



**HM GOVERNMENT OF GIBRALTAR**  
Ministry for Health & Environment  
Joshua Hassan House  
Secretary's Lane  
Gibraltar

## **PRESS RELEASE**

No. 367/2012

Date: 8<sup>th</sup> June 2012

### **Western Beach**

Western Beach consistently had excellent bacterial water quality prior to 2010. Since then, and especially during periods of rainfall in the winter months, there have been erratic episodes associated with sewage discharges from a storm water drain from La Linea which significantly affected the bacterial bathing water at this beach. Nevertheless, last summer it was possible to open Western Beach to the public because bacterial water quality standards were met and a protocol to safeguard public health was implemented.

The EU Bathing Water Directive stipulates two sets of bacterial bathing water quality standards known as Mandatory and Guideline Values, the latter being more stringent. Bathing is allowed when either of these values is met.

This year, since the 23<sup>rd</sup> May, bathing water quality has been found to meet the more stringent guideline values consistently and the beach will open as from the beginning of the official bathing season. A similar protocol to protect public health will be implemented once again.

The Protocol is as follows:

- The sampling regime will be maintained at twice a week, i.e. 4 times the recommended minimum sampling period stipulated in the Bathing Water Directive.
- Visual and olfactory inspections will be carried out on a daily basis. Any pollution detected will be assessed and, if deemed necessary the Beach will be closed until such time sample results confirm that EU values are met.
- Similarly, when there is deterioration in the bacterial water quality and the Mandatory Values are not met the beach will be closed and the sampling frequency will be increased to daily samples. This will continue until the authorities are satisfied that bathing water quality meets EU values at which time the Beach will be reopened.
- As bathing water quality may be influenced strongly by rainfall, the Beach will be closed at times of heavy rains.

- In the above situation, the sampling frequency will be increased to daily until it is ascertained that the EU values are being met, at which time the Beach will be reopened.

The bathing water quality sampling results 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, the Government will also introduce a notice board at Western Beach on which the quality of the bathing water will be displayed and updated in parallel to the Environmental Agency's Website so that Western Beach goers are made aware of the quality of the bathing water. This notice board will be prominently displayed at the official point of entry to the beach. Government advises the general public that persons bathing in all beaches do so at their own risk. The Bathing Water Quality will be displayed by a simple indicator based on three coloured square plates, green, yellow and red:-



– **Bathing water quality passes Mandatory EU standards.**  
**Bathing permitted at your own risk.**



– **Bathing water quality passes EU Mandatory standards but fails Guideline values.** **Bathing permitted at your own risk.**



- **Bathing water quality fails to meet EU Mandatory standards.** **Beach closed.**

Routine bathing water samples are taken on Mondays and Wednesdays, since bacteriological analysis of bathing water requires at least 48 hours before the complete results are available. The above indicators will, under normal circumstances, illustrate the quality of the bathing water on either the preceding Monday or Wednesday of any week.