

Briefing note from Cllr Mike Cockerill, Scarborough Borough Council  
Cabinet Member for Cabinet Member for Project Leadership, Harbours,  
Coast and Flood Protection

## **Bathing water quality: Scarborough South Bay and Filey Bay**

The recently published bathing water quality results for Scarborough South Bay and Filey have, understandably, been a cause of concern for elected members, officers and other interested parties.

This briefing note includes more information about the work, alluded to in the statement released by the Yorkshire Bathing Water Partnership earlier this month, which has been ongoing in recent years regarding the quality of the bathing water at some of our bathing beaches.

I must emphasise that this work is not new and is not in direct response to the results published on 7 November.

During the last couple of years there have been nearly 70 actions instigated in regard to identifying and controlling potential sources of pollution along our coastline. Although the Environment Agency is responsible for monitoring water quality, there are other organisations working closely with them, as part of the Yorkshire Bathing Water Partnership, in efforts to improve the current situation. These include Yorkshire Water and Scarborough Borough Council with support from Welcome to Yorkshire.

I attend partnership working group meetings and receive updates from representatives of the Environment Agency and Yorkshire Water and council officers. At appropriate times, representatives from other companies or groups also attend.

### **Scarborough South Bay**

#### 1. What is the current position?

Many of the individual results taken on some weeks during the 2016 bathing season (beginning of May to end of September) were of the highest 'Excellent' standard, so the bathing water is generally very good. However, a number of failures at other times statistically pushed the overall classification for the year into the 'Poor' category.

#### 2. Why has the bathing water failed?

There are a considerable number of potential sources of pollution in and around Scarborough South Bay that may be contributory factors, either individually or collectively. However, comprehensive investigations carried out to date have not yet revealed the critical cause, so at this moment in time we do not know exactly why the bathing water has failed.

3. What has been done and what is being done to investigate these potential sources of pollution?

For the last few years the Environment Agency has undertaken a number of investigations into bathing water quality along the whole of the Yorkshire Coast. These investigations, along with those undertaken by Yorkshire Water and the University of Hull have given us a better understanding of the nature and sources of potential pollution into South Bay. These sources have been examined in turn to see whether any one particular source is contributing to the quality of the bathing water, but the results to date have been inconclusive.

Investigations are continuing and will continue until answers are found.

The latest investigation underway is a major survey, which involves DNA profiling along the stretch of coastline from Jackson's Bay to Cayton Bay. The results of the survey are expected by March next year. We hope that the results will provide vital information to guide the partnership in any further steps that might be required.

4. Does all this mean that the massive investment by Yorkshire Water was a waste of time?

Most certainly not. Historically, Yorkshire Water's sewerage system did not have the capacity to deal with excessive rainwater during times of storms and bad weather, which on such occasions, led to some discharge of polluted water into the sea. Following the company's investment project to improve its sewerage system, which concluded in early 2014, these problems were eliminated, which meant they were no longer impacting on bathing water quality. Yorkshire Water's investment has therefore made a huge difference; taking out the largest inputs to bathing water quality. This is why the partnership's efforts have since been re-directed to what other sources might be having a negative impact on the bathing water quality.

There is obviously a lot of work to do to improve Scarborough South Bay's bathing water quality but I can assure you that as part of the Yorkshire Bathing Water Partnership, the council remains very much committed to the cause.

## **Filey Bay**

1. What is the current position?

The latest results give Filey a rating of 'Good'.

2. Why hasn't an 'Excellent' rating been achieved?

There are a few potential sources of pollution affecting Filey Bay, stretching from Filey Brigg to the bathing beach at Reighton. These are mainly natural drainage points, but with catchment areas including agricultural and residential areas.

Currently, these sources collectively generate sufficient bacterial amounts to prevent the bathing water from being unable to achieve an 'Excellent' rating.

3. What has been done?

During recent years the Environment Agency and Yorkshire Water have undertaken a number of investigations in attempts to identify the sources of pollution.

A number of sources, mainly misconnections on domestic properties, have been identified. Incorrect connections within the town's drainage system have also been identified and rectified.

4. What happens next?

Ongoing data gathering confirms that problems occur at certain times but that the overarching trend is in line with achieving an 'Excellent' rating.

Investigations continue and I hope to see them expanded in the near future.

## **Summary**

The current situation is disappointing, but the Yorkshire Bathing Water Partnership will continue its work to identify the sources of the pollution that are, currently, preventing all of our beaches achieving the standards we all want to see. The partnership remains strong and is being restructured to ensure the support for these activities remains comprehensive and focused.