

Report to:	TOURISM, ECONOMY AND COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
Relevant Officer:	Clare Nolan- Barnes, Head of Coastal and Environmental Partnership Investments
Date of Meeting:	3 February2021

BATHING WATER QUALITY ANNUAL REPORT

1.0 Purpose of the report:

- 1.1 To provide a basis for the Committee to consider the delivery of the Council’s statutory and other duties in respect of bathing water management. The report will provide a brief outline of the various statutory duties including statistics and highlights areas of challenge and concerns and information on the work of LoveMyBeach and Turning Tides.

2.0 Recommendation(s):

- 2.1 To scrutinise the delivery of the Council’s statutory and other responsibilities in relation to bathing water management, note the performance and highlight any areas for further scrutiny.

3.0 Reasons for recommendation(s):

- 3.1 To ensure constructive and robust scrutiny of the report and provide confirmation that the Council is delivering its statutory duties and other responsible duties and actions in respect of bathing water management.

3.2a Is the recommendation contrary to a plan or strategy adopted or approved by the Council? No

3.2b Is the recommendation in accordance with the Council’s approved budget? Yes

3.3 Other alternative options to be considered:

None

4.0 Council Priority:

4.1 The relevant Council Priority is:

“The economy: Maximising growth and opportunity across Blackpool”

5.0 Background Information

5.1 The Council has statutory duties as set out in the Bathing Water Directive 2006 (BWD) implemented through the Bathing Water Regulations 2013 (BWR) in respect of its four bathing waters which are, Blackpool South, Blackpool Central, Blackpool North and Bispham.

5.2 Following the completion of Bathing Water Management Scrutiny Review in 2013, the Scrutiny Committee is to receive a report on an annual basis, relating to progress on its bathing waters.

5.3 Statutory Duties

5.3.1 The BWR requires Blackpool Council to erect signage at all its bathing waters providing specific details of the bathing water, the quality of the water and any links for the public to enquire at any time during the bathing season about the quality of the water. In addition, the BWD set stricter standards to be adhered to in respect of bathing waters quality compared to previous directives. These stricter standards were imposed following the 2015 bathing season. Blackpool Council responded to the challenges by forming a partnership with Wyre, Fylde and Lancashire County Councils, the Environment Agency United Utilities and Keep Britain Tidy to take collective and collaborative action to ensure our Fylde Peninsula Bathing Waters are the best quality possible and meet the stricter standards directed by the BWD.

In addition to forming a local partnership, Blackpool also embraced a regional approach to improving bathing waters via the Turning Tides Partnership

5.4 Budget Information

5.4.1 There is no official funding for the delivery of our statutory duties under the BWR. However, the Council works proactively with its partner organisations in particular the Environment Agency and United Utilities to ensure that any available funding to deliver projects or campaigns is explored. Since 2011, Blackpool Council has been successful in obtaining £160,000 from its partner organisations to ensure that Blackpool and its neighbouring authorities comply with its duties and is proactive in delivery of projects to meet the higher standards set out in the BWD 2006. Unfortunately for since 2017 no further funding has been provided to Blackpool in respect of carrying out its Bathing water statutory duties.

6.0 Statutory Duty

6.1.1 Blackpool Council has consistently complied with its duty to erect signage at its four bathing waters, Blackpool South, Blackpool Central Blackpool North and Bispham. The signage provides the relevant information about the sampling point which is used by the Environment Agency when they sample. To date, the Council has not received any adverse comments from the Environment Agency regarding its statutory signage.

6.1.2 In addition, Blackpool Council has responded to pollution risk forecasting in order to advise the public against bathing if there is likely to be increased pollution at a bathing water on a set day.

6.2 What has changed

6.2.1 Bathing water predictions in 2011

6.2.2 In 2011, it was predicted that seven of the eight bathing waters along the Fylde Peninsula would be poor at the end of the 2015 bathing water season, which would have meant having to erect signage advising against bathing.

6.2.3 In order to ensure Blackpool Council and its partners achieved the best possible results, the Fylde Peninsula Water Management Partnership was formed and the Turning Tides Regional Partnership was formed, as it was recognised that more could be achieved to ensure the messages and campaigns to improve bathing waters by working with the wider region.

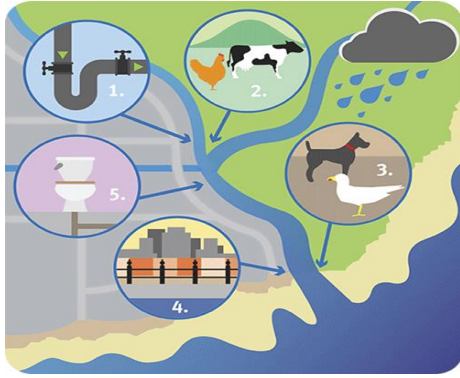
6.3 Governance

6.3.1 The original Governance for the partnerships set up to improve bathing waters and promote the benefits of the beach and bathing waters is detailed at Appendix 8(a). During 2021 the Fylde Peninsula Partnership will review the communications and action plan to continue to improve bathing waters.

6.4 Challenges

6.4.1 The most significant challenges to bathing waters are described below in respect of source pollution, however Blackpool also needs to provide the resources to work in partnership and expand the knowledge base.

