

Meeting of:	COMMUNITIES, ENVIRONMENT AND HOUSING OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
Date of Meeting:	15 JUNE 2026
Report Title:	BATHING WATER QUALITY ISSUES AND IMPACTS OF THE RIVER OGMORE
Report Owner: Responsible Chief Officer / Cabinet Member	CHIEF OFFICER – LEGAL, REGULATORY AND ELECTORAL SERVICES
Responsible Officer:	JASON BALE - OPERATIONAL MANAGER - SHARED REGULATORY SERVICES
Policy Framework and Procedure Rules:	THERE IS NO EFFECT UPON THE COUNCIL’S POLICY FRAMEWORK OR PROCEDURE RULES AS A RESULT OF THIS REPORT.
Executive Summary:	<p>The Council has three designated bathing beaches within its administrative area.</p> <p>Bathing water quality is a crucial aspect of public health and environmental protection, and the beaches in Bridgend play a key role in supporting the local economy, in particular the thriving tourism industry around Porthcawl, in addition to the well-being of local residents who frequent the waters.</p> <p>The Bathing Water Regulations introduces a classification system with stringent water quality standards and puts an emphasis on providing information to the public. Welsh Government is legally required to inform members of the public about bathing water management, bathing water quality, and potential threats to bathing water quality and public health. Waters are classified based on samples taken from the previous four years to even out effects of extreme situations.</p> <p>Natural Resources Wales (NRW) is responsible for monitoring and reporting against the standards in the Regulations. Samples are analysed for two types of bacteria, which indicate pollution from sewage or livestock. Polluted water can have impacts on human health,</p>

	<p>including causing stomach upsets and diarrhoea if swallowed.</p> <p>Whilst the Bridgend County Borough Council is not responsible for bathing water quality, its officers and elected members can have a role working with the regulators NRW and Dwr Cymru to seek improvements over a reasonable period.</p> <p>The report therefore explains the proposed arrangements to assist in improving bathing waters and the overall water quality within Bridgend's catchment areas and the Council's role in this.</p>
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1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1. The purpose of the report is to ensure that Members of the Communities, Environment and Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee and wider elected members are aware of the most recent bathing water classifications at designated bathing beaches within Bridgend County Borough Council and to advise of the collaborative arrangements in place to identify pollution sources and measures to improve bathing water quality and wider water quality within the River Ogmore catchment area in the future.

2. Background

- 2.1. Bathing water quality is a crucial aspect of public health and environmental protection. Within Bridgend County Borough Council, there are a number of designated bathing water beaches and these play a key role in supporting the local economy, in particular the thriving tourism industry around Porthcawl, in addition to the well-being of local residents who frequent the waters.
- 2.2. In Wales, the management and regulation of bathing waters have undergone revisions to ensure enhanced protection for both human health and the environment. The first European bathing water legislation, in the form of the Bathing Water Directive, came into force in 1976. The revised Bathing Water Directive was adopted in 2006, and 2015 was the first year it was fully implemented in the UK. Management and surveillance methods for bathing waters were changed and new tighter microbiological standards brought in.
- 2.3. Welsh Government sets the policy frameworks and legislative measures to govern bathing water quality.

