



Sewerage: From the IRIS Scheme to the Regional Sewage Treatment Strategy

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RESEARCH PAPER

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1. Summary

In 1991, Tynwald approved a strategy to modernise the Island's sewerage system and bring to an end the discharge of untreated sewage to sea. This became known as the IRIS Scheme or Master Plan: the Integration and Recycling of the Island's Sewage. By 2005, sewage from 65% of the Island's population, mostly in the South and East of the Island, was being treated via the IRIS network at Meary Veg in Santon.

In 2007, following a review of the IRIS Scheme, Tynwald approved proposals to adopt a regional approach for the remaining locations without sewage treatment. Rather than pumping sewage back to Meary Veg for treatment, these locations would have local sewage treatment works, with the sludge from these facilities taken on a regular basis to Meary Veg for final treatment. The regional approach was adopted largely for financial reasons: it was estimated that it would represent a saving of £25 million in capital costs.

Expenditure of £39,984,000 for Phase 1 of the Regional Sewage Treatment Strategy (RSTS) was approved by Tynwald in 2011. Phase 1 was completed in the summer of 2017 with the construction of Balladoole Sewage Treatment Works in Ramsey. It was completed under budget at approximately £28.1 million.

Phase 2 of the RSTS, which will provide sewage treatment in the Peel and Laxey and Baldrine catchment areas, is in the early stages. Expenditure of £23,500,000 was approved by Tynwald for Phase 2 in March 2019; a supplementary vote for an additional £16,950,000 has been tabled for the July 2022 sitting of Tynwald.

The works proposed for Peel and Laxey have proved to be a contentious issue. While there is a general consensus that sewage treatment is needed in these areas, residents, community groups and local representatives have raised concerns about the exact location of the works. Planning applications for sites in Peel and Laxey in 2020 were not successful. At the time of writing, there is no confirmed site for either location. Manx Utilities has, however, confirmed that it is proceeding with proposals to build regional sewage treatment works in both locations.

The project to improve the Island's sewerage system has been closely linked to the adoption of bathing water standards. In 1990, Tynwald adopted the 1976 EU bathing water standards, which were updated by the EU in 2006. In 2016, Tynwald voted to adopt the 2006 standards 'as an objective'. In 2018, following the approval of recommendations from a report by the Environment and Infrastructure Policy Review Committee, work began on implementing the 2006 standards. In 2021, Tynwald approved the introduction of designated bathing waters, which are monitored weekly during the bathing season against standards based on the 2006 EU Directive, with *Good* as the minimum standard required. Other non-designated locations continue to be monitored a monthly basis.

Both the IRIS Scheme and the RSTS have been the subject of two parliamentary inquiries. Following referrals from two Members after the October 2007 sitting of Tynwald, the Public Accounts Committee examined the development of the project up to October 2007; its report and recommendations were debated in November 2010. In 2017 and 2018, the Environment and Infrastructure Policy Review Committee investigated the plans for Phase 2 of the project, with a focus on Peel. The recommendations from the Committee's report were debated by Tynwald in May 2018.

Sewerage has been a popular topic of debate and questioning in Tynwald since the beginning of the IRIS project. An overview of questions, financial motions, and other debates is provided below.

2. Developments in Sewerage Policy 1991-date

2.1. The Integration and Recycling of the Island's Sewage: the IRIS Scheme

By the late 1980s, it had been recognised that the Island's sewerage system was in need of modernisation. 80% of the population lived in coastal communities where the sewage was discharged untreated to sea via outfall pipelines, which led to raw sewage being washed up onto beaches. The sewage of the remaining 20% of homes located inland was treated at 27 small sewage treatment works which discharged the treated effluent into rivers and other watercourses. Both the coastal outfall pipelines and inland treatment works were in poor condition and needed replacing.¹

In 1990, following the [adoption of the 1976 EU bathing water quality standards](#), the concept of IRIS was developed by a working party of the then Department of Highways, Ports and Properties (later the Department of Transport).

On [20th February 1991](#) Tynwald approved the recommendations of the working party for a strategy for the collection and treatment of sewage, which became known as the IRIS Scheme or Master Plan: the Integration and Recycling of the Island's Sewage. The first and second principles approved at that sitting—a single sewage treatment plant connected by a pumped main transfer system—were the basis of the IRIS strategy until October 2007.

Two update and review reports were debated and approved in [1995](#) and [1998](#), after which the scheme periodically appeared as the subject of [financial motions for various components of the scheme](#). By March 2004, total expenditure on IRIS had reached £82,624,958.²

By 2005, sewage from over 60% of the Island's population was being treated at Meary Veg.³ Raw sewage had ceased to be discharged at Port Erin, Port St Mary, Castletown, Derbyhaven, Douglas, and Onchan.

