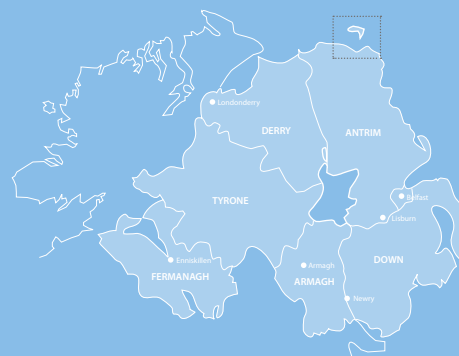


Bathing Water Profile

# Ballycastle

May 2019



Department of  
**Agriculture, Environment  
and Rural Affairs**

[www.daera-ni.gov.uk](http://www.daera-ni.gov.uk)



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## Map of Northern Ireland's Bathing Waters 2019



## Background to Bathing Water Profiles

This is one of a series of profiles which cover all 26 of Northern Ireland's identified bathing waters. These are the most popular of our bathing areas and have been 'identified' as part of a network of European bathing sites.

The purpose of the bathing water profile is to help the bather to make an informed choice before bathing. The profile gives information on the physical, geographical and hydrological characteristics of the bathing water while assessing the possible pollution risk at the site. Bathing water profiles are a European requirement, under the 2006 Bathing Water Directive ([www.daera-ni.gov.uk/articles/bathing-water-quality](http://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/articles/bathing-water-quality)). It is our intention to review the profiles annually.

All of our bathing waters are monitored on 20 occasions during the bathing season. In Northern Ireland the season runs between 1st June and 15th September each year. Bathing waters are tested for bacteria which indicate faecal contamination. Results are published weekly to bathing water operators and to the NI Direct web site ([www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/bathing-water-quality](http://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/bathing-water-quality)). Waters are then classified annually as Excellent, Good, Sufficient or Poor, as defined by the European Bathing Water Directive, 2006.

## Key Information

<b>Bathing Water Name</b>	Ballycastle Bathing Water
<b>EU bathing water ID number</b>	UKNO4_50500
<b>Location</b>	UK/Northern Ireland/County Antrim/Antrim Coast
<b>Year of identification</b>	1988
<b>Local council area</b>	Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council.
<b>Bathing Water Operator</b>	Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council.
<b>Description of bathing beach</b>	Sand and shingle, approximately 1.2 kilometres in length
<b>Monitoring Point</b>	Eastern end of bathing water, D13034126 (Map 2)

## A Description of Ballycastle bathing water and the surrounding area

Ballycastle bathing water is a popular tourist destination located on the Antrim coast of Northern Ireland. The beach is approximately 1.2 kilometres in length and runs from the pier at Ballycastle Marina at the western end to Pans Rock in the east. The beach is comprised of predominantly sand with some shingle and backs on to a golf course for most of its length. There is a promenade at the western end. Facilities including car parking, toilets and a playground are found near the marina with another car park near the eastern end.

The catchment for this bathing area is a mix of urban and rural. The town of Ballycastle is to the west of the bathing area with an approximate population of 5,000. During the summer season the population is increased by large numbers of holiday makers. Further inland the catchment consists of improved grassland with coniferous woodland, deep peat bog and dense dwarf heath. The main geology in the area comprises mixed Neoproterozoic metamorphic, Mesozoic sedimentary and Tertiary igneous rocks in faulted and unconformable contact.

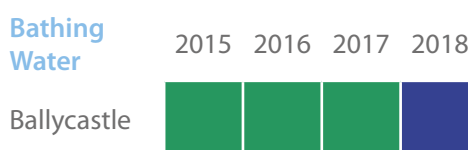
The River Margy / Glenshesk flows out to sea at the western end of the bathing area. This river flowing into the bathing water is the result of the convergence of several other rivers further inland. These other rivers flow through a rural environment and through the town of Ballycastle

and may therefore be influenced by rural and urban discharges.

## Bathing Water Quality History at Ballycastle

Ballycastle bathing water was identified in 1988. Monitoring and reporting is carried out by DAERA Marine and Fisheries Division.

### Ballycastle Bathing Water Quality 2015-2018



Key: ● Excellent ● Good ● Sufficient ● Poor

In 2015 the 1976 Bathing Water Directive was replaced by the European Bathing Water Directive 2006/7/EC. This revised directive introduced more stringent bathing water standards. Bathing Waters are classified as Excellent, Good, Sufficient or Poor (see above). Usually this classification is based on a statistical assessment of results from the last four years. However the 2018 classification was based on a one year set of results due to major infrastructure upgrades at the Ballycastle Waste Water Treatment Works and surrounding network.

All of Northern Ireland's water quality objectives are set out in River Basin Management Plans ([www.daera-ni.gov.uk/topics/water/river-basin-management](http://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/topics/water/river-basin-management)) Within the Programme of Measures in the River Basin Management Plans there are a number of measures which relate directly to the protection of bathing waters.

