



Lough Neagh Algal Bloom

The causes of the Lough Neagh algal bloom are due to an interconnected combination of issues with no quick, simple solution. Government needs to put in place a long-term strategy which addresses the issues - including all sources of pollution, invasive species management and the impacts of climate change – in order to protect this essential resource for both nature and people. With increasing temperatures due to climate change, blue green algal blooms are likely to become more common and there is no room for complacency or delay. All those with a regulatory role must discharge their responsibilities robustly. Anyone found in breach of regulations, from whatever sector, must be held to account.

The NI soil nutrient health scheme for farmland is underway and its implementation will make an important contribution to reducing phosphate levels. Investment in agricultural technology, upgrades in NI Water waste-water treatment infrastructure and in domestic septic tanks will be required. Further research on the management of zebra mussels is also required.

43% of NI land area ultimately drains into Lough Neagh which provides water for 750,000 local people. It is also one of our most important natural assets and designated as a Ramsar site, Special Protection Area (SPA) and Area of Special Scientific Interest (ASSI) being home to some of our rarest and most iconic species.

Alongside other stakeholders, Ulster Wildlife is helping to develop river basin management plans for Northern Ireland which will set out actions to improve freshwater conditions and we work with farmers and landowners to help them adjust to the changing environment. We are also part of the NI Freshwater Task Force, comprised of environmental NGOs, to encourage legislative change to improve water quality in our rivers, lakes, and streams. We manage three nature reserves within the Lough Neagh catchment and ensure they are sensitively managed to support good water quality.

For further information email communications@ulsterwildlife.org

Last updated October 23