

Bathing Water Profile for Aberdeen

Aberdeen, 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 Aberdeen has an extensive sandy beach that is approximately four kilometres long. Its most used section is the stretch fronting the main leisure complex. The distance to the water's edge can vary from 0-120 metres depending on tides times.

The beach is a popular recreation area that attracts many walkers, swimmers, surfers and kite surfers. Amusements and a golf course are nearby and it is adjacent to the large urban area of Aberdeen city



Site details

Local authority	Aberdeen City Council
Year of designation	1987
Water sampling location	NJ 95401 07182

Catchment description

A catchment area of 3440 km² drains into the Aberdeen bathing water. Its topography varies from high mountains in the west to low-lying plains along the coast.

The catchment is predominantly rural with agriculture the major land use in the mid-catchment.

The River Don and the River Dee are the main rivers in the bathing water catchment. The River Don catchment is more intensively farmed than the River Dee catchment. The agricultural areas in the Dee catchment are mainly given over to livestock farming. The upper reaches of both are predominantly estate land. Forestry and moorland are also common within the River Dee catchment.

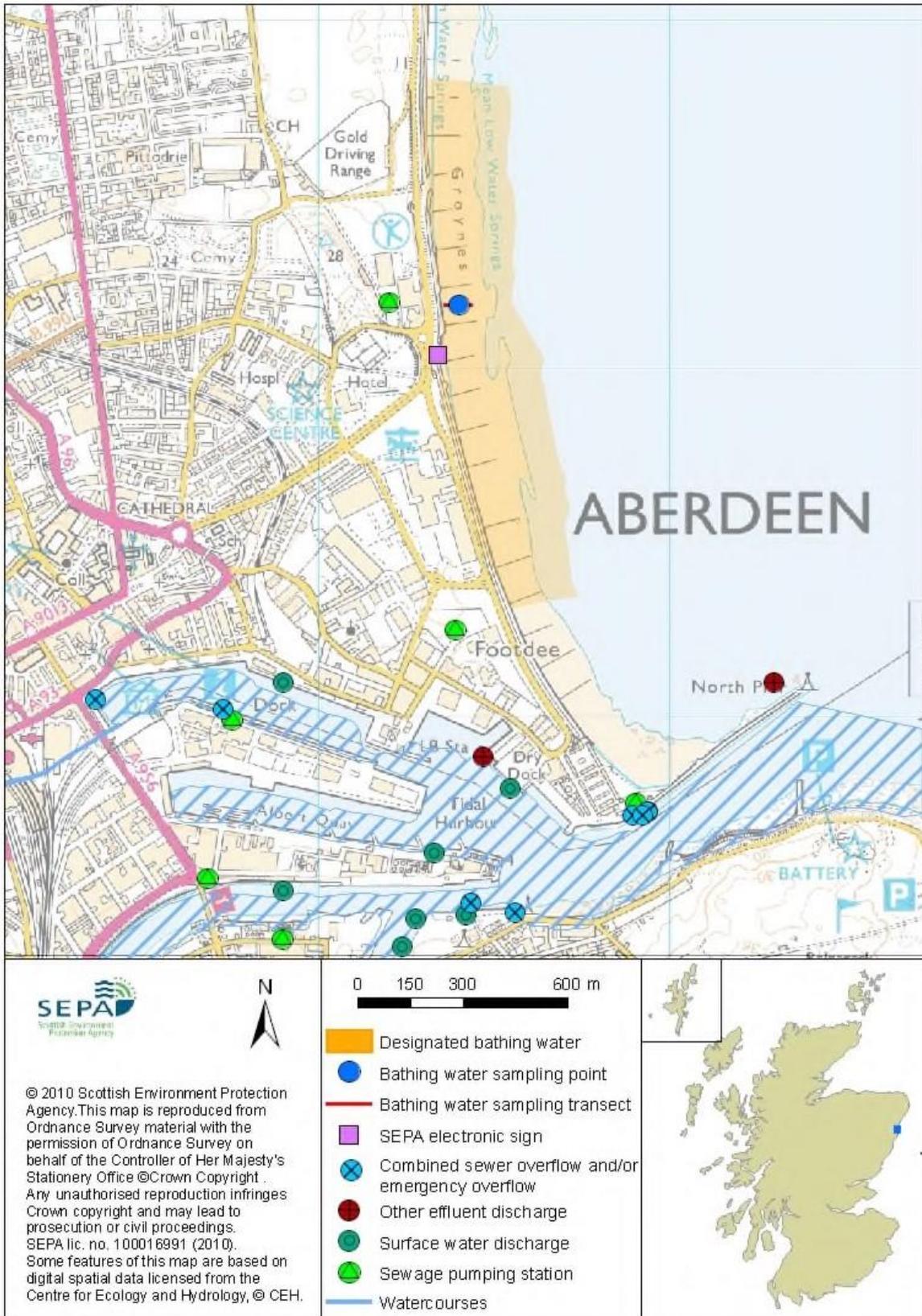
The lower part of the bathing water catchment is within the Aberdeen city urban area. The harbour area to the south side of the beach features intensive, large-scale commercial and industrial activity.

