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2025 Bathing Season Report

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2025 Bathing Water Summary Report

1. Introduction

Dublin City Council (DCC) manages and monitors water quality at six bathing water locations. This function is delivered by the Water Pollution Control Section of the Protection of Water Bodies Office in accordance with the *Bathing Water Regulations, SI 79 of 2008* (Regulations). Dollymount Strand, Sandymount Strand, and Half Moon are designated bathing waters, while the North Bull Wall, Shelley Banks, and Merrion Strand are recognised by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) as other monitored waters.

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) assigns bathing water classifications based on monitoring results from the four preceding bathing seasons. For example, the 2025 bathing season results along with the three preceding seasons will inform the 2025 classification. The results of which will be announced by the EPA in Q2 2026.

The 2024 classifications currently available, are as follows: The Half Moon Bathing Location is emerging as Dublin City Council’s best performing bathing water, classified as “Excellent”. Dollymount Strand is classified as “Good” and Sandymount Strand as “Poor”. Bathing water information cabinets are installed at the entrances to all bathing locations as outlined in Figure 1 below. Statutory and supplementary bathing information are contained therein.



Figure 1 - Map of bathing locations and cabinets

The Bathing Water Regulation S.I No. 79 of 2008 was amended by the Minister Darragh O’Brien on the 28th June 2024. Amendment S.I No. 322/2024 (link [here](#) for reference) updated various articles of the 2008 Regulations.

2. Bathing Water Sampling

2.1. Regulatory sampling requirements

Regulations require four samples to be taken per designated bathing water per season. DCC exceeds this requirement and monitors water quality at six locations on twenty separate occasions during the bathing season. The sampling programme is comprehensive and benefits the citizens of the capital as well as visitors. The monitoring schedule is agreed with the EPA in advance of the season and is published online. DCC monitors bathing water quality all year round, with water quality monitored on a fortnightly basis outside of the season.

DCC carries out investigative monitoring to further supplement scheduled sampling events. Investigative monitoring is conducted if a temporary deterioration in bathing water quality is expected or has been confirmed.



Photograph 1 - Water quality sampling at Merrion Strand

2.2. Parameters analysed and methodology

Samples are tested for two types of faecal indicator bacteria namely *Escherichia coli* (*E. coli*) and Intestinal Enterococci. *E.coli* results are available 24 hours following receipt of a sample. The exception to this would be where a sample is taken but held over night before being analysed e.g. a Sunday or weekend sample.

The Intestinal Enterococci results are generally available from 48 hours following receipt of the sample, once the various confirmation tests have been completed. Both results are required for compliance with the 2008 Regulations and HSE Guidelines. Physico-chemical parameters are also assessed on site to determine whether the aesthetic quality of the water is acceptable.

2.3. Assessment and Reporting

Bathing water samples are classified as *Excellent*, *Good*, *Sufficient* or *Poor* depending on the quantity of *E.coli* and Intestinal Enterococci counted therein. Table 1 details the thresholds for each classification group.

Excellent	Indicates excellent water quality – Samples should not exceed 250 MPN <i>E. Coli</i> and 100 CFU Intestinal Enterococci per 100 ml.
Good	Indicates good water quality – Samples should not exceed 500 MPN <i>E. Coli</i> and 200 CFU Intestinal Enterococci per 100 ml.
Sufficient	Indicates sufficient water quality - samples should not exceed 1,000 MPN <i>E. coli</i> and 250 CFU Intestinal Enterococci per 100 ml
Poor	Indicates poor water quality - samples exceed 1,000 MPN <i>E. coli</i> and 250 CFU Intestinal Enterococci per 100 ml
Date*	Additional Investigative Sampling carried out
MPN = Most Probable Number	
CFU = Colony Forming Unit	

Table 1 - Single sample assessment criteria

Sampling results are made available both online and in hardcopy format at the entrance to each bathing location. Softcopy results are available on the Dublin City Council website, www.dublincity.ie/bathingwater and on the EPA's National Bathing Water website www.beaches.ie.

3. 2025 Bathing Season Results

A total of 120 scheduled and 21 investigative bathing water samples were analysed by the Central Laboratory between 26/05/25 and 09/09/25.



