

# REPORT OF THE 2022/23 BATHING WATER REVIEW

JUNE 2023



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

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

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# 1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Bathing waters are an important asset for everyone in Northern Ireland. They are invaluable for both swimming and tourism, given the international renown of our coastline.
- 1.2 Our bathing waters are protected by The Quality of Bathing Water Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2008 (the Regulations)<sup>1</sup>. Monitoring of bathing water quality is important not only for bathers' public health, but also gives an indication of the overall health of our waters.
- 1.3 The Regulations aim to preserve, protect and improve the quality of the environment and to protect human health. The Regulations apply where the Department expects a large number of people to bathe, and where bathing is not permanently prohibited or where permanent advice against bathing has been issued. The Department is required to test water quality at all identified bathing waters and to assess the results against stringent microbiological standards in order to inform those who choose to bathe there. The Regulations also define the length of the bathing season and set the requirements for the provision of bathing water information to the public.
- 1.4 A bathing water can be any area of sea, lake, or river. The definition does not apply to swimming pools and spa pools; confined waters subject to treatment or used for therapeutic purposes; or to artificially created confined waters separated from surface water and groundwater.
- 1.5 The Department has committed to undertaking a review of Bathing Waters every 6 years. This report summarises the findings of the 2022/23 Bathing Water Review. The Department is aware of the marked increase in interest in open water swimming over the past few years. The review sought nominations for new sites where large numbers of people are bathing, and examined the length of the bathing season, given the growing trend for year-round bathing.

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<sup>1</sup> [The Quality of Bathing Water Regulations \(Northern Ireland\) 2008](#)

The Regulations currently define the bathing water season in Northern Ireland as 1 June to 15 September.

1.6 This report outlines the findings of the 2022/23 Bathing Water review, and the action the Department is taking to implement those findings.

## **IDENTIFIED BATHING WATERS**

1.7 Northern Ireland currently has 26 identified bathing waters (see map at Annex 1). An identified bathing water is one which is listed in Schedule 1 of the Regulations, requiring the Department to comply with the provisions of the Regulations in relation to those bathing waters. The Department decided not to review the existing 26 bathing waters, as these are well-established, frequently used and have recognised bathing water operators in place.

1.8 It should be noted that the Regulations and this review are focussed on bathing only. The microbiological standards set in the Regulations are based on those recommended by the World Health Organisation<sup>2</sup>

1.9 These recommendations are associated with the possible health outcomes arising from recreational water activities, where whole-body contact takes place, (i.e., those in which there is a meaningful risk of swallowing water). However, the information provided at Bathing Waters can be useful to all water users.

## **CRITERIA FOR IDENTIFYING BATHING WATERS**

1.10 The criteria for identification of a bathing water are as follows.

**1) There is an appropriate body willing to take on the formal responsibility of bathing water operator for the site.**

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<sup>2</sup> [World Health Organisation – Guidelines for Safe Recreational Water Environments. Vol I Coastal and Fresh Waters](#)

It is essential that an organisation undertakes the responsibilities of Bathing Water Operator. Bathing Water Operators in Northern Ireland currently include councils, the National Trust (as landowners at Portstewart and Murlough, Co.Down) and the NIEA (Crawfordsburn and Helen's Bay as the Country Park Manager). A summary of the responsibilities of Bathing Water Operators is attached at Annex 2. These are statutory responsibilities under the Regulations and so sites cannot go forward for identification without the support of a Bathing Water Operator.

## **2) Bathing is not prohibited or inadvisable for reasons of safety**

The Department must be satisfied that bathing at a site is permitted, and the site is safe for bathing. The safety of a site will be determined by the Department in consultation with the prospective Bathing Water Operators.

## **3) The site is used by a large number of bathers**

The guide value used in Northern Ireland to define a "large" number of bathers at a site is 45 bathers on at least one occasion or 100 site users on at least two occasions.

