# Thousands paddle out in protest against UK sewage crisis as bathing season begins



As the official bathing season in England and Wales commences, a wave of discontent ripples through UK beaches, rivers, and lakes. On Saturday, 17 May, thousands are expected to engage in Paddle-Out Protests against the severe sewage crisis plaguing the nation, which recorded alarming data showing untreated sewage was discharged into natural waters over once every minute last year. This situation showcases long-standing issues within the privatised water sector, raising vital questions about public health and environmental safety.

Organised by the environmental charity Surfers Against Sewage (SAS), these protests culminate in a significant gathering in Eastbourne, dubbed the “Big Turd Paddle Out,” where participants will launch from Wishtower Beach. The protest reflects broader frustrations with the private water companies, often accused of prioritising profits over necessary infrastructure improvements. The anger from the public culminates against a backdrop of missed regulatory targets and a lack of accountability, as voiced by SAS CEO Giles Bristow. He remarked, “The public has simply had enough and will be paddling out in their thousands to send a clear message to government and the polluters: end this sewage scandal now!”

The Paddle-Out Protests are not only a demonstration against pollution but also a call for comprehensive reform in the water industry. SAS is advocating for prioritisation of environmental and public health over profits, demanding real accountability from water companies that have repeatedly failed to deliver on promises regarding infrastructure investment. Current statistics highlight a worrying trend: as these water companies announce billions in investment, the evidence of their success in mitigating sewage discharges remains scant.

Moreover, the disparity in monitoring water quality raises further concerns, particularly in Scotland and Northern Ireland where the bathing season runs later than in England and Wales. The current data collection through SAS's Safer Seas & Rivers Service app reveals inadequate monitoring capabilities, with only a fraction of the networks under scrutiny, resulting in a lack of real-time pollution alerts for swimmers. Bristow pointed out the urgent necessity for reform, asserting, “We cannot keep chucking good money down the drain to service debt, dividends and dodgy bosses, whilst the deluge of sewage discharges contaminates our wild waters and the ocean.”

The Paddle-Out Protests also reflect an increasing public awareness of the negative ramifications of sewage discharge beyond just health risks, affecting sectors like tourism and shellfish farming, as featured in recent reports. In a country where recreational and commercial activities hinge on the safety and cleanliness of water, the backlash against privatised water companies is reaching a crescendo. Water sports organisations and campaigners alike are amplifying demands for government action, with event cancellations highlighting the severe impact of this crisis.

Participants in various Paddle-Out events across the UK, from Brighton to Falmouth, have echoed similar sentiments, each participant representing a larger movement calling for change. As summed up by Oliver Sterno from Plastic Free Eastbourne, the commitment to maintaining water quality should not be relegated to a few summer months; rather, continuous and robust monitoring must become the norm.

The Independent Water Commission's review and impending recommendations are anticipated with cautious optimism. Public sentiment indicates a firm demand for actionable change, as activists seek to ensure that any proposals translate to genuine reform. These Paddle-Out Protests represent a convergence of environmental activism, public health advocacy, and community solidarity – a powerful statement that the era of tolerating inequitable practices in water management must come to an end.

### Reference Map

1. Paragraphs 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6
2. Paragraph 5
3. Paragraph 6
4. Paragraph 3
5. Paragraph 5
6. Paragraph 5
7. Paragraph 6

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

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