

More of Scotland's bathing waters rated as 'excellent' as the 2019 season begins

31 May 2019

With hundreds of thousands of Scottish families and visitors expected to head to Scotland's beaches for the bathing season (1 June – 15 September), the Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) has revealed that more of the country's 86 designated bathing waters are meeting the 'excellent' classification rating (32%).

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- More bathing waters (32%) have been rated as 'excellent' than since the tighter standards first came into force in 2015.
- Fewer bathing waters have also been rated as 'poor' – and partnership projects are currently underway to maintain progress and further improve bathing waters including the 10 rated as 'poor.'
- Overall 88% of Scotland's designated bathing waters have met the strict environmental water quality standards for 2019.
- Water quality information is available by 10.00 am every day during the season for 31 bathing water locations at sepa.org.uk/bathingwaters, via Beachline and live electronic beach signage.

Rating	Number of bathing waters	Percentage
Excellent	28	32
Good	35	41
Sufficient	13	15
Poor	10	12
OVERALL	86	100%

SEPA has also revealed that 88% of Scotland's bathing waters have met the strict environmental water quality standards overall and that fewer bathing waters have been rated as 'poor' since the tighter standards first came into force in 2015.

In the Highlands and Islands improvements have been seen with Dores moving up to 'excellent' and Nairn (Central) and Thurso both moving up to a 'good' rating. In North-East Scotland Lunan Bay and Peterhead (Lido) have both improved to 'excellent', with Aberdeen moving up to 'good'. In South-East

Scotland Dunbar (East) and Thorntonloch have both improved to 'excellent' with Yellow Craig and Seton Sands both improving to 'good'. This year Portobello (West) in the outskirts of Edinburgh and Cruden Bay in Aberdeenshire have both passed for the first time with Portobello (West) achieving the 'sufficient' classification and SEPA rating Cruden Bay as 'good'.

Ranked as the most beautiful country in the world by Rough Guide, Scotland's natural environment is world-renowned. Its beaches range from remote, unspoilt Hebridean sands to golden stretches along northern and eastern coves and popular Western shores.

This season beach users will have access to real time water quality forecasts, and live information on any pollution incidents, thanks to SEPA scientists who sample the water and combine with state-of-the-art weather data to provide daily bathing water forecasts throughout the three and a half months of the bathing season. These are available at 31 bathing water locations by 10am every morning through:

- sepa.org.uk/bathingwaters – SEPA's website
- 08452 30 30 98 – SEPA's Beachline
- Live electronic signs at 31 designated beach locations

Calum McPhail, SEPA Environmental Quality manager, said:

"Every day SEPA works to protect and enhance Scotland's stunning environment. It is great news that more bathing waters have met the 'excellent' standard than since the new tighter standards first came into force in 2015 and we are also pleased to reveal that fewer bathing waters are rated as 'poor'.

"Each bathing water is different with a unique set of potential water quality challenges. Working with partners we're continuing our focus on bathing waters rated as 'poor' with tailored improvement plans, prepared by SEPA, well underway. Last summer we reported that, having been a priority project, both Nairn sites had passed for the first time. This season we see that in addition to Nairn (East) continuing to meet last year's standard, Nairn (Central) has improved even further to a 'good' rating – and Portobello (West) and Cruden Bay have both passed for the first time.

"We are committed to providing real time information on bathing water quality to ensure those heading to Scotland's beaches can have a great day, and through partnership working we hope to see further improvements in bathing water quality in the coming months and years."

Environment Secretary Roseanna Cunningham said:

"I am pleased to see so many of our designated bathing waters meeting the strict environmental water quality standards, and that a growing number are achieving the top rating. While a trip to the beach may always be dependent on our unique Scottish summer, beachgoers can have confidence that our bathing waters are being constantly monitored and their quality ensured.

"Scotland's shorelines and waters are among the most beautiful in the world

and significant progress has been made, in the space of just a few years, to improve standards still further. In cases where a lower rating has been achieved – often due to individual circumstances – SEPA and its partners are working through a comprehensive course of action to drive improvement.”

A Scottish Water spokeswoman said:

“We welcome the continued improvement in bathing water performance. Scottish Water has undertaken significant investment in partnership with SEPA in recent years to support bathing water quality.

“We will continue to work with partner organisations to improve bathing water quality where required. People can help look after our waters by remembering not to put the wrong items down toilets and sinks as these can block drains and sewers and cause pollution on beaches.”

