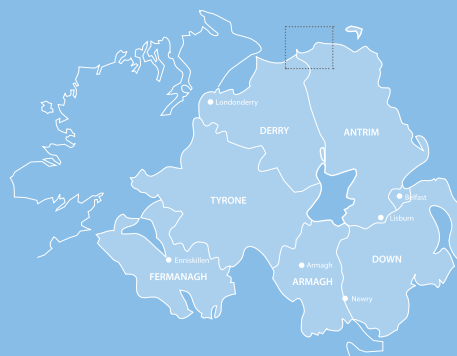


Bathing Water Profile

Whiterocks

May 2023



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

www.daera-ni.gov.uk



Key Information

Bathing Water Name	Whiterocks Bathing Water
Location	UK/Northern Ireland/County Antrim/North Coast
Year of identification	2006
Local council area	Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council
Bathing Water Operator	Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council
Description of bathing beach	Sand, approximately 1.5 kilometre in length, contiguous with Portrush (Curran Strand) Bathing Water
Monitoring Point	Western side of access point, C88324085 (Map 2)

Two minor unnamed rivers flow across the bathing beach, although the more westerly one is now effectively a drain under the golf course and seldom discharges. These rivers flow through a predominantly rural environment with a small number of residences. These may be influenced by both agriculture and urban sources of pollution.

The main area of population affecting this beach is the town of Portrush, which is located to the west of the bathing area. Portrush has an approximate population of 6,379, although during the summer season it attracts large numbers of holiday makers.

Bathing Water Quality at Whiterocks

Whiterocks bathing water was identified in 2006. Monitoring and reporting is carried out by DAERA Marine and Fisheries Division.

Whiterocks Bathing Water Quality 2018-2022



Key: ● Excellent ● Good ● Sufficient ● Poor

Bathing Waters are classified as Excellent, Good, Sufficient or Poor (see above). This classification is based on a statistical assessment of results from the last four years.

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

A Description of Whiterocks bathing water and the surrounding area

Whiterocks bathing water is a popular tourist destination located on the north coast of Northern Ireland. The beach is contiguous with Portrush Curran bathing water and they have a combined length of approximately three kilometres.

The bathing beach is comprised entirely of sand backing onto an extensive sand dune system at the western end, while rocks, cliffs and caves are to be found at the eastern end. There are golf courses over most of the sand dunes and the beach plays host to a number of activities including bathing, surfing, walking and horse riding.

The catchment for this bathing water is mostly rural with pockets of urbanisation. The town of Portrush is approximately 1.5 km to the West. Highly managed golf courses occupy the dunes over most of the bathing water's length. There are a number of residences and a hotel to the eastern end. All of these could influence the water quality. Further inland the catchment consists of improved grassland with arable horticulture, neutral grass and a small amount of open and dense dwarf heath. The main geology in the area is a mix of Mesozoic sedimentary and tertiary igneous rocks.

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

It should be noted that weekly classification at Whiterocks bathing water is generally 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.

Waste Water

There is a major waste water treatment facility between Portrush and Portstewart with an outfall approximately 1 km off the coast to the East of Portstewart. This treated waste water outfall is approximately 6 km West of the Whiterocks bathing water. The works treats waste water from the wider Portrush, Portstewart, Castlerock and Coleraine area. The waste water receives secondary treatment.

Although Whiterocks is in a rural setting the very popular seaside location of Portrush is less than 2 kilometres away. The urbanisation of Portrush 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 Portrush and Whiterocks 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 Waste Water Treatment Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2007 (www.daera-ni.gov.uk/articles/urban-waste-water) and the Water Environment (Water Framework Directive)

Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2017.

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 (<https://www.netregs.org.uk/environmental-topics/guidance-for-pollution-prevention-gpp-documents/>).

Agriculture and rural activities

Agriculture accounts for approximately 70% of the total Northern Ireland land area of 1.4 million hectares, and characterises much of the rural landscape. The agricultural industry is predominately grass based, with grazing livestock accounting for more than two-thirds of the gross industry output. Agriculture and the agri-food sector makes a very important contribution to the economy of Northern Ireland.

The most significant pressures on water quality are from the release of the nutrients phosphorous and nitrogen from agricultural sources. Agriculture can also give rise to sediment entering waters due to the damage caused to river banks and lake shores by livestock trampling and from other types of land disturbance e.g. ploughing and overgrazing. Agricultural activities are also a source of certain microbial vectors causing human illnesses including cryptosporidium and e-coli bacteria which can be an issue in bathing water areas. Other pressures from agriculture include the contamination of waters from hazardous chemicals, such as pesticides and sheep dip.

The Nitrates Action Programme and the Phosphorous Regulations have been revised and combined into the **Nutrients Action Programme (NAP) 2019-2022**. The Nutrient Action Programme (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2019 came into operation on 15 October 2019. The revised NAP has new measures to promote more efficient nutrient management and best practice.

