

The Quality of Bathing Water in Ireland

2003



Office of Environmental Assessment

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**THE QUALITY OF BATHING WATER
IN IRELAND (2003)**

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SUMMARY

In Ireland the primary legislation governing the quality of bathing waters is set out in the Quality of Bathing Waters Regulations, 1992 (S.I 155 of 1992) and amendments which transposed the EU Directive 76/160/EC concerning the quality of bathing water. The Regulations set more stringent limits for some parameters than in the EU Directive and all parameters specified are used by the EPA in assessing compliance with the Regulations in contrast to the European Commission which use a sub set of parameters in assessing compliance with the Directive.

Results for 2003 show that the quality of the bathing water in Ireland is very good with 78% of bathing areas (102 of 131 sites) complying with the National standards.

Assessing compliance in line with the European Commission approach shows that Irish bathing water quality is among the best in Europe with 97% of bathing areas (127 of 131 sites) complying with the minimum mandatory standards specified in the Directive. Eighty five percent of bathing areas (111 of 131 sites) complied with the stricter guide values specified in the Directive. These guide values can be regarded as quality objectives which all bathing sites should endeavour to achieve.

Although the overall quality of bathing waters remains very good, the trend in recent years has been downward, particularly with regard to EU guide values. Compliance peaked in 2000 with 91.5% of bathing sites complying with the guide values. This has fallen to 85% in 2003. There has also been a slight fall in compliance with mandatory values falling from a compliance rate of 98.5% in 2000 to 97 % in 2003.

The compliance levels quoted in this report are at variance with those recently published by the European Commission due to the late submission of results by one local authority. The EPA has concerns regarding the level of corrective actions taken by some local authorities in relation to non-compliant bathing water sample results. The Office of Environmental Enforcement within the EPA will be monitoring the progress of corrective actions, particularly at bathing areas which have failed to meet EC mandatory standards.

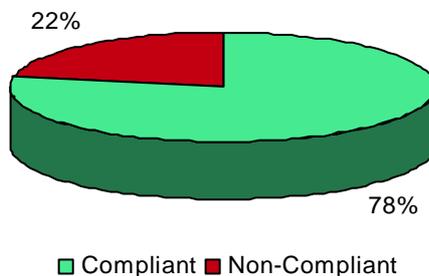


Figure 1: Compliance with National Values

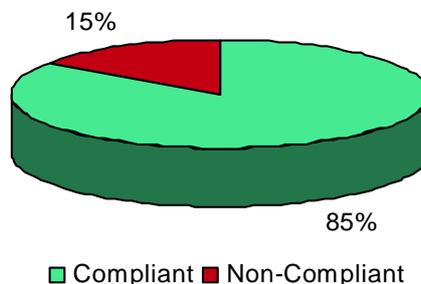


Figure 2: Compliance with EU Guide Values

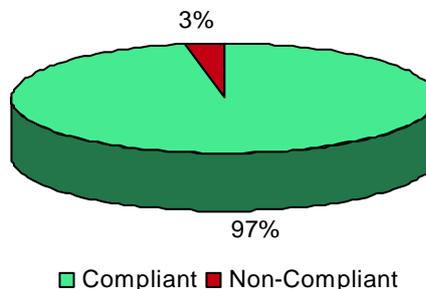


Figure 3: Compliance with EU Mandatory Values

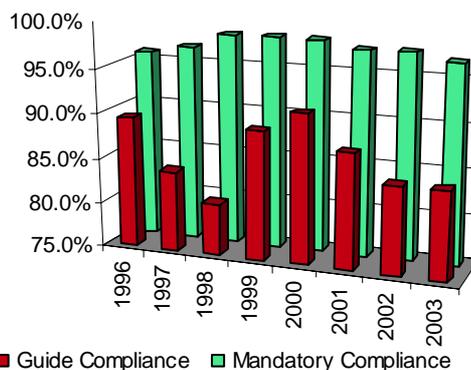


Figure 4: Compliance with EU Values 1996-2003

1. INTRODUCTION

The quality requirements for bathing water areas in Ireland are set out in the Quality of Bathing Waters Regulations 1992 (S.I. No. 155 of 1992) and subsequent amendments. These Regulations transposed the requirements of the EC Directive concerning the quality of bathing waters (76/160/EEC), the purpose of which is to ensure that bathing water quality is maintained and if necessary improved so that it complies with specified standards designed to protect public health and the environment. Details of the National Limit Values, the Euro-

pean Mandatory and Guide values are summarised in Table 1.