2.2. Review of the IRIS scheme

In [November 2005](#), Tynwald debated a report on the *IRIS Master Plan: Recommendations for Continued Development*,⁴ which recommended the continuation of the strategy of centralised treatment of sewage at Meary Veg. Although the report and its recommendations were approved by Tynwald, several Members raised concerns about the strategy during the debate, and the Minister agreed to investigate the possibility of a review.

As a result of the debate in 2005, the Department commissioned consultants Mouchel Parkman to conduct an independent review into the IRIS strategy in 2006. The review recommended a regional approach for the North and West of the Island, largely for financial reasons: the cost of constructing treatment facilities had fallen while the cost of pumping sewage had risen in the intervening years since the inception of the project.⁵

¹ See [PP 83/10](#), para 2.1.

² [PP 83/10](#), para 2.9.

³ [PP 83/10](#), para 3.2.

⁴ Available in the Tynwald Library (NN 2005/0001).

⁵ GR 33/07: Review of IRIS Master Plan. Development of a Regional Sewage Treatment Strategy (October 2007) (available in the Tynwald Library).

2.3. Regional Sewage Treatment Strategy (RSTS)

The Regional Sewage Treatment Strategy (RSTS) recommended by Mouchel Parkman was approved by Tynwald at the [October 2007 sitting](#).

In September 2008, Aecom, an engineering firm, was commissioned to produce a business case for a regional sewage treatment strategy, as well as a sludge disposal strategy. The study concluded that it would cost £66.3m in capital expenditure for regional treatment works, as well as an additional £9.45m for enhanced facilities at Meary Veg to treat the sludge from the works. The strategy was debated and approved by Tynwald in [July 2009](#).⁶ The then Minister for Transport said that the regional approach represented 'a saving of approximately £25m, compared to the original IRIS Master Plan'.

The regional strategy was developed into costed options and presented as the 'Regional Sewage Treatment and Sludge Disposal Strategy 2011-2016'. Expenditure of £39,984,000 was approved by Tynwald in [April 2011](#) for Phase 1.

PHASE 1

Phase 1 comprised several schemes, including:

- A regional treatment facility for Ramsey and Andreas;
- The replacement of the sludge drier at Meary Veg so that it could deal with additional sludge from the regional plants;
- Replacement of treatment works in Kirk Michael and Jurby;
- Construction of nine [local sewage treatment plants](#) in locations in the North and West of the Island (Integral Rotating Biological Contactors or IRBCs).

Phase 1 was completed in the summer of 2017 with the construction of Balladoole Sewage Treatment Works in Ramsey.

The works for Phase 1 were completed at a cost of £28.1 million, approximately 30% under the budget approved for it by Tynwald.⁷

PHASE 2

Phase 2 is intended to address those areas which remain without sewage treatment: Peel, and Laxey and Baldrine.

As per Recommendation 2 of the [Public Accounts Committee](#), an independent review of the RSTS was conducted at the end of Phase 1, albeit at a later date than the five years recommended. Overall, the review supported the continuation of a regional approach and included a number of recommendations dealing with technical aspects of the works proposed for the Peel, Laxey and Baldrine catchment areas. The report was laid before Tynwald in May 2018 [[GD 2018/0026](#)] and referred to during the debate on the Environment and Infrastructure Policy Review Committee's [report on Phase 2 of the RSTS](#). The review drew some criticism during the debate because it was conducted by a consultant who had also been involved in the 2006 review of the IRIS project and subsequent development of the regional strategy.

⁶ GR 26/09 (several volumes – available in the Tynwald Library).

⁷ [PP 2018/0038](#), para. 22.

In [December 2020](#), Manx Utilities reaffirmed its commitment to the regional sewage treatment strategy following the rejection of the planning application for the [Glenfaba House site in Peel](#).⁸

On [25th March 2022](#), the Manx Utilities Board agreed that a regional approach for both Peel and Laxey would be progressed.⁹

In [March 2019](#), Tynwald approved expenditure of £23,500,000 for Phase 2. A [supplementary vote](#) for an additional £16,950,000 has been tabled for the July 2022 sitting of Tynwald.

3. Location of sewage treatment works in the West and North East

There is a general consensus that sewage treatment is needed in the remaining areas without it. However, the exact location of the works proposed for Peel and Laxey and Baldrine has proved to be a contentious issue. At the time of writing, no site has been confirmed for either location. Chair of Manx Utilities Rob Callister MHK has stated that, 'we must be mindful that to publicise sites of interest would be disrespectful to landowners involved, potentially prejudice the planning process and ultimately be detrimental to the public purse.'¹⁰

3.1. Peel

In April 2008, Dalrymple Associates, an Island-based project management company, was commissioned to produce a location report for the sewage works for the West of the Island.¹¹ The report, published in two volumes in May and June of that year, recommended Site 2 (Fields adjacent to Peel Power Station) and Site 11 (Glenfaba Road, Ballaterson Farm) as possible locations for a sewage works, having ruled out a number of other sites. Site 2 was considered the preferred site.