1.11 A more detailed statement of bathing water policy is attached at Annex 3.

## **2. CONSULTATION ANALYSIS**

### **NOMINATIONS FOR BATHING WATERS**

2.1 Consultees were asked;

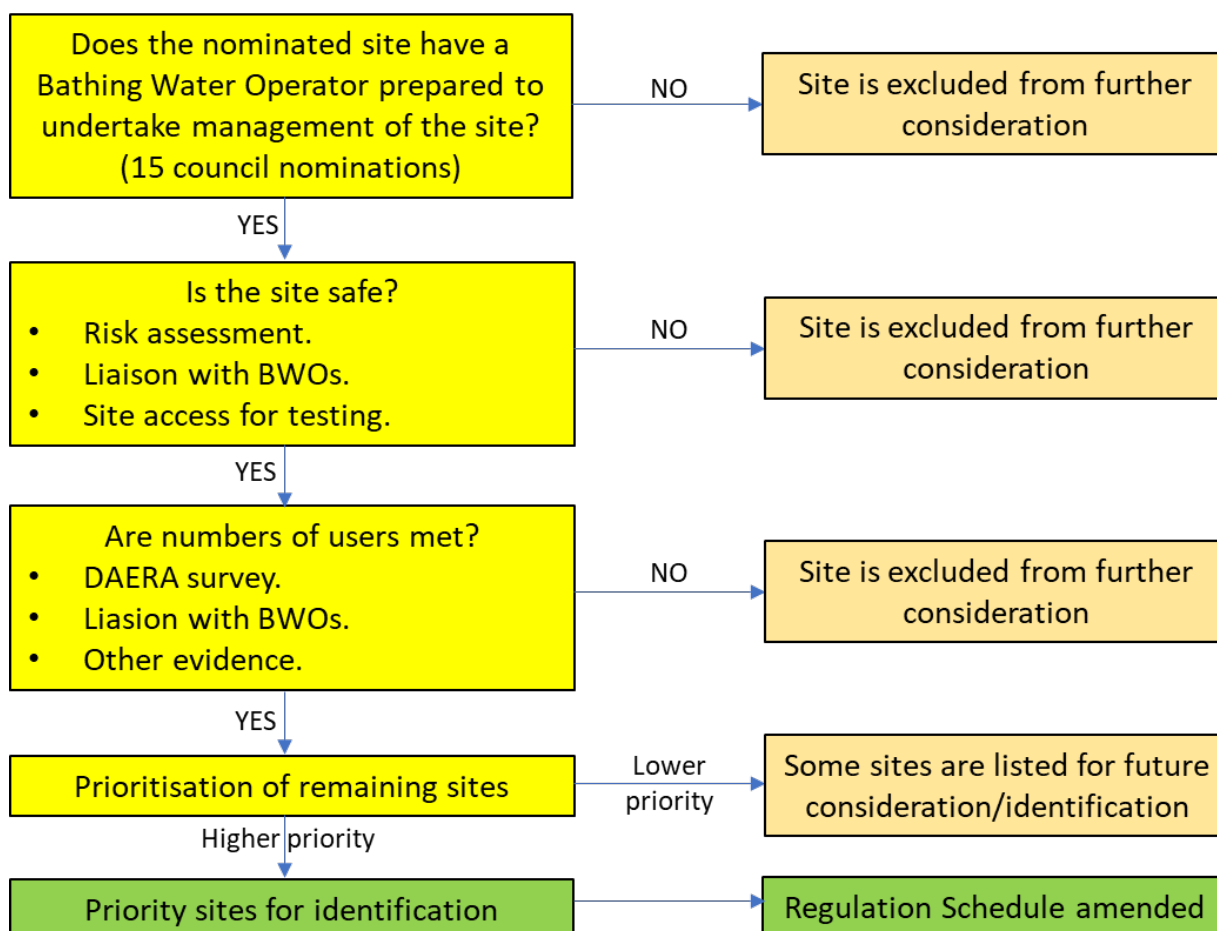
#### **Are there any sites you think should be considered for nomination?**

- 2.2 172 responses were received, the majority through the NI Direct Citizen Space online consultation process.
- 2.3 A total of 352 nominations for bathing water identification were received, representing 101 different bathing water sites, including nominations for inland sites (all current identified bathing waters are coastal).
- 2.4 All currently identified waters are operating well and were not subject to review.
- 2.5 A process of consultation with councils was undertaken in conjunction with the public consultation. 15 sites were nominated by councils where they were prepared to undertake the responsibilities of Bathing Water Operator.
- 2.6 Given the large number of nominated sites, assessment was prioritised based on council preparedness to act as Bathing Water Operator and public popularity. 20 waters were selected for assessment against the criteria at paragraph 2.12. These sites are listed in the table on page 9.

### **NOMINATED SITES PRIORITISATION PROCESS**

- 2.7 The interest in open water swimming has dramatically increased in recent years, and the current review has generated considerably more interest than in previous years.
- 2.8 In the 2017 review there were fewer than 30 responses and only 4 sites nominated. Subsequent work resulted in 3 of the 4 nominated sites being identified.

- 2.9 In anticipation of a large response, the consultation document noted, “There are likely to be resource constraints on the total number of new sites. Any proposed increase in the number of sites will be reviewed against available resources and budgetary constraints. The Department will endeavour to identify the most popular sites meeting the criteria, and to ensure a distribution of sites across Northern Ireland. “
- 2.10 The significant response to this review and consultation required a method of targeting limited resources most effectively by undertaking a process of evaluation and assessment to determine the sites where resources can be best allocated.
- 2.11 An analysis of the nominations identified 20 potential bathing water sites for evaluation which were subject to site visits, bather number surveys and risk assessment to determine the most suitable applicants for identification.
- 2.14 Using the site selection criteria outlined at 1.10 above, the process of allocating priority is as follows;



## **SITE SURVEYS**

2.15 The 20 sites selected on the basis of Bathing Water Operator availability and public popularity are listed in the table below.

