

## Bathing Water Profile for Largs (Pencil Beach)

Largs, 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

Largs (Pencil Beach) bathing water is a relatively small, shallow bay about 300 metres in length. It is situated on the north Ayrshire coast at the south end of Largs town. On a clear day the beach offers great views of Little Cumbrae and Great Cumbrae islands.

The bathing water is to the north of the strip of land upon which the Pencil monument is built. The bay comprises sandy areas and a mixture of grass and pebble shore strips interspersed by rocky outcrops.

During high and low tides the approximate distance to the water's edge can vary from 0–130 metres.



Photograph provided courtesy of North Ayrshire Council

### Site details

Local authority	North Ayrshire Council
Year of designation	2006
Water sampling location	NS 20700 58050

### Catchment description

The immediate catchment draining into the Largs (Pencil beach) bathing water extends to only 1.2 km<sup>2</sup>. The area is predominantly rural (90%) with agriculture as the major land use. There is also some moorland and a golf course. The lowland parts of the catchment are generally urban; the urban areas make up approximately 8% of the catchment. The main towns in the area are Largs, part of which is within the bathing water catchment, and Fairlie which is approximately 1 km to south of the bathing water.

### Risks to water quality

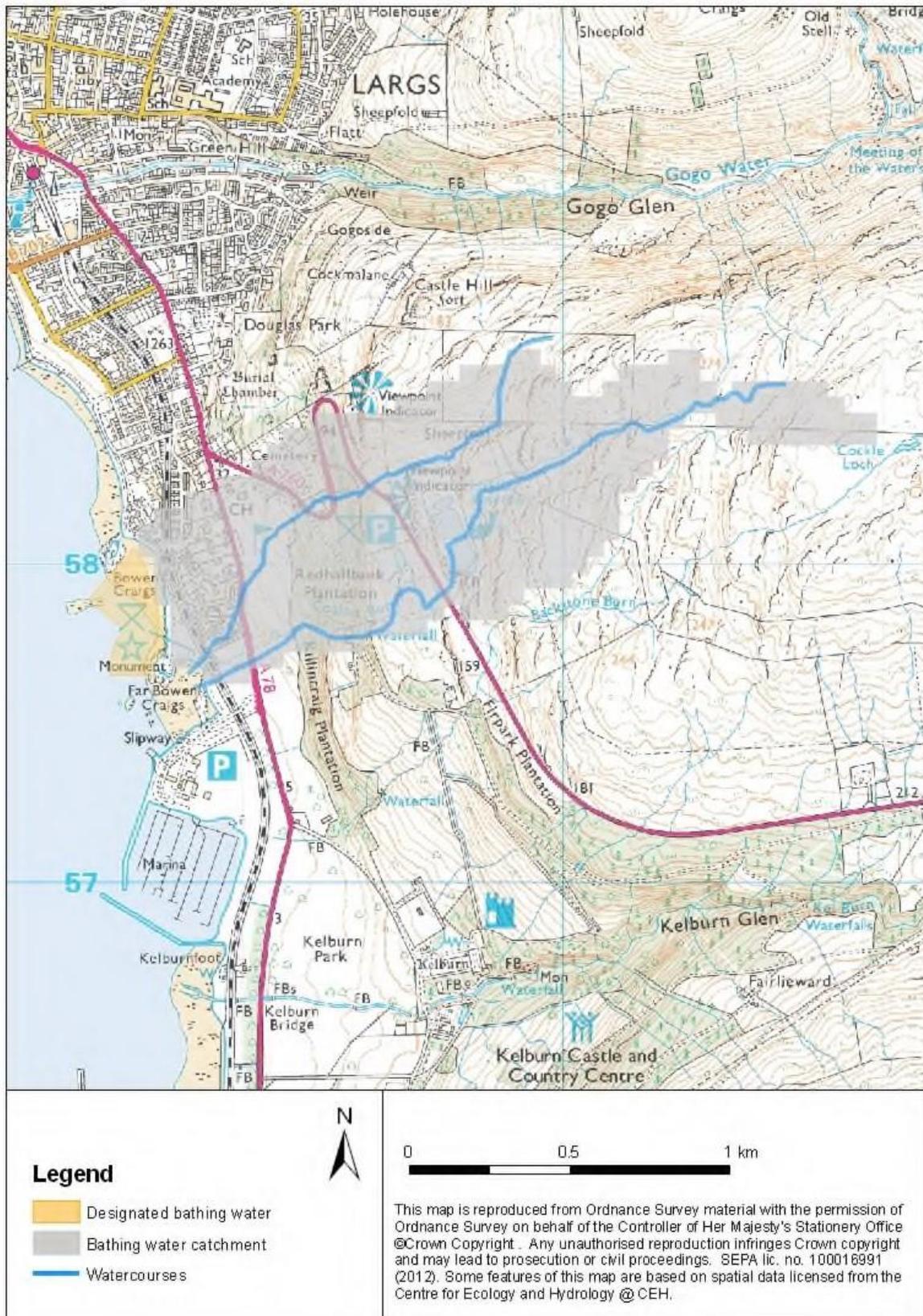
The principal risks and source of wet weather driven short term pollution at this bathing water arise from agricultural run-off and combined sewer/emergency overflows.

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.**

Map 1: Largs (Pencil Beach) bathing water



Map 2: Catchment draining into Largs (Pencil Beach) bathing water



### **Daily water quality forecasts**

Water quality is forecast on a daily basis during the bathing water season (1 June to 15 September). The forecasts indicate 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 electronic message signs 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 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. These are a risk to Largs (Pencil) bathing water quality, particularly during and after periods of wet weather.

Farm visits have been on going in this catchment since 2013 and SEPA will continue to work with rural land managers in to reduce the risk of pollution to the bathing water. SEPA has observed significant changes in land manager practice and 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**

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

There are several combined sewer and emergency overflows within Largs. Under storm conditions, they can discharge to the south of the beach, or to the two main watercourses.

Sewage from Largs town is pumped to a sewage treatment works situated to the north. Treated sewage from the works is discharged offshore into deep water.

#### **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 North 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>North Ayrshire Council</b> Cunninghame House Irvine KA12 8EE 0845 603 0590 <a href="mailto:contactus@north-ayrshire.gov.uk">contactus@north-ayrshire.gov.uk</a> <a href="http://www.north-ayrshire.gov.uk">www.north-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.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>		
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<p>1.2</p>	<p>April 2013</p>	
<p>1.3</p>	<p>April 2014</p>	
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<p>1.5</p>	<p>April 2020</p>	
<p>1.6</p>	<p>May 2023</p>	