The 2009 regional business case approved by Tynwald included a design for a new sewage treatment works for Peel at Site 2 (next to Peel Power Station). Following protests from residents over the proposals,¹² Peel Town Commissioners voted not to support an Environmental Impact Assessment, as they did not accept the preferred site. As a result, Peel was not included in Phase 1 of the RSTS investment programme.¹³

In 2013 Hyder Consulting (UK) Ltd/ARCADIS was commissioned to undertake a feasibility study into the best location for a new STW in Peel.¹⁴ The report considered 3 sites: Site 1 at Knockaloe Farm, Site 2 next to Peel Power Station, and Site 3 at Glenfaba Road. The report found that Sites 2 and 3 to be more economical than Site 1, and recommended further environmental assessments.

⁸ Manx Utilities, 'Regional Sewage Treatment is the way forward' (17 Dec 2020), <https://www.manxutilities.im/news/2020/dec/regional-sewage-treatment-is-the-way-forward/> (accessed 12 Jul 2022).

⁹ Manx Utilities, 'Sewage Treatment Strategy – Phase 2' (updated 13 Jul 2022), <https://www.manxutilities.im/about-us/our-assets/sewerage/sewage-treatment-strategy-phase-2/> (accessed 13 Jul 2022).

¹⁰ Manx Utilities, 'Regional Sewage Treatment Update (24 Jan 2022), <https://www.manxutilities.im/news/2022/jan/regional-sewage-treatment-update/> (accessed 12 Jul 2022).

¹¹ Western Sewage Treatment Works (available in the Tynwald Library).

¹² 'Protest Crowd Confronts Peel Commissioners' (21 Oct 2009), isleofman.com, <http://www.isleofman.com/News/details/31905/protest-crowd-confronts-peel-commissioners-> (accessed 12 Jul 2022).

¹³ [Manx Utilities, Review of the Regional Sewage Treatment Strategy, August 2017.](#)

¹⁴ Peel Sewage Treatment Works Feasibility Study (4 vols) (available in the Tynwald Library).

In [August 2017](#), in evidence to the Environment and Infrastructure Policy Review Committee, Manx Utilities said that it had reached agreement with the owner of a site for the Peel works and had obtained Treasury concurrence to purchase the site.

In April 2019, Manx Utilities applied for planning approval to build the works at the site of Glenfaba House on Glenfaba Road ([19/00462/B](#)). The application was considered under Section 11(3) of the [Town and Country Planning Act 1999](#), as the land in question was thought to be partly owned and maintained by DEFA. This meant that the application was [considered by an independent planning inspector](#) and the Council of Ministers was to make the final decision.

The planning inspector proposed 30 recommended conditions for planning approval if granted by the Council of Ministers. These encompassed a variety of issues, including odour control, the protection of archaeology in the area, compliance with Environment Policy 4 of the Strategic Plan, the working hours of the plant, the management of silt, protection of the River Neb, and the protection and replacement of trees in the area.¹⁵

However, it later transpired that DEFA did not in fact have an interest in the land and that the application could therefore proceed through the normal route; the Council of Ministers did not make a decision on the matter and referred it back to the Planning Committee.¹⁶ The planning application was withdrawn in December 2020.

There has been some criticism of the decision to [demolish the historic building Glenfaba House](#) before planning approval for the site had been granted.¹⁷ In 2019, 2020, and 2021, Trevor Cowin presented petitions for redress of grievance regarding the demolition of the property, two of which were in order; neither have been picked up (see [PP 2021/0159](#)).¹⁸

Patrick Commissioners put forward an alternative proposal for the construction to take place in fields between Glenfaba Road and the old railway tracks. However, the planning application ([20/00344/A](#)), which was submitted on 6th March 2020, was deemed withdrawn on 4th August 2020.

In [April 2021](#), Manx Utilities issued a 'call for sites' in the Peel, St John's and Central Valley areas, primarily for a local sewage treatment works but potentially also for pumping stations.¹⁹

In [May 2022](#), Manx Utilities issued a press release which stated that the 'preferred solution for Peel is a location within Peel, however Glenfaba House site remains an option for the catchment'.²⁰

The [explanatory memo](#) for the [financial motion](#) at the July 2022 sitting of Tynwald states that 'the revised proposal [...] seeks to pump sewage away from Peel Promenade to an alternative site within the Peel Town boundary. Final effluent will be discharged via the existing outfall pipe'.

¹⁵ Inspector's Report dated 23rd October 2020 ([19/00462/B](#)).

¹⁶ Letter dated 14th December 2020 ([19/00462/B](#)).

¹⁷ IOMToday, 'Historic house is demolished' (28 April 2019), [iomtoday.co.im](https://www.iomtoday.co.im), <https://www.iomtoday.co.im/news/planning/historic-house-is-demolished-227578> (accessed 12 Jul 2022).

