

## Magilligan Benone – Bathing Water Profile

Benone beach, County Londonderry, Northern Ireland



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*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 Magilligan Benone can be found at – [Bathing Water Compliance](#)

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

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**Description** Magilligan Benone bathing water is located on Northern Ireland’s north coast and is contiguous with Magilligan Downhill bathing water having a combined length of approximately 4km. The sandy beach backs onto an extensively well-established sand dune system but is also the focus for the Benone caravan park and tourist complex which includes public toilets, a café, and a caravan park /camping area. The immediate catchment is rural, with no significant urban area, apart from the tourist complex. The Umbra River which enters the bathing area flows predominantly through agricultural land.

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

Year of designation – 1988

Water sampling location – Lat 55.16821, Long -6.87561

### **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.**

Sewage from the Magilligan Benone area is treated at Magilligan Point WWTW which discharges to the Atlantic Ocean almost 6km west of the bathing water. This WWTW treats sewage from Drumvalley, Aughil, MoD Magilligan and HMP Magilligan. Effluent receives tertiary treatment in the form of year-round bacteria reduction. This is one small wastewater treatment works in the vicinity of the bathing water, approximately 4kms inland.

### **Wastewater systems in urban areas.**

The urbanisation associated with the tourist complex and toilet facilities is a potential source of pollution, especially during and after periods of prolonged or 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 Benone area there are 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.

An £8M upgrade to the sewerage network and Wastewater Treatment Works in the wider Magilligan Benone area was completed in March 2021.

### **Rural source pollution – agriculture**

Magilligan Benone beach is located in a rural area, and the catchment area has a significant amount of improved grassland and arable horticulture. 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. The Umbra River which enters the bathing area flows through this predominately agricultural catchment.

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

### **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.

Magilligan Benone bathing water is located in the North Western River Basin District. You can find more information about the North Western 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)**

Magilligan Benone bathing water may be subject to the presence of Cyanobacteria (blue-green algae). Blue-green algal blooms which form in Lough Neagh can be transported via the River Bann and affect the bathing water at Magilligan Benone. Blue-green algae can be toxic, and harmful if swallowed and may cause skin rashes. If the presence of blue-green algae is confirmed the public shall be informed, and if levels exceed health guidelines the public will be advised not to bathe through signage at the bathing water and through relevant local media posts. More information can be found at [Blue-Green Algae Infographic | Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs \(daera-ni.gov.uk\)](#)

### **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](mailto:Marine.InfoRequests@daera-ni.gov.uk)  
Website: [DAERA Bathing Water Quality](#)

**Local Authority** Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council  
Address: Cloonavin, 66 Portstewart Road, Coleraine, BT52 1EY  
Email: [info@causewaycoastandglens.gov.uk](mailto:info@causewaycoastandglens.gov.uk)  
Phone: + 44 (0) 28 7034 7034  
Website: [Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council](#)

Map 1. Magilligan Benone Bathing Water



### Legend

- Wastewater Pumping Station
- Bathing Water Sampling Transect
- Rivers
- Magilligan Benone bathing water area

1:28,000

0 0.25 0.5 1 1.5 2 Kilometres