

[New bathing water status in the Isle of Wight and Oxford](#)

Part of the Wolvercote Mill Stream at Port Meadow, Oxford, and the East Cowes Esplanade on the Isle of Wight will be added to the [list of bathing waters](#) in England from next month.

This follows public consultations which ran from 9 February to 2 March on designating the sites, which are popular swimming and paddling spots for both local residents and visitors to the area.

The new status means that the Environment Agency will regularly take samples from the sites to assess the level of water quality and whether action is needed to cut bacteria levels. Monitoring will begin at both sites from May 15, the beginning of the bathing water season. Results of water quality testing will be used to classify the bathing waters in the autumn.

Environment Minister Rebecca Pow said:

The residents of Oxford and the Isle of Wight have shown their overwhelming approval for these sites as places to enjoy and connect with nature, so I am pleased to see these locations receiving designated bathing water status. While bathing water quality has improved in recent years and England now has the cleanest bathing waters since records began, we know that water quality at these sites won't change overnight. It will take time and all those with a role to play must commit to achieve the necessary improvements.

We are continuing to drive up the quality of lakes, rivers and seas for the public to enjoy through the measures in our Environment Act, and I would encourage more applications for popular bathing areas, both inland and coastal, that may also be suitable for designation.

The Environment Agency has been monitoring and driving improvements at coastal and inland bathing waters since the 1990s, and in this time there have been significant improvements to water quality. In 2021, 99 per cent of England's bathing waters met the minimum bathing water standard and of these, 95 per cent met the highest standard of Excellent or Good. This compares with 98.3% passing the minimum required standards in 2019 and is the highest number since new standards were introduced in 2015.

Responses to the consultations were received from a wide of range of interested parties across the country, including residents, NGOs and conservation groups.

In total there were 1,267 responses to the [Wolvercote Mill Stream consultation](#), the largest response to date for a proposed bathing water designation, with 1,260 of respondents in favour of making the site a designated bathing water area.

The [East Cowes Esplanade consultation](#) received 132 responses, with 131 of respondents supporting the proposed designation.

Today's announcement follows [new plans unveiled by the Government in March to tackle the number of discharges of untreated sewage from storm overflows by water companies](#), including discharges into bathing waters. Under the proposed plan, there will be over 70% fewer discharges close to bathing waters by 2035 during the bathing season, with significant reductions expected outside the bathing season as well.

[The MHRA are seeking views to strengthen conflicts of interest policy for independent advisors](#)

Press release

Stakeholders and the UK public are invited to have their say on how the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) manages the conflicts of interest for independent experts and how patients can be more involved in expert committee meetings to ensure consistency and transparency.



The six-week consultation, which launched today, outlines a number of key proposals that strengthen the current code of practice, to ensure that experts providing the MHRA with advice are independent and impartial, and that the processes in place to manage conflicts of interest are robust and clear to all. It also enables greater inclusion of patient experts in committee discussions so that individuals with lived and personal experiences can contribute to discussions more easily.

The UK regulator is committed to responding to the recommendations set out in the Independent Medicines and Medical Devices Review and is taking steps to be a more transparent and inclusive independent regulator.

The proposals include:

- A register of interests accessible to all (through GOV.UK), which will be updated to reflect any changes from members
- The provision of more guidance on interests, to ensure that members can provide relevant information if or when their circumstances change
- Encouraging greater inclusion of patient experts in expert groups and committee discussions, so that individuals with lived and personal experience can contribute to discussions more easily.
- A new panel process to advise on complex or novel conflicts to ensure standards are upheld consistently and to deal with breaches of the conflict-of-interest policy as necessary and any disciplinary action that may be warranted

The changes proposed will impact all expert groups, including the Commission on Human Medicines, bringing together requirements across all groups for the first time, ensuring consistency and high standards for all.

Dr June Raine, Chief Executive of MHRA said:

“We know that trust is an important factor in our role as regulator. We want to attract and retain the right expertise in those who give the regulator independent advice; but the public should also feel confident those called upon to give their expert opinions do so in an impartial way.

“This consultation, which I encourage all to respond to, demonstrates how seriously we take independent and impartial advice on our regulatory decisions.”