¹⁸ Mr Cowin also reportedly submitted a petition regarding Glenfaba House on Tynwald Day 2022; see IOMToday, 'Eight people submit petitions for redress on Tynwald Day' (5 Jul 2022), <https://www.iomtoday.co.im/news/eight-people-submit-petitions-for-redress-on-tynewald-day-553792> (accessed 12 Jul 2022).

¹⁹ Manx Utilities, 'Peel – Regional Sewage Treatment – 'Call for Sites' (16 Apr 2021), <https://www.manxutilities.im/news/2021/apr/peel-regional-sewage-treatment-call-for-sites/> (accessed 12 Jul 2022).

²⁰ Manx Utilities, 'Regional Sewage Treatment Delivery' (4 May 2022), <https://www.manxutilities.im/news/2022/may/regional-sewage-treatment-delivery/> (accessed 12 Jul 2022).

3.2. Laxey and Baldrine

The 2007 Review of the IRIS Master Plan (GR 33/07, p.5) stated that 'providing a sewage treatment works in lower Laxey is very difficult due to the lack of suitable land' and that 'the option of constructing a sewage treatment works [...] has therefore been discounted'. The report recommended continuing with the proposals in the IRIS Master Plan, i.e. to connect Laxey and Baldrine with the IRIS network in Onchan (p. 30).

The 2009 AECOM report (GR 26/09) recommended Option 3a, which was to forward the sewage from Baldrine to a new treatment works along the Promenade in Laxey which would serve both catchments. It was noted that Planning and Building Control had indicated the 'only sites along the Promenade and the harbour could potentially be used as a sewage treatment site' and that 'further discussion is required with the Local Authorities to confirm the most appropriate location' (p. 20).

In January 2020, Manx Utilities submitted a planning application ([20/00082/B](#)) to erect a replacement sewage treatment works at Breeze Hill near the harbour, known as the Cairns site. The proposals were met with resistance by residents and the community group [Best for Laxey Bay](#) (B4LB), as reported by Manx Radio in [February 2020](#).²¹ Garff Commissioners also voted to object to the plans.²² While a planning report had recommended the approval of the application, the Planning Committee rejected it in July 2020, with concerns about foul odours, the impact on tourism, and a lack of consideration of alternative sites amongst the reasons for the decision.

In March 2021, Manx Utilities [issued a call for sites](#) for locating pumping stations or local treatment works in the Laxey and Baldrine area.²³

In [January 2022](#), Manx Utilities confirmed that it had purchased land at Glen Garwick, which would be a 'key location' whether the solution was a local sewage treatment works or a pumping station connected to the IRIS network.²⁴

In [April 2022](#), Manx Utilities confirmed that 'in Garff the preferred solution is for a single treatment works to serve both Laxey and Baldrine at a location between the two villages. As such there are no plans for anything other than pumping stations at either the Cairn site or on the Glen Garwick estate. Unfortunately this cannot be avoided but will have minimal impact on the surrounding areas. All of this remains subject to planning approvals.'²⁵

In [May 2022](#), Manx Utilities issued a press release which stated that, 'it has been confirmed that the preferred solution for Garff is a single treatment works to serve both Laxey and Baldrine, at a location between the two villages. There are no plans for anything other than pumping stations at either the

²¹ Manx Radio, 'Laxey residents against choice of site for new sewage plant' (19 Feb 2020), <https://www.manxradio.com/news/isle-of-man-news/laxey-residents-against-site-of-new-sewage-plant/> (accessed 12 Jul 2022).

²² BBC, 'Laxey sewage treatment works rejection "a victory for the people"' (27 Jul 2020), <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-isle-of-man-53558258> (accessed 13 Jul 2022).

²³ Manx Utilities, 'Regional Sewage Treatment "Call for Sites"' (10 Mar 2021), <https://www.manxutilities.im/news/2021/mar/regional-sewage-treatment-call-for-sites/> (accessed 12 Jul 2022).

²⁴ Manx Utilities, 'Regional Sewage Treatment Updated' (24 Jan 2022), <https://www.manxutilities.im/news/2022/jan/regional-sewage-treatment-update/> (accessed 12 Jul 2022).

²⁵ Manx Utilities, 'Sewage Treatment Strategy – Phase 2' (updated 13 Jul 2022), <https://www.manxutilities.im/about-us/our-assets/sewerage/sewage-treatment-strategy-phase-2/> (accessed 13 Jul 2022).

