

Survey Toolkit

This toolkit has been designed to provide you with all of the information you need to carry out an aesthetic assessment of your chosen beach. It is important both for your own safety and the quality of the information submitted that you read the toolkit information thoroughly.

Once this is done, all you need to do is complete and return the online registration form and we will set up a username and password so you can access and submit data over the web.

In this kit you will find the following information:

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Project Background

Over the past few years the Environment Agency has been working with the National Aquatic Litter Group (NALG) to devise a common monitoring protocol to assess the aesthetic quality of beaches.

The Agency carried out its own survey using the protocol at 472 bathing beaches in England and Wales during 2000, 2001 and 2002.

This survey provided the first building block towards our invitation to the public to **Sign Up** and help in monitoring the Aesthetic Quality of the Environment through the BeachBeat project.

Choosing a beach & Signing Up

If you would like to sign up and get involved in BeachBeat you need to sign up!
If you are 16 or under you will need parental permission to take part. You also will also need to ask a responsible adult (someone who is 18 or over) to sign up on your behalf and come with you to the beach to oversee your survey.

That person then needs to register with us – through the Sign Up page on the website. Please make sure all of the essential fields on the sign up form are completed and you check the relevant box regarding data protection.

You will be asked to select a beach you would like to survey from the drop down list. These are the 473 sites across England and Wales to choose from – so there should be one near you!

Once you have selected your beach and submitted your details you will be shown a summary of beach details including the National Grid Reference and a location of the area of beach to survey (e.g. 50m either side of slipway).
You should print this information out so you have a record for your survey.

Safety

Safety is always the Environment Agency's top priority, whatever the activity. Whether it is for our own employees, contractors or the general public, we take our Health and Safety responsibilities very seriously. Please ensure you read this section thoroughly and follow the guidance within it.

It is important to bear in mind that beaches can be unpredictable and potentially hazardous environments. Tides, cliffs, objects on the beach and the sea itself all have the potential to cause harm.

There are two keywords to remember:

'Hazard' means anything that can cause harm - e.g. fast moving cars on a busy road or a scalding hot shower.

'Risk' is the chance, great or small, that someone will be harmed by the hazard - e.g. is there a pedestrian crossing on the road or does the shower have a thermostat set to an appropriate temperature.

Risk Assessment

We make judgements almost every minute of our lives that help to reduce the level of risk we expose ourselves to. It could be checking to see if anything is coming before crossing the road or testing the temperature of the water in the shower before getting in. Whatever it might be, these judgements form a mental assessment of the level of risk from a potential hazard.

Carrying out a risk assessment is just a formal way of recording these judgements to ensure that any precautions that needed to be taken are not overlooked. Risk Assessments are very easy to carry out and the first essential part of the survey itself. By completing a Risk Assessment you will be ensuring that your survey will not present an undue risk to any members of the group taking part. You should view the Risk Assessment as part of the survey – it is also one of the rules for the prize draw competition that you have to carry it out.

Carrying Out a Risk Assessment

Included in the survey forms section of this ToolKit is a special Risk Assessment form. Your adult leader on arrival at the beach should complete this before any further activity takes place (it only takes a few minutes). Once this has been completed all members of your survey team should be made aware of any hazards and advised of any measures that they can take to reduce risk through a safety briefing. It is also important to advise all those taking part in the survey that they do so at their own risk.

The form is intended to help you assess the risks at the stretch of beach that you and your team are surveying. Don't worry if you have had no training or previous experience in carrying out a Risk Assessment, as long as you follow the instructions it is a straightforward procedure involving 4 simple steps:

1 *Look for the hazards*

Think about where volunteers will go within the survey area and identify anything that could reasonably be expected to cause harm. This could be an existing physical feature such as a loose cliff or items that may or may not be present such as Potentially Harmful Litter.

2 *Decide who might be harmed, and how*

Yourself and the rest of the survey group will be those at highest risk. You may wish to consider people who may not be part of the survey and whether they may be harmed by any activities - e.g. tripping over a tape being used to measure the survey area.

3 *Evaluate the risks arising from the hazards & decide whether existing precautions are adequate or more should be done*

Even after all precautions have been taken, usually some risk remains. What you have to decide for each significant hazard is whether risk is high, medium or low.

If you find something that needs to be addressed, ask yourself:

(a) Can I get rid of the risk?

(b) If not, how can I control the risks so that harm is unlikely?

Suitable precautionary measures for all reasonably foreseeable hazards, will minimise risk to volunteers.

4 *Record your findings and brief your survey team*

Write down the significant findings of your assessment on the Risk Assessment form. This means (a) writing down the more significant hazards and (b) recording your most important conclusions - for example a cliff, at the back of the beach, with unstable rock that could fall on volunteers.

Precautions and Equipment

Before you carry out your survey it is important to make sure you are well prepared, both in terms of equipment and preparation.