- 2.4. The Bathing Water Directive 2006/7/EC which put in place a mechanism to identify bathing waters in the UK forms part of retained European Union law in Wales. The Bathing Water Regulations 2013 specify the statutory requirements associated with the management of bathing waters in Wales.
- 2.5. The Regulations require the Welsh Government to annually identify popular bathing areas in Wales. The objective of the Regulations is to protect bathers' health and inform bathers of potential health hazards associated with poor water quality. Bather numbers is the main criteria which the Welsh Government will apply when considering whether it is appropriate to designate a site as a bathing water. Any infrastructure or facilities provided, or other measures taken to promote bathing at the site will also be considered.
- 2.6. Once a bathing water has been designated, the water quality is monitored by Natural Resources Wales (NRW) during the bathing season, which runs from 1st May to 30th of September.
- 2.7. The Bathing Water Regulations introduced a classification system with stringent water quality standards and put an emphasis on providing information to the public. Welsh Government has to inform members of the public about bathing water management, bathing water quality, and potential threats to bathing water quality and public health. Waters are classified based on samples taken from the previous four years¹ in order to even out effects of extreme situations.
- 2.8. Designated bathing waters are classified as excellent, good, sufficient or poor depending on water quality sampling results. The bathing water quality classifications are based on two microbiological parameters: intestinal enterococci and E.coli
- 2.9. NRW is the principal environmental agency in Wales tasked with overseeing various aspects of natural resource management, including water quality. Its roles and responsibilities regarding the bathing water regulations comprise of the following:
 - Conducting regular monitoring and assessment of bathing water quality at designated sites.
 - Providing data and analysis to inform decision-making processes related to bathing water management.
 - Implementing measures to mitigate pollution sources and improve water quality where necessary.
 - Collaborating with local authorities, Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water, and other stakeholders to achieve shared objectives in maintaining bathing water standards.

¹ There are no pass/fail standards for individual water samples, instead the classification is based on a statistical measure of all samples, known as a percentile. Percentiles use the range of all samples taken to estimate the probability of higher results occurring. The classification uses either the 95% or 90% percentile depending on the classification. (Further details on the how classifications are determined can found here_ - <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2013/1675/schedule/5/made>

- 2.10. NRW is responsible for monitoring and reporting against the standards in the Regulations. Samples are analysed for two types of bacteria, which indicate pollution from sewage or livestock. Polluted water can have impacts on human health, with numerous epidemiological studies directly linking recreational water uses, with gastrointestinal illnesses.
- 2.11. Local authorities in Wales are responsible for managing and regulating bathing waters within their jurisdictions. Their roles include:
- Managing designated bathing water sites in accordance with regulatory requirements.
 - Implementing pollution prevention measures and addressing sources of contamination within their areas of control.
 - Collaborating with NRW, Welsh Government, and other stakeholders to develop local strategies for improving bathing water quality.
 - Providing information and guidance to the public regarding safe bathing practices and water quality standards.
- 2.12. As the primary provider of water and wastewater services in Wales, Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water (DCWW) plays a crucial role in ensuring compliance with bathing water regulations. Its responsibilities include:
- Operating and maintaining wastewater treatment facilities to minimise discharges and pollutants entering bathing waters.
 - Implementing infrastructure upgrades and pollution control measures to enhance water quality.
 - Collaborating with regulatory authorities and stakeholders to monitor and address issues affecting bathing water quality.
 - Engaging in public outreach and education initiatives to promote awareness of water conservation and pollution prevention measures.

3. Current situation

- 3.1. Within Bridgend County Borough Council there are 3 officially designated beaches, namely Rest Bay, Sandy Bay (Coney Beach) and Trecco Bay.
- 3.2. As noted, the designated bathing water season runs from the 15th May to the 30th September. During the bathing season, NRW monitors bathing water quality and provides information about possible health risks arising from issues such as short-term pollution episodes. At the end of each year, NRW sends data on bathing water quality and information on management measures to Welsh Government, who then produce an annual report, with the latest report being that for the 2025 season².
- 3.3. Table 1 below provides a summary of the bathing water classifications for 2024 and 2025 for each of the designated bathing water beaches in Bridgend. It is evident that

² [NRW Bathing Water Report 2025](#)

all the designated bathing waters are classified as Excellent. Full details of the bathing water profiles are provided by NRW <https://environment.data.gov.uk/wales/bathing-waters/profiles/index.html> .