The public consultation will run for six weeks from 12 April 2022. [Have your say by visiting our consultation page.](#)

Notes to editors

1. The Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency is responsible for regulating all medicines and medical devices in the UK, by ensuring they work and are acceptably safe. All our work is underpinned by robust and fact-based judgements to ensure that the benefits justify any risks.
2. The MHRA is an executive agency of the Department of Health and Social Care.
3. The MHRA utilises expert and impartial advice from a number of advisory committees, including:
 - The Commission on Human Medicines (CHM), which advises MHRA on the safety, efficacy and quality of medicinal products,
 - The Devices Expert Advisory Committee (DEAC), which provides MHRA with advice on a wide range of aspects relating to the introduction and safe use of medical devices,
 - The British Pharmacopoeia Commission (BPC), which provides official

- standards for pharmaceutical substances and medicinal products,
- Herbal Medicines Advisory Committee (HMAC), which advises MHRA on the safety and quality of herbal medicinal products for human use,
 - Advisory Board for Registration of Homeopathic Products (ABRHP), which advises MHRA on safety and quality in relation to any homeopathic medicinal product for human use,
 - UK Stem Cell Bank Steering Committee (UKSCBSC), which oversees the activities of the UK Stem Cell Bank and UK research involving established human embryonic stem cell lines, whether obtained from the bank or from elsewhere.
 - The Review Panel, which carries out statutory and non-statutory reviews of proposals, decisions and provisional decisions taken by MHRA.

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[Exit scheme opens to support farmers who wish to leave the industry and create opportunities for new entrants](#)

Press release

Government opens application window for the Lump Sum Exit Scheme to facilitate a voluntary planned exit from the industry.



Farmers in England who wish to leave the industry can now apply for the new [Lump Sum Exit Scheme](#) which will provide a payment so they can exit the sector in a managed way. In return, farmers will be expected to either rent or sell their land or surrender their tenancy in order to create opportunities for new entrants and farmers wishing to expand their businesses.

The Scheme, which opens for applications today until 30 September 2022, follows a public consultation and builds on evidence that some farmers would

like to retire or leave the industry but have found it difficult to do so for financial reasons.

The exit payment provided to eligible applicants will be based on the average direct payments made to the farmer for the 2019 to 2021 Basic Payment Scheme (BPS) years. This reference figure will be capped at £42,500 and multiplied by 2.35 to calculate the lump sum, meaning that farmers could receive up to around £100,000.

We want to support new entrants coming into the industry and will be giving more detail of our next steps in the near future.

Environment Secretary George Eustice said:

The decision to retire or exit the industry can be extremely difficult and is frequently postponed. The purpose of the Lump Sum Exit Scheme is to assist farmers who want to exit the industry to do so in a planned way that provides them with the means to make a meaningful choice about their future. The Scheme will also free up land for new entrants to farming, and we will be saying more about our new entrants scheme shortly.

[The Lump Sum Exit Scheme guidance, including how to apply, can be found here.](#)

The Future Farming Resilience Fund, which provides free expert business advice to BPS recipients in England, is still open for applications. Our delivery partners will be able to support farmers in making decisions on how to ensure they have viable businesses or indeed to make the decision to exit the sector. A further phase of support will be launched in late September and will run until March 2025.

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[Master and vessel owner fined for fisheries offences](#)

News story

Master and vessel owner guilty of fisheries offences in prosecution brought by Marine Management Organisation (MMO)



Jan de Visser, master of Dutch registered fishing vessel Espada (WR19), and owner Rederji Gebr de Visser, were sentenced at Newcastle Magistrates' Court on 31 March 2022.

The court heard how Espada, which is a 26.98 metre Dutch registered vessel, was boarded for inspection by officers from the MMO on 27 November 2019.

The vessel was quad rigged and gear inspections uncovered offences in respect of the square mesh panels (SMP) in two of the four nets. The SMP is required to have a mesh size of 120mm and is an essential conservation measure in the North Sea to allow juvenile fish to escape the net. The two panels were under the required 120mm.

