



Fact Sheet • May 2021

# Beach management

Cornwall Council's beach management strategy sets out the approach and specific standards for the management of beaches it retains responsibility for.

## Who is responsible?

With over 250 miles of coast, the council's beach and coastal portfolio is highly significant in terms of extent, variety, importance and percentage of the overall number of Cornish beaches.

There are around 40 beaches that are owned, managed or leased by the council. Other owners include the National Trust, Duchy of Cornwall, Ministry of Defence and a number of smaller landowners.

When it comes to safety, the RNLI provide a beach lifeguarding service not only on council-owned beaches in Cornwall but also on a number of beaches in the county that are privately owned.

The main lifeguard season runs from May to September. However, this does vary from beach to beach.

## What we do

As well as provide the management services for Cornwall Council, Cormac also offers advice to other owners (where beaches can be accessed by the public) to ensure consistency in standards.

We also work closely with other departments across the council as part of a coordinated approach to the management of the assets.

Our main activities involve:

- Carrying out beach inspections
- Dealing with both general and more specific management enquiries
- Bathing water quality management
- Assistance with beach award applications
- Event management

## Beach safety inspections

Our Environment Inspectors undertake regular site safety inspections on all council-owned beaches, including those which are leased out. These inspections record any issues of concern using a category rating system. This allocates a timeframe by which any defect needs to be made safe or resolved. Lower category defects go on to a programme of maintenance and improvement.

Where a defect is picked up on private land our officers make every attempt to identify the landowner and inform them of any issues and concerns that have been raised.

Delivered by

**CORMAC**



PART OF THE  
CORSERV GROUP  
A CORNWALL  
COUNCIL COMPANY

## Blue flags and seaside awards

It is no surprise Cornwall's beaches are rated among the best in the world. Seven beaches are currently awarded international Blue Flag status and fifteen a Seaside Award which celebrate the quality and diversity of our coastline.

These accolades are only awarded to beaches that meet strict criteria and cover aspects such as beach cleanliness, provision of public facilities such as toilets, lifeguards and on site environmental initiatives.

The awards also recognise the efforts of the Cornish community who volunteer to dedicate their time to looking after our region's beautiful beaches.

For the past six years' Sharp's Brewery have provided sponsorship to support the application process and the team continues to work with the communities who deliver environmental programmes to make all this possible.

## Bathing water quality

**Did you know there are a total of 90 beaches in Cornwall that have been officially designated as bathing waters?**

The revised Bathing Water Directive puts a duty on local authorities to act as the controller on bathing water beaches, regardless of whether they own the beach or not.

Designations depend on the number of people using the beach and other facilities such as lifeguards, parking, cafes etc. As part of the directive, we receive three types of notification, which are:

**Combined Sewage Overflow (CSO) notifications** - provided by South West Water (SWW) on 29 Cornish beaches as part of their Beach Live initiative. CSO's are an example of 'point pollution', this means it comes from an identifiable source that can be traced back to a single point. CSO's often discharge when there is heavy rainfall but they can sometimes discharge when there are technical issues. The Environment Agency (EA) controls the permits which SWW have to discharge.

**Pollution Risk Forecast (PRF) notification**- currently occur on 29 beaches in Cornwall and are provided by the EA as part of the revised Bathing Water Directive. PRF's predict short term pollution events that are associated with rainfall events.

The PRF notification is proactive and provides a notification before a wet weather event could lead to poor water quality.

**Abnormal Situation (AS) notification**- AS's are unpredictable, unusual and uncommon pollution events that have the potential to affect bathing waters. AS's are issued by the EA and are reactive notifications used when there has been a significant bacteriological contamination of the water course.

## It's a team effort

We receive notifications by email during the official bathing season which runs from 15 May to 30 September. The PRF notification comes in daily, whereas the CSO and AS notifications can come in at any time. The directive requires Cornwall Council to place time responsive notices on a site to warn the public that water quality could be affected by a pollution incident. We undertake this role on behalf of the council and work in partnership with the RNLI Lifeguard Service and 25 volunteer beach champions to provide the relevant information to the public and beach users. A laminated notice with the day's date is placed on the permanent signs at each designated bathing water whenever an event occurs.

## Event management

We manage request for events held on council beaches which includes everything from the well-known Boardmasters event through to small scale surfing competitions. This requires significant liaison and consultation with stakeholders to ensure responses are gathered and any concerns are addressed direct with the organiser. We also encourage leaseholders and event organisers to engage with the council's event notification process which has proved very successful. In doing this we gain a better understanding of what activities are happening on neighbouring beaches, which allows us to inform the RNLI Lifeguard Service so they can be better prepared for events which they may not have known about.

## For more information

The Cornwall Council beach information pages can be accessed here : <https://www.cornwall.gov.uk/leisure-and-culture/beaches-in-cornwall/>

You can also find out more about South West Water's bathing water information service, together with top tips for enjoying a safe, fun and healthy day by the sea on their website: <https://www.beachwise.org.uk/beachlive/>

The Environment Agency also posts PRF predictions online at: <http://environment.data.gov.uk/bwq/profiles/>