

COMMITTEE REPORT

Subject:	<i>Application for Bathing water status at Lower Bemerton Recreation Ground</i>
Committee:	<i>Environment Committee</i>
Item Number:	<i>11</i>
Date:	<i>8 June 2026</i>
Author:	<i>Mostyn Coombes, Interim Head of Environment</i>
Report status:	<i>Decision</i>
Confidential / Exempt:	<i>No</i>

1. Report Summary

- 1.1 This report seeks approval from the Environment Committee to support an application from Bemerton Community Ltd for Bathing Water Status for the River Nadder at the Lower Bemerton Recreation Ground.
- 1.2 The proposal follows the successful application for bathing water status at Queen Elizabeth Gardens which is now one of 13 new bathing locations nationally identified by the Environment Agency.
- 1.3 If granted, Bathing Water Status would enable the Environment Agency to undertake regular water quality monitoring and public reporting at Lower Bemerton Recreation Ground, providing transparency and improving public safety for those using the river.
- 1.4 This proposal represents a low-cost, high-impact opportunity to improve environmental transparency, public health, and the recreational value of the River Nadder.

2. Recommendations

It is recommended that the Committee:

- 2.1 Supports the application for Bathing Water Status for the River Nadder at Lower Bemerton Recreation Ground.
- 2.2 Agrees to provide a formal letter of support as landowner and stakeholder to assist with the application.

3. Background

- 3.1 At the Full Council meeting on 14 July 2025, members discussed expanding bathing water designations beyond Queen Elizabeth Gardens and resolved to support similar proposals, subject to due diligence demonstrating a precedent for this type of initiative.
- 3.2 To support the application, Bemerton Community Ltd have secured a Citizen Science water quality testing programme, commencing on 18 May 2026, to build the evidence base required.

4. Financial Position

- 4.1 There are no significant direct financial implications associated with submitting the application.

5. Legal and Governance Considerations

- 5.1 Bathing Water Status applications are governed by national environmental legislation and regulatory processes.
- 5.2 The Council's role is primarily as landowner and stakeholder, providing support rather than leading regulation.

6. Consultation and Engagement

- 6.1 Internal officers engaged:
 - Interim Head of Environment
 - Councillors and relevant committees
- 6.2 External partners:
 - Bemerton Community Ltd

7. Strategic and Policy Alignment

- 7.1 The proposal supports the Council's strategic priorities:
 - Environmental protection and enhancement
 - Public health and wellbeing
- 7.2 Bathing Water Status would also align with national efforts to improve water quality monitoring and accountability.

8. Implementation and Next Steps

- 8.1 Subject to the Committee's decision, Bemerton Community Ltd will do as follows:
 - Continue Citizen Science monitoring programme (from May 2026)
 - Gather and analyse water quality data
 - Prepare formal application documentation
 - Engage with local stakeholders
 - Submit application in Autumn 2026

9. Implications

Implication Area	Impact	Comments / Mitigation
Financial	Low	Minimal direct cost; within existing resources
Legal	Low	Advisory/support role only
Risk	Medium	Application outcome uncertain; mitigated by evidence gathering
Personnel	Low	Delivered within existing staffing
Environmental Impact	High	Improved monitoring and awareness of water quality
Equalities Impact Statement	Low	Public access benefits maintained
Community / Public Impact	High	Increased confidence and safer recreational use
Procurement / Contractual	Low	Not procurement-led
Property / Asset	Medium	Increased use of Recreation Ground
Data Protection	Low	Monitoring data managed in line with standards

Background papers: Full Council Minutes 14 July 2025