

**KEEP
NORTHERN
IRELAND
BEAUTIFUL**



Seaside Award Guidance Notes

2020-21

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AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The Seaside Award is the nationwide standard for the best beaches across the UK. While Seaside Award beaches can be vastly different, the flag is a symbol of quality which ensures visitors are guaranteed to find a clean, safe, attractive and well-managed coastal stretch.

At a time when more and more people are choosing to holiday at home, the Seaside Award is vital in ensuring visitors know they are enjoying the best of our beautiful and dramatic coastline. The Seaside Award is specially designed to recognise all the different uses of our coastline.

At all times throughout this text, the term 'must' indicates that the action is mandatory, while 'should' indicates that the action is advised.

INFORMATION TO BE DISPLAYED FOR BEACH VISITORS

Sufficient Information must be displayed at the beach to enable beach visitors to make an informed choice whether to enter the bathing water and to also locate with ease the facilities and services if any are offered.

1. A code of conduct that reflects local rules governing the use of the beach and surrounding areas.
Examples of a code of conduct are given in Appendix 1. The code of conduct for a beach should be prominently displayed at the major entrances and shown where possible in any printed or online reference to the beach.
2. Information about bathing water quality must be provided at the beach.
This would include as a minimum the 'swimming man' symbol. It is not necessary to display individual weekly sample results.
3. A map of the beach indicating different facilities.
A list of elements which must be included if present is given in Appendix 2.
4. A promotional mark (plaque, flag, banner), along with basic information about the Seaside award or an indication of where to find this information.
5. Evidence that the interests of any protected sites and rare or protected species have been addressed in liaison with recognised local conservation organisations.
Display boards and/or other means should be used to provide basic information to visitors about the geology and/or flora and/or fauna of the beach and its environs. The locations and nature of sensitive sites or species should be highlighted, along with any requirements or prohibitions in place to protect them. The information need not be detailed, but should signpost locations of more detailed information.

BATHING WATER

The water must be considered safe for bathing.

6. The bathing water must have achieved "Sufficient" standard under the current EU Bathing Water Directive.
To be eligible for entry to the award scheme the bathing water associated with the beach must have attained at least the 'Sufficient' standard as outlined in the Bathing Water Directive Bathing Water Directive 2006/7/EC. The calculated quality over the previous four years (where available) results must be posted. The beach does not necessarily have to be an identified bathing water. However, all monitoring must be carried out strictly within the Directive methods of analysis of inspection by either the national agency responsible or a laboratory accredited for the testing of seawater samples. The suitability of monitoring bodies should be confirmed with the National Operator. Where the Beach Operator is made aware of adverse bathing conditions, e.g. failed sample or prolonged heavy rain which is likely to affect water quality, they must inform the public as quickly as is reasonably practicable, highlighting that rivers and streams which cross the beach should not be used as an alternative bathing area.
7. The Beach Operator must highlight all existing wastewater discharge points and riverine inputs within 1km of the Award area to the National Operator and the public. Larger inputs such as Waste Water Treatment Works (WWTW) within 3km must also be notified.

The presence of a discharge point does not necessarily eliminate the beach from consideration, but they should be highlighted at information points so that members of the public can make an informed decision on whether to enter the water or not.

SAFETY

The safety equipment and services provided must, so far as is reasonably practicable, minimize the possibility of harm to beach users.

8. The Beach Operator must ensure a site-specific risk assessment has been carried out by appropriately qualified personnel. Suitable and sufficient control measures identified by that process must be put in place.
The risk assessment and list of controls determined must be submitted for all new applications. The qualifications and standing of the person completing the risk assessments must be stated in the application. If the risk assessment is carried out by an organisation such as the RNLI or RLSS then they will be deemed competent. If the risk assessment is completed by the Beach Operator then a record of the training, experience and professional qualifications which demonstrate the competence of the person completing the risk assessment should be provided.
9. If lifeguards are provided the times and area patrolled must be clearly defined and marked both on the beach and on the beach map. Lifeguards must hold appropriate qualifications from a recognised training and assessment agent.
10. The Beach Operator must provide all first aid facilities specified in their risk assessment. The location and hours of operation must be clearly displayed. If the times that any of these facilities are available are limited this must be agreed with the National Operator and clearly stated at the beach.
At lifeguarded beaches they can provide the main first aid cover. At beaches where a risk assessment determines that lifeguards are not required, first aid provision must be clearly identified on the map and on the beach/facilities and be no more than 500m or a 5 minute return journey from anywhere in the Award area, whichever is the greater.
11. So far as is reasonably practicable, easy and safe access to the beach must be provided for all, including people with impaired mobility. An access assessment should be completed indicating the measures in place.
Safe and easy access for all should be provided at every site where it is technically, environmentally and financially feasible to do so. It is understood that not every site can be made accessible, and if suitable access cannot be provided then this must be highlighted in the application. Lack of access is not in and of itself a barrier to the granting of the Award so long as there are reasonable grounds for the lack of provision. It is strongly encouraged that the Beach Operator makes available an access statement outlining the measures used to promote access, for example the access statement developed by VisitEngland, which can be completed at www.access.tourismtools.co.uk or the DisabledGo system, www.disabledgo.com.
12. The beach and facilities should be checked on a regular basis by the Operator or a designated agent. Frequency of supervision must be appropriate to the facilities and number of beach users necessary to maintain the award standard.
This concerns specifically the Award area of the beach, and checks should ideally be at least daily, and more frequently when visitor numbers or other conditions warrant it. It is expected that the Beach Operator will have determined the level of supervision required, detailed the process reasons and

