

## Bathing Water Profile for Heads of Ayr

Ayr, Scotland

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

Today's water quality forecast <http://apps.sepa.org.uk/bathingwaters/Predictions.aspx>

### Description

Heads of Ayr beach is located between Heads of Ayr cliffs and the rocky outcrops at Greenan Castle. It is owned and managed by the adjacent holiday park.

The beach is very popular with tourists and visitors to the holiday park.

At high and low tides the approximate distance to the water's edge can vary from 0–300m. For local tide information see: <http://easytide.ukho.gov.uk/EasyTide/>



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### Site details

Local authority	South Ayrshire Council
Year of designation	2008
Water sampling location	NS 30202 18902

### Catchment description

A catchment area of 4 km<sup>2</sup> drains into Heads of Ayr bathing water. The maximum elevation within the catchment is around 250 metres, falling to around 10 metres along the coast.

The catchment is predominantly rural, grassland is the major land use. Dairy farming is the main agricultural activity. A small area of the bathing water catchment is urban. The urban area includes Craig Tara Holiday Park which is adjacent to the coast. The rest of the catchment comprises of rock and sediment.

The main water course in the catchment is the Carwinshoch Burn. It flows into the bay at the southern end of the bathing water.

Average summer rainfall for the region is 392 mm compared to 331 mm across Scotland as a whole.

