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## Swimming banned at premier beach over e-coli fears



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By Sean O'Riordan

Swimming has been banned on one of Cork's premier beaches as a result of excessive E.coli bacteria levels in the water.

Notices were put up at the Front Strand in Youghal after officials working for the council's environment directorate noticed elevated levels of the bacteria in routine sampling.

It is believed that localised heavy rain may have caused slurry to wash into the River Blackwater and then out to sea.

Last Friday, the council put up warning notices at three beaches in West Cork because it was expecting that heavy rain forecast could elevate E.coli levels.

It put the notices in place at Tragumna, Barleycove, and The Warren, advising people to avoid swallowing or splashing water, to wash their hands before eating, and not to swim if they were pregnant, had an open cut, or a weakened immune system.

A few days earlier, the council also prohibited swimming at Cadogan's Beach, Schull, and at a nearby stream.

The issue was raised at a meeting in County Hall yesterday.

Youghal-based Fianna Fáil councillor Mary Linehan-Foley said there was consternation in the town over the weekend when 'no swimming' notices went up on the Front Strand.

"It's the height of the tourism season and businesses are worried," she said.

Ms Linehan-Foley was concerned that the problem might have been caused by the building of the town's new sewerage treatment system.

However, council chief executive Tim Lucey assured her this was not the case and it was likely to be run-off from the land.

He said that when work is finished on the sewerage system, it will help to improve sea water quality in the area.

Mr Lucey said that council officials inspect water quality on beaches on a more regular basis between June 1 and September 15 each year.

He said further tests had been carried out and when the results were known, the council would liaise with the HSE to decide if it was safe to reopen the beaches for swimming.

In August 2012, Cork County Council banned swimming in seven beaches in the county due to concerns about levels of the E.coli bacteria in the water.

Redbarn, the Front Strand, and Claycastle, all in Youghal, as well as Garretstown near Kinsale, Garryvoe near Castlemartyr, Coolmaine near Kilbrittain, and Oysterhaven were closed due to the outbreak, but were later reopened once water quality had been restored.

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