



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

**Number:** [WG53895](#)

Welsh Government

Consultation – summary of responses

Bathing waters: Consultation on the identification of Fontygary Bay, Rhoose (Vale of Glamorgan) as a bathing water and extending the bathing season in Wales.

March 2026

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

This document contains responses to Consultation reference WG53895:

The Welsh Government consulted on two bathing water elements: a proposal to designate Fontygary Bay, Rhose as a bathing water under the Bathing Water Regulations 2013, and whether the national bathing season in Wales should be extended by two weeks to begin on 1 May rather than 15 May. The consultation ran from 15 December 2025 to 26 January 2026.

Respondents were asked whether they supported the proposed designation of Fontygary Bay, Rhose for the 2026 bathing season and to provide any evidence or reasoning. This proposal is considered under the 2013 Bathing Water Regulations as these regulations are in force until the 31 March 2026.

They were also asked whether they agreed with the proposal to extend the national bathing season to start on 1 May instead of 15 May. This is considered in the context of the Bathing Water (Amendment) (England and Wales) Regulations 2025 which will come into force in Wales on the 1 April 2026.

This document summarises the responses received to this consultation and explains how the Welsh Government has considered them. It does not comment on individual submissions.

### Context of bathing water designation

The purpose of the Bathing Water Regulations is to protect public health through monitoring and classifying bathing water quality. Designated bathing waters are monitored by Natural Resources Wales (NRW) during each bathing season for *Escherichia coli* and *Intestinal enterococci*, two bacteria that pose a risk to human health.

At the end of each bathing season, sites are classified based on their monitoring results as excellent, good, sufficient, or poor. Throughout the season, NRW publishes bathing water quality monitoring results on its website. This enables bathers to understand the water quality they may encounter, make informed decisions about where to swim, and identify areas where improvements in water quality are needed.

### Context of bathing water season consultation:

Following the coming into force of the Bathing Water (Amendment) (England and Wales) Regulations 2025, Welsh Ministers will have the authority to set either a national or site-specific bathing season.

### 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 responses 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: [Bathing Water Designation 2026 | GOV.WALES](#)

## Contents

<b>Introduction</b> .....	4
<b>Summary of Responses to consultation:</b> .....	4
Fontygary Bay .....	5
Other related issues .....	5
Public views on extending the bathing season .....	6
View on the impact on Welsh Language .....	6
<b>Government Response</b> .....	6
Next Steps.....	7
Annex A – List of Responding Organisations .....	8

## Introduction

This document summarises responses to the Welsh Government’s consultation on designating Fontygary Bay, Rhoose as a bathing water and on extending the national bathing season from 1 May to 30 September (previously starting on 15 May). It also outlines the Welsh Government’s response and intended next steps.

Respondents were asked whether they agreed with the proposed designation, to provide supporting evidence, and to offer views on extending the bathing season.

## Summary of Responses to consultation:

The consultation received 115 responses. Of these, 113 were received via the online portal and a further 2 responses were received directly via email.

<b>Respondent</b>	<b>Number of Responses</b>
Individuals	109
Regulators	1
Water companies	1
Town Council/ local Councillor/Community Council	1
Professional Bodies	
Local water using clubs and organisations	1
Non-government environmental body	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>115</b>

\*A full list of responding organisations is included at Annex A

A thematic analysis identified the following overarching themes:

- Strong public support for designation of Fontygary Bay.

- High and year-round recreational use
- Public health, safety and water-quality benefits
- Calls for improved or year-round monitoring
- Minor concerns about access and infrastructure
- Broad support for extending the bathing season
- No significant Welsh-language impacts; preference for bilingual signage

### Fontygary Bay

Most respondents agreed that the consultation evidence accurately reflected actual use of Fontygary Bay. The survey findings were considered to correspond well with local experience, including regular summer bathing, year-round dip groups, the activities of Rhoose Lifeguard Club, and consistent use by residents and visitors from the nearby caravan park.

Respondents noted that established access points, visible signage and active community use provide further support for designation.

Only one respondent clearly opposed designation raising access and safety grounds, and one raised concerns about the increasing sewage without opposing the proposal overall; these comments did not alter the strong evidence of frequent and sustained use.

The responses provide a coherent, consistent, and well-supported picture of high and regular bather activity during the bathing season. The evidence base confirms that the site meets the regulatory criterion for designation and that the consultation findings accurately reflect real-world activity at the location.

### Other related issues

Most respondents did not raise any additional issues beyond those already covered in earlier questions, often indicating “none” or offering general support for the proposal. Among those who provided further comments, several themes emerged. Many respondents highlighted that bathing and wider water-based recreation take place throughout the year and encouraged Welsh Government to consider reflecting this usage in future monitoring arrangements. Several respondents emphasised that water users other than swimmers, including surfers, paddleboarders, kayakers and surf lifesavers, are affected by water quality and should be recognised within the wider context of policy and environmental management.

Concerns were also expressed about water quality along parts of the South Wales coast, with several respondents calling for more frequent or more robust monitoring to protect both public health and the marine environment. Specific comments highlighted the presence of two water company assets near Fontygary Bay, noting that no information is available on whether these assets have any impact on water quality at the site.