2.16 Site surveys consisted of 5 one hour periods of observation during the 2022 bathing season (1 June to 15 September). As far as possible, sites were surveyed at times of greatest popularity and appropriate tide states. Site surveys were taken throughout the season including weekends, public holidays and evenings. A summary of survey findings is at Annex 4.



## NOMINATED SITES SELECTED FOR SURVEY OVER BATHING SEASON

<b>PRIORITY NOMINATED BATHING SITES</b>
<b>Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council</b>
Cushendall
<b>Mid and East Antrim Borough Council</b>
Drains Bay
Fisherman's Quay Carrickfergus
Portmuck
<b>Ards and North Down Borough Council</b>
Brompton Bay, Bangor
Skipping Stone Beach
Donaghadee Harbour
Portavoe
<b>Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council</b>
Rea's Wood, Antrim
Jordanstown Loughshore Park
<b>Newry, Mourne and Down District Council</b>
Castlewellan Lake
Camlough Lake
Rostrevor
Warrenpoint, Sandy Bottom
<b>Fermanagh and Omagh District Council</b>
Muckross
Killyfoal Lough near Donagh
Knockninny, Upper Lough Erne (near Derrylin)
Lough Melvin, Garrison
Mill Lough, Bellanaleck
Gortin Lake ( near Gortin Forest)

## LENGTH OF BATHING SEASON

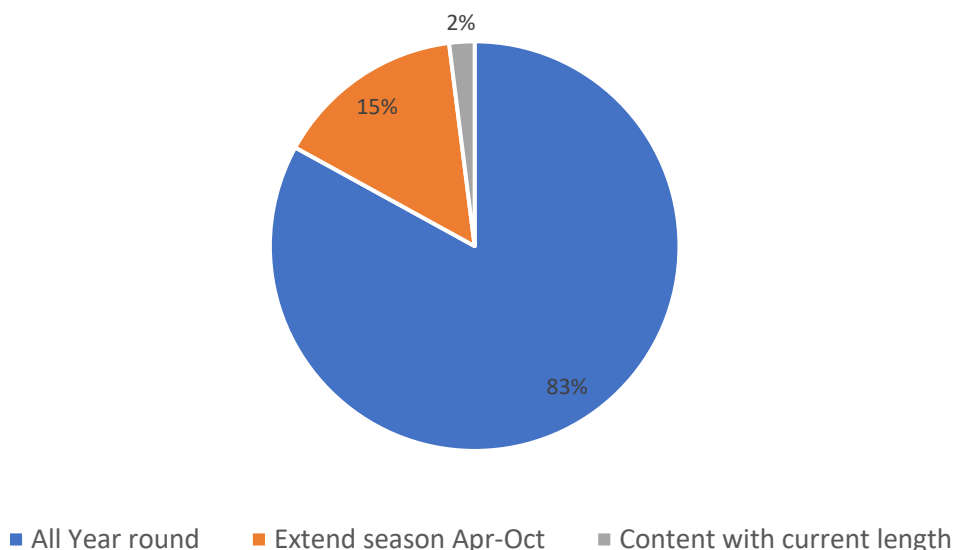
2.17 Consultees were asked;

**What is your opinion on the current length of the bathing season (1 June to 15 September each year)?**

**If your view is that the season should be extended, what period should be covered?**

- 160 respondents expressed an opinion on this topic.
- 131 respondents (83%) expressed a clear wish for the bathing season to be extended to cover the entire year.
- 24 respondents (15%) would like to see the bathing season extended, typically from April to October.
- 5 respondents (2%) thought the current bathing season length was correct.

Favoured length of bathing season



2.18 Consultation comments from stakeholder organisations, including Bathing Water Operators, recognise the desirability of year-round monitoring, but also

recognise that resource limitations on central and local government means this will have to be considered carefully. Extending testing across an entire year must be balanced with the expansion in the number of regularly tested bathing waters.

### 3 CONCLUSIONS

3.1 The 2022/23 Bathing Water Review has demonstrated that open water swimming has become an increasingly popular pastime over the last few years, and the Department recognises the public desire to facilitate the activity as actively as possible.

#### Conclusion 1

3.2 An initial pool of 101 candidate sites was reduced to 20 on the basis of likely Bathing Water Operator availability and public popularity. These 20 sites were surveyed over the 2022 bathing season and 10 were found to meet the usage criteria for identification. Further consultation with councils has resulted in a final list of seven sites which the Department will move to identify in legislation in collaboration with Bathing Water Operators.