Figure 2 – Summary of 2025 Bathing Season

In accordance with Schedule 2 of the Bathing Water Quality Regulations, scheduled samples may be discounted and replaced if they occur during a predicted short-term pollution event. Such an event occurred on Dollymount Strand, sample scheduled on 21st July 2025 was discounted and replaced with sample taken on 28th July 2025. Short term pollution events are raised in consultation with the Health Service executive (HSE) and EPA notified.

Table 2 below details the results of the single sample assessments conducted during the 2025 season.

Bathing Area	DATE OF SAMPLE	Pre-Season		Inside Bathing Season 2025																									
		26/05	04/06*	09/06	10/06	15/06	16/06*	23/06	24/06	04/07*	07/07	08/07	14/07	21/07	22/07	23/07*	28/07	05/08	11/08	18/08	19/08	25/08	26/08*	02/09	05/09*	08/09	09/09		
Designated Bathing Area	DOLLYMOUNT	Excellent	Good	Excellent	Excellent	Excellent	Excellent	Excellent	Excellent	Excellent	Excellent	Excellent	Excellent	Good	Good	Good	Excellent	Excellent	Excellent	Excellent	Good	Sufficient	Excellent	Good	Excellent	Excellent	Excellent	Excellent	Excellent
	SANDYMOUNT	Excellent		Excellent	Sufficient	Excellent	Excellent	Excellent	Good		Excellent	Excellent	Good	Poor	Excellent	Good	Good	Excellent	Excellent	Sufficient	Excellent	Excellent		Good		Excellent	Sufficient		
	HALF MOON	Excellent		Excellent	Excellent	Excellent	Excellent	Excellent			Excellent	Excellent	Excellent	Excellent	Excellent	Excellent	Excellent	Excellent	Excellent	Excellent	Excellent	Excellent	Excellent	Excellent	Excellent	Excellent	Excellent	Excellent	
Non-Designated Bathing Area	MERRION	Excellent		Excellent	Excellent	Excellent	Excellent	Poor	Excellent		Excellent	Excellent	Excellent	Poor	Sufficient	Good	Good	Excellent	Excellent	Poor	Excellent	Excellent		Excellent		Excellent	Sufficient		
	SHELLEY BANKS	Excellent		Excellent	Excellent	Excellent	Excellent	Excellent		Excellent	Excellent	Sufficient	Excellent	Excellent	Excellent	Excellent	Excellent	Excellent	Excellent	Excellent	Excellent	Excellent	Excellent		Poor	Good	Excellent	Sufficient	
	NORTH BULL WALL CAUSEWAY	Excellent	Good	Excellent	Poor	Excellent	Sufficient	Excellent	Excellent	Excellent	Excellent	Good	Poor	Poor	Poor	Excellent	Excellent	Excellent	Excellent	Excellent	Poor	Excellent	Excellent		Excellent		Excellent	Poor	
	Data*	Additional Investigative Sampling carried out																											

Table 2 – 2025 Single sample assessment results

Table 3 below provides an overview of the 2025 single sample assessment results. Across our three designated waters, 95%, 80% and 95% of Dollymount Strand, Sandymount Strand and Half Moons results returned as *Excellent* or *Good* respectively. Of the 60 scheduled samples taken across our three designated bathing location, only one sample was classified as *Poor*, while all remaining samples were rated *Sufficient* or better.

While at Other Monitored waters, 75%, 85% and 70% of Merrion Strand, Shelley Banks and North Bull Wall results returned as *Excellent* or *Good* respectively.

