

# EXECUTIVE BOARD

## 23<sup>RD</sup> OCTOBER, 2017

### MONITORING BATHING WATER IN CARMARTHENSHIRE

#### RECOMMENDATIONS / KEY DECISIONS REQUIRED:

- 1.1. The current monitoring programme ceases with the exception of monitoring of the quality of water in North Dock, Llanelli.
- 1.2. Review the current warning signs to ensure that they are accurate, appropriate and clearly signpost the public to the official designated bathing beaches in Carmarthenshire.

#### REASONS:

1. In accordance with approval from Executive Board Member in April 2010, the only non-designated beaches that are currently being sampled are Burry Port East beach and North Dock, Llanelli. Sampling/monitoring of the designated bathing beaches is the responsibility of the Natural Resources Wales.
2. Whilst the Authority has a responsibility to safeguard public health, bathing water sampling is not a statutory function.
3. North Dock is promoted by the Authority for water based activities. We will continue to monitor the water quality, which historically has been of good standard, in order to support the promotion of its use.
4. The Authority currently has signage in a number of areas where there are known bathers. The current signs warn of potential dangers of strong currents and to advise the washing of hands when leaving the beach. Appropriate signage will identify where the designated bathing waters are situated in Carmarthenshire.

**Relevant scrutiny committee to be consulted : NO**

**Exec Board Decision Required YES**

**Council Decision Required NO**

#### Executive Board Member Portfolio Holder:

Cllr. P. Hughes (Public Protection Portfolio Holder)

<b>Directorate</b> <b>Communities</b> <b>Name of Head of Service:</b> <b>Robin Staines</b> <b>Report Author:</b> <b>Sue Watts</b>	<b>Designations:</b> <b>Head of Housing, Public Protection and Provider Services</b> <b>Environmental Protection Manager</b>	<b>Tel Nos.</b> <b>E Mail Addresses:</b> 01267 228960 <a href="mailto:RStaines@carmarthenshire.gov.uk">RStaines@carmarthenshire.gov.uk</a> 01267 228929 <a href="mailto:sewatts@carmarthenshire.gov.uk">sewatts@carmarthenshire.gov.uk</a>
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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## EXECUTIVE BOARD

### 23<sup>RD</sup> OCTOBER, 2017

## MONITORING BATHING WATER IN CARMARTHENSHIRE

### Background

A motion was passed in the former Council on the 15<sup>th</sup> February 2017 in regards to bathing waters in Carmarthenshire. The motion included;

*“Carmarthenshire County Council confirms its commitment to public health and the safety of bathers and beach users in areas where there may be risks of contaminated water. In order to improve the current service we aim in future to not only test designated bathing beaches, but also other beaches used by the public where there is any suspicion of poor water quality. In future there should be monitoring of selected non designated beaches in the swimming season. Specifically we will monitor those next to bathing beaches which produce high readings of bacteria and also non designated bathing beaches which have had high readings of bacteria previously. In essence, beaches in public use with any health risk should be treated the same as bathing beaches for monitoring purposes where suspicion of contamination arises.”*

This report will outline the current requirements in attaining a quality ‘designated bathing beach’ and comments for consideration when undertaking a review of the current monitoring programme.

### Context

There are currently two designated bathing beaches in Carmarthenshire namely Pendine and Pembrey. These are monitored (including sampled) weekly from May through September, as required, by the Natural Resources Wales.

Any beach or inland water used by a large number of bathers can be designated as a bathing water, provided it meets the criteria for designation. The following topics would be required to be supported by evidence in such an application including:

- **User survey** – minimum of 20 days between 15 May and 30 September at times when peak usage would be expected. There is no set number of bathers because bathing water may be a beach in a large resort or a smaller site and each may attract a number of bathers proportionate to its size.
- **Facilities** – for examples public toilets, changing facilities, parking, lifeguards, first aid service, café, shop or kiosks and such.
- **Local consultation** – provide evidence of consultation during the bathing season with local groups and organisations that may be affected by designation of a bathing beach.
- **Evidence that bathing is encouraged** – warning signs against swimming (for example strong currents) will be a major factor in the decision.