processes agreed in the management plan or Normal Operating Procedures, and put in place suitable procedures and resources to deliver this. If supervision and checks are carried out less frequently than daily the rationale for this decision should be explained. Where there are large variations in the use of the beach, the scalable provision of resources should be demonstrated within the application.

13. Any significant incident in the environs of the Award area must be notified to National Operator as soon as is reasonably practicable and at most within two weeks.

A significant incident is one which results in the attendance of an emergency service to deal with a serious injury or loss of life, or which causes significant damage to the local environment. Some examples of incidents or injuries which should be reported are given in Appendix 2. The purpose of this requirement is to protect the reputation of the Award and the Operators who receive it, as well as ensuring that Beach Operators have adequate safety management practices at the beach, notification of significant incidents ensures that unsafe beaches or practices can be identified, and potential questions from press or other bodies/individuals answered accurately. It is understood that accidents can happen even when suitable and sufficient controls are in place. As such, the occurrence of a significant incident is not by itself an issue, but where the National Operator becomes aware of a significant incident which is not reported by the Beach Operator, it shall be treated as a major non-conformance.

LITTER AND WASTE

The beach and adjoining facilities must be clean.

14. There must be no obvious visual impact from litter or sewage-related debris (SRD) on the beach. The beach, intertidal area, backshore and any surrounding areas connected to the beach operation including carparks and amenity areas must be substantially free of litter, with no potentially harmful materials such as broken glass.
15. Properly secured and covered litter bins in adequate numbers should be made available for litter. These should be of suitable character and appearance and sited where appropriate to the surroundings. Where possible, recycling facilities must be provided and promoted.
16. The Beach Operator must provide appropriate facilities for the disposal of dog waste on the beach or at each access point.
The provision of bins specifically for dog waste is not required.
17. The Beach Operator must provide adequate toilet facilities, cleaned and maintained, including facilities for disabled people.

BEACH MANAGEMENT

The beach must be well managed for users, the community and the local environment.

18. The Beach Operator must consult users and the local community in producing a management plan or set of normal operating procedures for the beach.
A simple but sufficient management plan is described in the Guidance documentation. In it, the Beach Operator must demonstrate that the local community and beach users have been consulted in the development of the plan by provision of documentation with the application. The management plan must

be submitted with the application. Multi-year plans must have an annual review which may be submitted in place of the full plan.

19. The Beach Operator must develop a local emergency plan to cope with incidents which require the closure of the beach. Any incidents resulting in beach curtailment or closure must be reported to the National Operator within 24 hours.

Where there is a written emergency procedure it should be submitted with the application. In common with all emergency plans, periodic testing of the plan should be considered to ensure its suitability and efficacy. The public should be informed of pollution or potential dangers by the posting of information at the information board and through suitable media channels.

20. The Beach Operator must prevent unauthorised camping or driving on the beach. Dumping of waste must be prohibited and prevented.

21. The Beach Operator must manage the conflicting and incompatible needs of different users and the local ecosystem, in line with the health, safety and environmental management plans. e.g. zoning for swimmers, surfers, windsurfers, motorized craft and nature conservation. Zoning, either physically or by time, should be enforced where necessary by clear signage at information points and entry points to access channels; with explicit reference in literature; with and appropriate physical barriers such as buoyed lanes.

A risk assessment must be carried out on the activities likely to take place at the beach, and suitable control measures put in place. In common with the control measures for bathing, any recommendations made after risk assessment must be put in place. Zoning, where it is recommended, does not mean that activities other than bathing must be displaced from the Award area, assuming that a minimum safe separation can be maintained.

22. Dogs may be permitted in the award area unless local regulations prevent it. During the hours of operation / supervision they must be on a lead within the award area. The Beach Operator must ensure that this is adequately enforced and that the public's attention is drawn to this requirement.

We recognise that walking the dog is the objective of many visits to the beach, and this requirement does not seek to prevent that from occurring, or to penalise owners. Rather the objective is to create an inclusive environment for all visitors. The minimum requirement of dogs on leads within the award area does not preclude other areas being given over to dogs off leads, so long as an adequate assessment of the conflicting needs of users has been undertaken. 'Adequately enforced' means visitors to the beach are unlikely to observe a dog off the lead during the stated hours of operation. It is not sufficient for the Beach Operator to simply place warning signs; active enforcement of the stated requirements must be demonstrated.

23. The Beach Operator must insure all buildings, facilities and beach equipment are properly maintained to a high standard.