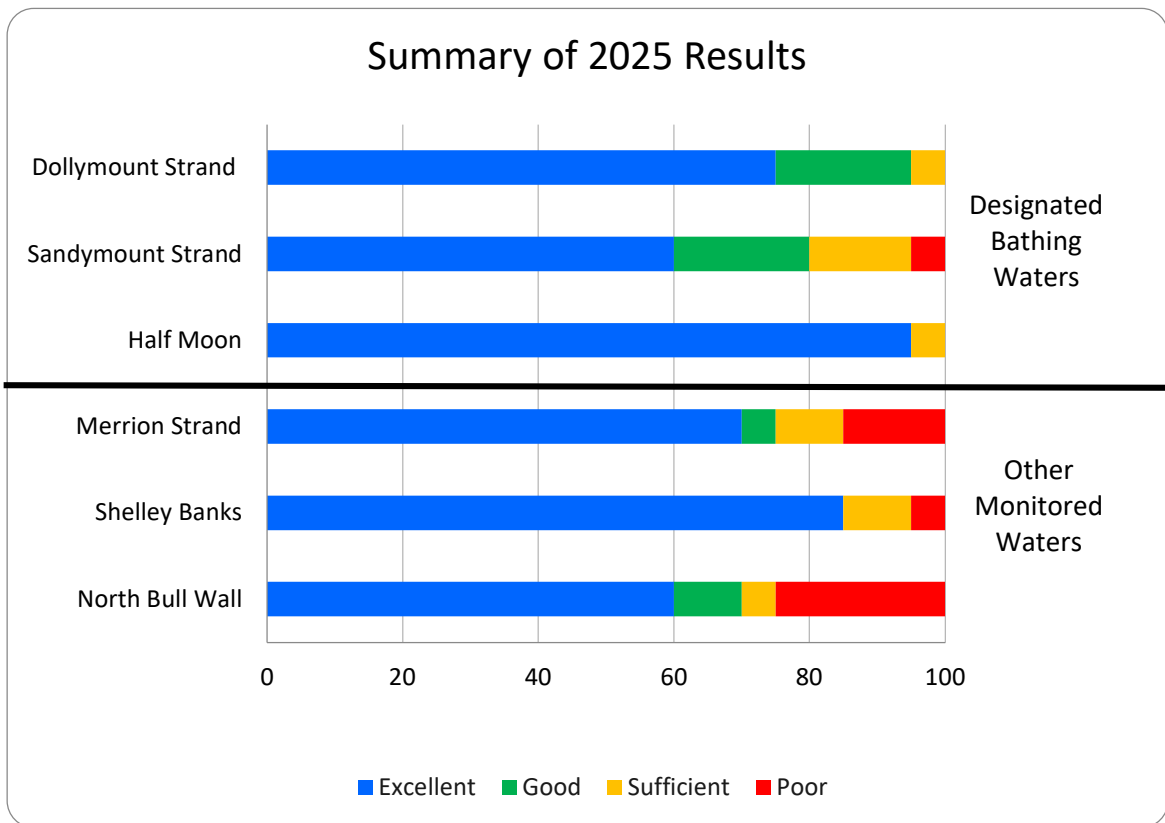


Table 3 - Summary of 2025 scheduled bathing water results expressed as percentage compliance

4. Summary of warnings raised

DCC raise warnings when a temporary deterioration in bathing water quality has or is expected to occur. Warnings are put in place to prevent or limit bather exposure to suspected poor water quality. Warnings are only raised at designated bathing waters.

Depending on the type of incident, warnings can include prior warning notices or temporary bathing prohibitions. A prior warning notifies the public of a suspected deterioration in bathing water quality, typically prompted by poor weather. A temporary bathing prohibition advises swimmers of a confirmed or highly likely deterioration in bathing water quality. Bathers should take notice of such warnings which have been raised to protect their health. Both notices remain in place until the quality of water can be verified by scheduled or investigative sampling, as required. DCC are required to consult with the Health Service Executive prior to raising or lifting a prior warning or temporary bathing prohibition.

A total of 11 warnings on five occasions were raised during the 2025 bathing season. 45% of the warning raised were Prior Warnings, the other 55% were temporary prohibitions. The warnings were raised in response to incidents which may or had caused a deterioration in bathing water quality.

