

SITE SET ON THE SEASIDE THIS SUMMER!

The Environmental Protection Agency has launched a new mobile-enabled website to provide information on water quality at over 190 beaches across Ireland, so that people can access any details they need before spending a day at the seaside. The website will be updated during the summer based on information from local authorities and Met Eireann.

Set up for mobile devices, the new website beaches.ie will allow visitors quick and easy access to a range of bathing information. For example, beaches.ie allows people to find out what the recent water quality has been like at their regular beach, if any swim restrictions are in place, what the weather is likely to be and even what time the tide is due in.

The site also provides information on the amenities available, including access to beach wheelchairs, while providing a link to the 'See it, Say it' App to make it easy for people to report environmental incidents or concerns. (By taking a quick photo, and adding a few details, this app makes it easier to make a complaint about issues such as dumping of litter or other environmental problems).

The website will be updated continually during the summer based on information from local authorities on water quality, Met Eireann weather forecasts and Marine Institute tidal information.

Andy Fanning, EPA Programme Manager said: "With schools closing and the summer in full swing, beaches.ie will provide people with the information they need when choosing which beach or inland bathing water site to visit during the long and hopefully warm summer."

He stressed the importance of local authorities informing the general public when pollution occurs or is predicted, adding that the site is a valuable addition to information already provided

on local authority websites and on beach noticeboards about water quality data and information on bathing restrictions.

"Anyone heading to the beach during the summer can now find the latest water quality information at beaches on this new website. The annual water quality rating for beaches is also available based on monitoring results for the past four bathing seasons."

Peter Webster, EPA Senior Scientist, encouraged everyone to use beaches.ie when planning their summer trips. "Almost three quarters of our beaches are classified as 'excellent' by EU standards so we really should make use of these great natural resources.

"We urge anyone heading to the coast or to inland bathing sites to check out the water quality at beaches.ie and sign up to our dedicated Twitter account, @EPABeaches, to receive alerts and updates."

The website beaches.ie – which has been set up primarily for mobile device users – was developed by the EPA in co-operation with local

authorities and the Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government.

Bathing water quality data that is uploaded directly to the site by local authorities will be used by the EPA, to assess the overall compliance of a bathing water with EU standards, and by An Taisce, in their assessment of beaches for Blue Flag status.