**The Department concludes that the following 7 sites meet the requirements for identification, subject to confirmation that the appropriate council will adopt the formal role of Bathing Water Operator;**

<b>Site</b>	<b>Bathing Water Operator</b>
<b>Brompton Bay, Bangor</b>	Ards and North Down Borough Council
<b>Cushendall</b>	Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council
<b>Donaghadee Harbour</b>	Ards and North Down Borough Council
<b>Drain's Bay</b>	Mid and East Antrim Borough Council
<b>Portmuck</b>	Mid and East Antrim Borough Council
<b>Rea's Wood, Antrim</b>	Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council
<b>Warrenpoint, Sandy Bottom</b>	Newry, Mourne and Down District Council

## **Conclusion 2**

3.3 During the review consultation there was a clear public desire to extend the current bathing season to extend across the entire year. It should be noted that extension of the bathing season will have significant impacts on key stakeholders and would represent a significant and impactful policy change.

**The Department will undertake further investigation of the implications of extending the bathing season with key stakeholders.**

## **Conclusion 3**

3.4 It was noted in the review that there had been a significant increase in public interest in open water bathing over the past few years, as evidenced by the notable increase in public interest from previous reviews.

**The Department will continue in its approach, endorsed by the previous Minister, of conducting a full review of Bathing Waters every 6 years, but being prepared to consider evidence to support the nomination of prospective bathing waters at any time.**