There are currently 131 designated bathing areas in Ireland of which 122 are sea water bathing areas and 9 are freshwater bathing areas. These bathing areas are monitored to check the quality of the bathing water by the competent local authority on a fortnightly basis during the bathing season which extends from the 1st June until end of August each year. Monitoring commences two weeks before the

Parameters ⁵	EC Directive concerning the quality of bathing waters 76/160/EEC		National Limit Values (SI 155 of 1992)
	G (Guide)	I (Mandatory)	
Microbiological:			
<i>Total Coliforms (Number/100ml)</i>	≤ 500 ¹	≤ 10,000 ³	≤ 5,000 ¹ ≤ 10,000 ³
<i>Faecal Coliforms (Number/100ml)</i>	≤ 100 ¹	≤ 2,000 ³	≤ 1,000 ¹ ≤ 2,000 ³
<i>Faecal Strep (Number/100ml)⁴</i>	≤ 100 ²		≤ 300 ³
<i>Salmonella (Number/litre)⁴</i>		0 ³	0 ³
<i>Enteric viruses (PFU/10 litres)⁴</i>		0 ³	0 ³
Physicochemical:			
<i>pH</i>		6 to 9 ³	≥ 6 and ≤ 9 ³
<i>Colour</i>		no abnormal change in colour ³	no abnormal change in colour ³
<i>Mineral oils (mg/l)</i>	≤ 0.3 ²	no film visible on the surface of the water and no odour ³	no film visible on the surface of the water and no odour ³
<i>Surface active substances (mg/l)</i>	≤ 0.3 ²	no lasting foam ³	no lasting foam ³
<i>Phenol (mg/l as C₄H₃OH)</i>	≤ 0.005 ²	no specific odour ≤ 0.05 ³	≤ 0.05 and no specific odour ³
<i>Transparency (m)</i>	≥ 2 ²	≥ 1 ³	≥ 1 ³
<i>DO (% saturation O₂)⁴</i>	80 to 120 ²		≥ 70 and ≤ 120 ³
<i>Tarry residues and floating material</i>	Absence ²		no offensive presence ³

Note 1 ≥ 80% of Samples,

Note 2 ≥ 90% of Samples,

Note 3 ≥ 95% of Samples

Note 4: To be sampled where investigations show or where there are other grounds for believing that water qual-

ity has deteriorated in respect of this parameter

Note 5: Additional parameters (Ammonia, Nitrogen (Kjeldahal), pesticides, heavy metals, cyanides, nitrates and phosphates) are specified for analysis where pollution by these parameters is suspected.

Table 1: Quality Requirements for Bathing Water

start of the season. The minimum number of samples to be taken during the season is seven.

1.1 Compliance Assessment

While the sampling and analysis criteria for bathing waters is largely similar for both National and EU legislation there are differences in the way in which compliance with the results of these parameters are interpreted.

1.1.1 National Compliance

The National Regulations stipulate that each sample obtained must be analysed for the following 8 microbiological and physicochemical parameters:

- Total coliforms
- Faecal coliforms
- Colour
- Mineral oils
- Surface active substances
- Phenols
- Transparency
- Tarry residues, floating materials

Under certain circumstances, in particular where there has been a deterioration of water quality, both the frequency of monitoring and range of analytes must be increased. Similarly, where bathing water quality is found to be consistently of a very good quality, the monitoring frequency may be reduced to a minimum of four times during the bathing season.

In addition to the 8 compulsory parameters, there are a number of additional parameters set out in the Regulations which must be sampled where there are grounds for believing that there has been a deterioration in respect of the parameter or substance concerned at the site .

Local Authorities must report the results of sampling to the EPA at the end of each bathing season.

The Agency interprets compliance with the Regulations based on all of the parameters which are required to be sampled and analysed.

1.1.2 EU Compliance

The parameters which are required to be sampled and analysed under EU Directive (76/160/EEC) are the same as those prescribed under the National Regulations. However, unlike National compliance which includes all parameters, EU bathing water compliance is based on a sub-set of these parameters.

The 5 parameters considered for EU compliance purposes are:

- Total coliforms
- Faecal coliforms
- Mineral oils
- Surface-active substances
- Phenol

The parameters transparency and colour are omitted for compliance determination.

There may be good reason for disregarding transparency and colour at seawater sites as turbulent seas may lead to a deterioration in both of these parameters and, as such results may not be indicative of the water quality.

This argument however is not applicable at freshwater sites as colour and transparency are indicators of the possible eutrophic status of the site.

2. SEA WATER BATHING AREAS

The number of designated seawater bathing areas remained at 122 in 2003.

2.1 Compliance with National standards

Of the 122 sites, 78 per cent (95 of 122) complied with the National standard in 2003.

Four bathing areas failed to comply with the National standard for faecal coliforms. These were Balbriggan (Dublin Fingal), Bray Beach (Wicklow), Keem Achill (Mayo) and Spiddal Main beach (Galway). Both Balbriggan and Keem also failed the National standard for total coliforms.

Six bathing areas failed to meet the National standard for faecal streptococci. These were Ardmore (Waterford), Balbriggan (Dublin Fingal), Bray beach (Wicklow), Dunmore East main strand (Waterford), Sandymount strand (Dublin City) and Sutton burrow beach (Dublin Fingal).

Two sites failed to meet the standard for Salmonella. These were Rush, South Beach and Loughshinny both located in Dublin Fingal.