Cairn site (Laxey Harbour) or on land at Glen Garwick. Pumping stations cannot be avoided due to the layout of the valley but will have minimal impact on the surrounding areas.²⁶

In [June 2022](#), [Best for Laxey Bay](#) (B4LB) called for a parliamentary inquiry into the proposed works in Laxey and Baldrine, claiming there are 'huge inaccuracies' in the costs for the proposal.²⁷

The [explanatory memo](#) for the [financial motion](#) for Phase 2 at the July 2022 sitting of Tynwald states that the 'revised proposal [...] seeks to pump sewage away from the two locations to treat at a remote location between the two catchments. Final effluent will be discharged via the existing outfall pipe in Laxey.'

4. Bathing Water Standards

The adoption of measurable bathing water standards has accompanied the project to modernise the Island's sewage treatment provision. Evidence shows that sewage treatment is a key factor in being able to achieve improved water quality standards.

In [March 1990](#) Tynwald adopted the 1976 EEC Bathing Water Quality Standard ([76/160/EEC](#)) and the Royal Commission 20/30 standard for effluent discharges. The 1976 standards were revised and replaced in 2006 ([2006/7/EC](#)).

In [March 2016](#) Tynwald resolved that 'EU Bathing Water Standards of 2006 should be considered as an objective'. The 1976 standards adopted in 1990 remained in place, but [testing](#) against the 2006 standards began to take place.

The [Environment and Infrastructure Policy Review Committee's 2018 report](#) on the Regional Sewage Treatment Strategy, Phase 2 – Peel [[PP 2018/0038](#)] recommended that the 2006 Directive standards be adopted as soon as possible. The recommendation was approved in an amended form as follows:

That Tynwald is of the opinion that the existing bathing water quality standards are inadequate. Provision must be made to adopt the standards included in the 2006 EU Bathing Water Directive as an objective as supported by Tynwald in March 2016 and that necessary implementation work should be completed in accordance with a time bound plan agreed upon consideration of the scoping paper referred to in Recommendation 6.

An interim scoping report on bathing water quality [[GD 2018/0079](#)] was laid before Tynwald in November 2018 and referred to in a [statement](#) by the DEFA Minister.

At the [December 2019 sitting of Tynwald](#), the Minister received approval from Tynwald for the Department's Strategy Document [[GD 2019/0087](#)] on the adoption of the 2006 Bathing Water Directive standards in the Isle of Man. The strategy did not aim to adopt the 2006 directive fully. The *Good* rating was to be used as the minimum standard. Adopting the Directive was intended to achieve 'consistency in the management of bathing waters with the rest of the UK'. Among other actions, this would include monitoring water quality in bathing waters, defining the length of the bathing season, designating beaches popular with bathers as 'bathing waters', defining local authorities responsible for beaches to be designated as 'beach controllers', and producing beach signage for bathers.

²⁶ Manx Utilities, 'Regional Sewage Treatment Delivery' (4 May 2022), <https://www.manxutilities.im/news/2022/may/regional-sewage-treatment-delivery/> (accessed 12 Jul 2022).

²⁷ IOMToday, 'Community group suggests that Manx Utilities has got its sums wrong over sewage plans but MU rejects that' (9 Jun 2022), <https://www.iomtoday.co.im/news/community-group-suggests-that-manx-utilities-has-got-its-sums-wrong-over-sewage-plans-but-mu-rejects-that-549726> (accessed 12 Jul 2022).

Proposals to introduce Water Quality Objectives (WQO) and Environmental Quality Standards (EQS) were [put out to public consultation](#) on 15th July 2020, closing on 7th October 2020. There were 17 responses, which broadly supported the proposals.

The Water Pollution (Bathing Water Standards and Objectives) Scheme [[SD 2021/0086](#)] was approved at the [April 2021 sitting of Tynwald](#). The Scheme sets the standards for assessing bathing water quality and stipulates that the bathing season starts on 1st May and ends on 18th September each year.

4.1. Designated bathing waters

Local authorities may apply to DEFA for a bathing water location to be designated officially under the Policy for the designation of bathing waters in the Isle of Man [[GD 2021/0011](#)]. Designated bathing waters are monitored for water quality on a weekly basis during the bathing season using the standards set out in the Water Pollution (Bathing Water Standards and Objectives) Scheme [[SD 2021/0086](#)].

There is no set criteria for designation as a bathing water. However, the applicant must provide information about the approximate number and type of beach users during the season, the facilities available within one mile of the location, and details of charity events held there (such as Beach Buddies or Manx Wildlife Trust events). As part of the process DEFA also consults with Manx Utilities to determine whether there is the necessary sewerage infrastructure in the area to support designation as a bathing water location (see [GD 2021/0011](#), p.8).