Table 1 - Summary of Bathing Waters in Bridgend 2024-2025

Designated Bathing Water	Classification 2024	Classification 2025
Rest Bay	Excellent	Excellent
Sandy Bay (Coney Beach)	Excellent	Excellent
Trecco Bay	Excellent	Excellent

- 3.4. In addition to the 3 designated beaches there are a further 4 beaches within Bridgend, namely Newton Beach, Pink Bay, Town Beach (No Swimming permitted) and Sker Beach. As these beaches are not fully designated under the Bathing Water Regulations, there are no water quality tests undertaken during the bathing water season and therefore no published water quality data.
- 3.5. In addition to the beaches situated in Bridgend, Ogmore by Sea is on the boundary with the Vale of Glamorgan, and this beach is influenced by the catchment area of the River Ogmore.
- 3.6. The River Ogmore catchment rises at the Ogwr Fawr at Craig Ogwr north of Nantymoel joined by the Ogwr Fach branch at Blackmill. Upstream of the town of Bridgend the major tributaries of the Afon Llynfi and Afon Garw join the Ogmore from the North. South of Bridgend near the ruins of Ogmore castle the Ogmore is met by the Eweny river, a major tributary flowing from Pencoed to the Northeast. Land use in the catchment, is mixed and typical of South Wales. The large urban conurbations of Bridgend, Maesteg and Pencoed are surrounded by more rural areas, with some agriculture spread across the catchment and forestry lining the tops and sides of the valleys.
- 3.7. Unfortunately since being designated as a Bathing Water in 2023, Ogmore by Sea has obtained Poor bathing classification.
- 3.8. Owing to the classification of this beach as Poor, Regulation 13 of the Bathing Waters Regulations 2013, requires advice against bathing at this beach and requires the responsible Local Authority to take local authority management measures as it considers adequate, with a view to preventing bathers' exposure to pollution. Signage has therefore been installed on Ogmore by Sea by the Vale of Glamorgan Council detailing this. However, the beach remains open for people to enjoy and there is no prohibition on use of the beach.
- 3.9. In addition to requirements of Regulation 13 for signage to be installed, Regulation 13 also imposes a duty on the appropriate agency, in this case NRW to:

- i. Take or cause to be taken appropriate agency management measures at the bathing water to prevent, reduce or eliminate (as appropriate) the causes of pollution;*
- ii. Take, or cause to be taken appropriate agency management measures at the bathing water as it considers adequate with a view to preventing bathers' exposure to pollution;*
- iii. Notify the local authority that controls the bathing water; and*
- iv. Identify the reasons why the bathing water failed to achieve a classification of "sufficient"*

- 3.10. NRW is working to fully establish sources of pollution around Ogmores By Sea beach and its catchment, and this work is being done in partnership with Bridgend and the Vale of Glamorgan Councils. Inspections are carried out jointly by NRW and the Shared Regulatory Services (SRS) Environmental Health team before the bathing water season starts in May. Usually these visits are done along with the DCWW.
- 3.11. Since 2024 additional monitoring has been carried out to better understand the causes of poor water quality at Ogmores By Sea. This has included the installation of continuous water quality monitors (sondes) on the River Ogmores and River Ewenny and the collection of investigatory chemical and bacteriological samples to coincide with bathing water monitoring.
- 3.12. NRW also monitor DCWW's progress on their obligations under the current water industry investment period (AMP8) to investigate and model the potential impact on bathing water quality from water company discharges.
- 3.13. This is part of a National Environment Programme driver to better understand the impact of their assets on bathing water quality and what future investment might be required to meet bathing water standards.
- 3.14. In addition to the above, NRW have now established the **South Central Bathing Waters Project** to further investigate the poor water quality classification at Ogmores By Sea. This project will provide an opportunity to develop a catchment wide framework for managing and improving water quality.
- 3.15. Following the current evidence gathering and scoping phase, NRW aim to develop a full business case by spring 2027, outlining the requirements for an implementation phase and setting out a comprehensive project plan. NRW will of course take advantage of opportunities to improve water quality as the project develops.
- 3.16. NRW's ambition is to create an integrated approach to catchment resilience. Whilst the immediate priority is addressing bathing water quality, this project aims to bring together wider environmental improvements such as water quality, resilient soils,

biodiversity and flood risk management in order to provide the best opportunity of addressing the many complex issues with the Ogmore river catchment. The project will seek to develop a whole-catchment plan that blends traditional engineering with nature-based solutions, driving climate resilience while supporting economic growth and community well-being.

