

Magilligan Downhill – Bathing Water Profile

Downhill beach, County Londonderry, 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 Magilligan Downhill 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 Magilligan Downhill bathing water is contiguous with Magilligan Benone bathing water. The bathing beach is comprised of sand and rock and is backed by sand dunes, a railway track, coastal road, and cliffs. The catchment is rural with the dominant land use being agriculture: improved grassland and arable horticulture. There is no large urban settlement within this bathing water's catchment, other than a small residential area at the entrance to the beach. The nearest large town is Castlerock, 3km away. There is one small river which flows across Magilligan Downhill beach. This river flows predominately through agricultural land. There are two minor outlets between Magilligan Benone and Magilligan Downhill which occasionally discharge to the beach, and which may affect the water quality at Magilligan Downhill during periods of prolonged/heavy rainfall.

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

Year of designation – 2006

Water sampling location – Lat 55.16788, Long -6.82337

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 is a small wastewater treatment works approximately 3km from the bathing water (Map 1). The majority of sewage generated in this area is treated at the Wastewater Treatment Works approximately 10km west of the bathing water.

Wastewater systems in urban areas.

Magilligan Downhill beach does not have a large urban area and therefore may not be affected by this source of diffuse pollution. However, the small residential area has the potential to effect water quality during and 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 Magilligan Downhill area there are wastewater pumping stations with 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 programme of works to the sewerage network and wastewater treatment works serving the Magilligan Benone area was completed in 2021.

Rural source pollution – agriculture

The catchment area of Magilligan Downhill bathing water has a significant amount of improved grassland and arable farming. 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 Magilligan Downhill 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 Downhill 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 Downhill 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 Downhill. 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.

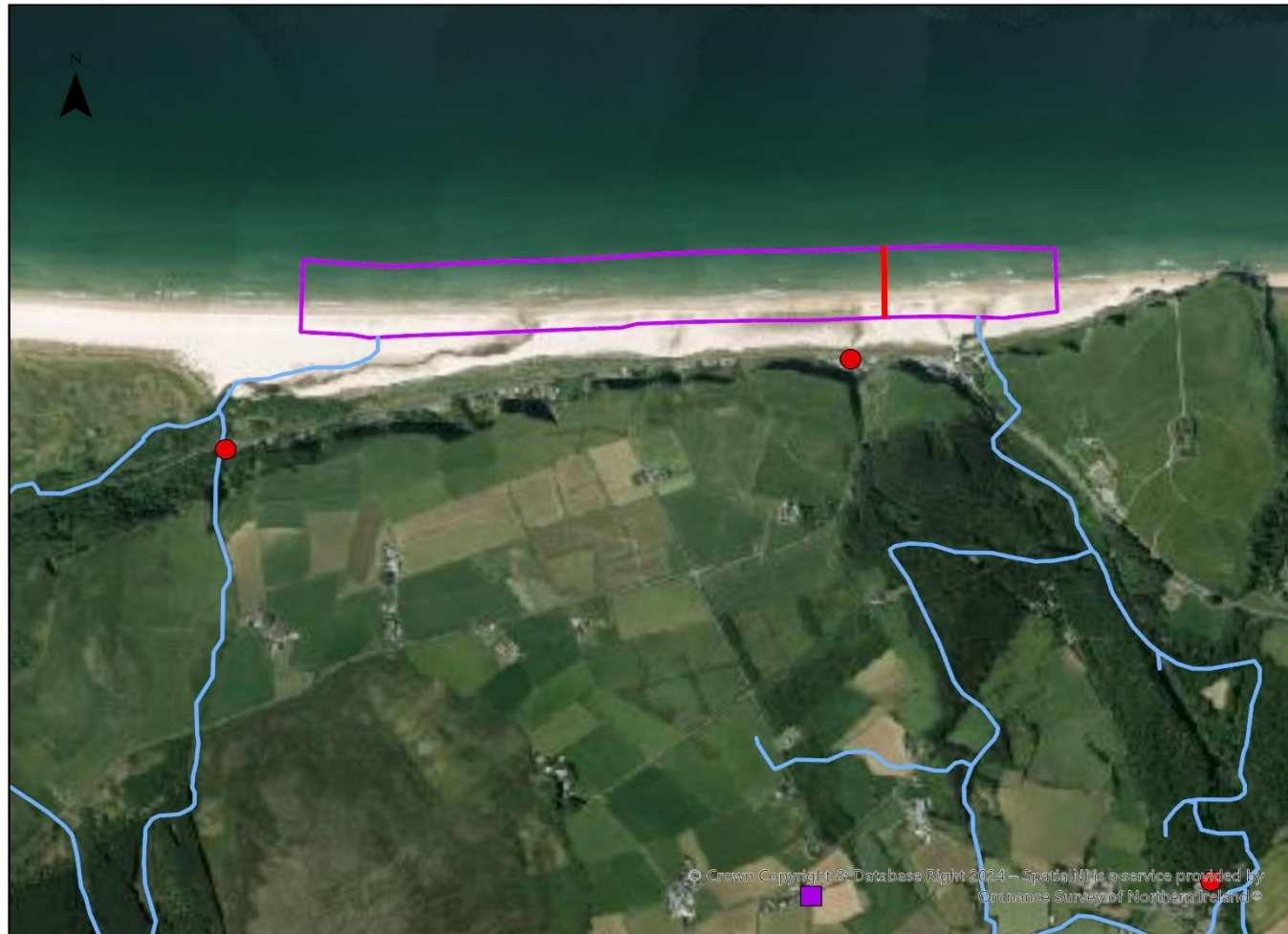
Contact details

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
Website: [Bathing Water Quality](#)

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

Map 1 Magilligan Downhill Bathing Water



Legend

- Wastewater Pumping Station
- Wastewater Treatment Works
- Bathing Water Sampling Transect
- Rivers
- Magilligan Downhill bathing water area

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