

## Waterfoot – Bathing Water Profile

Waterfoot 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 Waterfoot 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** Waterfoot bathing water is located on the eastern coast of Northern Ireland, stretching approximately 1km in length and comprised mostly of sand at the eastern end and sand and pebbles at the western end. The bathing water is backed by sand dunes which run the length of the beach, and the village of Waterfoot which is located at the northern end. The immediate catchment is predominantly rural, the only urbanisation within the vicinity of the bathing water being 3 caravan parks, a large car park, and public toilet facilities. The Glenariff River flows into the bathing water at the northern end and there is a small port of Red Bay to the north of the river.

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

Year of designation – 2006

Water sampling location – Lat 55.06219, Long -6.05696

### **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.**

Wastewater from the Waterfoot area is pumped to Cushendall wastewater treatment works, located approximately 2km north. The screened effluent is discharged via a long sea outfall more than 2km north east of the Waterfoot bathing water.

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

Urbanisation of Waterfoot town, and the caravan parks located near the bathing water, 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 Waterfoot 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.

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

The catchment area of Waterfoot bathing water, through which the Glenariff river flows, has a significant amount of improved grassland. This could be a potential source of pollution affecting the bathing water. 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 Waterfoot 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.

Waterfoot 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)**

Waterfoot 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](mailto: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](mailto:info@causewaycoastandglens.gov.uk)  
Phone: + 44 (0) 28 2076 2225  
Website: [Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council](#)

Map 1 Waterfoot Bathing Water



### Legend

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

1:18,000

0 0.15 0.3 0.6 0.9 1.2 Kilometres