



HM GOVERNMENT OF GIBRALTAR

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PRESS RELEASE

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Infection not caused by sewage

Monday's press release by the Environmental Safety Group (ESG) regarding an infection acquired by a young man on a wound was factually incorrect.

Government has been able to ascertain that, contrary to the ESG's remarks, St Bernard's Hospital made no statement about this or any other infection. It appears that the report was based on comments made to the patient by one of the clinicians and that this information was not confirmed nor backed up by firm laboratory results.

From the outset there was no evidence that the infection in question had been acquired at Western Beach. In fact, the GHA Laboratory has informed the Ministry for Health and the Environment that the micro-organisms identified from the infected wounds were not those associated with faeces.

The brief from the Laboratory, which also tests the water from Western Beach three times a week, states:

"Mr X had a wound swab on the right ankle sent on the 16th July from AE which grew a heavy growth of *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* together with *Staphylococcus aureus* and mixed anaerobes. These organisms are not indicative of faecal contamination. The organisms traditionally used as indicators of faecal contamination are *Escherichiacoli* (*E. coli*) and *Enterococci* (intestinal).

These organisms were not present in the swab received. In my opinion there is therefore no indication that the wound has been infected by faecal contamination and even less that this happened at Western Beach."

The water quality at Western Beach has continued to improve and is now within EU guideline values.

Government, which is fully committed to a clean and safe environment, will work as hard as it has to ensure safety for all bathers. It will fulfil its obligations to warn, with signs and flags, of contamination levels at all beaches. The public is advised to respect these warnings.

Monitoring in Western Beach is carried out more frequently than in most European beaches. However, results cannot be speeded up as the test is based on the growth of bacterial cultures which takes 48 hours.

The ESG have been informed of the situation. This Government works more closely than any previous administration with environmental organisations, including the ESG, and supports the important work they do in Gibraltar. On this occasion it appears that their facts were not all accurate and Government has therefore published the correct information to prevent unnecessary public alarm.