- 3.17. Furthermore DCWW has committed to develop a coastal model for Ogmore. This commitment is reflected in DCWW's next business plan and development of the project has already begun. The model will provide an evidence platform for NRW, DCWW and the Council.
- 3.18. DCWW have also recently completed further Capital Works to upgrade the Pen-y-bont Wastewater Treatment Works site. This work has resulted in an additional hybrid tank storage tank being brought to provide an additional 4,600m³ of storage capacity during storm events.

Next Steps

- 3.19. As stated earlier in this report the Council is committed to working with partner agencies in NRW and DCWW as part of their statutory requirements to investigate and assess the causes of the poor bathing water classification at Ogmore By Sea and impacts on the River Ogmore catchment areas.
- 3.20. The Council is keen to continue to work with local user groups as well as local Members in making these improvements to ensure an open and transparent approach is taken. We will ensure that regular meetings take place with the groups to discuss progress.
- 3.21. Officers will report back regularly to the Communities, Environment and Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee on progress.

4. Equality implications (including Socio-economic Duty and Welsh Language)

- 4.1 This is an information report, therefore it is not necessary to carry out an Equality Impact assessment in the production of this report. It is considered that there will be no significant or unacceptable equality impacts as a result of this report.

5. Well-being of Future Generations implications and connection to Corporate Well-being Objectives

- 5.1 The Well-being of Future Generations Act requires the Council to underpin decision making by contributing to the seven well-being goals of the Act, following the five ways of working, and consequently undertaking actions that will have a positive

impact on people living in the future as well as those living today. Consequently, the Council seeks to work in the following ways:

- Looking to the long term;
- Taking an integrated approach;
- Involving a diversity of the population in the decisions affecting them;
- Working with others in a collaborative way to find shared sustainable solutions; and
- Acting to prevent problems from occurring or getting worse.

5.2 It is clear that the by working in partnership with NRW and DCWW the Council is taking a collaborative approach to addressing the Water Quality issues that have been identified.

5.3 Furthermore, the ambition to improve and enhance the bathing water quality and wider water quality issues in the Ogmores Catchment will ensure that pollution issues are addressed to ensure that future generations can enjoy and have access to the highest standards of bathing waters.

5.4 The work to address bathing and wider water quality issues supports this Council's Well Being Objective in responding to the climate and nature emergency. Additionally this work will contribute to the objective to support people to live healthy and happy lives by improving the water quality within rivers and beaches in the County Borough.

6. Climate Change and Nature Implications

6.1. Bathing water quality reporting is highly perceptible to climatic changes, in particular, increased periods of heavy rainfall and with our changing climate, we must be prepared to deal with impacts of longer, heavier bouts of rain on a regular basis. Climate change has the potential to impact coastal ecosystems in multiple ways, altering human exposure to water-related contaminants that can cause illness.

6.2. As such it will be imperative to reduce the impacts of stormwater flows in order to reduce the potential pollution impacts on bathing waters. Implementation of Sustainable Urban Drainage solutions will therefore play a vital role in helping to reduce releases of stormwater now and in the future to reduce the long-term impacts of climate change.

6.3. The commitment to work with NRW and DCWW as set out in this report will be vital to ensure that long term improvements and reduction in pollution can be implemented in order to ensure the protection and enhancement of water quality and bathing waters in Bridgend County Borough Council.

7. Safeguarding and Corporate Parent Implications

7.1 There are no Safeguarding or Corporate Parent Implications for this report.

8. Financial Implications

8.1 There are no financial Implications for this report.

9. Recommendation(s)

9.1. It is recommended that the Communities, Environment and Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee notes the content of this report and the ongoing work, including the South Central Bathing Waters Project to assist in improving bathing waters and wider water quality improvements in the Ogmores Catchment area within Bridgend County Borough Council.

Background documents

None