## **4 NEXT STEPS**

4.1 The Department will liaise with councils with a view to formally identifying the following seven sites;

**Brompton Bay, Bangor**

**Cushendall**

**Donaghadee Harbour**

**Drain's Bay**

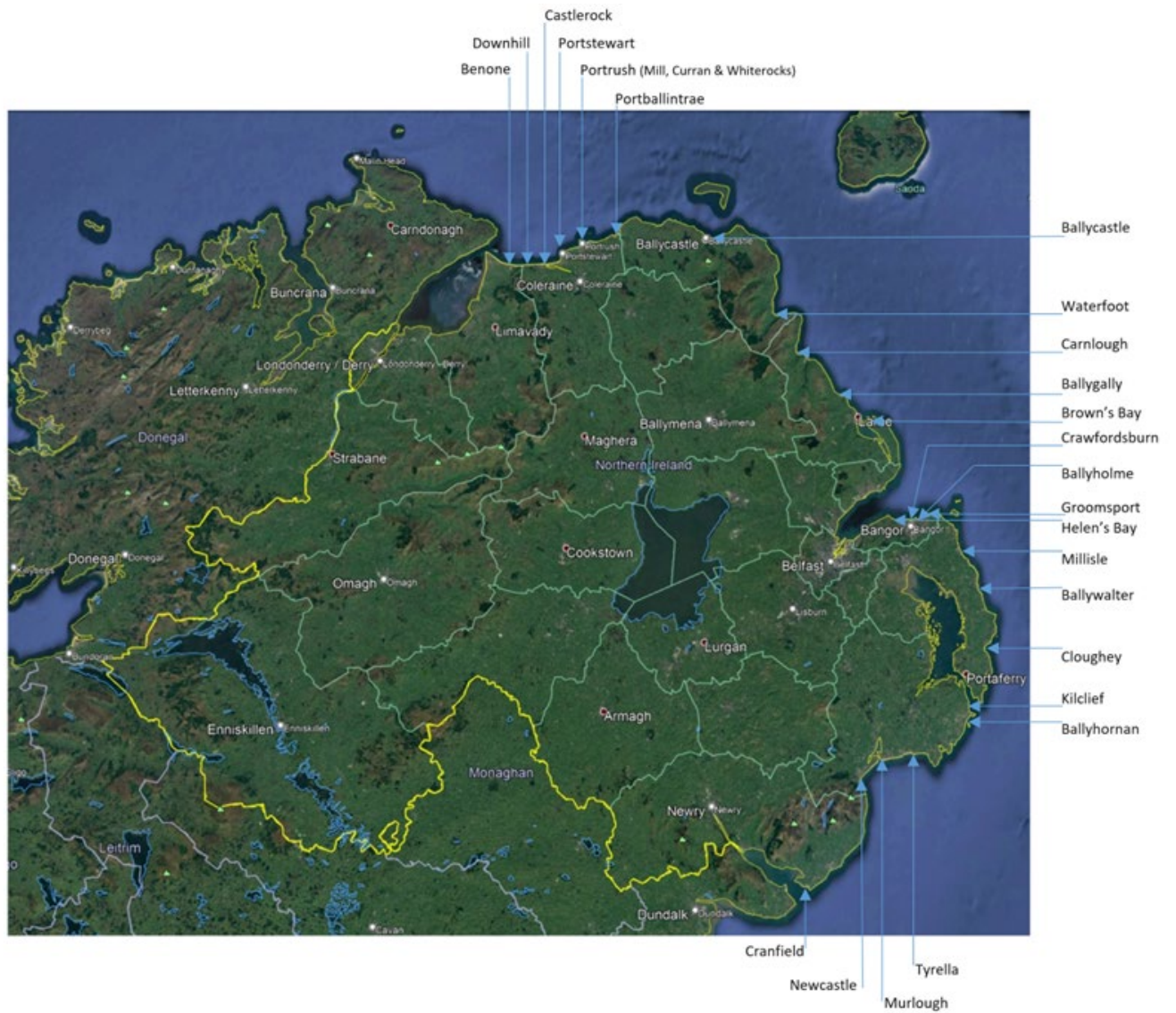
**Portmuck**

**Rea's Wood, Antrim**

**Warrenpoint, Sandy Bottom**

4.2 The Department will undertake a course of consultation with key stakeholders to assess the economic and other impacts of an extension of the current bathing season. Resource limitations on central and local government mean extending testing across an entire year must be balanced with the expansion in the number of regularly tested bathing waters.

IDENTIFIED BATHING WATERS 2022



## **Summary of Bathing Water Operator Responsibilities**

The responsibilities placed on a Bathing Water Operator by the Quality of Bathing Water Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2008<sup>3</sup> are summarised below:

- Bathing Water Operators must ensure that signage at a bathing water includes the information set out in the guidance for Bathing Water Operators

When Bathing Water Operators become aware of pollution incidents/ abnormal situations/ exceptional weather events that could be considered a risk to human health they should:

- consult DAERA (Department of Agriculture Environment and Rural Affairs).
- inform DAERA's pollution hotline on 0800 807 060.
- take appropriate management measures to protect bathers health.
- provide information to the public.
- where necessary, remove any waste.
- and, if necessary, issue temporary advice against bathing.

Where DAERA (the Department) has issued a notice requiring Bathing Water Operators to comply with the Bathing Water Regulations:

- comply with and implement the measures which are specified in the notice;
- provide the Department with any information it requires in carrying out its functions under the Bathing Water Regulations.
- display the current classification of the bathing water provided by DAERA and where appropriate, any advice against bathing.

Where a bathing water receives a poor classification:

- in the following bathing season, signs must display the appropriate classification and the symbol advising the public against bathing. Information must also be provided about why the site is not recommended for bathing.

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<sup>3</sup> [The Quality of Bathing Water Regulations \(Northern Ireland\) 2008 SR No. 231](#)



## 2022/23 BATHING WATERS REVIEW – SURVEY SUMMARY

<b>PRIORITY NOMINATED BATHING SITES</b>
<b>Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council</b>
Cushendall
<b>Mid and East Antrim Borough Council</b>
Drains Bay
Fisherman's Quay Carrickfergus
Portmuck
<b>Ards and North Down Borough Council</b>
Brompton Bay, Bangor
Skipping Stone Beach
Donaghadee Harbour
Portavoe
<b>Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council</b>
Rea's Wood, Antrim
Loughshore Park
<b>Newry, Mourne and Down District Council</b>
Castlewellan Lake
Camlough Lake
Rostrevor
Warrenpoint, Sandy Bottom
<b>Fermanagh and Omagh District Council</b>
Muckcross
Killyfoal Lough near Donagh
Knockninny, Upper Lough Erne (near Derrylin).
Lough Melvin, Garrison
Mill Lough, Bellanaleck
Gortin Lake ( near Gortin Forest)

# CAUSEWAY COAST AND GLENS

## CUSHENDALL

DATE	TIME	BATHERS	USERS
28/07/2022	16.30-17.30	1	19
11/08/2022	12:30-13:30	4	39
13/08/2022	19.30-20.30	12	42
21/08/2022	14:00-15:00	16	105
31/08/2022	12:00-13:00	21	120

### Commentary from consultation responses

Access to the beach is via a small promenade.

Grid reference D 24208 28060 Lat 55.084503 Long -6.0554239 W3W ///prone.stunt.irony

Cushendall has seen an increase in persons using the coastal area around Cushendall. Because of ease of access to the sea from the promenade this has resulted in an increase in swimmers, bathers and some paddle sports. As with many rural coastal settlements a swimming group has been established which has grown in popularity since March 2020. High tide would facilitate access to the water but the site is well used at any time with the increased interest in water based activity.

# MID AND EAST ANTRIM

## DRAINS BAY

DATE	TIME	BATHERS	USERS
18/07/2022	15-20-16.20	13	130
08/08/2022	14.15-14.15	1	17
11/08/2022	14.00-14.30	11	120
14/08/2022	09.30-10.30	0	11
31/08/2022	13:30-14:30	9	72

### Commentary from consultation responses

Drains Bay could do with easier beach access ie a slope for disabled users.

## PORTMUCK

DATE	TIME	BATHERS	USERS
18/07/2022	14.30-15.30	25	150
11/08/2022	12.30-13.30	19	Likely >100
27/08/2022	12.30-13:30	21	130
31/08/2022	16:00-17:00	15	75
18/09/2022	11.30-12.30	7	42

### Commentary from consultation responses

Portmuck is particularly busy for wild swimming in warmer months.