- **Evidence of water quality.** This will also take into account previous sampling results if any, knowledge on the water course, outcomes following rainfall, tidal effects and such.
- **Bathing water profile.** There is a requirement to provide the public with regular updates of water quality and any abnormal situations which may affect water quality for designated beaches.

For beaches that are not designated but are promoted for bathing, good practice includes regular updates on water quality. The updates must be clear on each applicable site that is promoted for bathing. This has the potential of being resource intensive and difficult to monitor in some areas as the quality may vary considerably following rainfall, tidal effects and such.

In accordance with approval from Executive Board Member in April 2010, the only non-designated beaches that are currently being sampled are Burry Port East beach and North Dock, Llanelli.

In addition to the above sites, there are at least eight further undesignated coastal beaches in Carmarthenshire. There are also potentially many more areas used for bathing including an unknown number of riverside spots. The resource required to implement this motion is, therefore unquantified at this time.

## **Review of current provision.**

The Authority must have regard to its responsibilities to protect public safety and health when considering future reviews of monitoring bathing waters by means of sampling. It would be misleading for the public if the Authority undertakes sampling in waters that are known to have inconsistent water quality.

To illustrate this, we are already aware that after high tides and periods of heavy rainfall the water quality does deteriorate in the Burry Inlet. The Waterbody Action Report also identifies that agricultural land management practices are considered to be the primary source of diffuse pollutants impacting on the water quality within the estuary.

In addition to this, testing the water only gives a snapshot of the water quality at that particular time. In light of the fact that laboratory testing takes a minimum of 48 hours, results from any testing only relates to the water from days before. The water quality can change so quickly in the estuary it could be considered that any results posted could be misleading to the public.

With this in mind, the Authority must consider what consequences there would be on (regular) poor sampling results including;

- Possible effects on the public that were bathing in the contaminated water at the time of sampling;
- Conveying (likely) regular messages from the Authority highlighting the poor quality of the results following the sampling;
- Follow – up sampling which would require additional resources
- As highlighted earlier, good practice includes regular updates on water quality. The regular updates must be clear on each applicable site that is promoted for bathing. This has the potential of being resource intensive and difficult to monitor in some areas as the quality may vary considerably following rainfall, tidal effects and such.

By embarking on such a sampling regime, the Authority must be mindful that this would be relaying a false message of safety in some situations.

### Current sampling

As part of this review, the appropriateness of the current sampling has been taken into account :

#### ***North Dock***

It is recommended that sampling be continued in light of the following fact;

- that the water is not part of the Estuary
- The water is promoted by the Authority for water activities

#### ***Burry Inlet***

It is recommended that the sampling cease taking into account the following facts:

- Although the Authority does not promote swimming at the East Beach at Burry Port, it is used by a small number of open water swimmers.
- The beach is also popular with the general public during the summer.
- Signage is provided advising no swimming in the area. The Authority is in the process of installing marker buoys in a triangular area as a demarcation zone to prevent motorised craft (such as jet skis) from going too close to the shore.

### Current warning signs

The Authority currently has warning signs in areas known to be used by bathers. The signs generally highlight the potential dangers and warn against swimming. It is recommended that the Authority review the current warning signs to ensure that they are accurate, appropriate and clearly signpost the public to the official designated bathing beaches in Carmarthenshire

## **Conclusion**

In light of the motion, given careful consideration of the information above, the following are options available for consideration;

### Option1

Continue with the current sampling programme (i.e. East Beach at Burry Port and North Dock). Whilst the Authority does promote the North Dock for water events, it does not promote bathing at East Beach. In addition, the water quality may be affected by the tides/weather conditions as highlighted in the above report.

