

Mr Marc Read, Head of Environmental Services,
Salisbury City Council

By email only.

**Subject: Proposed Bathing Water Application,
Queen Elizabeth Gardens, Salisbury**



Dear Mr Read,

As discussed earlier this spring, we are concerned about the water quality in the River Avon, which runs through Salisbury, and its impact on both nature and public health. We propose an application for Bathing Water Status at Queen Elizabeth Gardens in Salisbury to assess water quality at the site and inform improvements in river health.

The problem - Only 14% of the UK's rivers reach good ecological status, and none reach good chemical status. The River Avon, one of the most highly protected watercourses in the world, fails to meet targets set by both the Environment Agency and Natural England. With the increasing popularity of the public using inland blue spaces like rivers for swimming, paddling, kayaking, and more, there is a serious threat to the population's health from sewage discharge. A survey by Surfers Against Sewage found that one in six people had tried wild swimming, of which 55% have become ill as a result. Results also found that 52% of the public are scared of using waterways due to their uncertainty about the water's cleanliness.

The solution (or one of them) - Bathing water designation created blue spaces where water quality is monitored for harmful bacteria and viruses, with legal obligations placed on industry to reduce sewage pollution near sites. In addition to holding polluters accountable, the sites also enable water users to make informed decisions about their safety when encountering blue spaces.

Where - DEFRA guidelines highlight a strict set of criteria for sites to be considered. These criteria can be viewed [here](#). Our assessment indicates that Queen Elizabeth Gardens is likely to meet the required criteria and is a site that is already very popular, particularly with children during the summer. We expect that the proposed site would be located in the shallow area within QE Gardens, rather than the deeper river downstream. Therefore, there should be no conflict with existing angling interests downstream.

How - Bathing Water Designation is achieved by applying to a government agency. Historically, local authorities have taken the lead on making coastal applications. However, the majority of new riverine bathing water sites have achieved designation

through communities' campaigning and applying for designation. With your blessing, we would carry out all the requirements of the application, including user counts and public consultation.

Water Quality Testing - In 2023, we took four water samples in partnership with Surfers Against Sewage, which were analysed in a laboratory for E. Coli (EC) and Intestinal Enterococci (IE), both faecal indicator organisms used by the Environment Agency to indicate the risk of ill health when using the site. Both IE and EC levels were low on the first sample during dry conditions (6th September), followed by very high EC levels (>1000cfu/100ml) on the 13th of September, which had minimal rainfall recorded in the preceding days. The last two samples, on September 18th and 21st, had very high levels of IE and EC, which were linked to high rainfall events.

With fresh support from Surfers Against Sewage, we will conduct weekly sampling at the site for twelve months, starting in May 2025. The first seven sets of results show low to moderate levels of harmful bacteria in the water. This data can be viewed [here](#), with new results added weekly. Note that another individual is sampling the River Nadder downstream of the Old Mill public house.

What do we expect to achieve? - Provide information to inform water users about the water quality at the site and drive improvements.

What do we need from the Salisbury City Council? - We believe this project aligns with the council's strategic vision, particularly in relation to the 'A Green City' and 'Wellbeing' themes. We would appreciate a letter of support as a landowner and also assistance in obtaining a letter of support from Wiltshire County Council. We are happy to provide any additional information required or meet up to discuss.

With thanks,



Correspondance via email : maddie@loveofwater.org or phone 07340948185.