Portmuck allows swimming at all tides, and most weather conditions except strong northerly winds.

Many groups and individual swimmers use this site on a daily basis, as well as paddle boarders.

Portmuck is single track road manageable with courteous driving.

## FISHERMAN'S QUAY

DATE	TIME	BATHERS	USERS
18/07/2022	13.00 – 14.00	4	15
11/08/2022	12.30-13.00	5	17
27/08/2022	14:40-15:40	0	10
31/08/2022	17:30:18:30	2	20
18/09/2022	10:30-11:30	1	12

### Commentary from consultation responses

No comments

# ARDS AND NORTH DOWN BOROUGH COUNCIL

## BROMPTON Bay, Bangor

DATE	TIME	BATHERS	USERS
10/08/2022	10:00-11:00	4	9
24/08/2022	16:30-17.30	6	11
27/08/2022	12:00-13:00	52	45
01/09/2022	10:30-11:30	16	25
18/09/2022	13:30-14:30	24	12

### Comments

There is press evidence of swimmers/users which meets the threshold.

### Commentary from consultation responses

Some work to be done at Brompton

Brompton access very difficult at low tide since ladder came off in storm last year

Brompton is also unsafe due to erosion of the pier and no handrails or safety rails fitted.

There is a Facebook page called Brompton Belles and Beaux for members and these are people that regularly swim there. It has 659 members (11.02.22). There are regular swimming meets throughout the whole 12 month year. First swimmers can be there at first light with others coming in groups ranging in size right up to night swims.

Brompton requires new ladders as access is currently tide dependent.

Brompton used at all tides but more popular on a higher tide.

Brompton - is busy from dawn to sundown with swimmers and is not reliant on tides.

## SKIPPING STONE BEACH

DATE	TIME	BATHERS	USERS
10/08/2022	11:15-12:15	4	18
24/08/2022	16:42-17:42	0	15
27/08/2022	13:20-14:20	16	24
01/09/2022	11:45-12:45	2	14
18/09/2022	14:45-15:45	9	22

### Commentary from consultation responses

Skippingstone at high water

Skippingstone is best at high tide.

Skippingstone - currently easier access three hours either side of high tide.

The Council over the last few years has supported swimmers with infrastructure including allowing a local swim group to raise funds and install a ladder, railings and a beach shelter at Skippingstone. Water testing in the area cannot be carried out by the local swimming groups themselves and needs to be universal along the whole coast line, but would tie in with other developments attracting further tourism into the areas.

## DONAGHADEE HARBOUR

DATE	TIME	BATHERS	USERS
10/08/2022	12:50-15:40	45	110
24/08/2022	12:45-13:45	4	80
27/08/2022	15:30-16:30	12	90
01/09/2022	13:00-14:00	8	42
18/09/2022	16:20-17:20	4	36

**Commentary from consultation responses**

Donaghadee both low and high water.

Donaghadee at high water +/-1h

Donaghadee needs to be within an hour or so of high tide to swim.

Donaghadee - high tide and times around this.

Donaghadee is as accessible at the slip and other locations.

**PORTAVOE**

Unsafe access to beach - site not suitable

Commentary from consultation responses

Portavoe high tide.

Portavoe all tide heights

Portavoe not impacted by tide heights.

Portavoe Beach is not safe to access. There have been a few accidents.

The access to Portavoe beach needs upgrading to allow for safe use by all who wish to use it.

Better access to Portavoe would be beneficial as it has become a popular spot and can be hard for some people to access.

# ANTRIM AND NEWTOWNABBEY BOROUGH COUNCIL

## REA'S WOOD, Antrim

DATE	TIME	BATHERS	USERS
15/07/2022	14:00-15:00	4	80
21/07/2022	12:30-13:30	9	95
31/07/2022	12:00-13:00	4	130
13/08/2022	13:00-14:00	8	120
21/08/2022	14:05-15:05	16	150

### Commentary from consultation responses

**Regular swims at Reas Wood slipway 6.30 am Mon - Friday 7am Saturdays. Also most weekdays 9.30am.**

Intermittent swims 12.30pm weekdays. Evening swims intermittently weekdays around 18.00 more frequent during spring/summer. Boatclub slipway regular swims Sunday 10.00am & 14.30 with intermittent adhoc swims from this slipway over spring & summer months.

The Antrim Chilli Dippers swim all year so would like to see the season extended to all year.

Daily swimming- meeting point for Antrim chilli dippers 6.30 am 9.30 am and 12.30 am weekdays and similar times at weekends

## LOUGHSHORE PARK (Jordanstown)

DATE	TIME	BATHERS	USERS
15/07/2022	12:00-13:00	2	16
18/07/2022	14:40-15:40	0	35
13/08/2022	13:00-14:00	0	20
21/08/2022	16:00-17:00	0	24
18/09/2022	11:45-12:45	0	41

### Commentary from consultation responses

There are times at the Loughshore I would not get in as it looks unclean.

