



# INFORMATION

## BLUE-GREEN ALGAE

### Blue-Green Algae

Blue-Green Algae are natural inhabitants of inland water. When their numbers are not excessive they are important contributors to the aquatic biology of natural waters. During calm, sunny weather blue-green algae can rapidly increase in number. The algae can then rise to the surface to form blooms and scum which may look like bright blue-green paint or jelly. This can also cause foaming on the shore line.

Algae contain chlorophyll and use energy from sunlight to grow and increase in number. They require nitrogen and phosphorus in the water and will grow quickly when the water is still and the temperature is high.

### The Hazards

Bloom and the scum forming blue green algae can produce toxins. This, however, is not always the case and there is a one in two chance of toxins being present. The situation can change from day to day and from hour to hour. The toxins, are however only associated with the bloom or the scum. The test for toxins takes several days, by which time the condition could easily have changed.

The main danger to humans would appear to be through ingesting (drinking) of algal bloom or scum. Illnesses have included vomiting, diarrhoea, fever and pain in joints. Surface contact can cause skin rashes and eye irritation. There have been no reports of long term effects or death in humans. Most if not all, inland water in the British Isles have a population of blue-green algae and many water sports centres have been operating for a number of years (including the National Water Sports Centre at Holm Pier Point) on a basis of a code of practice to minimise the risk. As a result of Blue Green Algae in Bray Lake a code of practice has been adopted for the management of the water sports centre during times of likely algae build up. Those Watersports centres that have also adopted a similar code of practice have operated quite satisfactorily and any risk to health has been minimised. The risk posed by blue-green algae may be avoided if sensible precautions are taken.

### Action Being Taken

At the start of the day we visually assess the water and allocate safe operating areas as required. When blooms are bad we strongly recommend a shower following any immersion after activity as soon as is reasonably possible. Where direct contact with an area of highly concentrated algae occurs immediate shower is recommended.

To help control the possibility of an Algae Bloom we use Diofix a food dye that colours the water blue and reduces the light penetration through the water reducing the growth of weed and algae blooms. Since we have been using this treatment we have had no significant blooms. We have been operating on Bray Lake for over 30 years and have had several years of bad blooms and have never had any incidences of health problems attributed to contact with an algal bloom. For further information feel free to discuss with senior staff.