

Ballycastle – Bathing Water Profile

Ballycastle beach, County Antrim, Northern Ireland



Bathing Water Profiles are designed to help the public make an informed choice before bathing, providing detailed information on the physical characteristics of each bathing water as well as assessing the pollution risk to each site. They are a requirement of The Quality of Bathing Water Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2008 and are reviewed in line with these regulations.

Historical and Current bathing water compliance classifications for Ballycastle can be found at – [Bathing Water Compliance](#)

There is general advice not to bathe during or up to 48hrs after heavy or prolonged rainfall.

Description Approximately 1.2km in length, Ballycastle bathing water runs from the pier at Ballycastle Marina at the western end to Pans Rock in the east. Comprised of a mixture of sand and shingle, the beach backs onto a golf course and a promenade at the western end. Facilities close to the bathing water include a car park, toilets, and a children’s play park. The catchment for this bathing water is a mixture of both rural and urban. The town of Ballycastle is to the west of the bathing area and improved grassland with coniferous woodland, deep peat bog, and dense dwarf heath are further inland. The River Margy/Glenshesk, which is the convergence of several other rivers, flows out at the western end of the bathing water. These other rivers flow through rural and urban areas and may be influenced by discharges from multiple sources of pollution.

Site Details Local council area – Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council

Year of designation – 1988

Water sampling location – Lat 55.20542, Long -6.22552

Potential Pollution and measures to reduce impact on site:

The potential sources of pollution have been split into three categories; wastewater (sewage) treatment works discharges, wastewater systems in urban areas and rural source pollution, including agriculture. DAERA Marine and Fisheries Division work with the Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA) and other departments to identify and resolve sources of pollution.

Wastewater (sewage) treatment works discharges.

There are several small wastewater treatment works in the Ballycastle area, but the majority of wastewater receives secondary treatment at Ballycastle WwTW which was upgraded in 2018.

Wastewater systems in urban areas.

Urbanisation associated with the surrounding town of Ballycastle is a potential source of pollution, especially during or after periods of prolonged/heavy rainfall. In the event of prolonged/heavy rainfall the wastewater system may become overwhelmed leading to an overflow/discharge of wastewater. **This is why there is general advice not to bathe during or up to 48 hours after prolonged/heavy rainfall.**

The collection and treatment of wastewater has the potential to cause pollution as all combined collection systems are designed to overflow in periods of extreme wet weather or following failure of the system. This prevents overflows into residential properties. Within the Ballycastle area there are combined sewer overflows (CSO), emergency overflows, a number of wastewater pumping stations and associated emergency overflows, highlighted on Map 1.

There is also the potential for misconnections between the sewer system and surface drains, which may allow untreated wastewater to enter the water environment. Misconnections are not obvious, but when these become apparent NIEA pursues them as pollution incidents.

Rural source pollution – agriculture

The Ballycastle bathing water catchment area has a significant amount of improved grassland with coniferous grassland. Areas within the catchment where agriculture is the dominant land use may be subject to inputs from chemical fertilisers and organic wastes. Prolonged periods of rainfall can cause surface runoff of these organic wastes, such as animal slurries, contributing to the bacteria content in the water environment.

Septic tanks also have the potential to cause localised pollution, but there is no evidence to suggest that this is impacting Ballycastle.

Other potential sources of pollution.

- Dogs
- Horses
- Litter
- Fly tipping

Management measures:

The Water Environment (Water Framework Directive) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2017, take an integrated approach to the protection, improvement and sustainable use of the water environment. River Basin Management Plans (RPMP) are produced which detail all of Northern Ireland's water quality objectives and a programme of measures to achieve these objectives. Within these 'Programme of Measures' in each River Basin Management Plan are a number of measures which relate directly to the protection of bathing waters.

Ballycastle bathing water is located in the North Eastern River Basin District. You can find more information about the North Eastern River Basin Management Plan below:

[Draft 3rd cycle River Basin Management Plan for Northern Ireland 2021-2027](#)

Within the River Basin Management Plan programme of measures there are several schemes to address sources of pollution:

- Nutrients Action Programme (NAP) 2019-2022
- Knowledge Advisory Service (KAS)
- Environmental Farming Scheme (EFS)
- Soil Nutrient Health Scheme (SNHS)

Macro-algae, phytoplankton, and cyanobacteria (blue-green algae)

Ballycastle bathing water is not at risk of proliferation of macro-algae, phytoplankton, or cyanobacteria (blue-green algae).

What should I do if I see a pollution incident?

If you see a water pollution incident, you should immediately contact NIEA through the **24 hr** Emergency Water Pollution Hotline:

Phone: 0800 807060

When pollution is reported or found to be affecting the water quality of a bathing water, an immediate investigation is instigated. All possible sources of pollution are checked and the bathing water is monitored until the effects of the incident have passed. During this time, bathing waters may be temporarily closed (by local authority or controlling body) until the water quality has improved and levels of bacteria are within mandatory standards.

Contact details

For general information about bathing waters:

DAERA Marine and Fisheries Division
17 Antrim Road, Tonagh, Lisburn, BT28 3AL
Email: Marine.InfoRequests@daera-ni.gov.uk
Website: [DAERA Bathing Water Quality](#)

Local Authority Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council
Address: Sheskburn House, 7 Mary Street, Ballycastle, BT54 6QH
Email: info@causewaycoastandglens.gov.uk
Phone: + 44 (0) 28 2076 2225
Website: [Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council](#)

Map 1 Ballycastle Bathing Water



Legend

- Wastewater Pumping Station
- Wastewater Treatment Works
- ▲ Combined Sewer Overflow
- Ballycastle bathing water area
- Bathing Water Sampling Transect
- Rivers

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