

Scotland's newest bathing water at Wardie Bay

As we reported last week, Wardie Bay has become Scotland's newest bathing water approved area.

This follows a decision by Cabinet Secretary for Net Zero and Just Transition Màiri McAllan to [designate](#) it for the 2023 season.

The decision, along with Fisherrow Sands in East Lothian becoming the first [bathing water](#) to be re-designated, is a boost for the shore along the southern shore of the River Forth – and brings the total number of Scottish bathing waters to 89.

The Scottish bathing water season begins on 1 June and runs until 15 September, with 1,500 water samples taken by Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) staff at [bathing waters](#) around the country. These are analysed in its accredited laboratories, and the results posted online. Once the season is finished each bathing water will receive an official classification for 2024.



Application for designation

The application for bathing water status was submitted by Wardie Bay Beachwatch and The Wild Ones who demonstrated that a large number of bathers use the water and there was community support for designation. Edinburgh Council supported the designation, accepting required duties around signage and beach cleaning.

Màiri McAllan, Cabinet Secretary for Net Zero and Just Transition said: “As a result of our investment in protecting and improving bathing waters across Scotland we now have the highest number of designated Bathing Water sites ever, with 98% passing bathing water quality standards and more rated as ‘excellent’ than ever before.

“However, we are not complacent. We continue to work closely with SEPA and Scottish Water to monitor and improve water quality on our designated beaches and in our designated lochs, to ensure that as many people as possible are able to enjoy them throughout this summer and beyond.”

Ruth Stidson, SEPA’s Principal Scientist for bathing waters, said: “It’s great news, especially for the local community, that Wardie Bay has been designated for the 2023 season by the Cabinet Secretary – and with Fisherrow re-designated, Scotland now has 89 bathing waters, more than any previous year. Designation of waters large numbers of people use for bathing over the summer months means they can be monitored, protected and, if necessary, improved.

“We’ve seen huge improvements in water quality at bathing waters over the years, and SEPA will continue this journey – through targeted regulation and working with others to achieve significant investment. This way we’ll ensure that visitors to our bathing waters, especially the thousands that live within a short walk or bike ride of our urban bathing waters, can

continue to enjoy Scotland's stunning blue spaces."

Win for Wardie Bay

During 2022, SEPA sampled and reported water quality at Wardie Bay due to high community usage of the beach and an active application for bathing water designation. Our evidence indicates that Wardie Bay is expected to meet bathing water standards. Now designated by the Cabinet Secretary, the beach will be formally monitored and receive an official classification for 2024.

Karen Bates, Wardie Bay Beachwatch, said: "It has taken much time and effort to achieve this result for the #wardiebay4bathingwater campaign. We can finally be delighted that Wardie Bay is to be a protected bathing water.

"We are grateful to Cabinet Secretary Mairi McAllan for her progressive decision and for support from Council members who surmounted the obstacles to designation at this complex site. We are grateful too that SEPA published the essential information for Wardie swimmers in 2022. Thanks particularly to all those who help protect Wardie Bay, who signed the petition, took part in the campaign film and contributed to the applications."

Cllr Scott Arthur Environment Convener, City of Edinburgh Council, said: "This is great news for the wellbeing of our residents and visitors who enjoy taking a dip in this great stretch of Edinburgh's coastline. I'd like to thank the users of Wardie Bay for helping it join Portobello on Edinburgh's riviera as a bathing water beach.

The water will continue to be monitored by SEPA, and I'd encourage you all to do your bit to keep it and the beach clean and protect nature there by taking your litter home with you, or use a local bin. Please also, remember to pick up after dog too, if you have one.

“Of course, you can also enjoy the beaches and support local traders along our coast at Portobello, Silverknowes and Cramond.”

Local outdoor spaces are integral to our physical and mental health and managing them well can improve well-being and other social and cultural benefits for local communities and visitors alike.

SEPA takes water samples over the full three and half months of Scotland’s official bathing water season, and after analysis the results are posted online. Pre-season sampling is carried out during May.

Wardie Bay Beachwatch are planning [a celebration next week.](#)