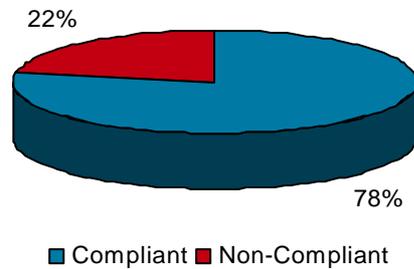


Figure 2.1 : Seawater bathing area compliance with National standards

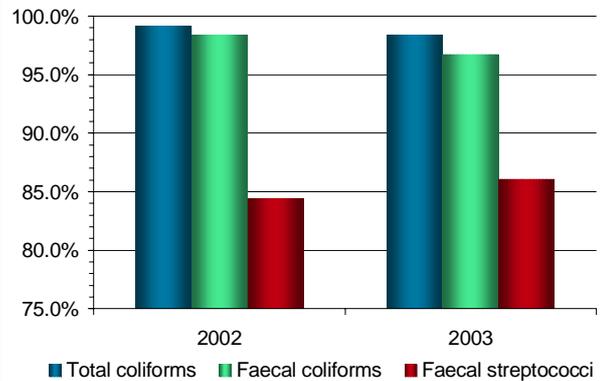


Figure 2.2: Seawater microbiological compliance with National standards

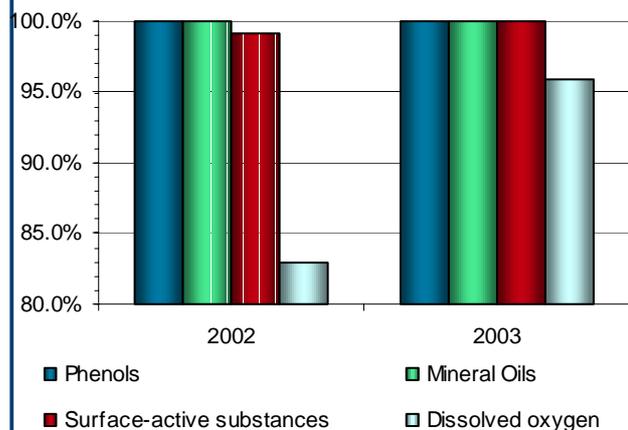


Figure 2.3: Seawater physicochemical compliance with National standards

2.2 Compliance with EU Directive

2.1.1 Mandatory Values

In total, 97% of designated sites (118 of 122) complied with the mandatory values laid down in the Directive for the five parameters listed above. This represents a marginal decrease on the compliance rate of 98% in 2002.

The bathing areas that failed to comply with the mandatory standards specified in the Directive are listed in table 2.

Balbriggan and Keem failed to meet with the mandatory standard for both total and faecal coliforms. Bray and Spiddal failed to comply on faecal coliforms only.

2.1.2 Guide Values

In total, 84% of seawater bathing areas complied with guide values specified in the Directive.

In addition to the four beaches listed which were non-compliant for both mandatory and guide values, the bathing areas that did not attain the guide values as specified in the Directive for 2003 are listed in Table 3.

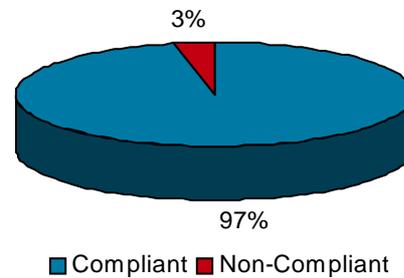


Figure 2.4: Seawater bathing area compliance with EU Directive mandatory values.

Beach	Location
Balbriggan	Dublin Fingal
Bray Beach	Wicklow
Keem Achill	Mayo
Spiddal main beach	Galway County

Table 2: Seawater sites which failed to comply with EU Directive mandatory standards

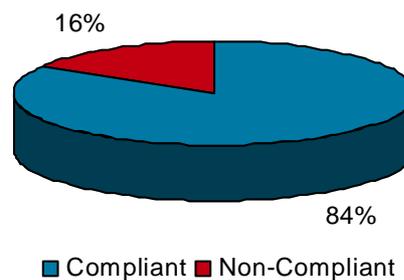


Figure 2.5: Seawater bathing area compliance with EU Directive guide values

Beach	Location	Parameter which did not meet guide value
An Cnoc, Inverin	Galway County	Faecal coliforms
Ardmore	Waterford	Faecal coliforms
Beach At Spiddal Pier	Galway County	Faecal coliforms
Carrowmore	Mayo	Total coliforms
Dunmore East, Main Strand	Waterford	Faecal coliforms
Fountainstown	Cork	Faecal coliforms; Total coliforms
Inny, Waterville	Kerry	Faecal coliforms
Killala Ross Strand	Mayo	Faecal coliforms
Laytown/Bettystown	Meath	Faecal coliforms
Mullaghroe	Mayo	Total coliforms
Salthill	Galway City	Faecal coliforms
Rathmullan	Donegal	Faecal coliforms
Sandymount Strand	Dublin City	Faecal coliforms
Skerries	Dublin Fingal	Faecal coliforms
Sutton Burrow Beach	Dublin Fingal	Faecal coliforms
Tramore Main Strand	Waterford County	Faecal coliforms

Table 3: Seawater bathing areas in addition to those listed in Table 2 which did not meet EU Directive guide values

3. FRESH WATER BATHING AREAS

The number of designated inland bathing areas remained at nine in 2003.

3.1 Compliance with National standards

In 2003, 78% (7 of 9) of designated freshwater sites complied with the limit values set out in the National Regulations.