Risks to water quality

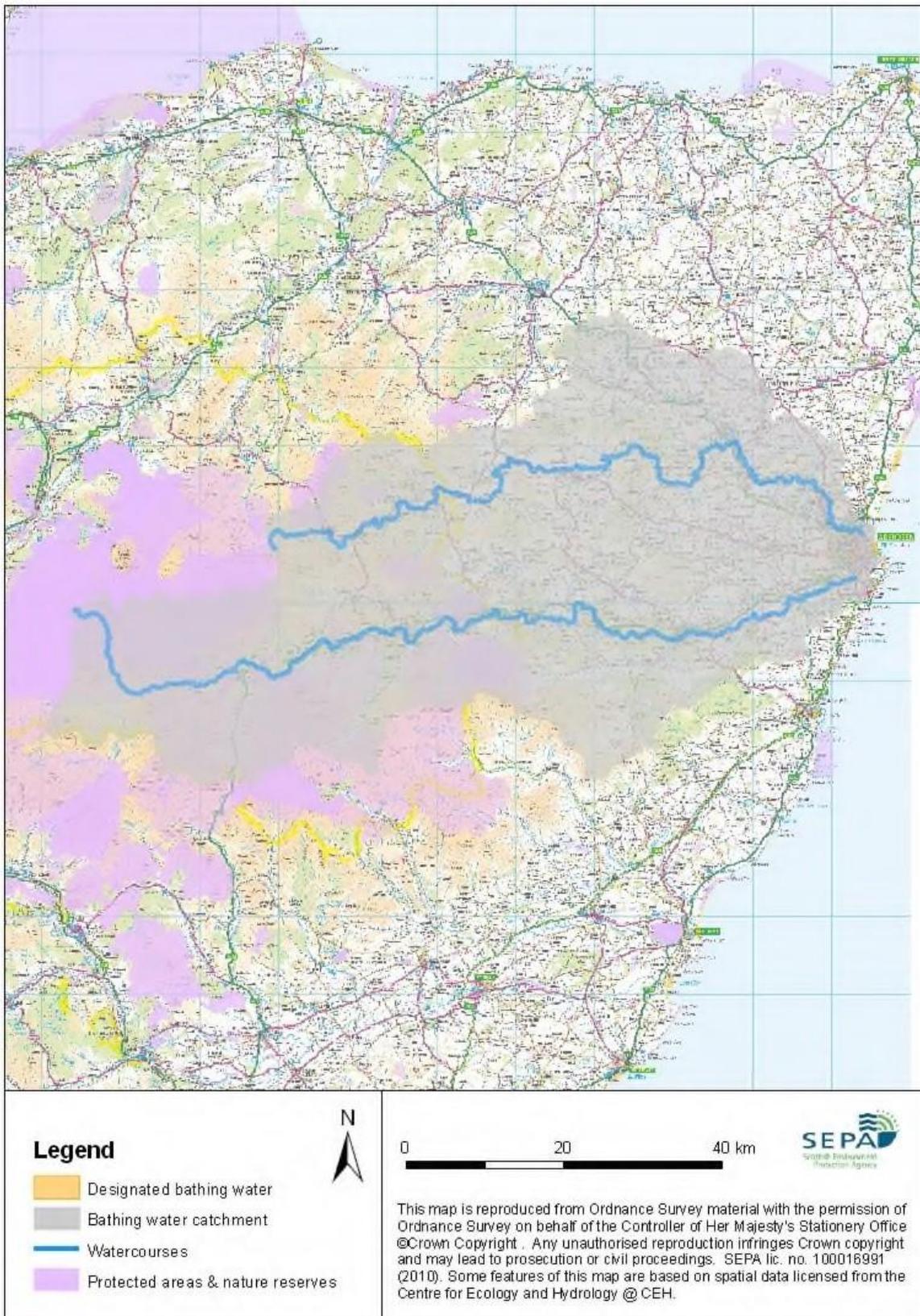
This bathing water is subject to short term pollution when heavy rainfall washes contaminants into the sea. Pollution risks at this site are from surface water urban drainage, agricultural run-off, combined sewer overflows and treated sewage effluent. The potential pollution sources at, or near, this bathing water 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 short term water pollution.**

