

Bathing Water Profile for Balmedie

Balmedie, Scotland

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

Description

Balmedie beach is an extensive sandy beach on the Aberdeenshire coast. Balmedie Country Park is adjacent to the beach. The bathing area is centred round the main access routes to the beach from the country park. Kite surfing and other water sports are popular at the beach.

During high and low tides the approximate distance to the water's edge can vary from 0 to 200 metres. The sandy beach slopes gently towards the water. For local tide information see: <http://easytide.ukho.gov.uk/EasyTide>



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Site details

Local authority	Aberdeenshire Council
Year of designation	1999
Water sampling location	NJ 98050 18330

Catchment description

The catchment draining into Balmedie bathing water extends to 23 km². The area varies in topography from gently rolling hills in the west to the low-lying plains along the coast. The main rivers within the bathing water catchment are the Egie Burn and Potterton Burn. The Egie Burn enters the sea approximately 1 km from the southern end of the designated bathing area and the Potterton Burn enters at the southern end.

The area is predominantly rural (93%) with agriculture the major land use. Of the rural area, 41% is arable agriculture and 47% grassland. Land use in the catchments of the Potterton and Egie Burns is predominately arable farming with some small holdings supporting livestock in the upper catchments. Approximately 3% of the bathing water catchment is urban with Balmedie village the main population centre in the area.

There is a Site of Special Scientific Interest within the catchment. The catchment also lies within a designated Nitrate Vulnerable Zone.

Risks to water quality

The principal risks and source of wet weather driven short term pollution at this bathing water arise from surface water urban drainage and agricultural run-off.

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: Balmedie bathing water



Map 2: Catchment draining into Balmedie 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 the potential for agricultural diffuse pollution to occur in Eigie and Potterson burns. This is a risk to Balmedie's bathing water quality, particularly during periods of wet weather.

Farm visits have been on going in the catchment since 2014. These visits looked to identify diffuse pollution sources and provide advice on possible mitigation measure farmers could employ to reduce the risk of pollution. SEPA has observed significant changes in land management practice within the catchments. SEPA will continue to work with the farmers 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.

Improvements to the sewerage system in recent years have led to a significant reduction in the level of faecal indicators in the Balmedie bathing water under normal conditions. The Balmedie sewage treatment works was replaced in 2004 and now provides secondary treatment for local sewage including from the nearby village of Newburgh. Treated effluent from the works is discharged via a long sea outfall approximately 1 km offshore from SEPA's bathing water sampling point. Sewage from the neighbouring communities of Potterton and Belhelvie, which previously discharged to the Potterton Burn, now also discharges via the long sea outfall. The combined sewer overflow from the Balmedie works also discharges via the long sea outfall. The long sea outfall is a potential risk (albeit not significant) to bathing water quality. Modelling work has been carried out to assess the impact of the long sea outfall on water quality at the bathing water and may need to be reviewed in light of the tighter standards of the revised Bathing Water Directive.

There are many septic tank discharges from private dwellings to the Potterton and Eigie burns. We have assessed the risk to the water environment from the cumulative impacts of these discharges, which are thought to pose a potential risk to bathing water quality. We are unlikely to grant consents for any further septic tank discharges to the lower reaches of the Eigie Burn when connection to the public sewer is an option.

Improving pollution from diffuse urban sources

Urban diffuse source pollution comes from contaminated rainwater discharging to rivers and streams.

The Eigie Burn, which discharges directly into the Balmedie bathing water, is known to be affected by surface water run-off from the urban area through which it flows. Although the risk is not thought to be significant, it is a potential risk to bathing water quality.

SEPA, local authorities and Scottish Water are working together to tackle urban diffuse pollution. Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDS) have been incorporated into local plans and partner organisations have been encouraged to retrofit SUDS where possible.

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 Aberdeenshire Council for this bathing water.

Contact details and information sources

<p>SEPA Aberdeen Office Inverdee House Baxter Street Torry Aberdeen AB11 9QA 01224 266600 www.sepa.org.uk</p>	<p>Aberdeenshire Council Woodhill House Westburn Road Aberdeen Aberdeenshire AB16 5GB 08456 081207 www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk</p>	<p>Keep Scotland Beautiful 01786 471333 beach@ksbscotland.org.uk www.keepsotlandbeautiful.org</p>
<p>Scottish Government Victoria Quay, Edinburgh, EH6 6QQ 0131 244 0396 eqcat@scotland.gsi.gov.uk www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Environment/Water/15561/bathingwaters</p>		

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