Tests for dissolved oxygen were carried out at 8 of 9 sites, and of these, Loughrea Lake and Portumna failed to comply with the National Limit value set for this parameter. The bathing site at Portumna also failed to comply with the National Limit value for transparency.

These two parameters are particularly relevant to inland bathing sites as both parameters are indicative of the trophic status of the waterbody.

3.2 Compliance with EU Bathing Water Directive

During the 2003 bathing season all fresh waters sites complied with both mandatory and guide limits set out for the five parameters

1. total coliforms;
2. faecal coliforms;
3. surface active substances;
4. mineral oils; and
5. phenols.

Tests for *faecal streptococci* were carried out in 8 of the 9 bathing areas and it was found that all sites tested complied with the guide value specified in the Directive.

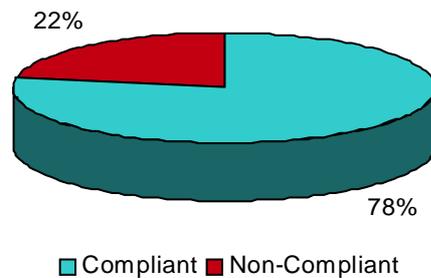


Figure 3.1: Fresh water bathing area compliance with National standards

4. DISCUSSION

4.1 Compliance Assessment

In Ireland the primary legislation governing the quality of bathing waters is set out in the Quality of Bathing Waters Regulations, 1992 (S.I. 155 of 1992) which transposed the EU Directive 76/160/EC concerning the quality of bathing water.

In comparing the National Regulations to the EU Directive Mandatory Values, the Regulations sets more stringent limits for microbiological parameters and also includes an additional parameter, Faecal streptococci, for compliance purposes.

The EPA assesses compliance with the National Regulations based on all parameters which are required to be monitored under the Regulations. While the Directive specifies the same approach to compliance assessment, the European Commission are currently assessing compliance based on a subset of monitored parameters. As such, compliance figures for the National Regulations and the EU Directive may differ.

4.2 Bathing Water Quality 2003

Results for 2003 show that the quality of the bathing water in Ireland is very good with 78% of bathing areas (102 of 131 sites) complying with the National standards.

Assessing compliance in line with the European Commission approach shows that Irish

bathing water quality is among the best in Europe with 97% bathing areas (127 of 131 sites) complying with the minimum mandatory standards specified in the Directive.

The above figures are at variance with those published in the European Commission report "Quality of bathing water, May 2004" due to the late submission of results for Salthill and Silver Strand beaches by Galway City Council. This resulted in the water quality for these bathing areas being re-designated from non-compliant to mandatory and guide compliant respectively.

Overall, the percentage of bathing areas in compliance with the mandatory values specified in the EU Directive fell by 1% from a compliance rate of 98% in 2002 compared with 97% in 2003. The number of sites complying with the more stringent guide values remained the same at 85%. The results for the 2003 and 2002 bathing seasons are summarised in the Table 4 below.

4.2.1 Status Changes

The status of 27 bathing water areas have changed between 2002 and 2003. Most of the status changes resulted in bathing water areas moving between mandatory and guide compliance but a number of other sites experienced more significant status changes between 2002 and 2003. All bathing water areas that experienced a change in compliance status between 2002 and 2003, are outlined in Table 5.

	Sea Water		Freshwater		Overall	
	2002	2003	2002	2003	2002	2003
Number of sampling points	122	122	9	9	131	131
Number of points complying with mandatory	119	118	9	9	128	127
Percentage compliant with mandatory values	98%	97%	100%	100%	98%	97%
Number of points complying with guide values	102	102	9	9	111	111
Percentage compliant with guide values	84%	84%	100%	100%	85%	85%

Table 4: EU Bathing Water Compliance Status in 2002 and 2003

A significant number of bathing water areas in the greater Dublin area experienced an improvement in bathing water quality in 2003. A major factor in this trend is likely to have been the commissioning of a new wastewater treatment facility located at Ringsend in Dublin, which has significantly reduced the quantity of untreated sewage entering Dublin Bay.

A comparison of compliance status between 2002 and 2003 is illustrated in Figure 4.1. The bathing areas which showed the most improvement were those closest to the Ringsend plant i.e. Malahide, Portmarnock, Dollymount and Merrion Strand.

4.3 Performance of Local Authorities

The monitoring programmes put in place by Local Authorities to comply with the requirements of the Regulations are generally considered satisfactory.

There are however concerns regarding the actions taken by some Local Authorities on foot of non-compliant sample results. There are clear requirements under the Regulations in such cases with regard to:

- Increased frequency of monitoring;
- Giving public notice of that fact and;
- Taking the necessary measures to ensure that standards are complied with.

The EPA is not satisfied that appropriate action was taken in all non-compliant instances noted during the 2003 bathing season.

4.4 Proposed Directive concerning the quality of bathing water

The Bathing Water Directive (76/160/EEC) is more than 25 years old and has, since its adoption, contributed greatly to improvement in water quality in the coastal and inland bathing areas in Europe. However, it is also recognised that the Directive has a number of limitations and weaknesses that need to be addressed – particularly in relation to the specified water quality parameters for monitoring and their associated limit values.

