

## BREACH OF THE CODE OF PRACTICE FOR OFFICIAL STATISTICS

This document reports a breach of the Code of Practice for Official Statistics, or the relevant Pre-release Access to Official Statistics Orders, to which the Code applies as if it included these orders.

### 1. Background information

Name of Statistical Output (including weblink to the relevant output or 'landing page')

Condition of Bathing Waters in Wales.

<https://naturalresources.wales/water/quality/bathing-water-quality/?lang=en>

Name of Producer Organisation

Natural Resources Wales (NRW)

Name and contact details of the statistical Head of Profession (Lead Official in an Arm's Length Body) submitting this report, and date of report

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### 2. Circumstances of breach

Relevant Principle/Protocol and Practice

Protocol 2: Release practices, Practice 5

Date of occurrence

3 May 2016

Nature of breach (including links with previous breaches, if any)

The pre-announced publication date on GOV.UK was 03 May 2016, however the statistics were not published until 04 May 2016 (one day later).

## Reasons for breach

There was an inconsistency in the publication dates on our internal timetable and on the published calendar.

Natural Resources Wales is currently recruiting a full-time Official Statistician following the recent end of a secondment to fill this role. The secondee, who originally set the date as 03 May is no longer in post, and data and communications staff within NRW thought that the date set for publication had been changed to 09 May, after the pre-election period had ended. This confusion was only discovered on 04 May, when the date for publication as pre-announced on gov.uk had already passed.

### **3. Reactions and impact (both within the producer body and outside)**

The Reporting and Data Officer responsible for the Bathing Waters data identified the error when checking other publication notices on 04 May, and saw the Bathing Waters' date for publication was registered as 03 May rather than 09 May. Immediate checks were made internally and in consultation with officials within the Welsh Government, who provided additional guidance on the procedures to follow in order to rectify and report the breach.

There have been no enquiries about this delay in publication either internally or externally. Once the error was discovered immediate action was taken to publish the data.

### **4. Corrective actions taken to prevent reoccurrence of such a breach (include short-term actions, and long-term changes made to procedures)**

A full-time Official Statistician is being recruited at this time, they will have oversight and responsibility for the publication of all Official Statistics produced by Natural Resources Wales.

The annual date for the publication of the Bathing Waters report will be agreed in advance by both production and communications staff. This will ensure that both the Natural Resources Wales' communications calendar and the pre-release announcement are consistent and accurate.

Staff have been reminded of their obligations under the Code and now have a greater understanding of the breach reporting process. The newly appointed NRW Official Statistician is expected to be in place by mid-summer and will ensure we benefit from continued and effective support from our colleagues in Welsh Government in meeting our responsibilities in accordance with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics.