



The Environment Agency will host bathing water seminars for beach controllers across the South West this week.

The two seminars held jointly with Defra are designed to increase awareness of the European wide revised Bathing Water Directive among Beach controllers and clarify their understanding of the new directive requirements and timetable.

The first seminar is on Tuesday 17 April at the National Marine Aquarium in Plymouth, the second is on Thursday at Taunton Conference Centre, Somerset College. The revised Bathing Water Directive, introduced in 2006, significantly changes the way bathing waters are managed.

Bathing water quality standards are getting tighter.

The Directive introduces a new classification scheme:

- 'Excellent' which is approximately twice as stringent as the current guideline standard
- 'Good' similar to the current guideline standard
- 'sufficient' tighter than the current mandatory standard
- 'Poor' normally non-compliant waters

The Agency will sample on a four year rolling programme and report against these new classifications for the first time in 2015. All bathing waters need to achieve a classification of at least 'sufficient'. The second important strand of the revised Directive is a greater emphasis on beach controllers providing public information at the beach. If a site is classified as poor in 2015

measures must be taken and advice against bathing posted at the bathing water by the beach controller.

Significantly, if a site is classified as poor for five consecutive seasons permanent advice against bathing must be issued and posted at the beach by the beach controller. Some sites in the South West that meet the current standards are at risk of not meeting the new standards in 2015. Jonathan Ponting, bathing waters project manager for the Environment Agency, said.

‘We decided to hold these events because we want to be sure that beach controllers in the South West are aware of the tighter standards of the new Directive and their new responsibilities. The majority of our beaches are outstanding and despite the tighter measures we want to work with beach controllers to make sure they remain that way.

‘Good quality bathing water is a top priority for the South West because we recognise its vital importance to the regional economy and wellbeing. To improve bathing water quality we all need to work on agricultural diffuse pollution, urban diffuse pollution, the effects of wet weather, sewerage issues, and the effects of dog or bird fouling. Everyone has a role in reducing pollution and improving bathing water quality.’