Ends

2019 results in full

Highland and Islands

(9 excellent, 5 good, 2 sufficient, 0 poor)

Achmelvich	Excellent
Dores	Excellent
Dornoch	Excellent
Dunnet	Excellent
Ettrick Bay	Good
Findhorn	Good
Gairloch Beach	Excellent
Ganavan	Excellent
Loch Morlich	Excellent
Lossiemouth (East)	Sufficient
Machrihanish	Excellent
Nairn (Central)	Good
Nairn (East)	Sufficient
Rosemarkie	Good
Sand Beach	Excellent
Thurso	Good

Lothian, mid Scotland and Fife

(7 excellent, 6 good, 2 sufficient, 2 poor)

Aberdour (Silversands)	Excellent
Aberdour Harbour (Black Sands)	Good
Anstruther (Billow Ness)	Excellent
Burntisland	Good

Crail (Roome Bay)	Excellent
Elie (Harbour) and Earlsferry	Excellent
Elie (Ruby Bay)	Excellent
Fisherrow Sands	Poor
Kinghorn (Harbour Beach)	Poor
Kinghorn (Pettycur)	Good
Kingsbarns	Excellent
Kirkcaldy (Seafield)	Good
Leven	Good
Portobello (Central)	Sufficient
Portobello (West)	Sufficient
St Andrews (East Sands)	Good
St Andrews (West Sands)	Excellent

North East Scotland

(6 excellent, 8 good, 3 sufficient, 0 poor)

Aberdeen	Good
Arbroath (West Links)	Good
Balmedie	Excellent
Broughty Ferry	Excellent
Carnoustie	Good
Collieston	Good
Cruden Bay	Good (<i>SEPA-rating</i>)
Cullen Bay	Sufficient
Fraserburgh (Philorth)	Excellent
Fraserburgh (Tiger Hill)	Sufficient
Inverboyndie	Sufficient
Lunan Bay	Excellent
Monifieth	Good
Montrose	Excellent
Peterhead (Lido)	Excellent
Rosehearty	Good
Stonehaven	Good

Solway

(0 excellent, 3 good, 0 sufficient, 4 poor)

Brighthouse Bay	Poor
Carrick	Good
Dhoon Bay	Poor
Mossyard	Good
Rockcliffe	Poor
Sandyhills	Poor
Southernness	Good

South East Scotland

(5 excellent, 9 good, 0 sufficient, 1 poor)

Broad Sands	Good
Coldingham	Good
Dunbar (Belhaven)	Good
Dunbar (East)	Excellent
Yellow Craig	Good
Eyemouth	Poor
Gullane	Excellent
Longniddry	Good
North Berwick (Milsey Bay)	Good
North Berwick (West)	Good
Pease Bay	Excellent
Seacliff	Excellent
Seton Sands	Good
Thorntonloch	Excellent
Whitesands	Good

West Scotland

(1 excellent, 4 good, 6 sufficient, 3 poor)

Ayr (South Beach)	Poor
Culzean	Sufficient
Girvan	Sufficient
Heads of Ayr	Poor
Irvine	Poor
Largs (Pencil Beach)	Good
Lunderston Bay	Good
Luss Bay	Sufficient
Maidens	Sufficient
Millport Bay	Excellent
Prestwick	Good

Saltcoats/Ardrossan	Sufficient
Seamill	Good
Troon (South Beach)	Sufficient

The Bathing Water Directive

Under the Bathing Water Directive:

- classifications are calculated at the end of the 2018 season for display on all beaches at the start of the 2019 season;
- water quality classification applies for the whole season;
- the overall condition of a location is described through bathing water profiles.

Wet weather problems

- Diffuse pollution is the largest pollution pressure on the water environment in Scotland, but it can be difficult to identify and control. The risk of diffuse pollution is worse during rainfall because nutrients, soil, chemicals and faecal bacteria can be washed from land into the surrounding water environment. Single discharge points might not seem to be an issue, but several combined across a whole river catchment can significantly affect water quality, including in EU designated bathing waters. Land and run-off management practices play a pivotal role in diffuse pollution mitigation.
- Another source of pollution at beaches can be combined sewer overflows (CSOs). During heavy rainfall CSOs, which discharge diluted but minimally treated sewage to watercourses and coastal waters, are essential to prevent flooding. However, during extended periods of rain, which are not uncommon in Scotland, the combined effect of CSOs in a catchment can have a negative impact on the water quality. To minimise the impact of combined sewer overflows on water quality, SEPA imposes conditions requiring sewage litter and debris removal and on the location and frequency of their operation. SEPA continues to work closely with the Scottish Government, Scottish Water and the Water Industry to ensure that planned capital investment programmes aimed at upgrading sewerage infrastructure throughout the country are prioritised to maximise environmental benefits.

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