense of community and providing a network of support.

Many responses raised the importance of Burry Port West Beach as a valued 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.

A significant number 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 number of responses also emphasised the need to protect beaches from sewage discharges and other forms of pollution.

A high number of responses identified the important contribution which outdoor swimming has on improving peoples' well-being and physical and mental health. Many of these responses specifically noted the well-being and health benefits provided by swimming at Burry Port West Beach in the last few years during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Carmarthenshire County Council raised safety concerns at Burry Port West Beach, as there have been incidents of people getting trapped on the sandbank due to strong currents and the fast change of tide. They have noted that designation may increase the risk to safety as it may encourage the uptake of swimming in an area with known safety hazards. RNLI has similarly raised safety concerns, noting that the location causes about 25% of Burry Port lifeboat launches each year as a result of the rapid flood of incoming tide. Carmarthenshire County Council works in partnership with a number of agencies, including RNLI, Cardiff Marine Group and

HM Coastguard, on communicating these hazards at Burry Port West Beach. This includes improved signage to all beach access locations, leaflet drops to local holiday parks, businesses and leisure facilities, and a recurring social media campaign that features a time lapse.

DCWW believe their assets will have minimal impact on the bathing water quality at Burry port West Beach and that any potential bacterial pollution at this site is likely to be from other sources such as agricultural pollution and poorly managed septic tanks.

Question 4

Do you agree or disagree with our proposal to designate Burry Port West Beach as a bathing water for the 2023 bathing season? What is your view on the proposal and your reason/evidence to support your view?

There were 135 responses to question four with 117 respondents (86.67%) saying they agreed with the proposal to designate Burry Port East Beach.

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

1 response was against designation with concerns of safety and potentially poor water quality at times.

A significant number of responses provided detailed examples of individual, family, and groups that use the site for swimming, paddle boarding and other water-based activities. There were a number of responses from representatives of local swimming groups that regularly swim at Burry Port East Beach.

Many responses also reported having witnessed many swimmers, paddle boarders and other water and beach users during the summer of 2022. The beach was identified by many responses as a site that attracted families, locals, visitors and people of all ages.

Some responses raised the importance of Burry Port East Beach as a valued natural environment to enjoy the outdoors, with adequate parking and facilities nearby. Designation was also seen as a way to support local businesses and tourism.

A significant number of responses raised the importance of water quality testing and monitoring at the site so that people are able to make informed decisions about swimming in the area. A number of responses also emphasised the need to protect our beaches from sewage discharges and other forms of pollution.

Many responses identified the important contribution which swimming has on improving peoples' well-being and physical and mental health. Many of these responses specifically noted the well-being and health benefits provided by

swimming at Burry Port East Beach in the last few years during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Carmarthenshire County Council raised concerns at Burry Port East Beach regarding the strong currents which pose a safety risk, and the potential for poor water quality. The beach is also in close proximity to the Burry Port Harbour entrance, which is used for leisure craft and commercial fishing. Similar to Burry Port West Beach, Carmarthenshire County Council communicates the safety hazards to members of the public via signage, leaflet drops and social media.

RNLI has also raised a potential safety risk associated with access to the site via the two slipways. The outer slipway is used by the public to launch small boats and jet skis, while the inner slipway is the secondary launch location for both of Burry Port's lifeboats to any emergency at sea. They have noted a potential heightened safety risk from boating activity if there is an increase in bathing numbers due to designation.

DCWW believe their assets will have minimal impact on the bathing water quality at Burry Port West Beach and that any potential bacterial pollution at this site is likely to be from other sources such as agricultural pollution and poorly managed septic tanks.

Question 5 & 6

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?

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 members of the public enjoy and support 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.

Responders noted the use of the language in our communities as the language of those living in the locality, and as an opportunity to promote Wales and our language to visitors. The use of 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 of 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 7

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 four named beaches, a number of responses were generally supportive of the designation of as many beaches as possible in Wales. Some responses made particular reference to the rising popularity of wild swimming and the benefits it offers to mental and physical health and well-being.

Swim Wales highlighted the new “Safe Aquatic Facility Endorsement (S.A.F.E) Cymru” accreditation to support bathing water designations, which has been developed with key partners to promote safe aquatic facility standards. For all proposals, Swim Wales encouraged further consultation with the local community and from safety experts regarding potential water safety risks.

Some responses highlighted a need to increase accessibility at bathing waters for people with disabilities in order to ensure everyone has the opportunity to reap the benefits provided by these sites.

A number of respondents also commented on the need to address sewage discharges on beaches and other forms of pollution that can have an impact of bathing water quality.

Government Response

Consultation outcome

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.

Following full consideration of all responses received and information and evidence provided, the Welsh Ministers are satisfied that Ogmore by Sea Beach and Watch House Bay, have met the criteria as set out in the Bathing Water Regulations 2013. **Therefore, the Welsh Ministers have taken the decision to identify Ogmore by Sea Beach and Watch House Bay as bathing waters for the 2023 bathing season.**

While the Welsh Ministers believe that there is appropriate evidence on the number of bathers at Burry Port West Beach and Burry Port East Beach, there are concerns regarding the safety at these sites due to the strong currents and the rapid change of tide. **Therefore, the Welsh Ministers have taken the decision to postpone the designation of Burry Port West Beach and Burry Port East Beach as bathing waters until the safety concerns are mitigated.**

The Welsh Government will take this opportunity to work closely with Carmarthenshire County Council and safety experts to gain a greater understanding of the safety hazards at these sites and identify improvements to ensure the necessary safety precautions are in place. The Welsh Government is committed to keeping our communities safe around water, and urges everyone to make sure they enjoy our waters safely and responsibly.

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

NRW has responsibility for monitoring bathing water quality at designated bathing water sites in Wales. Where a surface water is designated as a bathing water, NRW 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.

Next Steps

We will advise NRW of the Welsh Ministers' decision to identify Ogmore by Sea Beach and Watch House Bay as designated bathing waters and ask them to prepare a bathing water profile and to keep the profile under review.

We will also advise NRW of the Welsh Ministers' decision to postpone the designation of Burry Port West Beach and Burry Port East Beach as bathing waters until safety concerns are mitigated.

The Welsh Government would like to thank those who responded to the consultation on the 'Bathing Waters Review Wales 2023'.

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.

- DCWW
- RNLI
- Carmarthenshire County Council
- Swim Wales
- Jackson's Bay Surf Lifesaving Club
- Llantwit Lifeguards Surf Lifesaving Club
- St Brides Southerndown and Ogmere by Sea Community Council
- Pembrey and Burry Port Resilient Community Forum
- Surf Lifesaving Wales
- Barry and Vale Green Party
- Surfers Against Sewage
- A number of individual responses from members of a number of open swimming clubs