In 2002 the European Commission presented a proposal for a new Directive on bathing water

quality. The new proposal is intended to deliver general benefits in relation to improved health-protection for bathers and a more pro-active approach to beach management, including public involvement. In terms of monitoring, the new Directive proposes to eliminate the tests for 19 different pollutant parameters and replace them with two bacteriological measurements – intestinal enterococci and *escherichia coli* – which focus specifically on protection of human health. Compared with current standards, the proposed standards are intended to provide a significantly higher protection against the risk of contracting gastroenteritis and respiratory diseases as a result of bathing

The proposed Directive also aims to make more use of modern communication methods, such as the Internet, to inform the public about the quality of bathing waters and thereby allow the public to make a more informed choice on where to bathe. The bathing water quality standards specified in the proposed Directive are considered tougher than the present Bathing Water Directive. As a consequence, some decrease in Ireland's current high level of compliance under the present Bathing Water Directive might be expected. The European Parliament adopted its first-reading Opinion on 23 October 2003 and it is still with the Working Party on the Environment who continue to discuss the proposal in depth.

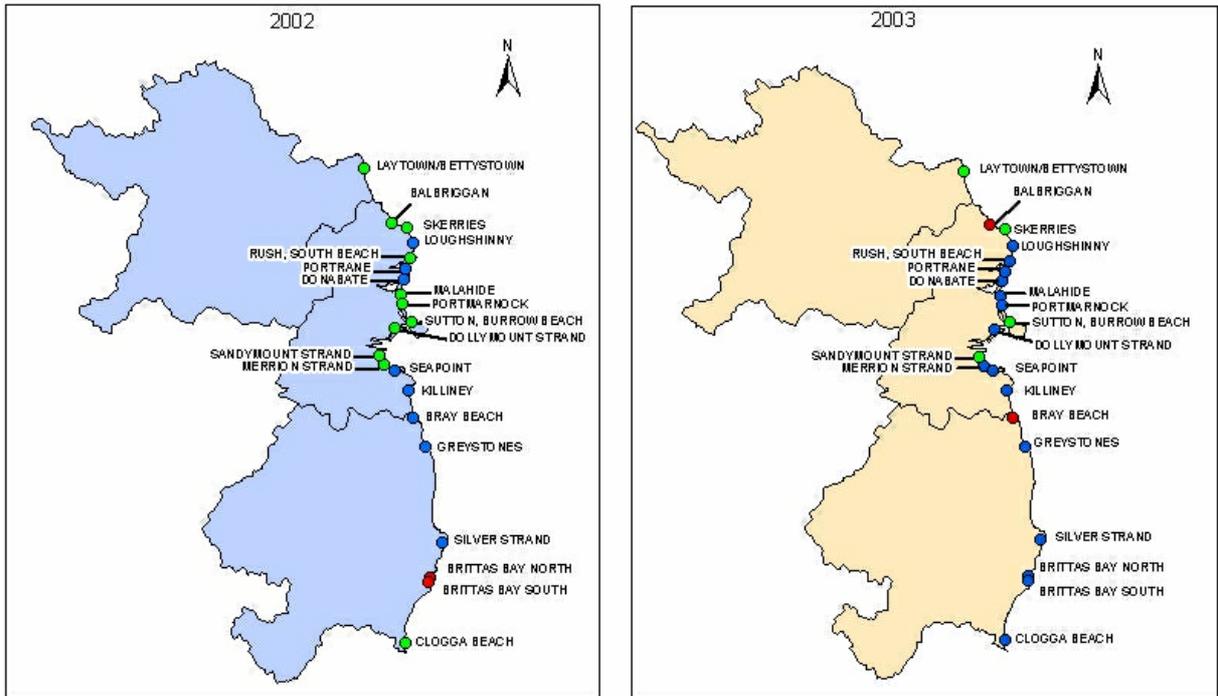


**Table 5: Bathing Areas which experienced a Status change in relation to EU levels
between 2002 and 2003**

Local Authority	Bathing Water Area	Status 2002	Status 2003	Trend
Cork County Council	Fountainstown	G.C.	M.C.	↓
Donegal County Council	Lady's Bay	M.C.	G.C.	↑
Donegal County Council	Port Arthur	M.C.	G.C.	↑
Donegal County Council	Rathmullan	G.C.	M.C.	↓
Dublin City Council	Dollymount Strand	M.C.	G.C.	↑
Dublin City Council	Merrion Strand	M.C.	G.C.	↑
Dublin Fingal	Balbriggan	M.C.	N.C.	↓
Dublin Fingal	Malahide	M.C.	G.C.	↑
Dublin Fingal	Portmarnock	M.C.	G.C.	↑
Dublin Fingal	Rush, South Beach	M.C.	G.C.	↑
Galway City Council	Salthill	G.C.	M.C.	↓
Galway County Council	An Cnoc, Inverin	G.C.	M.C.	↓
Galway County Council	Beach At Spiddal Pier	G.C.	M.C.	↓
Galway County Council	Clifden	M.C.	G.C.	↑
Galway County Council	Spiddal, Main Beach	G.C.	N.C.	↓
Mayo County Council	Carramore	G.C.	M.C.	↓
Mayo County Council	Keem, Achill	G.C.	N.C.	↓
Mayo County Council	Killala, Ross Strand	G.C.	M.C.	↓
Mayo County Council	Mullaghroe	G.C.	M.C.	↓
Sligo County Council	Enniscrone	M.C.	G.C.	↑
Waterford County Council	Ardmore	N.C.	M.C.	↑
Waterford County Council	Dunmore East, Main Strand	G.C.	M.C.	↓
Waterford County Council	Tramore, Main Strand	G.C.	M.C.	↓
Wicklow County Council	Bray Beach	G.C.	N.C.	↓
Wicklow County Council	Brittas Bay North	N.C.	G.C.	↑
Wicklow County Council	Brittas Bay South	N.C.	G.C.	↑
Wicklow County Council	Clogga Beach	M.C.	G.C.	↑