Mr de Visser pleaded guilty to the offences in court and was ordered to pay a fine of £2,000, costs of £1,710 and a £200 victim surcharge.

An MMO spokesperson said:

The recovery measures put in place in these areas are essential to the protection of fish stocks. It is vital that these measures, as well as the rules relating to mesh sizes are followed.

When this is not the case the MMO will always take the appropriate action, including prosecution, to ensure offenders do not benefit from such illegal activity and to protect fish stocks for the wider fishing industry and future generations.

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[Call for evidence for new 10-year plan](#)

to improve mental health

- A call for evidence opens today to inform a new 10-year mental health plan to level up mental health across the country and put mental and physical health on an equal footing
- The public, those with lived experience of mental ill-health, and health and care professionals will have 12 weeks until 5 July to share views on how support and services should adapt for the future
- Plan will build on current progress, assessing how local services can work together to prevent mental ill health

The general public, people of all ages with lived experience of mental health conditions and those who support people with mental ill-health are urged to respond to a 12-week call for evidence to inform a new 10-year mental health plan and a refreshed National Suicide Prevention Plan seeking views on what can be improved within the current service, particularly in light of the pandemic which has led to record levels of people seeking treatment.

Around 1 in 5 adults in Britain experienced some form of depression in the first three months of 2021, over double pre-pandemic figures. Through the NHS Long Term Plan we have committed to continue expanding and transforming mental health services, and to address the impacts of the pandemic.

We have also made £500 million available to support the groups most impacted, including children and young people and those with severe mental illness through our Mental Health Recovery Action Plan.

The call for evidence will now build on this progress, adding to our understanding of the causes of mental ill-health, listening to people who have interacted with services and those who know and support them, to draw on 'what works'. This will support the development of a plan which aims to prevent and mitigate the impacts of risk factors on mental health and suicide, particularly for groups who experience disparities.

The 10-year plan builds on the NHS Long Term plan and forms part of the government's wider commitments to Build Back Fairer, working towards putting mental health on a level footing with physical health, and forms a key part of the commitments to address health disparities across the country and to improve the mental wellbeing of the nation by 2030.

Health and Social Care Secretary Sajid Javid said:

The pandemic put unprecedented pressure on people across the country. While we continue to expand and transform our mental health services under the NHS Long Term Plan to meet rising demand, we know we need to go further.

Too many people, particularly our children and young people, do not have the tools and support they need to look after their wellbeing or prevent mental health problems from escalating.

We all have a role to play in resetting the way we approach mental health and our new 10-year plan will set an ambitious agenda for where we want the mental health of the nation to be a decade from now.

The sooner someone receives support when they are struggling with their mental health, the more likely it is they will recover. The call for evidence seeks views on how the 10-year plan can complement and extend the work of the NHS Long Term Plan to better address how local services can work together, to prevent those at risk from falling into mental ill-health through earlier, targeted help.

The NHS plays an important role in identifying, diagnosing, treating, and supporting people with mental health conditions, and there are also a range of public, private and community services ideally placed to identify people who may be struggling that can offer support or signpost to NHS services. This may include education settings, housing associations, social care, youth centres, workplaces and job centres.

Minister for Mental Health Gillian Keegan said:

Across the country, no matter your background, you should have the opportunity to grow up in, and stay in, good mental health.

I want anyone who needs mental health services to be able to access them.

I encourage everyone, especially those who live with a mental health condition, carers and our brilliant workforce, to share their views on how we improve mental health services and reduce disparities across the country.

The call for evidence, which opens today (Tuesday 12 April) and will close on 5 July, seeks to build consensus on the priority actions we need to collectively take to reduce the number of people who go on to develop mental health conditions, especially for children and young people and communities at greatest risk. It's important responses are reflective of society, include those from people of all ages and backgrounds, to ensure future services work for all.

It is actively seeking views on several key questions which will be addressed in the plan including:

- How can we all promote positive mental wellbeing?
- How can we all prevent the onset of mental ill-health?
- How can we intervene earlier when people need support with their mental health?
- How can we improve the quality and effectiveness of treatment for mental health conditions?
- How can we all support people living with mental health conditions to

live well?

- How can we improve support for people in crisis?