## Potential sources of pollution and measures to reduce the impact at the bathing water

It should be noted that weekly classification at Ballycastle bathing water is generally Good or Excellent.

The potential sources of pollution have been split into three main categories. These are waste water (sewage) treatment works discharges, waste water systems in urban areas and rural source pollution, including agriculture.

DAERA Marine and Fisheries Division work with NIEA and other Departments to identify and resolve sources of pollution.

## Are there Waste Water Treatment Works in the vicinity of Ballycastle beach?

There are several small waste water treatment works in the Ballycastle area but the majority of waste water receives secondary treatment at the new WWTW.

## Are there other risks of pollution from waste water systems?

Ballycastle town is a popular seaside location attracting large numbers of visitors during the summer season. This urbanisation is a potential source of pollution, especially during and after periods of prolonged or heavy rainfall. In the event of very heavy rainfall a collection system may not be able to deal with all the flow received. A portion of the contents of the collection system may overflow to a waterway under storm conditions. [This is why there is general advice not to bathe during or up to 2 days after such rain.](#)

The municipal collection and treatment of waste water has the potential to cause pollution because all combined collection systems must be designed to overflow in periods of extreme wet weather or following failure of the system. If systems are not designed in that way, then sewers may overflow into residential areas. Within the Ballycastle area there are combined sewer overflows (CSO), emergency overflows and wastewater pumping stations with associated emergency overflows as shown on Map 1.

In order to reduce the potential for pollution in the water environment from these systems NIEA requires that all current and proposed systems meet the requirements of the Urban Wastewater Treatment Directive ([www.daera-ni.gov.uk/publications/waste-water-treatment-works-discharges-and-ec-urban-](http://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/publications/waste-water-treatment-works-discharges-and-ec-urban-)

[waste-water-treatment-directive](http://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/publications/waste-water-treatment-works-discharges-and-ec-urban-)) and the Water Framework Directive (WFD).

During the expansion of any urban area, there is the potential for misconnections between the sewer system and surface drains, which may allow untreated wastewater to enter the water environment. When these become apparent, NIEA pursues them as pollution incidents.

A further measure in tackling urban pollution is through the use of sustainable urban drainage systems (SUDS), which NIEA encourages through its SUDS Strategy. Other measures include compliance with the Northern Ireland Water Order 1999 and implementation of Pollution Prevention Guidelines ([www.netregs.org.uk/library\\_of\\_topics/pollution\\_prevention\\_guides.aspx](http://www.netregs.org.uk/library_of_topics/pollution_prevention_guides.aspx)).

## Are there risks from agriculture and rural activities?

Agriculture is a major industry in Northern Ireland and the catchment area of Ballycastle bathing water has a significant amount of improved grassland with coniferous grassland. Areas within the catchment where agriculture is the dominant land use may be subjected to inputs from chemical fertilisers and organic wastes which can contribute to pollution problems in the surrounding area. 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 Nitrates Action Programme Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014 (previously the Nitrates Action Programme Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2010) and the Phosphorus (Use in Agriculture) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014 were introduced to improve the use of nutrients on farms and as a result improve water quality throughout Northern Ireland. The effectiveness of these regulations is continually reviewed through monitoring, enforcement and education.

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

## Are there other potential sources of pollution?

Other sources of pollution exist in this bathing area, these include;

- Dogs
- Horses
- Litter
- Fly tipping

All issues have been addressed through local signage to ensure that these controllable causes of pollution do not affect the bacteria content of the water.

NIEA have compiled River Basin Management Plans, these take an integrated approach to the protection, improvement and sustainable use of the water environment. Each plan identifies existing pollution reduction programmes and additional measures which could be implemented to maintain or improve the water quality.

Ballycastle is located in the North Eastern River Basin Management Plan - further details can be found at [www.daera-ni.gov.uk/publications/north-eastern-river-basin-management-plan-2015-2021](http://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/publications/north-eastern-river-basin-management-plan-2015-2021)

## Is there evidence of short term water pollution events at Ballycastle?

From 2015-2018 there were twenty-five confirmed incidents of water pollution in the Ballycastle area. Six of these incidents occurred during the bathing seasons, two of which were reported by DAERA Marine and Fisheries Division.

## What should I do if I see a pollution incident?

If you see a water pollution incident, you should immediately contact NIEA through the Emergency Water Pollution Hotline, which is operated 24 hours.

**Phone: 0800 807060**

When a pollution incident is reported or pollution is found to be affecting the water quality of a bathing water, an immediate investigation is instigated. All possible sources of pollution are checked. In addition, a resample will be collected to monitor whether the beach is still polluted. Bathing waters may be closed (by local authority or controlling body) until the water quality has improved and levels of bacteria are within mandatory standards.