# NEWRY, MOURNE AND DOWN DISTRICT COUNCIL

## CASTLEWELLAN LAKE

DATE	TIME	BATHERS	USERS
25/07/2022	13:00-14:00	14	120
12/08/2022	15:00-16:00	20	150
19/08/2022	16:00-15:00	10	80
29/08/2022	13:00-14:00	4	>300
04/09/2022	13:20-14:20	0	70

### Commentary from consultation responses

No public nominations

## CAMLOUGH LAKE

DATE	TIME	BATHERS	USERS
25/07/2022	15:10-16:10	0	8
12/08/2022	13:45-14:45	6	10
19/08/2022	12:00-13:00	0	4
29/08/2022	15:00-16:00	5	12
04/09/2022	15:40-16:40	2	6

### Commentary from consultation responses

No public nominations

## ROSTREVOR

DATE	TIME	BATHERS	USERS
10/07/2022	14:00-15:00	8	16
14/07/2022	14:00-15:00	5	22
12/08/2022	13:40-14:40	15	25
20/08/2022	12:45-13:45	11	20
27/08/2022	17:30-18:30	0	12

### Commentary from consultation responses

No public nominations

## WARRENPOINT, SANDY BOTTOM

DATE	TIME	BATHERS	USERS
10/07/2022	12:30-13:30	22	55
14/07/2022	12:20-13:20	9	26
12/08/2022	15:10:16:10	45	70
20/08/2022	14:00-15:00	13	100+
27/08/2022	16:30-17:30	8	40

### Commentary from consultation responses

No public nominations

# FERMANAGH AND OMAGH DISTRICT COUNCIL

## MUCKROSS

Council to provide supporting information

DATE	TIME	BATHERS	USERS
17/08/22	17:30-18:30	8	15
28/08/2022	11:15-12:15	5	26

### Commentary from consultation responses

Muckross was described as having an area already roped off area for swimming, which suggest it is used regularly for swimming. No further information was provided so no further detail in relation to that site is given below (response from NI Environment Link)

## KILLYFOAL LOUGH NEAR DONAGH

Council to provide supporting information.

DATE	TIME	BATHERS	USERS
17/08/22	14:32	0	0
28/08/2022	16:15-17:15	0	4

### Commentary from consultation responses

No public nominations

## KNOCKNINNY, UPPER LOUGH ERNE (NEAR DERRYLIN)

Council to provide supporting information.