G.C. *Guide Compliant*
 N.C. *Non Compliant*
 M.C. *Mandatory Compliant*

* Parameters which must be sampled under Directive 77/102/EC

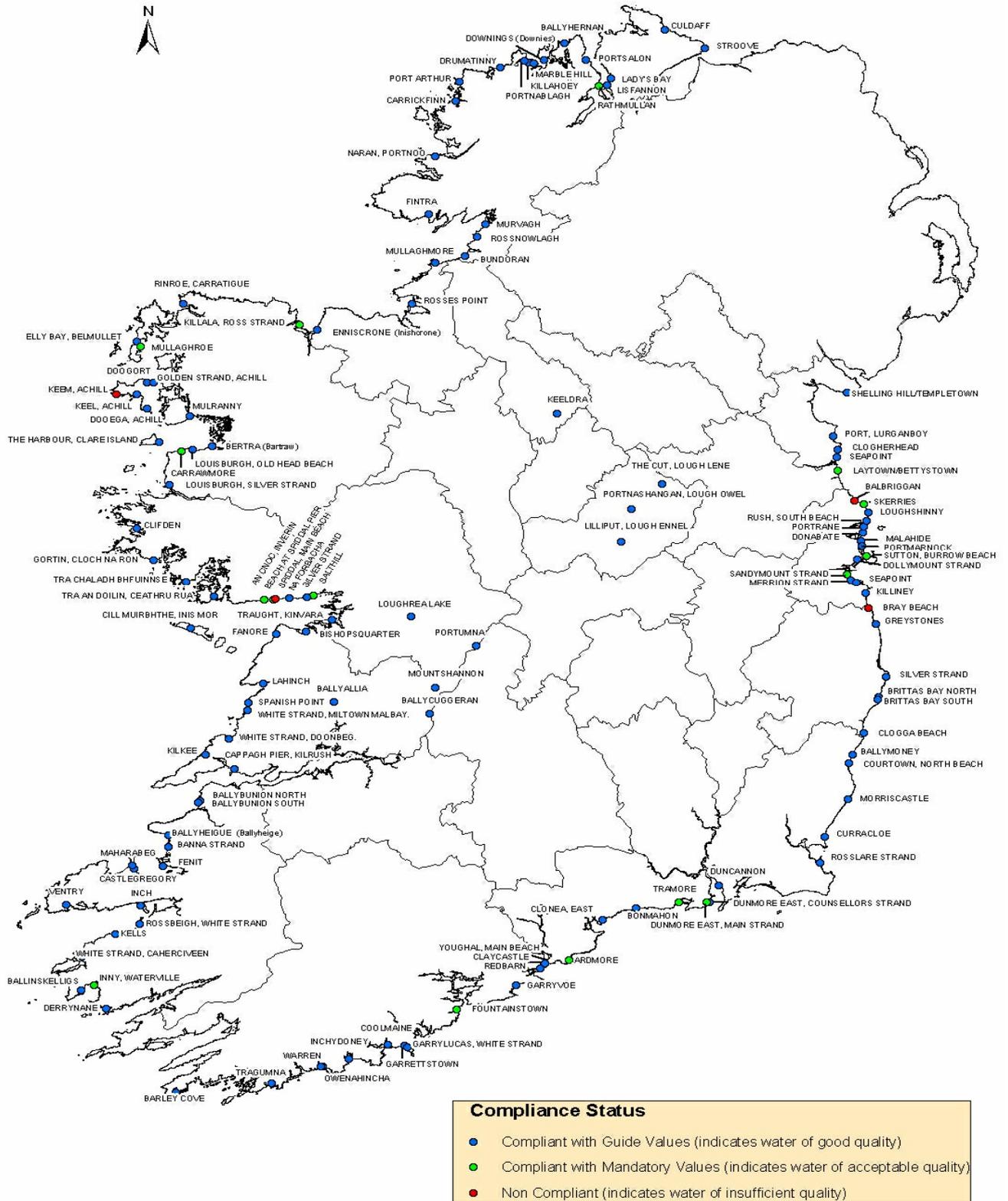


Status

- Compliant with Gude Values (indicates waters of good quality)
- Compliant with Mandatory Values (indicates water of acceptable quality)
- Non-Compliant (indicates water of insufficient quality)

Figure 4.1: Bathing Water Quality in the Greater Dublin Region 2002 and 2003

Appendix 1: Bathing Water Quality Map of Ireland 2003



Appendix 2: Compliance Rates For Bathing Areas (1991-2003)

