St Helens

WATER QUALITY INFORMATION

In accordance with the 2006/EC Bathing Waters Directive St Helens is a designated Bathing Water. The Environment Agency is responsible for monitoring water quality and publishing this data on line. Additionally the Isle of Wight Council must ensure that each location displays the necessary information so that the general public can make an informed decision as to where to bathe, swim or paddle.

A classification for bathing waters is calculated annually, based on all of the samples from the previous four years. The classification for St Helens is "Excellent" which means the standard is the highest, cleanest class.

Within the Yar catchment there are numerous storm, emergency and surface water outfalls that discharge to the rivers and ditches. The Yar, which flows through Bembridge Harbour, affects the bathing water at low tide. Monitoring has shown that this is not a significant source of bathing water pollution.

The majority of sewers in England are "combined sewers" and carry both sewage and surface water from roofs and drains. A storm overflow operates during heavy rainfall when the sewerage system becomes overwhelmed by the amount of surface water. The overflow prevents sewage from backing up pipes and flooding properties and gardens. An emergency overflow will only operate infrequently, for example due to pump failure or blockage in the sewerage system.

St Helens Duver storm overflow is at the north end of the beach and The Point Bembridge storm overflow is opposite the south end of the beach. These outfalls can discharge when heavy rainfall overwhelms the sewerage system but are designed to ensure that bathing water compliance is not affected. Within the Yar catchment there are numerous storm, emergency and surface water outfalls that discharge to the rivers and ditches.

Heavy rain falling on pavements and roads often flows into surface water drains or highway drains, ending up in local rivers and ultimately the sea. The quality of bathing water may be adversely affected as a result of such events.

This bathing water is subject to short term pollution. Short term pollution is caused when heavy rainfall washes faecal material into the sea from livestock, sewage and urban drainage via rivers and streams. At this site the risk of encountering reduced water quality increases after rainfall and typically returns to normal after 1-3 days. The Environment Agency makes daily pollution risk forecasts based on rainfall patterns and will issue a pollution risk warning if heavy rainfall occurs to enable bathers to avoid periods of increased risk. The Environment Agency works to reduce the sources of this pollution through pollution prevention measures, work with agriculture and water companies. 4 warnings advising against swimming due to an

increase risk of short term pollution was issued in 2019 for St Helens bathing water. These warnings were issued because of the effects of heavy rain on the water quality.

St Helens bathing water is monitored by the Environment Agency from May to September… The full details for this bathing water, its catchment, information on all potential pollution sources and how they are managed can be viewed at www.environment.data.gov.uk/bwq/profiles/

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