

Ballywalter – Bathing Water Profile

Ballywalter beach, County Down, Northern Ireland

	2021	2022	2023	2024
Ballywalter				

Key: ● Excellent ● Good ● Sufficient ● Poor

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.

Current bathing water classification for Ballywalter can be found at - [Bathing Water Classification](#)

Ballywalter is one of six bathing waters in Northern Ireland for which daily bathing water quality predictions are being made as part of the SWIM NI project. SWIM NI is currently in the pilot stage, more information on which can be found at [Swim NI](#)

There is general advice not to bathe during or up to 48hrs after heavy or prolonged rainfall.

Description Located on the Irish Sea Coast of the Ards Peninsula, this bathing water is approximately 0.85km in length and comprised mostly of sand with a rocky shoreline at the northern end. The beach is backed by a sea wall and promenade. Facilities within the vicinity of the bathing water include a car park, public toilets, children's play area, tennis court and a bowling club. The village of Ballywalter is situated at the northern end of the bathing water. The northern end of the beach is partially protected by Ballywalter harbour; a jetty which extends some 200m out to sea. There are two rivers which flow across the bathing water near the southern end. Both flow through a rural environment and may be influenced by rural discharges. There are several caravan parks in Ballywalter as this village is popular with tourists during summer months.

Site Details Local council area – Ards and North Down Borough Council

Year of designation – 2006

Water sampling location – Lat 54.53987, Long -5.48297

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 Ballywalter is pumped to the Ards North Wastewater Treatment Works, which is located north of the town. Wastewater receives secondary treatment and the treated effluent is discharged via a long sea outfall at Ballyferries.

Wastewater systems in urban areas.

The urbanisation associated with the village of Ballywalter is a potential source of pollution, especially during periods of prolonged or 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 Ballywalter area there are a number of combined sewer overflows (CSO) and 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 land cover within the catchment area of Ballywalter is predominately grassland with 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.

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.

Ballywalter 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)

Ballywalter 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
Website: [DAERA Bathing Water Quality](#)

Local Authority Ards and North Down Borough Council
Address: City Hall, The Castle, Bangor, BT20 4BT
Email: enquiries@ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk
Phone: 0300 013 3333
Website: [Ards and North Down Borough Council](#)

Map 1 Ballywalter Bathing Water

