

# Correspondence: Standardised Reporting of Radioactive Discharges Direction 2018

Direction from the Secretary of State and Welsh Ministers to the Environment Agency and the Natural Resources Body for Wales. This covers the reporting of standardised information on radioactive airborne and liquid discharges into the environment from nuclear power stations and nuclear reprocessing plants, as required by Article 67.2 of the Basic Safety Standards Directive 2013/59/Euratom.

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## Press release: Bonus beaches leads to record number of swimming spots

As the bathing water season begins this week, visitors to the seaside will have 422 bathing spots to choose from after nine new beach locations have been designated as official bathing waters along the south coast.

The Environment Agency tests water quality at every official bathing water to ensure it is maintained and improved. Last year, water quality remained high with 98.3% of bathing waters in England meeting the tough standards. 92% of these locations achieved the top rating of Excellent or Good.

Beach-goers can check out the water quality at their nearest bathing water spot by visiting the Environment Agency's online map at the [Bathing Water Data Explorer website](#).

Helen Wakeham, Deputy Director of Water Quality at the Environment Agency, said:

It is wonderful news that more beaches have been given bathing status in time for the start of the 2018 season. Water quality has improved at English beaches giving locals and tourists a better experience as well as benefiting the environment.

Water quality tests are published online, me and my family will certainly be searching the online map before heading off to enjoy time at the beach this summer.

The Environment Agency will continue to work with water companies, councils and local communities to keep our beaches clean, reduce pollution and protect our environment. We are working to achieve the goal in Defra's 25 Year Plan to minimise the harmful bacteria in our bathing waters by 2030.

During the bathing water season environment officers will take up to 20 samples at each location, from now until the end of September. Samples will be tested in Environment Agency labs for cleanliness. This year, in addition to sampling water quality, Environment Agency teams will also carry out surveys of plastic pollution on beaches. This data will help target our work and support community action.

**Dramatic improvements have already been made over the last two decades to prevent pollution ending up in the sea, but there is always more to do.**

Pollution from sewage and from agriculture are generally recognised as the two most significant sources but there are some local variations. Surveys have shown that around a third of bathing water pollution is caused by agriculture. This year the Environment Agency is rolling out [new rules for farmers](#) to ensure best practice is followed and pollution from farms is reduced.

Water companies have done a lot over the last two decades to improve infrastructure investing over £2.5 billion on projects that have improved water at swimming beaches.

To go further the Environment Agency are advising water companies on the investment they should be making to protect the environment, these include measures to protect water quality as well as being more resilient to flooding and potential water shortages. Environment Agency proposals include that water companies should improve 24 bathing waters between 2020-2025.

All members of the public can help keep water clean by taking all rubbish with them after visits to the beach, not leaving dog mess on the beach and at home never flushing wet wipes or pouring fats down drains.

Heavy rain is likely to reduce water quality in the short term, even at Excellent beaches. Information on the Bathing Water Data Explorer website may advise against swimming and there could be temporary signs at beaches.

The nine new beaches have become official bathing waters following suggestions from councils, feedback from public consultations and a decision by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs.

All the new bathing waters will have signage to show they are official swimming spots and the Environment Agency will test water quality regularly.

One of the new beaches is in Bournemouth, Manor Steps beach. Eight of the new locations are in Cornwall: South Fistral beach in Newquay, Booby's Bay near Trevoze Head, Mexico Towan, Upton Towan and Godrevy, all situated on a long stretch of dunes in St Ives Bay, Northcott Mouth beach to the north of Bude,

Gwynver Beach which forms part Whitesand Bay and Tregonhawke in Whitesand Bay.

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## [Press release: Northumberland fire starter fined](#)

A man who deliberately set fire to buildings on his land to avoid demolition costs has been sentenced to 10 months imprisonment, suspended for 18 months, and ordered to pay over £24,000 in fines and costs after a successful prosecution by the Environment Agency.

The flames from the blaze took fire rescue services four hours to extinguish and the distraction also caused two motorists on the nearby A1 to crash.

Nigel Weston Smith (63), owner of Whittle Colliery in Shilbottle, Northumberland, was charged with waste offences at Newcastle Crown Court on 14 May, 2018. He was sentenced to 10 months imprisonment, suspended for 18 months, fined £14,000 and ordered to pay £10,745.45 costs.

The court heard that Smith, constructed a two storey building at Whittle Colliery without planning permission and was ordered by Northumberland County Council (NCC) to demolish it.

After receiving a fine of £3,000 and a further NCC enforcement notice to remove the building, Smith decided to burn the building rather than pay to have it demolished.

In March 2014 he offered the site as a training venue to Northumberland Fire & Rescue Service (NFRS), suggesting the building could be set on fire. When NFRS rejected the offer on the grounds that the fire would be too big, it was not a controlled environment and there was inadequate water supply, Smith decided to burn it illegally.

On 5 March he advised NFRS that he was demolishing a large cabin and would burn timber and waste in small amounts. NFRS received three separate reports from members of the public concerned about the fire.

Smith called NFRS again on 20 March saying he intended to burn wood and timber from parts of a building. He stated he lived on site, had adequate water supply and he would not burn if the wind was blowing in the direction of the A1.

At 8.30 that evening, two motorists driving northbound on the A1 were distracted by flames and smoke from a large fire. Both were injured in a collision as the first slowed to call 999 and the second collided into the rear of the first.

It took NFRS four hours to extinguish the fire, which produced a significant amount of smoke raising concerns that the fire would spread. Smith had fled the scene.

Smith was described by Judge Robert Spragg as 'breathtakingly arrogant' by ignoring repeated requests from planning officers to remove the building. He added that Smith only escaped an outright custodial sentence by a narrow margin.

In mitigation, Smith stated that the remains of the building had now been removed at his own cost and that he regrets his actions.

Rachael Caldwell, Environment Agency, said:

Smith showed complete disregard for environmental laws because he wanted to cut corners and save himself the cost of demolishing a building legally – a building that shouldn't have been there in the first place. It is fortunate that no one was killed by his recklessness. We're pleased with the result of this case and hope this sends a message to anyone out there that thinks they can circumnavigate environmental laws, especially in such a dangerous manner.

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## **Open consultation: Air quality: non-road mobile machinery and red diesel – call for evidence**

*Updated:* Corrected link for responding online.

In order to improve air quality, particularly in our towns and cities, we are publishing a call for evidence into whether red diesel for non-road mobile machinery discourages the purchase of cleaner alternatives.

Red diesel for agricultural use will be out of scope, as will fishing vessels, home heating and other static uses.

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# Open consultation: Vehicle Excise Duty for vans

To incentivise van drivers to make the cleanest choices, we are publishing a consultation on reforming Vehicle Excise Duty (VED) for new vans. Van VED is currently charged at a flat rate, no matter the vehicle's emissions. The consultation explores creating a graduated first year rate for new vans, as is already in place for cars.