

GOVERNMENT OF GIBRALTAR
Ministry for Environment and Tourism
Joshua Hassan House
Secretary's Lane
Gibraltar

PRESS RELEASE

No. 176/2011

Date: 9th June 2011

Western Beach to open from 11 June 2011

Western Beach consistently had excellent bacterial water quality prior to 2010. Towards the end of the 2010 bathing season the Government was obliged to close the beach on public health grounds as a consequence of the bacterial contamination the Western Beach Basin emanating from the La Linea drains system.

The La Linea Administration have been conducting some improvements on their sewerage system which would improve the situation, in that sewage would not systemically overflow into the storm drains. The overflow continues to be manually controlled so the incidence of further contamination is heavily influenced by the effectiveness of their control of the switchover valve installed and the quantity and duration of any heavy rainfall.

The general public was advised, in April 2011, following an improvement in the quality of the bathing water at Western Beach, that the Government would be taking a cautious approach to ensure that this improvement in the water quality is sustained before deciding whether to open the beach. Sampling has shown that there has been a sustained improvement in the quality of the bathing water, since May 2011.

Following advice from its Chief Technical Officer, the Department of the Environment and the Environmental Agency, the Government has decided to reopen Western Beach for public use as from 11th June 2011.

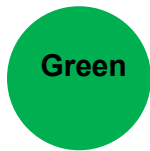
During the official bathing season, Government is also introducing additional protective measures and has established the following protocol in order to continue to safeguard public health, which remains the absolute priority:

- The water sampling regime, increased at the end of last year's bathing season, will be maintained at twice a week, i.e. 4 times the European Commission recommended minimum sampling frequency.
- Should, the bathing water quality fail to meet the EU Standard the Government will review the position.
- As bathing water quality remains susceptible to rainfall, i.e. heavy rainfall will cause the Spanish sewerage system to overflow into the storm drain, Western Beach will, as a precaution, be closed whenever it rains significantly, on the precautionary assumption that contamination and failure of the bathing water quality will follow.

- During any period of time that the bathing water quality fails to meet the EU Standard, the Government will, if so advised by the pertinent authorities, close the beach and maintain it closed until sampling shows that the bathing water quality meets the EU Standard and the Government is certain that no material risk to public health exists.

The bathing water quality sampling results will continue to be published on the Environmental Agency website - <http://www.environmental-agency.gi/beachresult.php?beachid=6>

In addition to the publishing of the results on the web, a notice board will be on display at a prominent position at Western Beach where it will be available to all users of the beach. This notice board will be at an easily seen position near to the official point of entry to the beach. The Bathing water Quality will be displayed by a simple indicator based on two coloured discs, green and red:-



- Bathing water quality meets EU standards.
Bathing permitted



- Bathing water quality fails to meet EU standards.
Bathing not allowed.