

Bathing Water Profile for Rockcliffe

Rockcliffe, 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 Rockcliffe bathing water is a small, shallow bay about 300 metres long. It is situated on the south coast of Dumfries and Galloway in the Urr Estuary close to the small town of Rockcliffe (Map 1). The beach is prized for its scenery of the nearby hills and views of Rough Island and Hestan Island.

During high and low tides the approximate distance to the water's edge can vary from adjacent to the sea wall to over a kilometre. Mud flats are exposed at low tide, making the water's edge difficult to access in certain areas. For local tide information see: <http://easytide.ukho.gov.uk/EasyTide/>



Site details

Local authority	Dumfries & Galloway Council
Year of designation	1999
Water sampling location	NX 84777 53682

Catchment description

A catchment area of 10 km² drains into Rockcliffe bathing water. It features a series of hills including Barcloy Hill in the southeast and Greenan, Whinny, Kirkland and Torbay Hills to the north and northeast. The main rivers in the bathing water catchment are the Mill Burn and an unnamed tributary which enters the Rough Firth just to the north of the bathing water.

Agriculture is the main land use in the catchment. The upland areas support mixed sheep and beef farming whilst the lowlands are used for mixed grazing and arable farming. The catchment includes woodland coverage. The main population centres are Rockcliffe and Kippford of Scaur.

Average summer rainfall for the region is 356 mm compared to 331 mm across Scotland as a whole.

