New app launches to help staycationers find Britain's best beaches without the crowds

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

L-R: Viking Bay, Broadstairs, Kent; Hayling Island, Hampshire; Bournemouth, Dorset

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Beach Check UK is an innovative new app which allows visitors to check the status of a beach before they arrive in order to avoid congested beaches and to encourage them to discover nearby beaches that are quieter and less crowded. The app launched in various destinations across the UK on 1 July.

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 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 see a map showing red (crowded), amber (less congested) and green (uncongested) beaches.

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 first phase, the app has been funded by the government's Local Digital Collaboration Unit at MHCLG the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government to roll it out nationally.

 "We want everyone to safely enjoy a well-deserved summer this year, while continuing to minimise the spread of the coronavirus," says Local Government Minister Luke Hall.

"That's why the Government is funding Europe's first innovative beach check app to allow people to check whether beaches are busy before travelling to avoid a surge of visitors. This will allow coastal communities to carefully welcome back visitors and will help local areas bounce back from the hardship faced by the pandemic."

The app is currently available in the following coastal locations: Hayling Island, Hampshire; Camber Sands and Bexhill Beach, East Sussex; Thanet (Margate, Broadstairs, Ramsgate); Westward Ho!, Devon; West Wittering, West Sussex, Bournemouth, Poole and Christchurch and Minehead Somerset.

The National Coastal Tourism Academy is supporting BCP Council in the roll out of their app and is encouraging resorts nationwide to adopt it.

"When temperatures have soared both this year and last, we have witnessed over-crowding on numerous hot-spot beaches around the country. This app developed by BCP Council allows users to plan ahead, travel to quieter areas to ensure safe social distancing," says NCTA Director Samantha Richardson.

"We have one of the world's most amazing coastlines and this year we hope that many UK visitors will explore a new stretch of the coast and have the holiday of a lifetime."

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.

For more information, visit https://www.englandscoast.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 (07772 136 027) / 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> for more information.