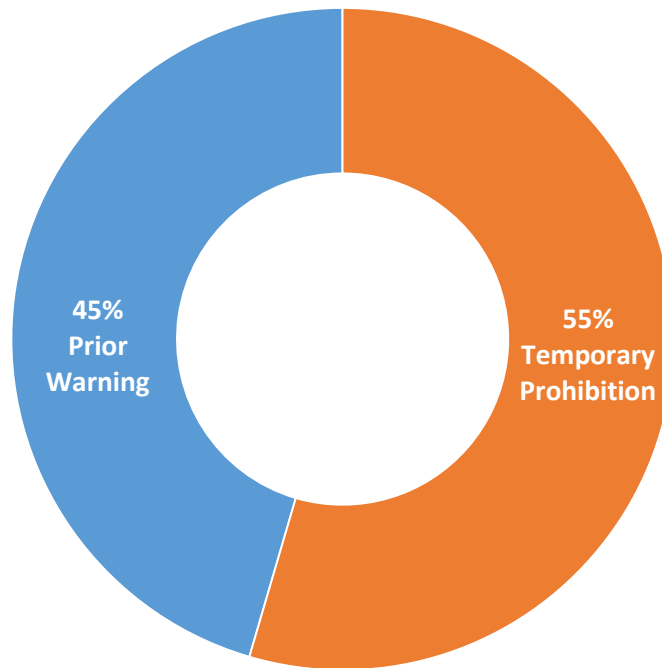


Figure 3 – Summary of 2025 bathing water warnings

5. PCR analysis

Dublin City Council continues to utilise Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) analysis to better inform pollution investigations triggered by bathing water failures. PCR analysis is used as an analytical tool in Microbial Source Tracking (MST) of faecal pollution. PCR analysis looks for species-specific genetic markers to identify human, canine and marine bird sources in bathing water samples with elevated faecal indicator bacteria.

This analysis complements DCC’s scheduled monitoring programme, exceeding statutory testing obligations. The additional information has allowed DCC to identify the likely source or contributing factors leading to a failure where no obvious sources relating to rainfall or pollution events are present.

However, there are certain limitations to the analysis, where it is not yet possible to accurately apportion the contribution made by specific markers when a combination of markers are present. The results of PCR analysis of DCC bathing waters have successfully identified the likely contribution of non-human sources of pollution on our beaches.

During the 2025 Bathing Season, a total of 53 samples were analysed using PCR analysis. Table 4 provides a summary of results received.

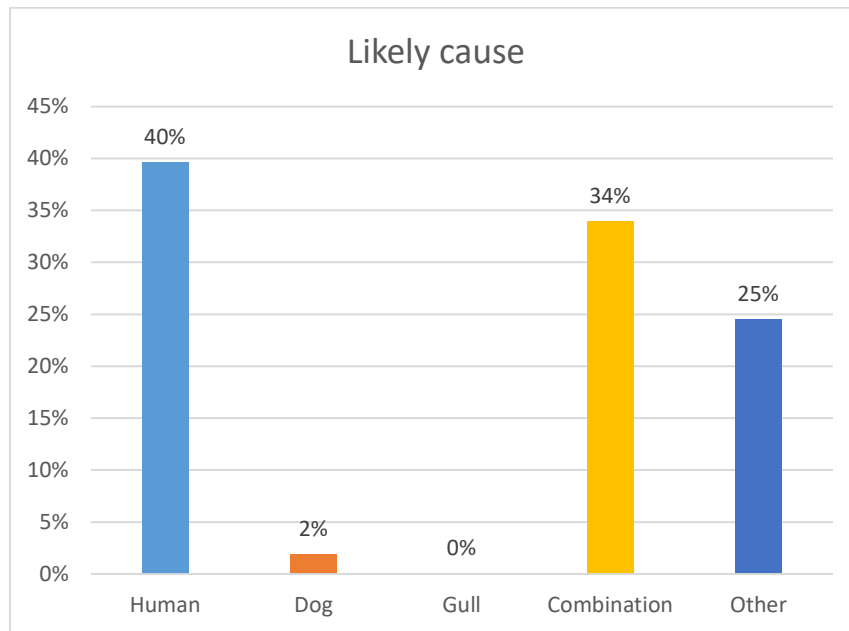


Table 4 - Summary of 2025 PCR analysis and attributable likely cause

In summary, human faecal contamination is the sole likely cause to have contributed to 40% of samples with elevated bacteria levels. Human markers were also detected in all combination samples, several of which were collected during periods of heavy rainfall. Such conditions can lead to increased runoff, stormwater overflows and pressure on wastewater treatment plant, resulting in higher bacterial levels.

The dog marker was found to be the sole likely cause in one sample taken at Sandymount Strand. The Dog marker was present in a further 12 combination samples, predominantly alongside the human marker. Dublin City Council continues to promote responsible dog management through our "Leave Only Paw Prints" initiative and deployment of poo-bag dispensers at the bathing waters.

While the gull marker was not found to be the sole cause of contamination in any sample, it was detected in 8 combination samples, distributed across several bathing locations: Sandymount Strand, Merrion Strand, Dollymount North and North Bull Wall.

All six bathing waters are located within designated Special Conservation Areas (SCA) and Special Protection Areas (SPA). A large number (>10,000) of wintering birds are regularly observed at various locations within the Bay area, as the environment provides ideal conditions for nesting, feeding and roosting. Where birds congregate, fouling occurs, which can lead to temporary declines in water quality.

