

## Bathing Water Profile for Machrihanish

Machrihanish, Scotland

Current water classification <https://www2.sepa.org.uk/BathingWaters/Classifications.aspx>

### Description

Machrihanish Bay is a 5 km long quiet rural sandy beach located on the Mull of Kintyre Peninsula. It is close to the small village of Machrihanish and adjoins the golf course via an established sand dune system. There is a car park at either end of the bay and access to the beach is via a gate at the village.

The beach is prized for its unspoilt golden sands and is popular with locals, as well as surfers and other water sports enthusiasts.

During high and low tides the approximate distance to the water's edge can vary from approximately 30–100 metres. The beach slopes gently towards the water. There are powerful rip currents and submerged rocks on part of the beach.



© Copyright [Leslie Barrie](#) and licensed for [reuse](#) under this [Creative Commons Licence](#)

### Site details

Local authority	Argyll and Bute Council
Year of designation	1999
Water sampling location	NR 64100 20900

### Catchment description

The catchment draining into the designated bathing water extends to approximately 66 km<sup>2</sup>. The land area adjacent to the bathing water is flat and low-lying and has been subjected to extensive drainage works over the years. Beyond this low-lying area the land rises to approximately 200 metres.

The main river within the bathing water catchment is the Machrihanish or Backs Water.

The catchment is predominantly rural (98%) with grassland (74%) the major land use. The upland areas support mixed sheep and beef farming whilst the lowlands are used for intensive dairy farming. Most farms grow a small acreage of barley for feed and straw. Approximately 2% of the bathing water catchment comprises of bog, standing water and inland rock. Population density within the catchment is generally low. The village of Machrihanish is at the southern end of the bathing water. The area also includes Campbeltown Airport and both Machrihanish and Machrihanish Dunes golf clubs.

The bathing water includes the Machrihanish Dunes Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)

### Risks to water quality

The principal risks and source of wet weather driven short term pollution at this bathing water arise from agricultural run-off and intermittent combined sewer overflows.

There is a risk that water pollution may occur after heavy rainfall. **Bathing is not advised during or 1-2 days after heavy rainfall. This is due to the risk to bathers' health from water pollution.**

Our regulatory and scientific assessment indicates that potential sources of short-term faecal indicator pollution at this bathing water can originate from human or animal sources.

Map 1: Machrihanish bathing water



Map 2: Catchment draining into Machrihanish bathing water



## **Improving bathing water quality**

### **Improving diffuse pollution from agricultural sources**

Diffuse pollution from agricultural sources is the result of rain driven events causing cumulative inputs of pollutants to rivers and streams.

There is potential for agricultural diffuse pollution to occur in small tributaries discharging onto the bathing beach. There is a risk to Machrihanish's bathing water quality, particularly during and after periods of wet weather.

Farm visits have been ongoing in the Kintyre area since 2022. SEPA will continue to work with rural land managers in these catchments to reduce the risk of pollution to the bathing water.

### **Improving pollution from sewage and other discharges**

Scottish Water provides most waste water collection and treatment services in Scotland.

The only Scottish Water assets in the catchment are pumping stations. These pumping stations have provision for making screened, intermittent discharges under storm or emergency conditions only.

### **Cyanobacteria (blue-green algae)**

Marine waters are not at risk of cyanobacteria overproduction.

### **Algae**

Current information suggests that this bathing water is not at risk of excessive growth of macroalgae (seaweed) or phytoplankton.

### **Jellyfish**

There is a possibility of increased numbers of jellyfish in the water during summer months. This is a naturally occurring phenomenon. Most species common to the UK are harmless. The Marine Conservation Society advises to 'look but don't touch'.

### **Responding to pollution incidents**

Please use our 24 hour hotline (0800 80 70 60) to report pollution. SEPA will investigate the incident and contact other relevant organisations. That may include Scottish Ministers, Scottish Water, the local authority and the relevant health board. Where necessary, measures will be put in place to resolve the problem.

If beach users or bathers are considered to be at risk, the local authority will warn the public by erecting signs at the bathing water. Information will also be available on our website.

SEPA will investigate whenever our sampling identifies pollution.

Beach users are encouraged to use the bins provided or to take litter home. Beach cleaning and litter clean-up is maintained by Argyll and Bute Council for this bathing water.

## Contact details and information sources

<p><b>SEPA Lochgilphead office</b> Kilbrandon House Manse Brae Lochgilphead Argyll PA31 8QX 01546 602876 <a href="http://www.sepa.org.uk">www.sepa.org.uk</a></p>	<p><b>Argyll and Bute Council</b> Kilmory Lochgilphead Argyll PA31 8RT 01546 602127 <a href="mailto:enquiries@argyll-bute.gov.uk">enquiries@argyll-bute.gov.uk</a> <a href="http://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk">www.argyll-bute.gov.uk</a></p>	<p><b>Keep Scotland Beautiful</b> 01786 471333 <a href="mailto:beach@ksbscotland.org.uk">beach@ksbscotland.org.uk</a> <a href="http://www.keepsotlandbeautiful.org">www.keepsotlandbeautiful.org</a></p>
<p><b>Scottish Government</b> Victoria Quay, Edinburgh, EH6 6QQ 0131 244 0396 <a href="mailto:eqcat@scotland.gsi.gov.uk">eqcat@scotland.gsi.gov.uk</a> <a href="http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Environment/Water/15561/bathingwaters">www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Environment/Water/15561/bathingwaters</a></p>		
<b>Version number:</b>	<b>Date:</b>	<b>Next review due:</b>
1.0	Oct 2010	
1.1	March 2014	
1.2	June 2015	
1.3	April 2020	
1.4	May 2023	