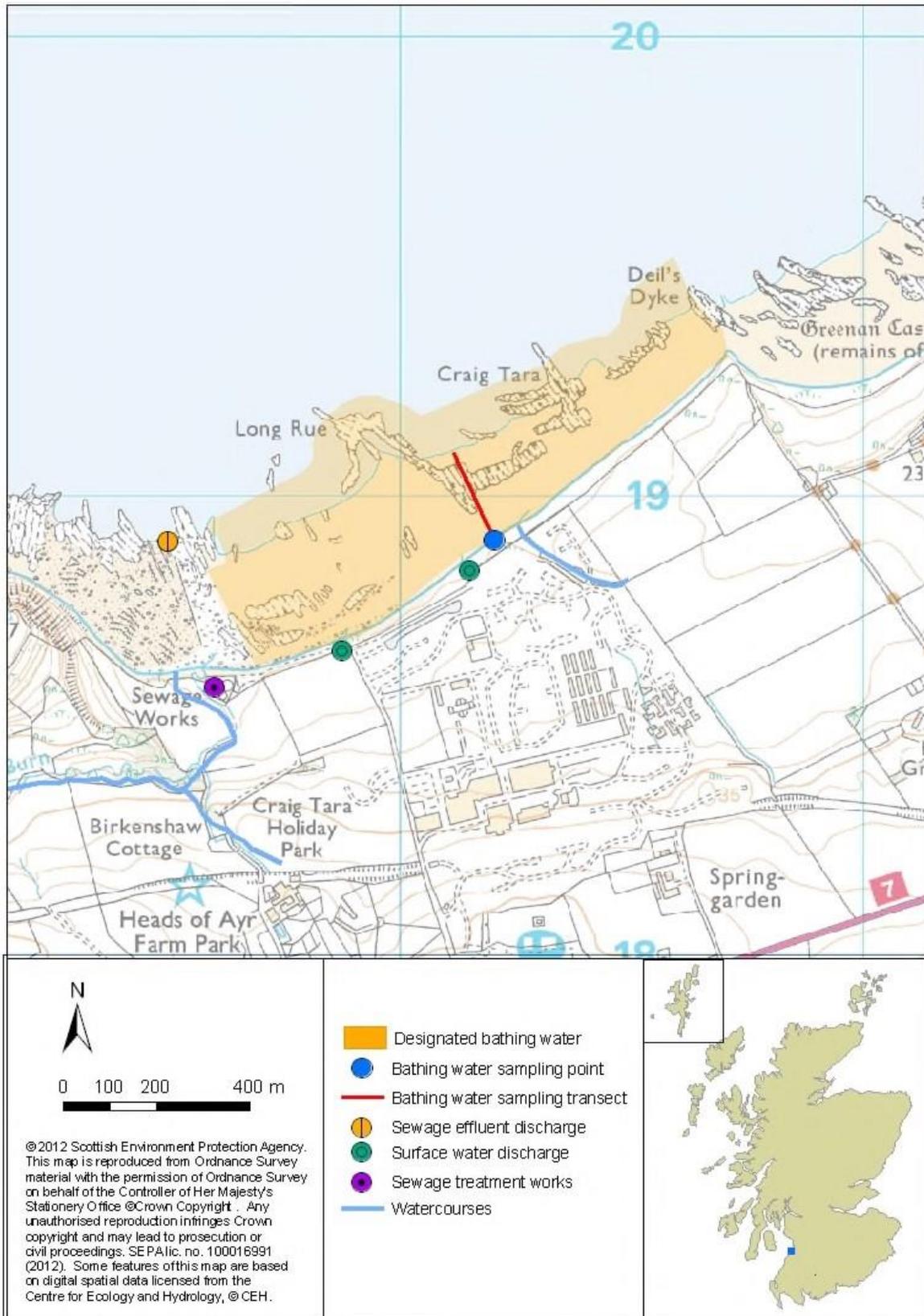
### Risks to water quality

This bathing water is subject to short term pollution when heavy rainfall washes faecal material into the sea. Pollution risks include surface water drainage, agricultural runoff and effluent from sewage treatment works. These are highlighted on Map 1.

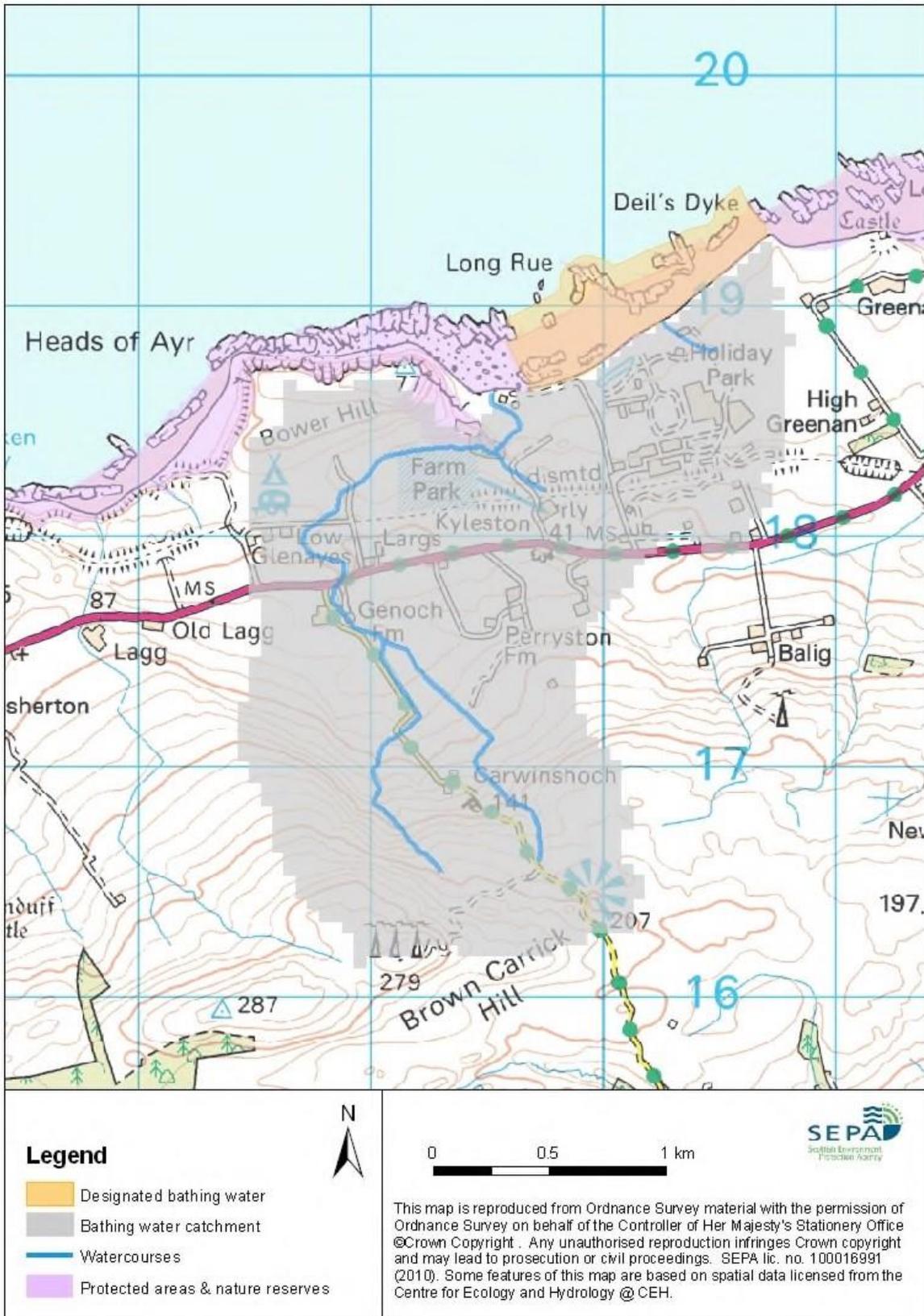
There is a risk that water pollution may occur after heavy rainfall. **Bathing is not advised during or 1-2 days after heavy rainfall. This is due to the risk to bathers' health from water pollution.**