Ireland	Total	C(I) %	C(G) %	NS %
Sea Water				
1991	65	96.9	83.1	1.5
1992	90	94.4	86.7	0.0
1993	90	95.6	75.6	0.0
1994	108	100.0	89.8	0.0
1995	108	98.1	87.9	0.0
1996	115	95.6	89.5	0.0
1997	115	96.5	83.5	0.0
1998	121	98.4	80.2	0.8
1999	121	98.3	89.3	0.0
2000	121	98.3	91.7	0.0
2001	122	97.5	87.7	0.0
2002	122	97.5	83.6	0.0
2003	122	96.7	83.6	0.0
Freshwater				
1991	-	-	-	-
1992	5	100.0	80.0	0.0
1993	5	100.0	100.0	0.0
1994	9	100.0	88.9	0.0
1995	9	100.0	88.9	0.0
1996	9	100.0	88.9	0.0
1997	9	100.0	88.9	0.0
1998	9	100.0	88.9	0.0
1999	9	100.0	88.9	0.0
2000	9	100.0	88.9	0.0
2001	9	100.0	100.0	0.0
2002	9	100.0	100.0	0.0
2003	9	100.0	100.0	0.0

C(I) Mandatory Compliant **C(G)** Guide Compliant **NS** Not sampled or insufficiently sampled.

Appendix 3: Compliance Status of all Bathing Areas

Responsible Local Authority	Bathing Area	Compliance With EU:	
		Mandatory Values	Guide Values
Clare County Council	Ballyallia	✓	✓
	Ballycuggeran	✓	✓
	Bishopsquarter	✓	✓
	Cappagh Pier, Kilrush	✓	✓
	Fanore	✓	✓
	Kilkee	✓	✓
	Lahinch	✓	✓
	Mountshannon	✓	✓
	Spanish Point	✓	✓
	White Strand, Doonbeg	✓	✓
	White Strand, Miltown Malbay	✓	✓
Cork County Council	Barley Cove	✓	✓
	Claycastle	✓	✓
	Coolmaine	✓	✓
	Fountainstown	✓	✗
	Garretstown	✓	✓
	Garrylucas, White Strand	✓	✓
	Garryvoe	✓	✓
	Inchydoney	✓	✓
	Owenahincha	✓	✓
	Redbarn	✓	✓
	Tragumna	✓	✓
	Warren	✓	✓
	Youghal, Main Beach	✓	✓
	Donegal County Council	Ballyhernan	✓
Bundoran		✓	✓
Carrickfinn		✓	✓
Culdaff		✓	✓
Downings		✓	✓
Drumatiny		✓	✓
Fintra		✓	✓
Killahoey		✓	✓
Lady's Bay		✓	✓
Lisfannon		✓	✓
Marble Hill		✓	✓
Murvagh		✓	✓
Naran, Portnoo		✓	✓
Port Arthur		✓	✓
Portnablagh		✓	✓
Portsalon		✓	✓
Rathmullan		✓	✗
Rossnowlagh		✓	✓
Shroove		✓	✓
Dublin City Council	Dollymount Strand	✓	✓
	Merrion Strand	✓	✓
	Sandymount Strand	✓	✗
Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council	Killiney	✓	✓
	Seapoint	✓	✓

Responsible Local Authority	Bathing Area	Compliance With EU: :	
		Mandatory Values	Guide Values
Fingal County Council	Balbriggan	x	x
	Donabate	✓	✓
	Loughshinny	✓	✓
	Malahide	✓	✓
	Portmarnock	✓	✓
	Portrane	✓	✓
	Rush, South Beach	✓	✓
	Skerries	✓	x
	Sutton, Burrow Beach	✓	x
Galway County Council	An Cnoc, Inverin	✓	x
	Bathing Place at Loughrea Lake	✓	✓
	Bathing Place at Portumna	✓	✓
	Beach at Spiddal Pier	✓	x
	Cill Muirbhte, Inis Mor	✓	✓
	Clifden	✓	x
	Gortin, Cloch Na Ron	✓	✓
	Na Forbacha	✓	✓
	Spiddal, Main Beach	x	x
	Tra An Doilin, Ceathru Rua	✓	✓
	Tra Chaladh Bhfuinnse	✓	✓
	Traught, Kinvara	✓	✓
Galway City Council	Salthill	✓	x
	Silver Strand	✓	✓
Kerry County Council	Ballinskelligs	✓	✓
	Ballybunion North	✓	✓
	Ballybunion South	✓	✓
	Ballyheigue	✓	✓
	Banna Strand	✓	✓
	Castlegregory	✓	✓
	Derrynane	✓	✓
	Fenit	✓	✓
	Inch	✓	✓
	Inny, Waterville	✓	x
	Kells	✓	✓
	Maharabeg	✓	✓
	Rossbeigh, White Strand	✓	✓
	Ventry	✓	✓
	White Strand, Caherciveen	✓	✓
Leitrim County Council	Keeldra	✓	✓
Louth County Council	Clogherhead	✓	✓
	Port, Lurganboy	✓	✓
	Seapoint	✓	✓
	Shelling Hill/, Templetown	✓	✓