Map 1: Aberdeen bathing water



Map 2: Catchment draining into Aberdeen bathing water



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 when 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 99 66 99).

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 both the River Dee and the River Don. This is a risk to Aberdeen's bathing water quality, particularly during periods of wet weather.

Farm visits have been ongoing in the Rivers Dee and Don since 2014. These visits looked to identify diffuse pollution sources and provide advice on possible mitigation measures the farmer could employ to reduce the pollution risk. 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

Improvements to sewerage infrastructure and treatment facilities have led to a reduction of faecal pollutants in Aberdeen bathing water. Nigg and Persley sewage treatment works are two of the main works for Aberdeen city and surrounding areas. Effluent from Nigg discharges out to sea, several kilometres south of the beach area and approximately 2km offshore. Full biological treatment is applied to the effluent. Persley sewage treatment works discharges effluent to the River Don. Ultraviolet disinfection is applied to the works' effluent. This helps further protect the bathing water by reducing the bacterial loading to the River Don.

A Scottish Water study into improving Aberdeen's bathing water quality concluded that investment in their assets is not required.

Trade effluent discharges do not add a significant bacterial input to the bathing water. Surface water discharges and septic tank discharges do not add a significant bacterial input either.

Improving pollution from diffuse urban sources

Urban diffuse source pollution comes from contaminated rainwater discharging to rivers and streams. The River Dee and the River Don are known to be impacted by surface water run-off. This potentially impacts on bathing water quality at Aberdeen. 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 the summer months. This is a naturally occurring phenomenon. Most species common to the UK are harmless and do not sting. The Marine Conservation Society advises to 'look but don't touch'.

Responding to pollution incidents

Please use our 24 hour pollution 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 Aberdeen City Council for this bathing water.

Contact details and sources of more information

<p>SEPA Aberdeen office Inverdee House Baxter Street Torry Aberdeen AB11 9QA 01224 266600 www.sepa.org.uk</p>	<p>Aberdeen City Council The Point, Ground Floor St. Nicholas House Broad Street Aberdeen AB10 1AR 0845 608 0910 www.aberdeencity.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>		

Version number:	Date:	Next review due:
1.1	April 2013	
1.2	May 2014	
1.3	May 2015	
1.4	June 2018	
1.5	April 2020	
1.6	May 2023	