### Option 2

Reduce the current sampling programme to include North Dock only. In addition, it is recommended that the Authority review the current warning signs to ensure that they are accurate, appropriate and clearly signpost public to the official designated bathing beaches in Carmarthenshire. This is the preferred option as North Dock is promoted for water events within the County. Furthermore, the water is not affected by tides or adverse weather conditions.

### Option 3

Increase the sampling programme to include potential 'bathing' beaches that are not currently designated. It is suggested that these would include the following 8 beaches; Llanelli Beach, Burry Port Harbour, Carmarthen Bay, St Ishmaels, Ferryside, Llanstephan, Morfa Bychan and Telpin.

This is the least preferred option for the following reasons:

- a) Sampling is carried out at high tide and the sampling season involves weekly samples from the beginning of May to end September (approximately 20 weeks). Due to the geography of the County and the times required to ensure that the samples were received by the laboratory within required timeframes, it is estimated that this would take a minimum of two full days per week during the sampling season. Given this, it is estimated that the basic cost would be approximately £12,600. In addition to this, the team would also be responsible for any follow up action in the event of adverse readings. This could include press releases, preparing and placing appropriate signage in applicable areas, responding to queries, follow-up sampling (in addition to the weekly sampling). It is estimated that this could involve an officer spending on average one day a week based on historical information of the water quality. This is in addition to the time spent on the sampling programme which would therefore increase the estimated costs to approximately £19,000 (minimum).
- b) This does not take into account other inland 'bathing' areas within the County such as rivers, lakes etc. It is unknown at this point how many that would include and where they are. Costing the sampling programme therefore at this point would not be possible;
- c) This is not a statutory function;
- d) The Authority may 'appear' to be promoting all said beaches by sampling and therefore 'misleading' the public. Furthermore, sampling of the water will give 'mixed messages' to the public with regards to safety as there are warning signs present in many of the above sites identifying that there are strong currents, sandbanks, mud flats etc and suggesting that there be no swimming;
- e) There is a risk that in all likelihood, there will be a high frequency of poor bacterial results which, when publicised regularly, would not reflect well on the County particularly from a leisure and tourism perspective.
- f) There are two designated bathing beaches in Carmarthenshire and the County would be best placed to promote these for (safe) bathing.

**DETAILED REPORT ATTACHED?**

**NO**

## IMPLICATIONS

I confirm that other than those implications which have been agreed with the appropriate Directors / Heads of Service and are referred to in detail below, there are no other implications associated with this report :

Signed: Robin Staines

Head of Housing, Public Protection and Provider Services

Policy, Crime & Disorder and Equalities <b>NONE</b>	Legal <b>NONE</b>	Finance <b>YES</b>	ICT <b>NONE</b>	Risk Management Issues <b>YES</b>	Staffing Implications <b>YES</b>	Physical Assets <b>NONE</b>
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### 3. Finance

Additional resources would be required to carry out the monitoring including the identification of the appropriate sites, regular sampling and follow up actions. The amount at this stage is unquantifiable.

### 4. Risk Management Issues

Adopting the monitoring programme would give the public an opinion that the Authority are endorsing the beaches. However, where the Authority is aware that the safety is compromised by strong currents and potentially poor water quality at times, this will put bathers at risk and possible claims against the Authority.

### 5. Staffing Implications

Additional resources would be required to carry out the monitoring including the identification of the appropriate sites, regular sampling and follow up actions. The amount at this stage is unquantifiable.

## CONSULTATIONS

I confirm that the appropriate consultations have taken in place and the outcomes are as detailed below

Signed: Robin Staines

Head of Housing, Public Protection and Provider Services

1. Scrutiny Committee N/A

2. Local Member(s) N/A

3. Community / Town Council N/A

4. Relevant Partners N/A

5. Staff Side Representatives and other Organisations N/A

Section 100D Local Government Act, 1972 – Access to Information  
List of Background Papers used in the preparation of this report:

THERE ARE NONE