For the 2021 and 2022 bathing seasons there were five designated bathing waters:

- [Douglas Central](#)
- [Port Erin](#)
- [Port St Mary](#)
- [South Ramsey](#)
- [Castletown](#) (from July 2021)

The Strategy Document [[GD 2019/0087](#), p.5] states that 'a key factor for deciding if a beach should be designated as a bathing water will be to establish whether the water quality objective (a minimum of 'Good' status) can be met, if it can't be met it is unlikely that a beach will be designated'. According to the [2021 Bathing Season](#) report published by DEFA in March 2022, applications were received for the designation of Peel, Fenella and Laxey but 'due to insufficient sewerage infrastructure these were not able to be progressed'.²⁸

During [the debate](#) on the Water Pollution (Bathing Water Standards and Objectives) Scheme [[SD 2021/0086](#)], several Members queried whether the 2006 standards would apply to non-designated beaches such as at Peel and Laxey. The Minister explained that the water at these beaches, and other non-designated areas, would continue to be monitored against 2006 standards. According to the [2021 Bathing Season](#) report, the Department agreed to continue sampling at all previously monitored locations on a monthly basis as there were only four designated locations.²⁹

This scheme is similar in principle to the [system in place in England](#).³⁰ However, in England, only designated bathing waters are monitored for water quality during the bathing season.

²⁸ DEFA, *2021 Bathing Season* (March 2022), p.2, <https://www.gov.im/media/1375993/bathing-water-report-2021.pdf> (accessed 12 Jul 2022).

²⁹ DEFA, *2021 Bathing Season* (March 2022), p.3, <https://www.gov.im/media/1375993/bathing-water-report-2021.pdf> (accessed 12 Jul 2022).

³⁰ 'Guidance – Bathing waters: apply for designation or de-designation', GOV.UK, last updated 26 Feb 2021, <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/bathing-waters-apply-for-designation-or-de-designation> (accessed 11 Jul 2022).

4.2. Test results

The results of bathing water quality tests are published [on the Government website](#). Designated bathing waters are monitored weekly during the bathing season. All other locations, including Peel and Laxey, continue to be monitored on a monthly basis.

5. Parliamentary Committee Inquiries

5.1. Public Accounts Committee – IRIS Scheme

Following referrals from Peter Karran MHK and David Cannan MHK, the Public Accounts Committee conducted an inquiry into the IRIS scheme, focussing on developments up to October 2007. The inquiry considered the handling of contractual disputes, the design, construction and operation of the project, and the interaction between spending on other sewerage works and the IRIS project.

The Report [[PP 83/10](#)], which was debated at the [November 2010](#) sitting of Tynwald, made the following recommendations, all of which were approved by Tynwald:

1. That Tynwald notes the success achieved by the Department of Transport in reducing the discharge of raw sewage to the sea by connecting two-thirds of the Island's population to the IRIS system.
2. That where a proposal is put to Tynwald for a capital infrastructure initiative designed to be delivered over a period of ten years or more, the proposal should include a strategic review at least once every five years, such review or reviews to be carried out by an independent person appointed by the lead Department and to be reported to Tynwald with recommendations.
3. That within six months of the debate on this Report, the Treasury should report to Tynwald with recommendations on how it will be ensured that, where project management services are outsourced by Government, they are subject to robust procurement and contract management procedures.
4. That within six months of the debate on this Report, the Council of Ministers consider: (a) what are the lessons learned from the Meary Veg experience in terms of contract design and contract management; and (b) how to ensure those lessons are shared across Government; and report to Tynwald with recommendations.

In April 2011, the Treasury reported to Tynwald [[GD 08/11](#)], fulfilling Recommendation 3. The report outlined proposals to implement an improved process for the procurement and governance of outsourced project management services on all major capital schemes costing £5 million or over. The report and its recommendations were approved by Tynwald at the [April sitting](#).

The Council of Ministers reported back to Tynwald in January 2012 [[GD 51/11](#)], fulfilling Recommendation 4. Lessons learned included the importance of formal reviews of project team members; involving a representative of the operations team in the project team from inception to completion; the establishment of a project steering group to oversee the project; consideration of the approach to resolving contractual disputes at the pre-contract stage; evaluating the approach to levying damages at the pre-tender stage, including considering a retention bond or a plant performance bond as an alternative; and taking appropriate noise standards into account. These improvements were to be addressed through amendments to Capital Procedure Notes and Project Risk Assessments. The report was laid before Tynwald at the January 2012 sitting but not debated.

5.2. Environment and Infrastructure Policy Review Committee – RSTS Phase 2

In 2017 and 2018, the Environment and Infrastructure Policy Review Committee conducted an inquiry into the proposals for Phase 2 of the RSTS, with a focus on the plans for Peel. The Committee considered

the financial and environmental implications of the proposals, as well as the impact on businesses located near the proposed sites. The report [[PP 2018/0038](#)] recommended that:

1. The Treasury commission an independent review of the costs of the regional sewage treatment strategy for Peel, St John's and the Central Valley, and report back to Tynwald;
2. No regional sewage works be constructed in Peel without an extended sea outfall pipe;
3. UV treatment be included in the plans for regional works in the Central Valley;
4. A solution for safely disposing of the Raggatt leachate be developed in conjunction with any plans for sewage treatment in Peel;
5. Tynwald is of the opinion that the existing bathing water quality standards are inadequate. Provision must be made to adopt the 2006 EU Bathing Water Directive as soon as possible;
6. MUA and DEFA work together to produce a scoping report of what is needed to comply with the EU 2006 Bathing Water Directive, and report back to Tynwald by November 2018;
7. Any major infrastructure project should be accompanied by a wider economic impact study.