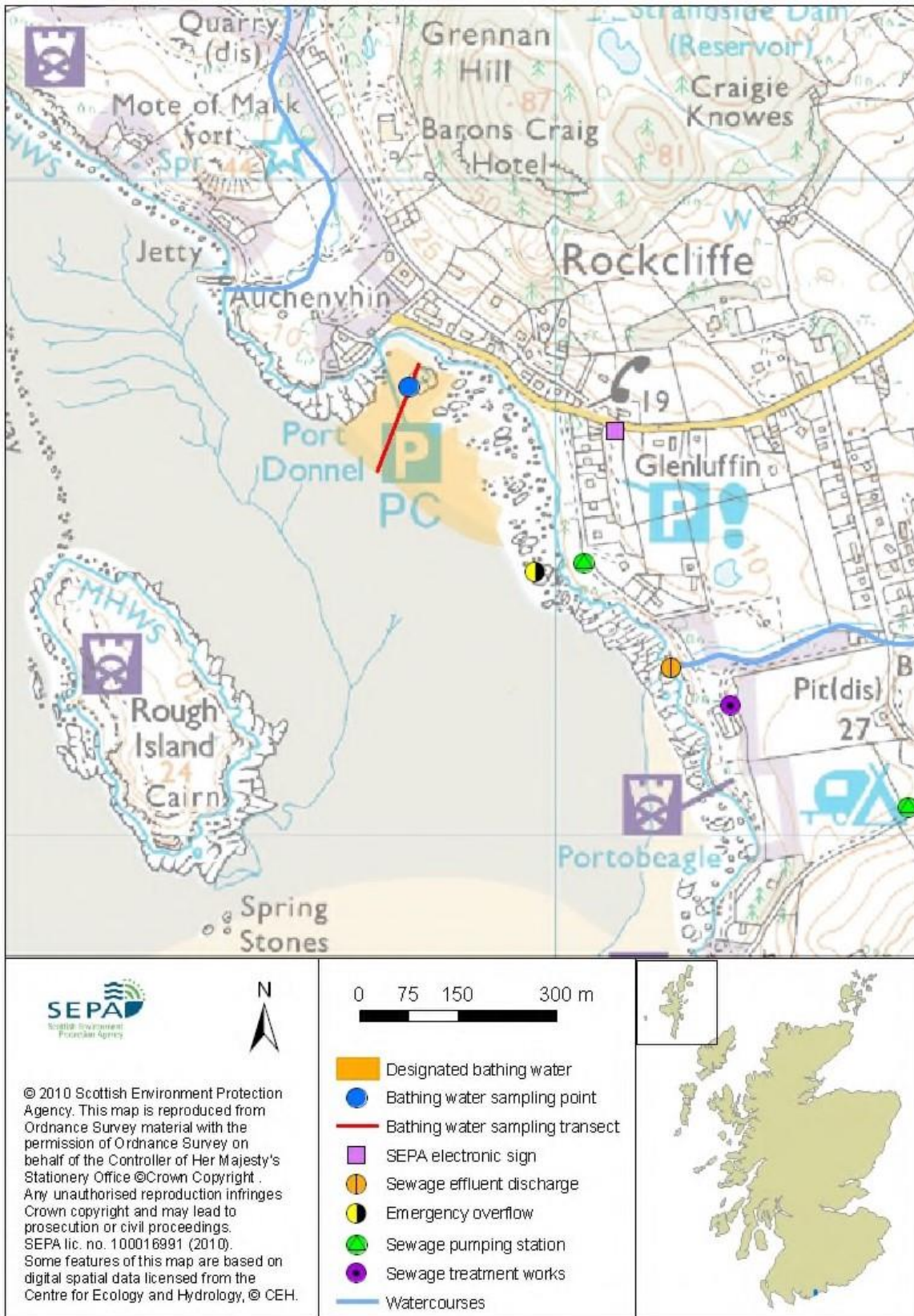
Risks to water quality

This bathing water is subject to short term pollution when heavy rainfall washes faecal material into the sea. Pollution risks include agricultural run-off, sewerage emergency overflows and treated sewage effluent. These are highlighted on Map 1.

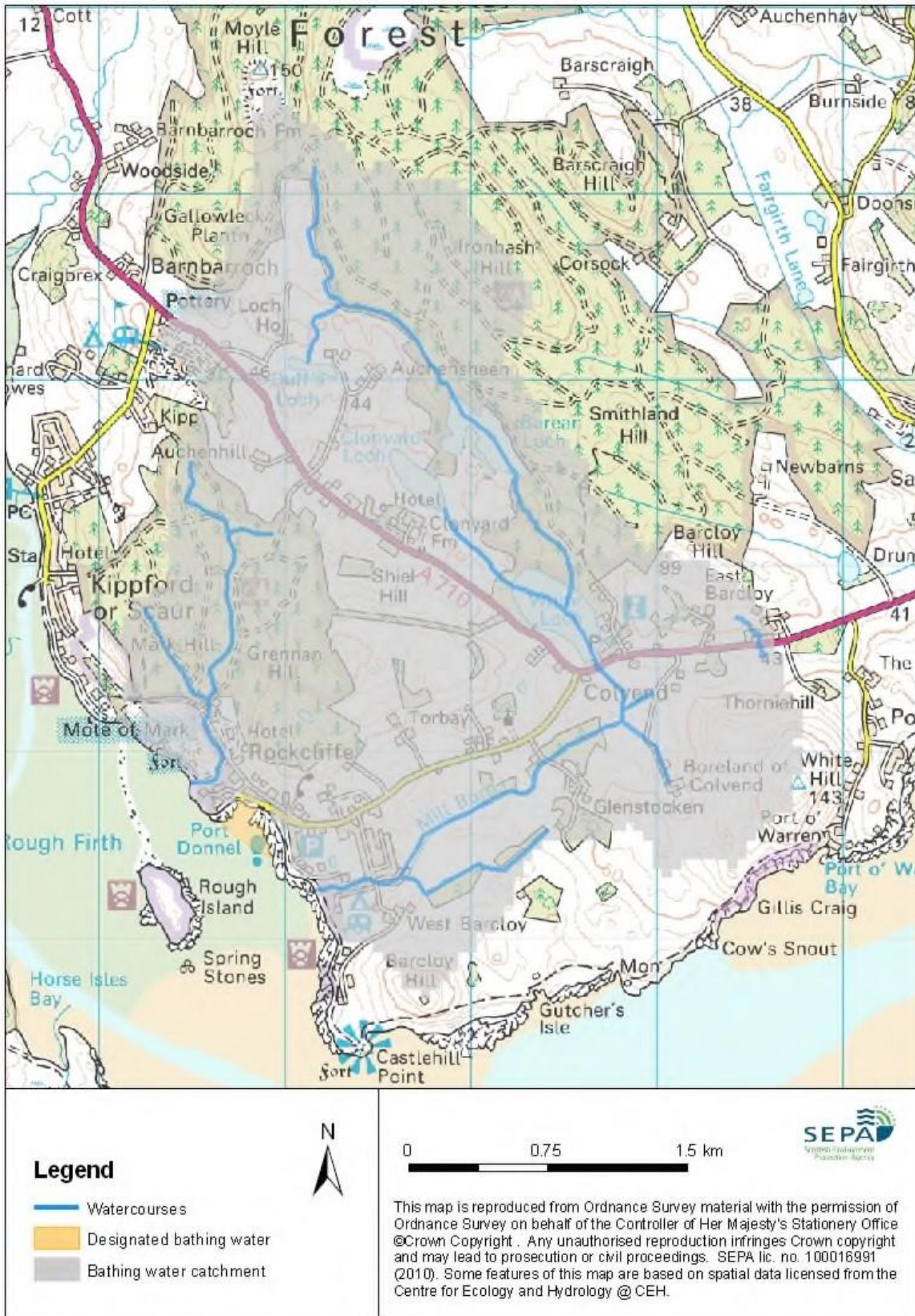
There is a risk that water pollution may occur after heavy rainfall. **Bathing is not advised during or 1-2 days after heavy rainfall. This is due to the risk to bathers' health from water pollution.**