Both the birds and their habitat are protected under European law. Since the birds contributing to faecal contamination are part of the designated areas, there is limited scope to managing the bird fouling however, DCC will continue to monitor their impact.

The Other category includes results where the levels of bacteria are too low to measure accurately. BLD (Below Level of Detection) means the bacteria are present, but there's not enough to detect. BLQ (Below Level of Quantification) means the bacteria are detectable, but the amount is too small to give a reliable result.

6. Dog fouling and Public Information

Dog faeces has been found to contain many dangerous pathogens that can pose a significant threat to public health. The UCD Acclimatize Project found that one dog stool has the potential to pollute a volume of water the area of a tennis court.

Acclimatize in conjunction with Dublin City Council produced a short animation to highlight the impact of dog fouling on water quality. The campaign was supported and shared by DCC across various social media platforms. Further information can be found here - <https://www.acclimatize.eu/dogs/>.



Figure 4 - Acclimatize dog fouling campaign still

While dog fouling is not the only pressure on bathing water quality, it has been found to be a significant contributor. Unlike other sources of pollution, dog fouling can be easily removed by the pet owner to prevent contamination of a nearby waterbody.

As part of the UCD Acclimatize II Project, four separate surveys were conducted during the summer of 2025 at Sandymount Strand and Dollymount Strand. The surveys recorded the number of dogs present and observed incidents of dog fouling. Findings estimate that between 2.1 kg and 3.6 kg of dog waste is deposited on each beach per day, amounting to approximately 767 kg per year at Dollymount Strand and 1.3 tonnes per year at Sandymount Strand.

The surveys also found that, on average, 16% of dog walkers do not clean up after their pets. These results highlight the ongoing need for responsible dog ownership to protect public health and bathing water quality.

7. Communications with stakeholders

Dublin City Council continues to regularly update its dedicated bathing water webpage. An [FAQ section](#) was introduced in 2021 which has proved very popular and addresses most commonly received queries.

In conjunction with the DCC webpage, bathers are encouraged to visit the EPA’s National Bathing Water webpage www.beaches.ie. The page contains most recent warnings and bathing water results for bathing waters across Ireland. The section liaised with the following stakeholders throughout the 2025 bathing season.

Stakeholder	Communication
Uisce Eireann	Wastewater reportable incidents.
HSE	As the designated medical surveillance authority, the HSE reviews and agrees in advance to all bathing water warnings and their subsequent removal, ensuring consistency and medical oversight. Ongoing consultation is maintained throughout the bathing season.
EPA	Reporting of bathing water incidents via BWIS which populates information for the EPA national bathing water website www.beaches.ie
Councillors	7 Councillor questions responded to.
Public	Statutory information provided in designated bathing water cabinets, and smart screens were applicable. Bathing water results available online at www.dublincity.ie/bathingwaters
Public	1 correspondence received during the season. It is believed the improved website and additional resources reduced the need for the public to contact the section directly.
Public participation	The closing date for the 2025 public participation period was 26/09/25. Details of the participation were published on DCC’s dedicated webpage and across social media platforms. No applications were received for consideration.