The report was debated at the [May 2018](#) sitting of Tynwald along with the Government response [[GD 2018/0025](#)] and the Independent Review of Regional Sewage Treatment Strategy Phase 2 [[GD 2018/0026](#)].

Recommendations 4 and 6 carried in their original form; 1, 2 and 7 were lost; 3 and 5 were amended as follows:

3. Provision for tertiary disinfection (e.g. UV treatment) be included in the plans for regional works in the Central Valley.

5. Tynwald is of the opinion that the existing bathing water quality standards are inadequate. Provision must be made to adopt the standards included in the 2006 EU Bathing Water Directive as an objective as supported by Tynwald in March 2016 and that necessary implementation work should be completed in accordance with a time bound plan agreed upon consideration of the scoping paper referred to in Recommendation 6.

The actions to deliver Recommendations 5 and 6 are discussed above in [section 4](#).

6. Parliamentary Material

6.1. Questions

A large number of questions have been tabled on this topic since 2008. The following links lead to material available on the Tynwald website:

- [Tabled Questions on sewerage and sewage since 2008.](#)
- [Tabled Questions on Laxey and sewage since 2008.](#)
- [Tabled Questions on Peel and sewage since 2008.](#)
- [Tabled Questions on IRIS since 2008.](#)

6.2. Financial Motions

The following table gives an overview of additional capital expenditure approved by Tynwald for sewerage works since February 1991.

Sitting Date	Scheme	Amount
14 Dec 1993	IRIS (Pre-contract design fees)	£950,000

12 Apr 1995	IRIS (Southern storage tanks and pumping stations for Douglas and Onchan)	£7,7208,800
18 Jun 1996	IRIS (Northern storage tanks and pumping stations for Douglas and Onchan)	£2,615,850
15 Oct 1996	IRIS (Transmission sewer between northern and southern storage tanks)	£1,610,650
17 Feb 1998	IRIS (Union Mills Sewer Refurbishment)	£300,000
20 Oct 1999	IRIS (Union Mills to Quarterbridge transmission main)	£1,486,000
16 Nov 1999	IRIS (South Douglas Storage Tanks and Pumping Station)	£334,350
21 Nov 2000	IRIS (Douglas to Santon transmission main)	£2,701,000
21 Nov 2000	IRIS (Sewage Treatment Plant, Santon)	£1,985,000
12 Dec 2000	IRIS (Douglas to Santon transmission main)	£3,530,000
21 Feb 2001	IRIS (White Hoe pumping station)	£1,735,500
19 Jun 2001	IRIS (Sewage Treatment Plant, Santon)	£20,045,000
15 Oct 2001	IRIS (Castletown to Santon transmission main and railway replacement)	£13,290,500
10 Dec 2002	IRIS (Port Erin to Castletown transmission main and pumping stations)	£12,915,000
17 Oct 2007	IRIS (Sewage Treatment Plant)	£6,250,000
17 Oct 2007	IRIS (Mount Murray to Newtown transmission main and pumping station)	£1,023,000
15 Jul 2008	IRIS (consultants' fees and main installation Onchan, Baldrine, Ramsey)	£1,964,000
12 Apr 2011	RSTS (Phase 1 – Patrick, Glen Maye, Dalby, Bride, Maughold, Port Lewaigue, Glen Mona, Corony, Jurby, Kirk Michael, Ramsey, sludge treatment at Meary Veg)	£39,984,000
21 Jun 2011	Pumping station refurbishment project	£525,000
15 Nov 2011	Pumping station refurbishment project	£490,000
21 May 2013	Supplementary vote for pumping station refurbishment project	£382,321 ³¹
19 Mar 2019	Regional Sewage Treatment Strategy – Phase 2	£23,5000,000
19 Jul 2022	Regional Sewage Treatment Strategy – Phase 2	£16,950,000 requested

³¹ The supplementary vote also included other sewerage works; it is unclear to what extent they are directly relevant to IRIS or RSTS: Tynwald Debate ([21 May 2013](#)).

DEFINITION OF 'IRIS SPENDING'

The Public Accounts Committee considered the definition of 'IRIS spending' in its 2010 report [[PP 83/10](#), paras. 9.1-9.6], taking into account the Department of Transport's varied responsibilities across the Island's infrastructure. The Department of Transport confirmed to the Committee that general maintenance of the sewerage network was paid for from revenue (9.4), and that IRIS expenditure could include aspects of the costs of reinstatement of roads and railways after pipes had been laid (9.5). The Committee concluded that 'clear boundaries have been maintained between capital expenditure on the IRIS project, and revenue expenditure on the ongoing operating [of] the Island's systems for the collection and treatment of sewage' (9.6).