## Macro-Algae, Phytoplankton and Cyanobacteria (blue-green algae)

Ballycastle bathing water is not at risk of a proliferation of macro-algae, phytoplankton or cyanobacteria (blue/green algae).

## Daily water quality forecasts

There is presently no facility to predict bathing water quality on a daily basis. However, the general advice remains: do not bathe during or for up to 2 days after heavy rainfall events.

## Contact details

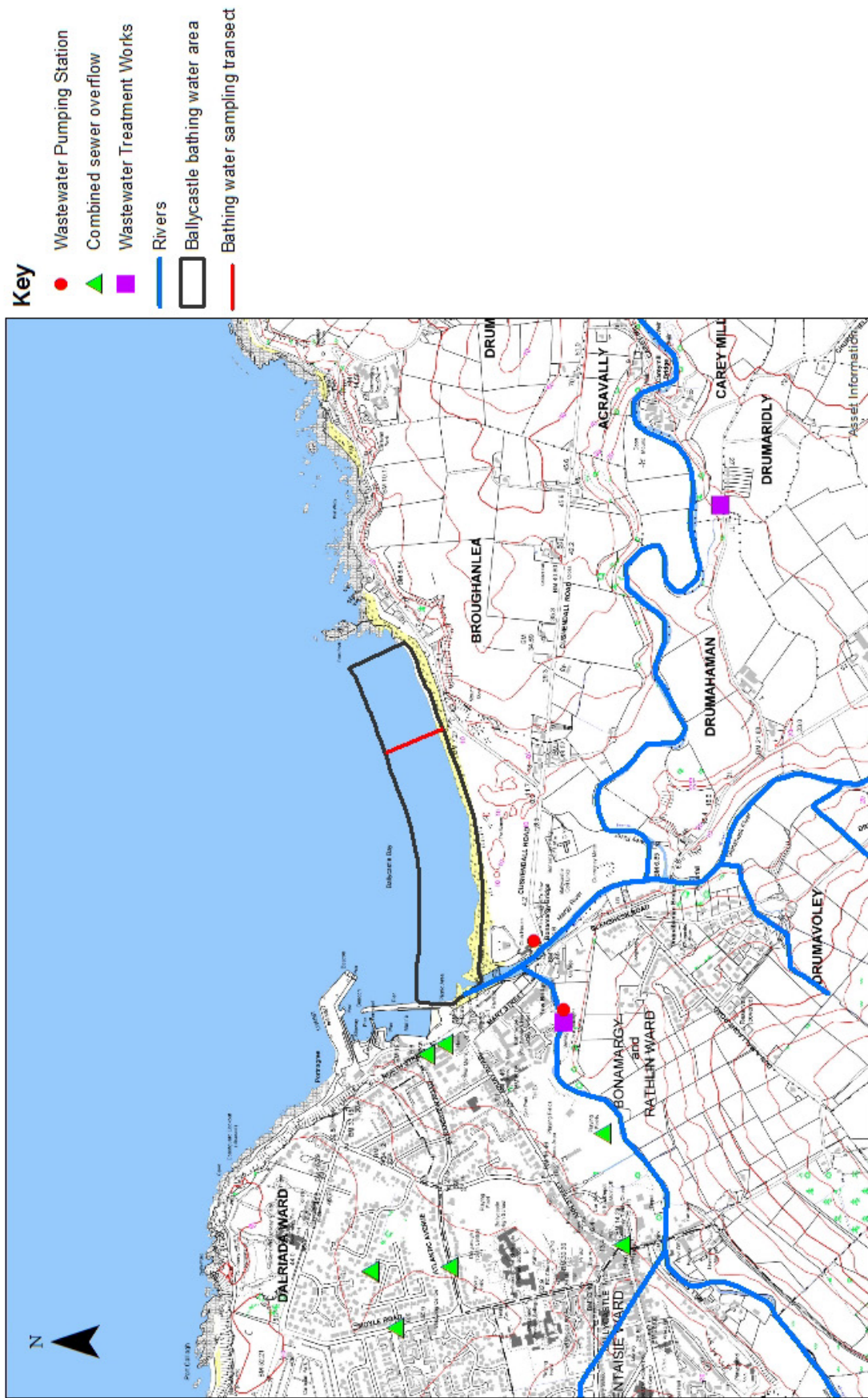
For general information about bathing waters:

**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)  
Phone: 028 9262 3244

**Water Pollution 24hr Hotline** Phone: 0800 807060

**Local Authority** Causeway Coast and Glens  
Borough Council  
Sheskburn House  
7 Mary Street  
Ballycastle, BT54 6QH  
Phone: 028 2076 2225

Map 1  
Ballycastle Bathing Water -  
Potential Pollution Sources



Map 2  
Ballycastle Bathing Water -  
EC Bathing Water Sample Location



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