

## Manningtree Mermaids Update – April 2024

It's been a busy year for the Manningtree Mermaids! Back in February 2023 we launched our campaign group, Safe Water in Manningtree (SWiM), to apply for Bathing Water Designation at Manningtree Beach. If successful, it will mean that the Environment Agency will test our water on a weekly basis throughout the bathing season for E.coli and enterococci. Should unsafe levels of this bacteria be found, which are harmful to human health and indicative of sewage pollution, the polluter will be identified and legally obliged to clean up their act.

The application process was challenging and involved great efforts from a huge amount of people. We had to carry out water user counts to demonstrate how popular the Beach is, promote and undertake a survey to prove we have public support for designation and obtain letters of support from various key stakeholders. To do this we had armies of volunteers counting water users; presenting to the county, town and parish councils and other community associations; giving assemblies at primary schools; holding stalls at the Saturday market and all local events; running a social media campaign; writing articles; giving press interviews; delivering 5,000 campaign leaflets; and, the best part of the process, throwing a Beach Picnic party of live music, games and a mass swim where we managed to over 300 people in and on the water, including Sir Bernard Jenkin!

The application, all 70 detailed pages of it, was submitted in October and at the end of February we were informed that we'd gone through to the final stage of the process, a public consultation held by DEFRA. We therefore had another push to get as many people as possible to complete the consultation and again received so many messages of support from our wonderful community. The consultation closed on 10 March and at the time of writing we're awaiting the final decision.

Although the process has been hard and sometimes stressful work, it has been so rewarding and overwhelming having the community genuinely come together to support us. We'd like to thank Mistley Council for their support for our application and the SWiM campaign.

