

AI-powered smart signs have come to Worthing's bathing waters

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Smart signs which answer questions about bathing waters are now at Goring Beach, Worthing and Worthing Beach House.

The signs look like simple QR codes to be scanned with a mobile phone. But behind them is an artificial intelligence (AI) ready to share its knowledge with visitors about bathing water quality and any live issues.

The Hello Lamp Post technology, funded by the Environment Agency, is also keen to learn and will ask visitors about beach conditions like how many people are enjoying the water today or is there much seaweed present? This conversation builds a picture of site activity outside of the typical bathing water season and identifies issues that could be harming water quality like seagull or dog excrement.

Visitors will also be asked to report urgent concerns to the Environment Agency's 24/7 incident hotline for follow-up but can also upload photos to the AI to show their concerns or any positive updates from the beaches. Photos will be moderated to remove anything that could identify a person.

'Local knowledge married to monitoring is a win-win'

Cat Fuller, Environment Agency area director for Solent and South Downs, said:

Normally signs only give quick guidance and direction – these are another level. They give verified facts you can trust and pick up real-life information from those who use the beaches.

This means we can fix simple issues quicker and investigate more challenging problems thoroughly. Local knowledge married to monitoring expertise is a win-win for our waters.

Users can ask the AI questions about bathing water and will be asked to answer basic questions about real-time beach conditions.

Bathing water quality was recently classified as 'Good' at Worthing and Goring Beach – a promotion credited to fixed misconnections, an ongoing push to promote only rain down the drain and information sharing between the Environment Agency, Worthing Borough Council and Southern Water. The new signs will build upon that success and drive improvement at Worthing Beach House.

'Easy for people to share what they are seeing in real time'

Councillor Vicki Wells, Worthing's Cabinet Member for Environmental Services, said:

Our coastline is a huge asset for people and nature. It's vital that people feel informed and confident that action and improvements are happening but also play their part to

report their observations.

By introducing Hello Lamp Post with the Environment Agency and Southern Water, we're going further to ensure residents and visitors have easy, on-site access to share what they're seeing in real time.

This initiative supports the important monitoring work already taking place, adding a valuable new layer of engagement that helps people better understand our beaches and supports our wider efforts to improve coastal water quality.

Where to find smart signs

The signs can be found attached to metal posts near the points on each beach where sampling is routinely done and at the council's beach hut on Goring Beach.

Worthing's beaches are the latest to join the growing network of bathing water-specific smart signage which includes the River Dart in Devon, Rivers Teme and Severn in West Midlands, the River Nidd in Yorkshire, Edisford Bridge in Lancashire and Windermere in Cumbria. Signs are coming soon to Ravensbourne in London.

Fans of beaches and bathing waters don't need signage to ask an AI questions about water quality. If you are already at a beach or bathing water, go online to tap into the latest information using the Environment Agency's BluePrint AI platform.

Background

- To protect our waterways and the health of swimmers, the Environment Agency monitors the water quality at more than 400 designated beaches and inland waters across England. We do this through a robust sampling programme - as set out in law in the Bathing Water Regulations.
- The Environment Agency classifies England's bathing waters each year as 'Excellent', 'Good', 'Sufficient' or 'Poor', based on four years of monitoring data.
- Monitoring runs throughout the bathing season and samples are assessed for *Escherichia coli* and intestinal enterococci for classification purposes.
- The 2025 classifications cover 449 designated bathing waters in England.
- 95% bathing waters in Solent and South Downs have been classed as 'Excellent', 'Good' or 'Sufficient'.
- Worthing and Goring Beach are classed as 'Good'. Worthing Beach House is classed as 'Poor'.
- The Environment Agency is working with local partners to take targeted action to improve water quality at bathing waters classified as 'Poor'.
- Bathing water designations are made by the Secretary of State for Defra following local applications and public consultation.
- Members of the public can access up-to-date bathing water information, including the 2025

classifications, via the Environment Agency's Swimfo service.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/ai-powered-smart-signs-have-come-to-worthings-bathing-waters>