The **Knowledge Advisory Service (KAS)** was set up in April 2018 as a single advisory service aimed at supporting Northern Ireland's farm and food businesses.

The **Environmental Farming Scheme (EFS)** is DAERA's agri-environment scheme under the Rural Development Programme 2014-2022. EFS has been designed to address specific environmental needs, primarily relating to biodiversity and water.

A **Soil Nutrient Health Scheme (SNHS)** for Northern Ireland was launched in 2022 and will run for 4 years. The Scheme is a soil sampling and carbon analysis scheme that will provide farmers with nutrient levels in their soils across all fields as well as providing an accurate estimate of the carbon stored in the soils, hedgerows and trees on their farms. The scheme will benefit farmers in management of their nutrient applications which will help improve water quality and manage agricultural land more effectively.

The catchment area of the Whiterocks bathing water has a significant amount of improved grassland with some neutral grass and arable horticulture.

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

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 a River Basin Management Plan, which takes 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.

Whiterocks is located in the North Eastern River Basin Districts. A draft of the 2021-2027 river basin management plan can be found here: www.daera-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/consultations/daera/Draft%203rd%20cycle%20River%20Basin%20Management%20Plan%20for%20Northern%20Ireland%202021-2027_0.PDF

Pollution events

From 2019-2022 there were twelve confirmed pollution events within the vicinity of the bathing water.

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)

Whiterocks 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
Lisburn, BT28 3AL
Email: Marine.InfoRequests@daera-ni.gov.uk