A number of respondents raised site-specific issues, including slippery rocks, hazardous steps, and an interest in improved or extended railings. Practical matters—such as a lack of bins and associated litter problems—were also mentioned.

Overall, these comments reinforce a wider public interest in enhanced monitoring, improved safety measures, and better environmental upkeep.

#### Public views on extending the bathing season

There was clear and substantial support for extending the national bathing season to begin on 1 May. Only one respondent objected to the proposal, with a small number expressing uncertainty. Respondents noted that many water-based activities take place before mid-May, including sea swimming, cold-water dipping, surfing and paddle sports, often driven by early warm weather, changing seasonal patterns and increasing year-round participation. Many felt that extending the season more accurately reflects how coastal waters are used and provides additional public-health benefits through earlier monitoring and clearer information.

A significant number of respondents supported the change as a positive step that could, in future, form part of broader or more continuous monitoring arrangements. Some respondents noted operational considerations, such as lifeguard provision or sampling schedules. Those who were unsure about the proposal mainly sought clarification on practical implications, such as dog-access rules rather than expressing outright opposition.

The overall response demonstrated a strong consensus that extending the bathing season is appropriate, evidence-based and aligned with current patterns of water use.

Concerns were raised about whether current sampling frequencies and overall sampling capacity are sufficient to ensure representative and reliable results, and how any changes to the bathing season could influence bathing-water classifications. It was also noted that any extension would need to align with wider regulatory requirements, including asset permits, performance metrics and associated funding.

#### View on the impact on Welsh Language

Most respondents did not identify any effect of the proposals on the Welsh language. Among those who commented, the majority stated that the proposals would have no impact. A widely expressed view was that bilingual signage and information should be provided, supporting visibility of Welsh without disadvantaging English-speaking users. A small number of respondents supported promoting Welsh as part of local heritage, while only a few felt that bilingual provision could be inconvenient or costly. Overall, no negative impacts were identified, and there is potential for modest positive effects through bilingual communication.

### **Government Response**

The decision whether to designate Fontygary Bay will be made under the current Regulations. That is the 2013 Bathing Water Regulations as these regulations are in force until the 31 March 2026.

In considering whether to designate a bathing water, the Bathing Water Regulations 2013 require the Welsh Government to assess whether there is an expectation of a

large number of bathers. This assessment is informed by survey evidence of current use, views provided through public consultation, together with consideration of historical patterns of use, available infrastructure, and any measures intended to promote bathing. Each proposed site has been assessed on its own merits against these criteria.

Some respondents raised issues outside the scope of the Regulations, relating to broader environmental concerns, water quality, and site-specific safety matters. While these issues are important, they fall within other legislative and regulatory frameworks, which remain unaffected by the bathing water designation process.

The consultation evidence provides sufficient support that Fontygary Bay, Rhoose, Vale of Glamorgan attracts a large number of bathers within the meaning of the Regulations. Welsh Ministers have therefore decided to designate the site as a bathing water for the 2026 bathing season.

Bathing season arrangements have been considered separately, in the context of the Bathing Water (Amendment) (England and Wales) Regulations 2025, which will come into force in Wales on 1 April 2026. Consultation responses demonstrated strong support for extending the start of the Welsh bathing season to 1 May, with the majority of respondents in favour. Reasons provided reflected established patterns of coastal water use. On this basis Welsh Ministers have concluded that a bathing season running from 1 May to 30 September is proportionate, justified, and supported by the evidence.

### Next Steps

Welsh Ministers will inform Natural Resources Wales (NRW) of the decision to designate Fontygary Bay as a bathing water for the 2026 bathing season and will ask NRW to prepare the required bathing water profile. NRW will also establish a monitoring programme for the site, with sampling commencing from May 2026.

The bathing water profile will describe each site and its surrounding catchment. They will identify the rivers and streams that feed into the bathing waters, outline potential sources of pollution and the measures in place to manage them, and provide information on compliance with bathing water quality standards. NRW will work collaboratively with partners, including water companies, the agricultural sector and local authorities, to identify and address any water quality issues.

During the bathing season, the relevant local authority must ensure that detailed information about each bathing water is displayed in an accessible location near the site. This must include up to date monitoring results and any public health information required under the Regulations.

The designation of a bathing water will not amend, alter or supersede any existing legal protections, obligations or regulatory requirements. This includes, but is not limited to, relevant environmental, conservation and land use legislation, ensuring that current legal standards, duties and obligations remain fully in effect. Additionally, any existing responsibilities of private and public individuals, entities and corporate

bodies, as established under applicable law, will remain unchanged by the designation.

The bathing season in Wales will be extended by two weeks, starting on 1 May 2026. Communications will be prepared to ensure that the public and stakeholders are informed of this change.

Officials note that a number of respondents suggested that the bathing season should take an evidence based approach and consider further extension.

#### Annex A – List of Responding Organisations

This list of responding organisations is not exhaustive and includes only those that chose to declare an organisational affiliation. Some responses may have been submitted by individuals who are members of these organisations and therefore may not represent the organisation's official position. The list also excludes respondents who requested confidentiality or did not provide an organisation name.

- Rhoose Lifeguards
- Surfers Against Sewage
- Swansea Council Pollution Control Team
- Barry & Vale FoE
- Natural Resources Wales
- Dwr Cymru Welsh Water
- A number of individual responses