

## Portrush Whiterocks – Bathing Water Profile

Whiterocks beach, County Antrim, 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 Portrush Whiterocks 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** This popular tourist beach / bathing water is contiguous with Portrush Curran bathing water with a combined length of around 3km. Comprised entirely of sand, it is backed by an extensive sand dune system, with rocks, cliffs and caves at its eastern end. Most of the sand dunes host a highly managed golf course and the beach is used for a number of activities such as bathing, surfing, walking and horse riding. There is a large car park with public toilet facilities behind the bathing water. The catchment for this bathing water is mostly rural, although there are a number of residential properties and a hotel to the eastern end and Portrush town is approximately 1.5kms to the west. Two unnamed rivers flow across the bathing water and may be influenced by both agricultural and urban sources of pollution. The more westerly of the two rivers is now effectively a drain under the golf course and seldom discharges.

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

Year of designation – 2006

Water sampling location – Lat 55.20690, Long -6.61316

### **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 major wastewater treatment facility between Portrush and Portstewart with an outfall approximately 1km off the coast of Portstewart. The treated wastewater outfall is approximately 6km to the west of Portrush Whiterocks bathing water. The works treats wastewater from the wider Portrush, Portstewart, Castlerock and Coleraine areas. The wastewater receives secondary treatment.

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

Although Portrush Whiterocks is in a rural setting, the urbanisation of Portrush town and the few residential properties in close proximity to the bathing water are potential sources of pollution, especially during 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 Portrush Whiterocks area there are combined sewer overflows (CSO), 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**

Portrush Whiterocks bathing water's immediate catchment consists of improved grassland with neutral grass 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.

### **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.

Portrush Whiterocks 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)**

Portrush Whiterocks 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 Portrush Whiterocks. 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 Portrush Whiterocks Bathing Water



### Legend

- ▲ Combined Sewer Overflow
- Portrush Whiterocks bathing water area
- Bathing Water Sampling Transect
- Rivers

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