You and your team will need

Adequate clothing including sturdy footwear, waterproofs, suntan lotion etc...

Appropriate refreshments including soft drinks and food.

A First-Aid kit is an essential item – just in case!

Your survey forms, a clipboard and four 'markers' for your survey area.

Precautions

Check the Weather forecast – please don't carry out a survey if it is going to be stormy as this may constitute too great a risk to your team.

Tides - note the times of the tides for the day beforehand and keep an eye on the tide level during your survey. The survey should be carried out on a falling tide as close to low tide as possible. Please note that the survey area does not extend below the mean high water mark.

Head counts – it is important that you always carry out a head count at the beginning and end of the survey to ensure you don't lose any members of your group.

Emergency Phone - make sure volunteers know where the nearest telephone is and remind them that the emergency services (including the Coastguard) can be contacted by dialling 999.

Notify the Coastguard – if you choose one of the more remote beaches at which to carry out your survey.

Mobile phones - if you intend to use one for emergencies check the reception prior to the event as some beaches may not have a signal.

Be careful of slippery rocks and other potential hazards such as lifting items which are too heavy for you.

Don't touch any of the litter you observe on your survey containers or drums that look as if they contain hazardous substances, or any unfamiliar objects. Try to keep inquisitive volunteers away. Contact the local council, Coastguard or police immediately and notify them of your find.

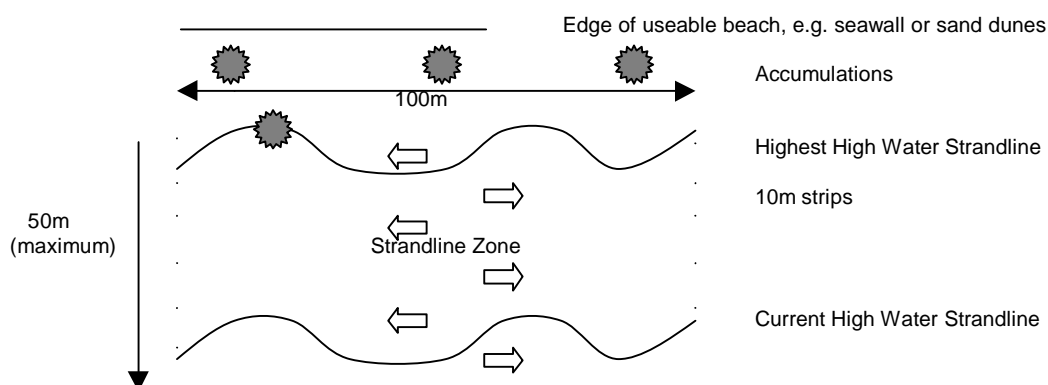
Avoid disturbing wild animals

Children (under 17) must be accompanied by an adult at all times and have parental consent to take part.

Carrying out your survey

The Survey itself is very simple to carry out and should take no more than an hour to complete. Here are the instructions:

1. Locate your beach using the grid Reference and location information you were given when you registered.
2. Go down onto the beach using the safest route (a recognised path or slipway) & carry out the Risk Assessment component of the survey.
3. Fill in the first page of the survey sheet, describing the weather and tidal conditions. Complete all of the information on beach management (e.g. number of litter bins) that you can, where you don't know and can't find out then check the 'don't know' box. Notice boards or lifeguards on site might be able to help you with some of these.
4. Using the grid reference and/or location point provided, find the area of beach to survey. Locate the highest high water strandline and current high water strandline across this survey line. (A distinctive line along the length of the beach where natural debris, pebbles or other material may have accumulated as the tide dropped.)
5. Measure 100m along the highest high water strandline and mark the length with the markers provided. *Do not touch anything in the strandline whilst doing this.*
6. Measure the distance to the current high water strandline and record the size of the survey area. If it is greater than 50m then mark out a 50m by 100m section of the beach between the two strandlines. If the current high water strandline is within 50m of the high water strandline then complete the rectangle using the two strandlines as the long sides of the rectangle.
7. Divide the area into 10m segments (or 5 strips if the area is less than 50m) across the width of the beach and mark using the pegs provided. Please record the number of sweeps you carry out.
8. Travel along each strip of the survey area counting the number of litter items present on the beach. **DO NOT TOUCH** anything but record the number of each items you see according to the categories on the survey sheet. A tally count **||||** works best for this. (Follow the dotted line from the Highest High Water Strandline as shown below.)



9. If there is any doubt as to the category a litter item should be allocated, then default to the worst case, e.g. a *general litter* item **could** be deemed dangerous then default to the *harmful litter* category.
10. Standing a few feet back from the highest high water strandline, identify the area of useable beach between the highest high water strandline and the edge of the beach (sand dune, sea wall, etc.). Assess whether there are any obvious clumps of litter in that area and record the number of these accumulations. If you are unsure then describe this in the box provided.