Table 5 - Breakdown of communications by stakeholder

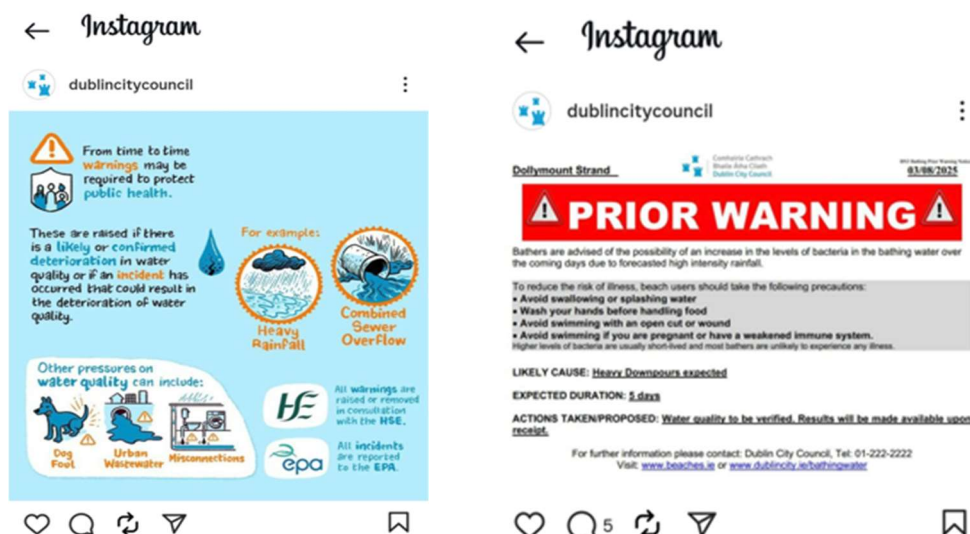
8. Service Improvements

DCC will continue to improve processes annually, with a focus on enhancing engagement with the public. Following a successful pilot of smart screen technologies in 2023 at Sandymount and Dollymount Strands, DCC will continue to seek innovative technologies to improve service delivery to the public.



Photograph 2 - E-ink screen at Sandymount Strand

DCC has increased its social media presence throughout the bathing water season, using these channels to strengthen communications with the public. Regular scheduled posts were issued to alert the public to the bathing water guide and dog fouling and its impact on bathing water quality. The platform served as an effective tool for issuing timely warnings and prohibitions.



Photograph 3 – Sample of Instagram Posts

DCC set up an alert service including bathing water alerts which sends subscribers bathing water quality results and warning notifications when raised. Further information can be found on [DCC's website](#).

In 2024, DCC carried out an audit of its bathing water infrastructure, leading to the retrofitting of bathing water cabinets at North Bull Wall and Dollymount Strand to increase reach and effective communications to the public along these areas. Additionally, double sided bathing water display cabinets were installed at Half Moon and Sandymount Strand, expanding the available display area and further improving communication with the public.

Dublin City Council is leading the Bathing Water National Signage Working Group, in collaboration with the Department of Housing, HSE, EPA, local authorities, and other key stakeholders. The group's goal is to standardise how statutory and supplementary bathing water information is displayed across Ireland. As part of this work, actions are now being progressed to develop a system which will help ensure that bathing water updates are clear, consistent, and accessible nationwide, improving public understanding and supporting compliance with national regulations.

8. Bathing Water Task Force (BWTF)

In November 2019, Dublin City Council (DCC) set up the Bathing Water Task Force including representatives from Uisce Éireann, Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government (DHPLG), Dun Laoghaire Rathdown County Council (DLRCC) and Fingal County Council (FCC).

The mission of the BWTF is to identify, assess, remediate or eliminate sources of pollution entering Dublin Bay. Sources that specifically affect bathing water quality and ultimately public health. The BWTF holds monthly meetings chaired by Dublin City Council.

The meetings provide stakeholders with an opportunity to report on progress made, challenges faced, review progress and coordinate activities. It is also a platform for local authorities and the Department to discuss current bathing water management issues and knowledge sharing.

Work programmes and multiagency actions are set out in the published BWTP report. (Click [here](#) for reference). The BWTF engages in high-level meetings with the Environmental Protection Agency, Health Service Executive, the National Bathing Water Expert Group and the Department of Housing, Local Government & Heritage, including participation and contributions to the National Bathing Waters Expert Group.

10. Forecasted Annual designated bathing water classification

The EPA provide bathing water classifications to designated locations before the 31st December each year. The classification is an annual assessment that is based on water quality results over the previous four bathing seasons. A minimum of 20 no. samples were taken at each of our three locations throughout the 2025 season. The bathing water can receive a classification as *Excellent*, *Good*, *Sufficient* or *Poor*. The below table details the current and predicted 2025 classification as set out in Schedule 4 of the bathing water regulations, <https://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2008/si/79/made/en/print>. All predictions are provisional and subject to assessment and verification by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

Designated Bathing Water	2024 Classification	Predicted 2025 Classification
Sandymount Strand	Poor	Sufficient
Dollymount Strand	Good	Good
Half Moon	Unclassified	Excellent

Table 6 - Current and predicated Annual classification

The bathing water classification at Sandymount Strand is predicted to achieve an improved status to Sufficient classification for 2025, following the latest annual assessment. In 2025, 95% of samples taken at Sandymount Strand returned as Sufficient or better, meeting the minimum standards set out in the Bathing Water Regulations. This promotion highlights the work undertaken by the BWTF, demonstrating effective progress in improving bathing water quality and continued efforts to reduce pollution pressures.