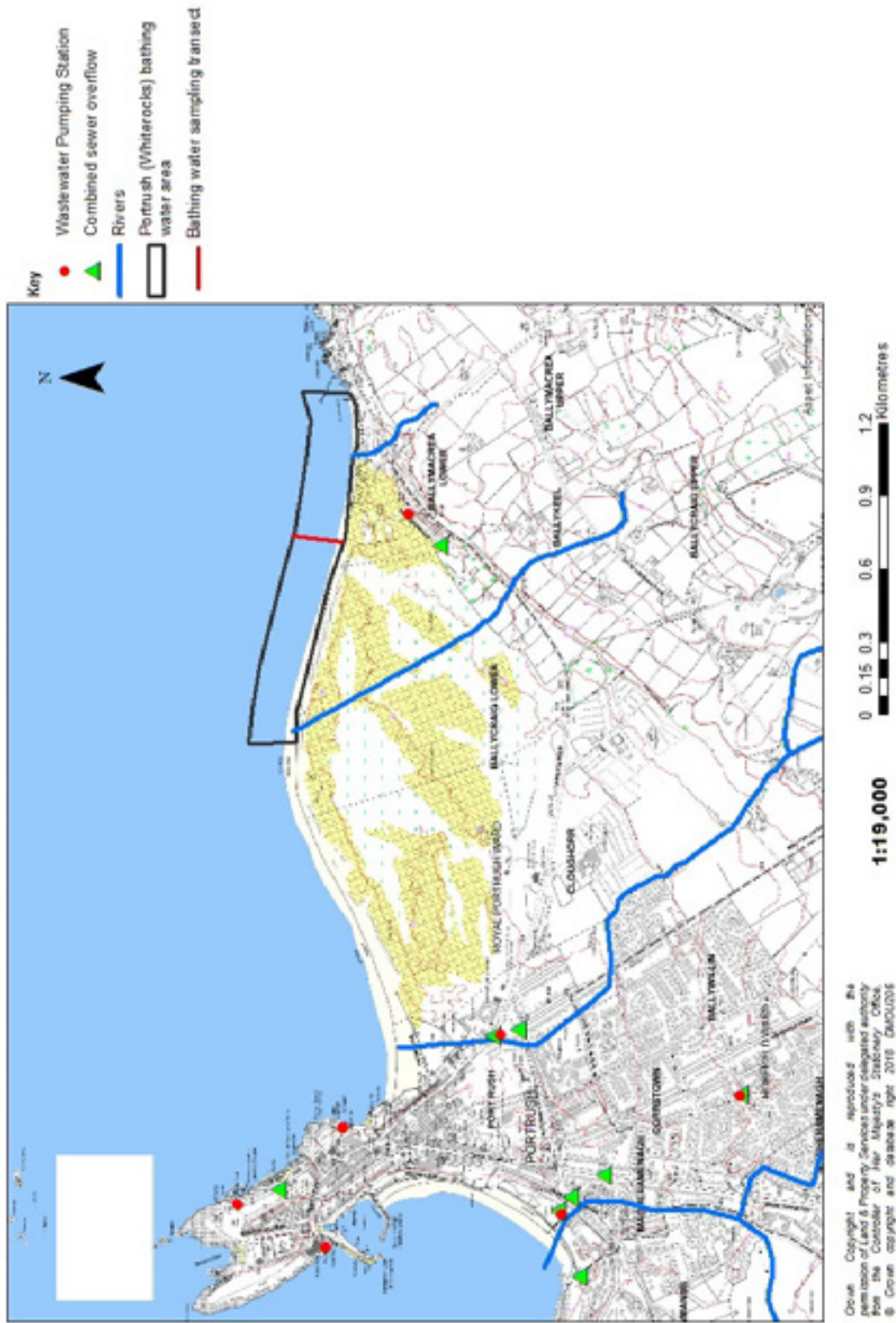
Phone: 028 9262 3244

Water Pollution 24hr Hotline Phone: 0800 807060

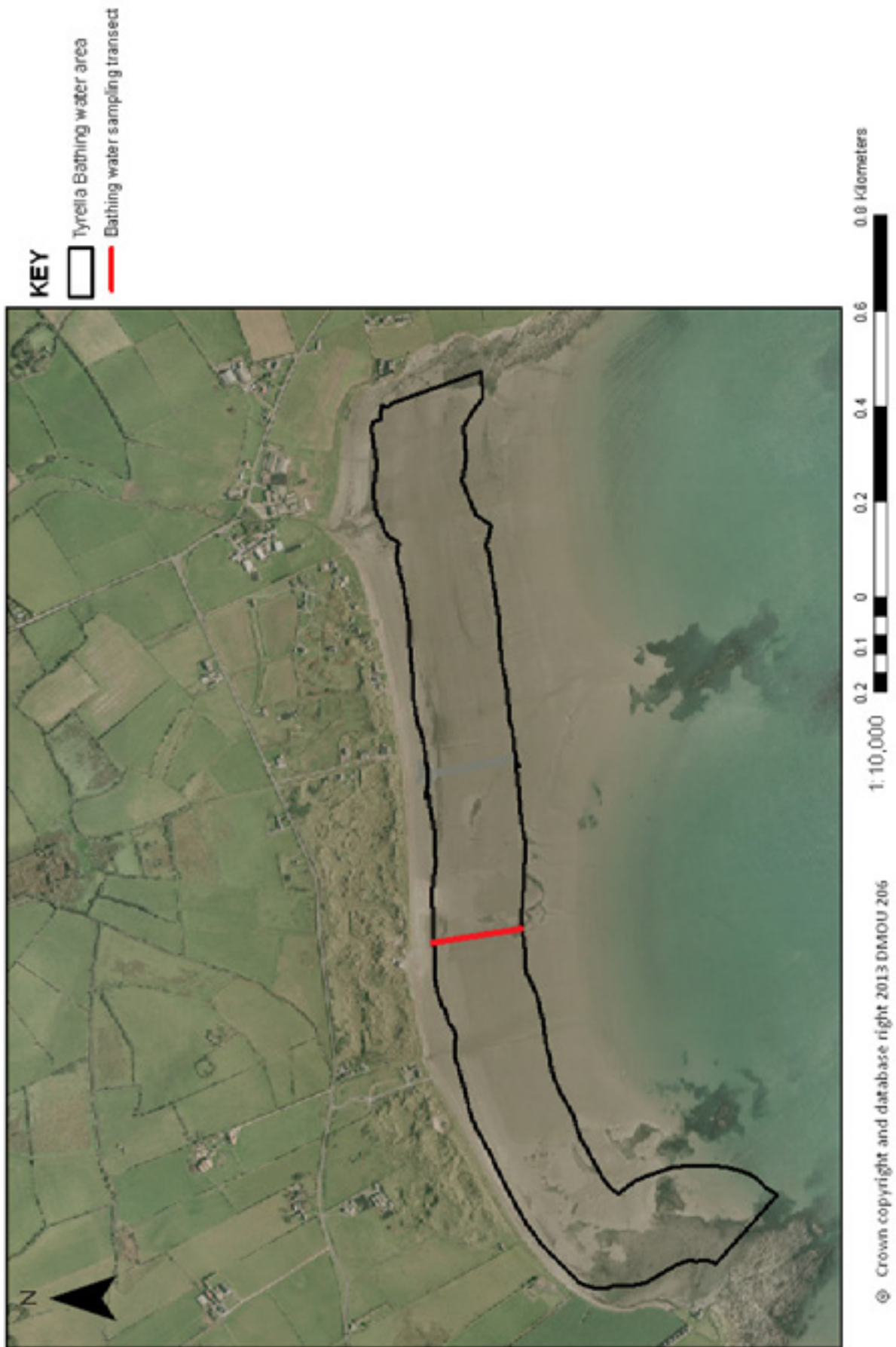
Local Authority Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council
Cloonavin
66 Portstewart Road
Coleraine, BT52 1EY

Phone: 028 7034 7034

Map 1
Whiterocks Bathing Water -
Potential Pollution Sources



Map 2
Whiterocks Bathing Water -
EC Bathing Water Sample Location



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