



## **NEW app helps staycationers find the south west coast's best beaches without the crowds**

**Beach Check UK works in real time to help maintain social distancing on the south west coast this summer**



*Westward Ho!, north Devon; Minehead Beach Central (C: Minehead BID)*

**5 July, 2021**

**Beach Check UK is an innovative new app which allows visitors to check the status of a beach before visiting in order to avoid congested beaches and to encourage them to discover nearby beaches that are quieter and less crowded. The free-of-charge app has just launched in Somerset and West Taunton, and Torridge, Devon on the UK's south west coast, as well as various other destinations around the UK.**

Working on a traffic light system that uses sophisticated technology and on-the-ground authorised users who assign a colour code to beaches according to the number of visitors, ability for social distancing to be maintained and number of car park spaces, the app aims to reduce overcrowding at popular coastal areas and encourage safe social distancing.

The app is free of charge and simple to use, downloadable from [Google Play](#) and the [Apple App store](#) (with no in-app purchases), allowing users to check individual beaches or to see a map showing red (crowded), amber (less congested) and green (uncongested) beaches.

The app will allow staycationers and day-trippers to check the status of the following beaches: Westward Ho! near Barnstaple and Minehead in Somerset. More beaches will be added as they come on-stream.

Piloted by Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Council in summer 2020, the app was developed to help manage overcrowding of the area's beaches following easing of the first national lockdown. In its first phase, it had around 40,000 downloads. Following its successful introduction, the app was awarded further funding by the government's Local Digital Collaboration Unit at the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government for a national roll-out.

**Torrige District Councillor Cheryl Cottle-Hunkin - Lead Member for Community, Culture and Leisure said:** "The Beach Check app will be a great way for people to plan their trip to Westward Ho! during quieter times and avoid the potential for longer queuing and congestion. It also highlights many of the facilities at this award-winning Blue Flag beach that make it such a special place to visit.

"Safe and clean bathing waters, as well as direct access from the beach to Northam Burrows Country Park, make this a must-see for tourists and locals alike. We look forward to a safe and enjoyable summer and recommend people use the app to plan ahead."

**Somerset and West Taunton Cllr Marcus Kravis, Executive Member for Economic Development, said:**

"We decided to adopt the Beach Check App in line with our Covid-safety planning as we recognised the value it can provide safeguarding visitors and residents to Minehead and other beaches around the UK. It's simple to use and helps beachgoers to maintain social distancing by choosing less populated zones or beaches with lesser crowding.

"The App is being adopted by other coastal authorities as part of a national roll-out and now that it's been officially launched, we can provide more details behind the recently installed cameras at Minehead Beach that work in conjunction with it. To allay any privacy concerns, these send low-res distance shots on request to the Minehead BID team, enabling them to set the congestion colour for each zone displayed via the App's map.

"Minehead is ready to welcome greater numbers of visitors as the lockdown continues to ease and I encourage them to stay safe by downloading the App to check congestion levels beforehand."

**Andrew Hopkins, Minehead BID Manager, added:**

"Minehead BID is delighted to support this national project and to take on responsibility for updating the Beach Check App. Throughout the last year working with Somerset West and Taunton and other partners we have been encouraging people to come back and safely visit our beautiful beach and town. Accommodation bookings are looking very encouraging and our many independent retail and hospitality businesses are ready to welcome new and old visitors. We are all looking forward to a very vibrant summer ahead and would encourage visitors planning to visit Minehead to download the app and check the congestion rating before visiting us."

There are plans to sign up more coastal locations, and users are encouraged to contact their local authority if they feel their area would benefit.

**Explore the south west coast this summer with these ideas from Beach Check UK:**

**Discover the largest rose garden in the south west**

Celebrate the beauty and scent of over 2,000 roses in the largest rose gardens in the south west at [RHS Garden Rosemoor's Rose Festival](#), taking place until 18 July 2021 in north Devon. Enjoy late evening events with live acoustic music, self-guided trails and scented journeys through the gardens to discover stunning roses and their fascinating stories, including some of the oldest and most fragrant varieties. With more than 200 different varieties and over 2,000 roses - from cottage garden climbers, to bright and beautiful container roses – this is a joy for the senses.

**Explore the South West Coast Path in Porlock**

For one of the most scenic walking routes in the UK, the [Porlock Bay route](#) (8.6 miles) showcases everything that Porlock has to offer: woodland, saltmarsh, hills and picturesque villages, with scenery, wildlife, geology, history, culture and plenty of places to eat and drink. For those travelling around by car this summer, the A39 from Minehead to Barnstaple takes in stunning views of the Bristol Channel

and Exmoor National Park as well as the steep incline of Porlock Hill - the highest gradient of any A-Road in Britain at 1,300ft in less than two miles!

### **Luxury Cabins with spa vibes**

Proof that camping really can be glam, luxury [Coastal Cabins](#) in the picturesque countryside of North Devon offer king-size beds, kitchenettes, en-suite shower rooms and a private decking area, plus there's a mobile spa service for those looking for pampering from their very own cabin, a Wild Spa hot tub area with massage jets (don't forget the bubbly), on-site babysitting service and a guide to local caterers if you don't feel like cooking, or there are plenty of village restaurants and pubs nearby.

For more information, visit <https://www.englishcoast.com/en/blog/beach-check-uk-app>

### **Press:**

For further information on Beach Check UK, or high-res images, please contact Lizzie Cooper or Jackie Franklin at [Travel PR](#) on [l.cooper@travelpr.co.uk](mailto:l.cooper@travelpr.co.uk) (07772 136 027) / [j.franklin@travelpr.co.uk](mailto:j.franklin@travelpr.co.uk) (07779 336 158).

### **Notes to editors:**

1. Launched in July 2020, the Beach Check app is the brainchild of BCP Council, designed using sophisticated technology to help manage over-crowding among its busy beaches.
2. Each location the app is operated will provide information specific to the data available. In some locations the new version will use camera feeds to determine the traffic light system across beaches and will include updates on car park availability. It is simple to use, free to download from Google Play and the Apple App Store and it allows users to check individual beaches or see a map showing red (crowded), amber (less congested) and green (uncongested) beaches.
3. App data is supplied by a mix of sources. At the start of the day, a prediction is set for each zone, based on previous data, factoring in the date and weather to show how busy we forecast each zone will be. From mid-morning, beach management staff (seafront rangers) will update each section on a regular basis to reflect any changes in congestion observed. This is supplemented by CCTV and some footfall counters. Plans are underway to embed the app on coastal destination's tourism webpages.
4. The app has been funded by the government's Local Digital Collaboration Unit at MHCLG the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government which includes funding the launch and maintenance of the app in its first year at no cost to local authorities. The total funding secured for this development is £160,000.
5. The beaches can be searched for individually as well as seen on a wider map. Where data is not available this will be indicated on the app or if any location is temporarily closed. Options allow the consumer to change the colour-codes of the beaches if required. Those who have already downloaded the app will find it updates automatically to the national version.
6. Visit [www.bcpCouncil.gov.uk/summerreadiness](http://www.bcpCouncil.gov.uk/summerreadiness)<<http://www.bcpCouncil.gov.uk/summerreadiness>> for more information.