DATE	TIME	BATHERS		USERS
17/08/22	15:10	4		7
28/08/2022	16:15-17:15	0		4

### Commentary from consultation responses

No public nominations



## LOUGH MELVIN, GARRISON

### Council to provide supporting information

DATE	TIME	BATHERS	USERS
17/08/22	16:15	0	20
28/08/2022	13:00-14:00	2	16

### Commentary from consultation responses

No public nominations

## MILL LOUGH, BELLANALECK

### Council to provide supporting information

DATE	TIME	BATHERS	USERS	
17/08/22	15:40	0	1	
28/08/2022	15:00-16:00	0	2	

### Commentary from consultation responses

No public nominations

## GORTIN LAKE ( NEAR GORTIN FOREST)

### Council to provide supporting information

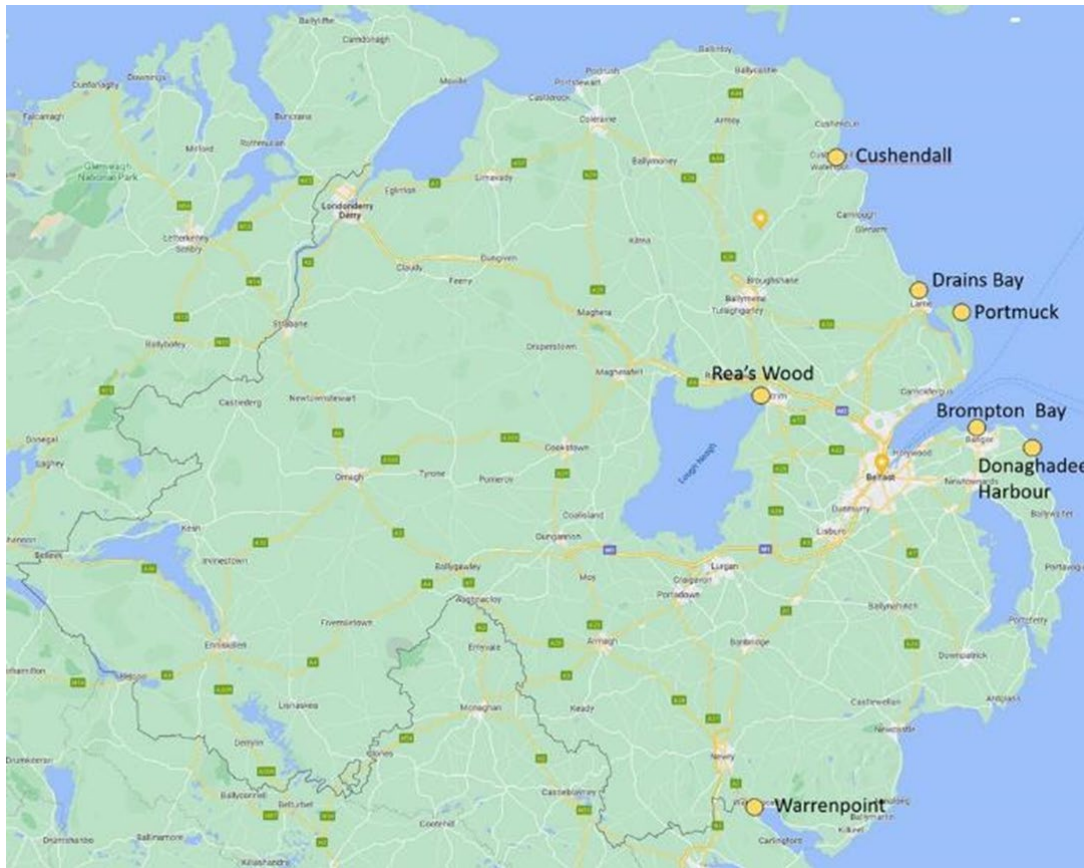
DATE	TIME	BATHERS	USERS	
17/08/2022	12:30-13:30	2	13	
29/08/2022	09:30-10-00	3	7	

### Commentary from consultation responses

Gortin lakes tend to be day time.

Used year round by all of the community. Gortin Dippers group and many other visitors to the site.

## SITE LOCATIONS MEETING THE CRITERIA FOR BATHING/USER NUMBERS



## BATHING WATERS POLICY

In 2006, the revised Bathing Water Directive (2006/7/EC)<sup>4</sup> was adopted by the European Parliament and the Council of the European Union.

In summary, the Directive required the Department to:

- annually identify bathing waters and provide a list of identified bathing waters to the European Commission;
- monitor, assess and classify bathing water quality at identified bathing waters;
- develop a system of bathing water profiles as a means of understanding risks to bathing water quality, which can then be used as a basis for the management of bathing waters; and
- encourage public participation in the implementation of the Directive, particularly in relation reviewing and updating of the list of identified bathing waters.

The Directive requires both the Department and bathing water operators to:

- undertake management measures in the event of specified pollution incidents; and
- provide appropriate, timely and standardised information to the public on bathing water quality.

The requirements of the Directive were transposed in Northern Ireland through The Quality of Bathing Water Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2008 (The Bathing Water Regulations<sup>5</sup>). Introduction of the Regulations was phased, and were fully implemented by 2016.

### Site bather and user numbers

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<sup>4</sup> The revised Bathing Water Directive (2006/7/EC) can be accessed at:  
<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2006:064:0037:01:EN:HTML>

<sup>5</sup> [http://www.doeni.gov.uk/index/protect\\_the\\_environment/water/bathing\\_water.htm](http://www.doeni.gov.uk/index/protect_the_environment/water/bathing_water.htm)

EU Member States were required to identify bathing waters where bathing is explicitly authorised by the competent authorities, or bathing is not prohibited and is traditionally practised by a “large number of bathers”. A large number of bathers is defined in the Directive as “a number that the competent authority considers to be large having regard, in particular, to past trends or to infrastructure or facilities provided, or measures taken, to promote bathing”.

In 2006 the Department undertook opinion surveys across Northern Ireland to ascertain public usage behaviour at bathing sites and it was determined that 45% of beach users would intend to enter the water on all or most visits.

The Department also considered the approach taken in other parts of the UK (for example, at that time, Scotland consider 150 beach users as a “large number” in relation to bathing waters) to help quantify what a large number of bathers and beach users might be in a Northern Ireland context. Bearing in mind the Northern Ireland population and climate, the Department determined 100 beach users to be a substantial number when considering sites for identification. Thus a "large number" of bathers was set at 45 people in Northern Ireland (i.e. 45% of 100 beach users).

### **Frequency of review**

The Directive required Member States to annually identify all bathing waters and to encourage public participation in the process of reviewing and updating the list of bathing waters. The Directive, however, does not place any statutory requirement on Member States to perform formal reviews in relation to bathing water identification. A review in 2011 determined that 6 yearly reviews was an appropriate timescale. This does not preclude interested parties from nominating a site for formal identification as a bathing water at any other time, subject to the nomination meeting the criteria for identification.