Drains Bay – Bathing Water Profile

Drains Bay, 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 Drains Bay 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 Drains Bay bathing water is approximately 1km in length and is comprised mainly of sand, with a rocky shoreline at both ends and some rocky parts throughout. Picnic tables and seats are located on a grass bank at the northern end and the beach is separated from the busy Coast Road by a seawall that runs parallel to the bathing water. The bathing water can also be accessed from the southern end which is backed by the seawall and a number of residential properties. Car parking, public toilets and a children's play park are available across the road from the bathing water. Further inland the wider catchment is mostly agricultural with improved grassland, arable and horticulture being the main land uses, along with some forestry. A small river flows directly onto the bathing water having passed through agricultural land and another river flows just outside the southern boundary. Although Drains Bay is located mainly in a rural area it lies approximately 2km north of the busy town and port of Larne.

Site Details Local council area – Mid and East Antrim Borough Council

Year of designation – 2025

Water sampling location – Lat 54.88142, Long -5.83721

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.

The major wastewater treatment facility for the greater Larne area is located 3.5km to the south of Drains Bay bathing water, providing tertiary treatment with UV disinfection as the final process.

Wastewater systems in urban areas.

Urbanisation associated with the nearby town of Larne and its suburbs 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.**

Collecting and treating wastewater has the potential to cause pollution, as sewer collection systems are often combined and designed to overflow in periods of extreme wet weather or there may be occasional failures in the system. Near the bathing water area at Drains Bay there are combined sewer overflows (CSO)and wastewater pumping stations, 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 catchment area of Drains Bay bathing water contains a number of land uses, such as arable and horticulture, along with areas of woodland and improved grassland for grazing further inland. Where agriculture is the dominant land use, areas 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.

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.

Drains Bay 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 plans 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)

Drains Bay bathing water is not at risk of a 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
Mid and East Antrim Borough Council
Address: 1-29 Bridge Street, Ballymena, BT43 5EJ
Email: enquiries@midandeastantrim.gov.uk
Phone: 0300 124 5000
Website: Mid and East Antrim Borough Council

Map 1 Drains Bay Bathing Water