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

Map 1: Rockcliffe bathing water



Map 2: Catchment draining into Rockcliffe 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 the Mill Burn which could impact on the bathing beach during and following heavy rain. Farm visits to identify diffuse pollution sources were undertaken as part of the Galloway priority catchment work in 2014 until completion in 2017. These visits looked to identify diffuse pollution sources and pathways. Mitigation measures were agreed with land managers to reduce the risk of bacterial pollution on water quality. Significant investment and improvements to farming practices have been observed within the catchment, often going beyond compliance. The priority catchment program is now complete.

Even though all agricultural compliance work has been completed in this bathing water catchment and all farms are in a compliant state, SEPA will continue to engage with farmers and the NFUS to remind them of good practice when applying slurries and manures and grazing livestock.

Improving pollution from sewage and other discharges

Scottish Water provides most waste water collection and treatment services in Scotland. Improvements to the sewerage system have led to a significant reduction in faecal pollutants in the bathing water. Upgrades to Rockcliffe sewage treatment works took place in 2004 with further work in 2013/14. Scottish Water undertook upgrade work at Dalbeattie sewage treatment works in 2014.

Studies revealed the Scottish Water septic tank at Kippford to be having a significant impact on the Rockcliffe bathing water. It was built for a population of around 300, but due to population growth and seasonal fluctuations, the peak population requiring treatment is now over 1300.

Following trials, Scottish Water installed chemical dosing as a temporary measure at the septic tank at Kippford. This was brought into operation prior to the start of the 2021 bathing season. Conditions in the permit require Scottish Water to ensure chemical dosing is controlled and the environmental impacts monitored and reported to SEPA.

The chemical dosing in place at the Kippford septic tank is proposed to continue until a new wastewater treatment works is constructed and relocated, along with a new discharge point by 2024. Development of this permanent solution will ensure that environmental impacts are minimised and bathing water quality standards are achieved. The local community are being engaged in the development of this new asset and it will be subject to planning permission from the local authority and an authorisation from SEPA.

Private sewerage may continue to pose a risk to the bathing water with a number of properties in the Orchard Knows and Rough Firth areas not currently connected to public sewerage. The proposed new treatment works will have capacity to accommodate these properties, if they wish to connect, thereby reducing the risk to the bathing 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. 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 Dumfries & Galloway Council for this bathing water.

Contact details and information sources

<p>SEPA Dumfries office</p> <p>Irongray Road Dumfries Dumfries and Galloway DG2 0JE 01387 720502 www.sepa.org.uk</p>	<p>Dumfries and Galloway Council</p> <p>Council Offices English Street Dumfries DG1 2DD 0303 333 3000 cis@dumgal.gov.uk www.dumgal.gov.uk</p>	<p>Keep Scotland Beautiful</p> <p>01786 471333 beach@ksbscotland.org.uk www.keepsotlandbeautiful.org</p>
<p>Scottish Government</p> <p>Victoria Quay, Edinburgh, EH6 6QQ 0131 244 0396 eqcat@scotland.gsi.gov.uk www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Environment/Water/15561/bathingwaters</p>		

Version number:	Date:	Next review due:
1.2	April 2013	
1.3	April 2014	
1.4	April 2015	
1.5	June 2018	
1.6	March 2019	
1.7	April 2020	
1.8	April 2022	
1.9	May 2023	