DNA tracing indicates that human sources and animal sources are contributing to faecal pollution of the bathing water.

Map 1: Heads of Ayr bathing water



Map 2: Catchment draining into Heads of Ayr bathing water



### **Daily water quality forecasts**

Water quality is forecast on a daily basis during the bathing season (1 June to 15 September). The forecasts indicate that water quality is either acceptable or poor. Warnings against bathing are advised when poor water quality is forecast. This is because there is an increased risk to bathers' health from water pollution.

Forecasts are communicated via an electronic message sign at the beach, SEPA's website, mobile website and Beachline (03000 996699).

### **Improving bathing water quality**

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

Diffuse pollution from agricultural sources is the result of 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 Head of Ayr bathing water quality, particularly during and after periods of wet weather.

Farm visits have been ongoing in this catchment since 2011 and SEPA will continue to work with rural land managers to reduce the risk of pollution to the bathing water. SEPA has observed significant changes in land manager practice resulting in improvements which are known to reduce pollution risk. There has been significant capital expenditure resulting in many rural land managers going beyond regulatory compliance to address issues arising from their farming activities.

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

There are private sewage treatment plants and septic tanks within the catchment. This includes a sewage treatment works serving the nearby holiday park. The effluent from the sewage treatment works discharges into the bay via a long sea outfall.

Recent investment in private sewerage has resulted in significant water quality improvement. SEPA are investigating any remaining impacts on Heads of Ayr bathing water. Improving pollution from diffuse urban sources

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

The only urban run-off in the vicinity of this beach is from the nearby holiday park. There has been investment in upgrades to the drainage system at the park. SEPA is monitoring the effectiveness of the work.

#### **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. Further sampling of the bathing water and related rivers and streams is undertaken.

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

## Contact details and information sources

<p><b>SEPA Ayr office</b> 31 Miller Road Ayr Ayrshire KA7 2AX 01292 294000 <a href="http://www.sepa.org.uk">www.sepa.org.uk</a></p>	<p><b>South Ayrshire Council</b> Burns House Burns Statue Square Ayr KA7 1UT 01292 618222 environmental.health@south-ayrshire.gov.uk <a href="http://www.south-ayrshire.gov.uk">www.south-ayrshire.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.keeptoscotlandbeautiful.org">www.keeptoscotlandbeautiful.org</a></p>	<p><b>Craig Tara Holiday Park (Haven)</b> Dunure Road Ayr KA7 4LB 0871 230 1930 <a href="http://www.haven.com/parks/scotland/craig_tara/index.aspx">www.haven.com/parks/scotland/craig_tara/index.aspx</a></p>

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[www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Environment/Water/15561/bathingwaters](http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Environment/Water/15561/bathingwaters)

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