Responsible Local Authority	Bathing Area	Compliance With EU:	
		Mandatory Values	Guide Values
Mayo County Council	Bertra	✓	✓
	Carrawmore	✓	✗
	Doogort	✓	✓
	Dooega, Achill	✓	✓
	Elly Bay, Belmullet	✓	✓
	Golden Strand, Achill	✓	✓
	Keel, Achill	✓	✓
	Keem, Achill	✗	✗
	Killala, Ross Strand	✓	✗
	Louisburgh, Old Head Beach	✓	✓
	Louisburgh, Silver Strand	✓	✓
	Mullaghroe	✓	✗
	Mulranny	✓	✓
	Rinroe, Carratigue	✓	✓
	The Harbour , Clare Island	✓	✓
Meath County Council	Laytown/Bettystown	✓	✗
Sligo County Council	Enniscrone	✓	✓
	Mullaghmore	✓	✓
	Rosses Point	✓	✓
Waterford County Council	Ardmore	✓	✗
	Bonmahon	✓	✓
	Clonea, East	✓	✓
	Dunmore East, Counsellors Strand	✓	✓
	Dunmore East, Main Strand	✓	✗
	Tramore, Main Strand	✓	✗
Westmeath County Council	Lilliput, Lough Ennel	✓	✓
	Portnashangan, Lough Owel	✓	✓
	The Cut, Lough Lene	✓	✓
Wexford County Council	Ballymoney	✓	✓
	Courtown, North Beach	✓	✓
	Curracloe	✓	✓
	Duncannon	✓	✓
	Morriscastle	✓	✓
	Rosslare Strand	✓	✓
Wicklow County Council	Bray Beach	✗	✗
	Brittas Bay North	✓	✓
	Brittas Bay South	✓	✓
	Clogga Beach	✓	✓
	Greystones	✓	✓
	Silver Strand	✓	✓

Appendix 4: Roles and Responsibilities

The local authorities, the Environmental Protection Agency and the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government each have specified roles in the administration of the legislation concerning the quality of bathing waters.

Local Authorities

Sampling and Investigations

Local authorities are required to sample (or arrange for the sampling of) waters at the bathing areas for which they are responsible. These samples must be taken at specified locations, at a required frequency and as far as possible, analysed using specified methodologies. Local authorities are also responsible for conducting periodic investigations of conditions which may affect the quality of bathing waters for the purpose of determining the volume, nature and effect of all potentially polluting discharges at the bathing areas.

Where bathing waters do not comply with the specified standards, local authorities are required to give public notice of this fact and to undertake the necessary measures to ensure compliance with standards. However, deviations of water quality standards caused by floods, other natural disasters or abnormal weather conditions should not be taken into consideration in determining compliance with the standards.

Access to Information

Each local authority involved in sampling of water at the designated bathing areas must establish and maintain a register of sampling results which should be made available for inspection by any person during office hours.

During the bathing season, the results of sampling should be displayed at or near the bathing area or alternative arrangements should be made for their availability to the public at the area concerned. The results displayed should be updated regularly, at least every four weeks and location of the sampling point(s) should be indicated on a map displayed at or near the bathing area.

Reporting of Results

Local Authorities are required to forward monitoring results and reports annually to the EPA at the end of the bathing season. A new web based reporting system was set up in 2003 to help streamline the reporting process.

Environmental Protection Agency

The role of the Environmental Protection Agency is to collate the water quality results from each local authority involved and to compile a national report, which is sent to the European Commission. The results from 2003 national report which was sent to the European Commission in December 2003 are incorporated in this report, which also includes additional explanatory material for the general reader.

This national overview, together with similar reports from other member states are assembled into one single European-wide document, which is published annually by the Commission.

An additional role extended to the Environmental Protection Agency in 2001 is the authorisation of departures from bathing water quality standards under specific circumstances. Prior to 2001, the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government had this responsibility. These National Regulations allow the EPA to grant a departure to a local authority only where:

- deviations from the standards have arisen because the water concerned has undergone natural enrichment from the soil without human intervention; or
- in the case of the parameters pH, colour and transparency, where exceptional weather or geographical conditions have arisen.

The departure may be granted on condition that it does not constitute a public health hazard. The granting of the departure may also be subject to conditions specified by the EPA and may be restricted to a specified time period.

Department of Environment and Local Government

The role of the Minister for Environment, Heritage and Local Government includes the preparation of the National Regulations and their updating according as the need arises.

Blue Flag Beaches

The Blue Flag Scheme is a voluntary scheme administered in Ireland by An Taisce and at European level by the Foundation for Environmental Education in Europe (FEEE). To receive a blue flag, a bathing site, in addition to maintaining a high standard of water quality, must meet specified objectives with regard to the provision of safety services and facilities, environmental management of the beach area and environmental education. The Environmental Protection Agency has co-operated with An Taisce to check that all water quality results obtained by both organisations for the 2003 bathing season are comparable. The analysis of bathing water in respect of the Directive is separate from, although complementary to, the European Blue Flag Scheme. The EPA also participates in the National Blue Flag Jury, which assists in the initial assessment of the Irish applicants for the Blue Flag Award.



USER COMMENT FORM

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