



The Consumer Council

Elizabeth House
116 Holywood Road
Belfast
BT4 1NY

Our ref: PD 20010 912

Mr Anthony Courtney
Water Policy Team
Environmental Policy Division
Department of the Environment
Goodwood House
6th Floor
44-58 May Street
BELFAST
BT1 4NN

5 October 2011

Dear colleague,

Re: Review of and consultation on the Identification of Bathing Waters in Northern Ireland, June 2011

The Consumer Council welcomes the opportunity to respond to this consultation.

The Consumer Council is an independent consumer organisation set up in legislation to safeguard the interests of Northern Ireland consumers, particularly the vulnerable and disadvantaged. We work to promote and protect consumer interest and bring about change to benefit consumers. Our aim is to make the consumer voice heard and make it count.

We represent consumers in the areas of transport, water and energy. We also have responsibility to educate consumers on their rights and

responsibilities and to equip them with the skills they need to make good decisions about their money and manage it wisely.

Our research about consumer views on water found that consumers are concerned about pollution and ranked pollution from sewage discharges to coastal waters the second priority in relation to environmental matters.¹

The Consumer Council believes that an option for identification should be selected that best considers the conditions specific to Northern Ireland.

In our response to the Draft Quality of Bathing Water (Northern Ireland) Regulations 2008, the Consumer Council welcomed the decision to conduct a full review of bathing waters every four years.

The Consumer Council recognises that bathing water usage in Northern Ireland is unlikely to change significantly year on year and the expense that is incurred by the Department to perform surveys to assess usage. However, this could potentially mean that relevant bathing waters are used by bathers and information on water quality would not be available until the bathing water is officially identified.

If the Department decides to extend the formal review period to six years and newly nominated sites will only be considered during the next formal review period it must ensure that interested parties are fully aware of the timetable of formal review cycles and the level of evidence required for formal identification, allowing them to gather relevant data in advance.

If you wish to discuss the above in more detail, please do not hesitate to contact Jenny Robinson by telephone on 02890 674897 or by email at jrobinson@consumercouncil.org.uk.

Yours sincerely,

Jenny Robinson
Consumer Affairs Officer

¹ Tapping into Consumer Views on Water - A Research Report by the Consumer Council commissioned by Northern Ireland Water. March 2009