NHS England's National Mental Health Director Claire Murdoch said:

The pandemic has naturally taken a toll on the nation's mental health, so there is no better time for everyone to have their say on how we as a society can improve people's mental wellbeing over the next decade.

Improving people's mental wellbeing requires action from all parts of our society, so it is vital that as many people as possible from all walks of life respond to this call for evidence.

The plan will also look at how initiatives across government including green social prescribing, online harms and Thriving at Work can work together to ensure people's daily practical, social and emotional needs are being met, as well as how to fully harness the potential of technology and data to support better mental health, and incentivise the private sector to play its part.

Responses from the call for evidence will also inform the development of a separate National Suicide Prevention Plan which will refresh the 2012 plan. Future detail on this plan will be set out in due course.

Dr Alex George, Youth Mental Health Ambassador, said:

We have made great progress in reducing the stigma associated with mental ill-health, but there is still work to do.

Too many people still don't know where to turn to for support or can't access help early enough.

Let's continue to tackle the stigma that surrounds mental health – let's respond to this call for evidence and all start a national conversation so that in 10 years from now, the mental health of the nation will be better supported. I am keen to see the outcomes of this consultation followed by adequate funding.

Paul Farmer, Chief Executive of Mind, said:

Mind has long been calling for a more joined-up approach from Government to mental health, one which follows the evidence of what works in areas like benefits, education, and housing to build a better future for us all, and reduces the glaring racial and social inequalities that persist in mental health.

A truly cross-Government plan will play a key role in making sure support for our mental health starts to be rebuilt post-pandemic to the same level as for our physical health.

Advisor to the Government on the National Suicide Prevention Strategy, Louis Appleby said:

A new plan for suicide prevention is a chance to reflect the changing pattern of risk, on issues such as online safety and gambling.

It's a chance to renew our vigilance and reinvigorate the efforts of the people we depend on – bereaved families, charities, professionals and many more. It's a chance to ensure that suicide prevention is built into our recovery from Covid & to set the priorities for action for the next few years.

Victoria Hornby, CEO of Mental Health Innovations, which powers Shout 85258:

We welcome the Call for Evidence to inform a new 10 year Mental Health Plan and look forward to contributing insights and evidence from the first four years of the operation of the Shout service. Over the course of the pandemic, our Shout text service saw conversation numbers with people in distress increase three-fold.

This substantial growth has enabled us to gain unique insights into the mental health needs and experiences of key groups, including children and young people, those who identify as LGBTQ+, people with autism, and underserved communities.

Marjorie Wallace CBE, Chief Executive of SANE, said:

This is a once-in-a-lifetime chance to help create mental health services able to respond to individual need at the time a person reaches out for help, or when they need consistent support. We hope that everyone concerned will take this opportunity to shape the future.

Mark Rowland, Chief Executive of the Mental Health Foundation, said:

We welcome the government's recognition that our mental health doesn't exist in a silo. It's influenced by the quality of our relationships, education and housing, the fairness of our justice system, the security of our income and the health of our communities. A well-resourced whole-government plan for mental health is the pioneering step we need for building the mentally healthy society we all want: where mental health is an asset to be nurtured, rather than a problem to be treated.

Mubeen Bhutta, Head of Policy, Public Affairs & Campaigns at Samaritans:

Suicide is preventable and the refreshed suicide prevention strategy and next 10-year mental health plan are real opportunities to save lives and make sure we learn lessons from previous approaches.

It's crucial this consultation hears from people with lived experience. The long-term impact of the global Covid-19 pandemic is likely to play out over many years and so it is vital that we have a well-planned strategy to ensure that mental health and suicide prevention are considered just as important as physical health to the wellbeing of the nation.

The questions in the call for evidence have been developed in partnership with stakeholders and people with lived experience of mental ill-health. More detail on each of the questions can be found in a discussion paper also published today alongside the Call for Evidence.

We are transforming mental health services in England with an extra £2.3 billion a year. This includes expanding talking therapies to ensure 1.9 million people will be able to access them by 2023/24, and give an additional 345,000 children access to NHS-funded services or school and college-based support by 2024.