6.3. Debates

The following table gives an overview of debates tabled on this topic in addition to the debates discussed in sections 2-5.

Sitting Date	Motion	Tabled by	Outcome
20 Oct 2010	That Tynwald - 1. considers that a sewage treatment works at Peel may no longer be the most cost-effective option for the treatment of sewage from the west of the Island; 2. calls upon the Water and Sewerage Authority to suspend with immediate effect the implementation of 'IRIS West' as currently proposed; and 3. appoints a Committee of three Members with powers to take written and oral evidence pursuant to sections 3 and 4 of the Tynwald Proceedings Act 1876, as amended: (i) to assess the available technical evidence as to the cost-effectiveness of constructing a western sewage treatment works as compared with the alternative option of connecting sewage flows from the west to the existing works at Meary Veg; (ii) to examine the handling of that evidence by the Water and Sewerage Authority and the response of the Authority to objections which have been put forward to 'IRIS West'; (iii) to consider any implications for the way in which capital projects are overseen by Tynwald; and (iv) to report with recommendations by June 2011.	Chris Robertshaw MHK	Motion as amended carried.
18 Jan 2011	That Tynwald considers it prudent for the Water and Sewerage Authority to conduct a full cost comparison of both Anaerobic Digester and Belt Dryer options before proceeding with the purchase of either; and that the findings be reported to Tynwald no later than June 2011.	Chris Robertshaw MHK	Motion lost.
17 Oct 2012	That Tynwald is of the opinion that there should be a full investigation of the value for money to be obtained from bio-energy recovery before further public money is spent on the sludge drying process which is being developed as part of the IRIS project; and calls on the Council of Ministers to re-affirm its commitment to the principle set out in the Report of the Public Accounts Committee on the renewal of the Island's infrastructure for the collection and treatment of sewage (IRIS), 1991 to 2007 [PP 0083/10] that before any proposal is put before Tynwald for a capital infrastructure project designed to be delivered over a period of ten years or more, the proposal should include a strategic review at least once every five years	Peter Karran MHK	Motion lost.

	to be carried out by an independent person appointed by the lead Department and that that review should be reported to Tynwald.		
20 Jan 2015	That Tynwald notes the urgent need for the Public Accounts Committee to inquire into the IRIS system and to follow up its previous Report on the Renewal of the Island's Infrastructure for Collection and Treatment of Sewage (IRIS) 1991 to 2007, which highlighted a catastrophic underestimation of sewage flow to the treatment works; refers the current proposals for regional sewage works provision to the Public Accounts Committee for investigation, with special reference to their value for money, their long term economic sustainability and their environmental impact; and further refers to the Public Accounts Committee the questions of (a) whether the method of recruitment and remuneration of consultants results in the best outcomes for the taxpayer and (b) the extent to which the performance of contracts is properly monitored; and asks that it report its findings by October 2015.	Peter Karran MHK	Motion lost.
15 Mar 2016	That Tynwald is of the opinion that the EU Bathing Water Standards of 2006 should be adopted to bring the Island into parity with neighbouring countries for the protection of public health and in particular for those who wish to use the Island's beaches and bathing waters for recreation.	Peter Karran MHK	Motion as amended carried.
15 Jun 2021	That Tynwald notes the Environment and Infrastructure Policy Review Committee's First Report of Session 2017-2018 (Regional Sewage Treatment Strategy, Phase 2 - Peel), and the evidence taken by the Committee in the course of its inquiry; in particular, reaffirms its opinion that there are valid concerns about the calculations relied on by the MUA and its advisors in support of the continuation of the regional strategy for the West of the Island and that sewage treatment, while essential, will not solve all of Peel's water quality problems; and is further of the opinion that the regional strategy for the West of the Island should be replaced by an integrated sewage scheme for Peel and Laxey.	Mrs Lord-Brennan MLC	Motion not moved.

7. Legislation

[Sewerage Act 1999](#) – Places a duty on the Manx Utilities Authority as the Sewerage Authority to provide, improve and extend a system of public sewers and make provision for emptying them, among other duties.

8. Further Reading

Manx Utilities, 'Sewage Treatment Strategy – Phase 2' (updated 13 Jul 2022), <https://www.manxutilities.im/about-us/our-assets/sewerage/sewage-treatment-strategy-phase-2/> (accessed 13 Jul 2022).

House of Commons Library, *Water quality* (July 2018), <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-7246/> (accessed 13 Jul 2022).

European Commission, 'Bathing water quality', https://ec.europa.eu/environment/water/water-bathing/index_en.html (accessed 13 Jul 2022).

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