Submitting your results

Once you've completed your survey you'll be itching to submit your results!

Go to the login page on the BeachBeat website and enter your username and password then follow the simple steps – you'll be taken to a form that has the same fields as the survey form – you can then enter your data here.

The process only takes a few minutes and is very simple.

Viewing Your Results

Immediately you have submitted your results the grades for your beach will be shown on screen – you can print this out to keep a record or save the file to disk using 'save as'. At this point only you and the BeachBeat administrator will be able to see the data you have submitted.

Quality Control & Authorisation

The BeachBeat administrator will check everyday to see if new data has been added and will take a look at your data before authorising it. If your results present any unusual findings you may be contacted to check that you have entered your data correctly.

Once the administrator is happy with the validity of the data they will authorise it, at which time anyone with Internet access will be able to view it through the Beach Search page!

So now you are ready to walk your BeachBeat – all you have to do is print the survey forms are on the next two pages.

Have fun on your BeachBeat – we look forward to receiving your survey data.



Survey Form

Remember: **DO NOT TOUCH** anything you find during this survey!

Name:	Date and time of survey:
Beach Name:	National Grid Reference::
Location on beach (precise description, landmarks):	
Risk Assessment Information (see the safety section of the Toolkit for guidance)	
Potential Hazards observed	Risk level (low – medium – high)
<small>Note if you deem the level of risk to be medium or high for any hazard you should not carry out the survey</small>	
Size of survey area if less than 100 x 50m:	Number of sweeps:
State of tide: HW-3 [] HW-2 [] HW-1 [] HW [] HW+1 [] HW+2 [] HW+3 [] LW-3 [] LW-2 [] LW-1 [] LW [] LW+1 [] LW+2 [] LW+3 [] Springs [] Neaps []	Beach type: sand [] shingle [] pebble [] rock [] other []
Weather conditions: sunny/dry [] partial cloud [] overcast [] light showers [] showers [] constant light rain [] constant rain [] heavy showers [] constant heavy rain [] hail/sleet/snow [] Wind: no wind [] light wind [] moderate wind [] strong wind []	
Description/Additional Information: What bathing water quality results are shown on-site? (result and date) How many litter bins are there within 500m of the survey area? Y [] N [] Number (if Y) Is there any seaweed or natural debris present? <i>(This should not be included in the litter count)</i> Seaweed Yes [] No [] Driftwood Yes [] No [] Other Yes [] No []	
Do you have any other observations/comments: <div style="border: 1px solid black; height: 40px; width: 100%;"></div>	

Continued

Recording Form – if in doubt as to which of the following categories an item should be allocated to, default to the worst case scenario; e.g. If any item could be deemed harmful but you are unsure, then default to the *harmful litter* category.

Category	Examples	Number of Items –Tally count IIII ✓	Total
General Sewage Debris	? Feminine hygiene (sanitary towels, tampons, applicators) ? Contraceptives ? Toilet paper ? Fatty deposits ? Identifiable human faeces		
Sewage Debris: Cotton Buds	? Cotton Buds		
Gross Litter (at least one dimension greater than 50cm)	? Shopping trolleys ? Pieces of Furniture ? Large plastic or metal containers ? Road cones ? Bicycles or prams ? Tyres ? Large items of processed wood (pallets, etc.) Driftwood should not be included		
General Litter (items less than 50cm in dimension)	? Drink cans ? Food packaging ? Cigarette packets and ends ? Any other items <i>Items with a diameter less than 1cm should not be counted.</i>		
Potentially Harmful Litter (potentially dangerous to humans or animals)	? Sharp broken glass If it is clear that the glass originates from one item (e.g. a bottle) then it is counted as one. ? Medical waste (e.g. used syringes, plasters) ? Sharps (e.g. metal waste, barbed wire) ? Soiled disposable nappies ? Containers marked as toxic ? Others (e.g. flares, ammunition, explosives) ? Dead domestic animals ? Any other items (please specify)		
Faeces (non-human)	? Dog faeces <i>Do not count faeces from animals such as sheep and horses, as they are not considered to be a nuisance or hazard. However, record their presence in the 'Any other items' box.</i>		
Oil (includes oil waste, mineral or vegetable from fresh spills, weathered deposits or tarry wastes)	Rate according to the following grades: A – no oil present B – traces of oil but weathered or on other litter items C – oil that is immediately noticeable, can be smelt or seen and constitutes a nuisance D – objectionable oil which prevents normal use of entire beach		
Accumulations (a discrete aggregation of litter clearly visible when approaching the survey area)	Please record the number of accumulations. If the litter is not in clear accumulations, but rather a longer strip or general spread, then please specify.		
Any Other Items	For items that do not fit into any other category (please list)		