In respect of the latter, during 2020 officers will be trained and upskilled to continue the work to maintain bathing water standards



6.5 Source pollution

- 6.5.1 Outfall sewers – United Utilities have invested in providing long sea outfalls in the South of Blackpool at Harrowside and at Anchorsholme in the North and the impact of this change continues to be monitored. United Utilities have been asked to provide an update on the impact of this investment.
- 6.5.2 Animals – animal waste in particularly from areas of salt marsh grazing on the river Ribble are regularly reported and the council erects warning signs to prevent bathing during this type of pollution risk forecast. This will continue to be a challenge in maintaining standards.
- 6.5.3 Dogs and Birds – Work has continued to monitor the impact of pollution from dogs and birds. Public space protection orders are in place during the bathing season. In respect of birds, Blackpool was asked to explore the impact of the starlings and this exercise found that because of the relationship with starlings presence and the bathing season they have little impact as a source of pollution. Gulls however do present a pollution risk to bathing waters.
- 6.5.4 Surface water run off continues to be monitored by Blackpool and the Environment Agency as a source of pollution. This is a challenge particularly during busy periods.
- 6.5.5 Misconnections – Blackpool together with its partners the Environment Agency and United Utilities continue to investigate and enforce on any misconnections or pollution directly to sea from piped sources.

6.6 Turning Tides

- 6.6.1 Since 2012 £800,000 has been invested into Turning Tides and the associated LOVEmyBEACH campaigns by United Utilities and the Environment Agency. This has resulted in a fully collaborative approach from stakeholders to improve the regions bathing waters. The investment continued in 2020 despite the restrictions.

- 6.6.2 The Authorities in the North west are utilising the expertise of Blackpool’s public health department to promote an active coast, this will continue in 2020.
- 6.6.3 The vision and future for turning tides continues as described in the Partnership Evolution below.



6.6.4 LOVEmyBEACH and Fylde BeachCare

The LOVEmyBEACH campaign is managed by Keep Britain Tidy and supported by all local authorities across the North West coast.

Fylde BeachCare is the 'on the ground' element of LOVEmyBEACH; advising groups within the community how they can assist with positive changes to bathing water quality and beach cleanliness. This service links in with Blackpool’s street and beach cleaning services and beach patrol.

6.7 Results at the end of 2020

- 6.7.1 As a result of the Covid -19 pandemic, the Environment Agency were unable to take the mandatory samples they usually take prior to the bathing water season commencing in mid May 2020 and that are required during the 2020 bathing season

to provide the classification as described by the bathing water directive. Some samples were taken at priority bathing waters, but this was limited to Blackpool North.

- 6.7.2 The Environment Agency announced in November 2020 that they would use the 2019 results to classify the 2020 bathing waters which means that there is no change to the results previously report for the four Blackpool bathing waters.

6.8 Short Term Pollution and pollution Risk Forecasting

- 6.8.1 Whilst Blackpool Council were aware that sampling was not being taken during the 2020 bathing season, the Council continued to apply short term pollution signage at bathing waters when rainfall is expected to be heavy potentially reducing the bathing water quality for short timescales. The advantage is that the public receive additional advice about quality and results can be discounted for providing this advice.

- 6.8.2 Blackpool Council continued to apply pollution risk forecasting signage at bathing waters when pollution events were expected or known to potentially reduce bathing water quality. In normal circumstances results can be discounted for providing this advice, however as reported above sampling was suspended during 2020. It was important to continue to advise to provide the health advice to bathers.

6.9 Awards

- 6.9.1 The results from the 2020 bathing water season mean that Blackpool have again been able to apply for Seaside Awards for Blackpool Central, Blackpool North and Bispham.

Does the information submitted include any exempt information? No

List of Appendices:

Appendix 8(a) – Partnerships Governance Arrangements

7.0 Legal considerations:

- 7.1 None

8.0 Human Resources considerations:

- 8.1 Blackpool Council needs to retain the expertise and resource to deliver the statutory duties in respect of bathing waters and ensure it works with its partners in developing and implementing the action plan to maintain the quality of the bathing

water. The expertise in this area needs to be expanded and include upskilling officers so that the Council remains resilient.

9.0 Equalities considerations:

9.1 None

10.0 Financial considerations:

10.1 Funding by partners to Blackpool Council and the Turning Tides Partnership is required to ensure standards continue to be met and campaigns to raise awareness.

11.0 Risk management considerations:

11.1 Failure to implement the statutory duties could lead to action from the Environment Agency against Blackpool Council and failure of the bathing water standards resulting in Blackpool having to erect signs advising residents and visitors against bathing in our waters.

12.0 Ethical considerations:

12.1 None

13.0 Sustainability, climate change and environmental considerations:

The Council is working with partners, such as part of the Turning Tides Partnership, to ensure bathing water quality and their sustainability.

14.0 Internal/ External Consultation undertaken:

14.1 Blackpool Council chairs both the Turning Tides Partnership and the Fylde Peninsula Water Management Partnership and are now the lead representatives for the Local Government Association (LGA) Coastal Special Interest Group (SIG) at the National Bathing Waters communications forum.

15.0 Background papers:

15.1 None