Any construction sites, derelict buildings or other unsafe areas within the environs of the Award area must be isolated from visitors by suitable hoarding or enclosures.

24. The Beach Operator must provide adequate access and parking facilities within the environs of the beach, with provision for disabled people.

This concerns the area around the beach, rather than the beach itself (note the requirements of criterion 12). The Beach Operator is expected to have provided a safe place to park a car or alight from public transport and complete the journey to the beach by the provision of marked footpaths, crossing points and other traffic management options. Where it is necessary to park on the beach, it must be in a designated

area which is clearly defined, marked and controlled. Advice from suitable organisations should be sought to develop a traffic management plan, which should include public transport and cycling options where possible.

APPENDIX 1. EXAMPLE OF A CODE OF CONDUCT

Safety while bathing

1. Any activity can be dangerous. Be responsible for your own safety. Ensure you know the location of personal rescue equipment and pay attention to warning symbols. There is no lifeguard service at this beach.
2. Never leave children unsupervised.
3. Report any incidents or missing persons immediately by calling the emergency services - dial 999 from any phone.
4. First aid for minor conditions is available from the cafe in the car park between 10 am and 6pm. Outside these hours or in an emergency ring 999 and ask for an ambulance.

Animals on the beach between 1st May and 31st October.

1. Horses are only permitted onto the beach before 10am and after 6pm.
2. Dogs must be kept on leads at all times within the Award area - other parts of the beach are available for safely exercising your pet. Please respect other visitors and the local wildlife.
3. Dog fouling is never acceptable, anywhere. Bag it and bin it.
4. You must ensure any animal you bring onto the shore does not alarm other persons, animal or birds.
5. Breach of any of these regulations may result in an £85 fine or court appearance.

Activities on the beach

1. Cars, Quad bikes, scramblers or bicycles are not permitted on the beach or in the dunes at any time.
2. Jet skis and other personal watercraft are not permitted within 200m of the restricted area - to the south of the beach and marked by signs - at any time.
3. Metal detecting is not permitted anywhere on the beach or in the dunes at any time.
4. Kayaks and canoes may be launched from the beach and used near the shore outside the restricted zone but you must ensure you do not disturb the seal colony.
5. You must not remove anything from or dump anything onto the beach or dunes.
6. You must not light any fires on the beach or in the dunes. Barbeques are not permitted outside the designated area by the carpark.
7. Camping or overnight sleeping is not permitted on the beach or in the dunes.
8. You must not dig for bait.

APPENDIX 2. FEATURES WHICH MUST BE PRESENT ON A MAP

A map must be present. It must show all of the following elements which are applicable:

- The area of the beach considered the 'Award Beach' (especially if award section is part of larger beach)
- Water quality sampling point
- Car / bike parks
- Disabled parking and access points (where applicable)
- Nearest public telephone
- Information points
- Lifesaving equipment
- Position of lifeguards (where applicable)
- Location of first aid kit/facilities
- Recycling facilities (where applicable)
- Public facilities - toilets, drinking water (where applicable)
- Disabled toilets (where applicable)
- Access points
- Nearby footpaths
- Potential hazards (cliffs, rip currents, access problems)
- Environmentally sensitive or protected areas.
- Riverine or waste water discharges to bathing water/beach
- Recreational zones (where applicable)

This information should be displayed at every reasonable access point to the beach.

All signs should be clean, legible and weatherproof, have strong colour contrast to distinguish information from its background, be within visual range of eye level.

APPENDIX 3 - EXAMPLE OF SIGNIFICANT INCIDENTS WHICH MUST BE REPORTED TO THE NATIONAL OPERATOR.

This is not exhaustive, rather it is to provide examples of the type and severity of incident which should be reported.

- An incident involving contact between one moving vehicle and another, at or on the award beach or its supporting areas, where damage occurs.
- Any incident involving a moving vehicle and a pedestrian. These incidents will also constitute a Road Traffic Incident, and should be reported the police in most circumstances
- Drowning
- An incident involving contact between a watercraft of any description and a bather which requires action by the emergency services. For example, a swimmer who is hit by a surfboard and requires the aid of lifeguards to return to shore, even if there are no lasting injuries. This should be reported in all circumstances even if the incident occurs in an area zoned for such activities
- Fall from constructed raised area, e.g. a promenade or balcony, which results in first aid treatment or attendance of emergency services
- Sting or wounding by flora or fauna around the beach or in the water which results in attendance of emergency services
- A fracture, break, laceration or crush injury caused by equipment on the beach. This includes equipment provided or placed by the Beach Operator as well as anything brought onto the beach by contractors or visitors

There is no need to report incidents where people are treated or taken to hospital purely as a precaution when no injury is apparent.

The National Operator does not and will not investigate incidents or apportion blame for any incident. The Beach Operator should have in place procedures to investigate and determine the root cause of such incidents (see criterion 18 on management plans / normal operating procedures). The information is provided as a notification only. The National Operator reserves the right to ask for clarification of details provided or request a review of practices where it considers such action is required.