# Lough Neagh faces renewed challenges as blue-green algae reappears



Lough Neagh, the largest freshwater lake in the UK by surface area, is facing renewed challenges as blue-green algae has reappeared this spring. The Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA) confirmed the first cases of algae blooms for 2025 on April 10 and 11, having detected them at Traad Point and Kinturk (Curran’s Quay). This resurgence follows the troubling trend of the previous two summers, where extensive blooms impacted both Lough Neagh and other local waterways, as well as beaches in the vicinity.

Prior to the confirmation of these cases, algae had already been reported in several locations, including Martray Lough, Ballygawley, and Ballysaggart Lough in Dungannon. Environment Minister Andrew Muir had anticipated the algae's return this year, acknowledging the complexity of the issue. A spokesperson from the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) stated, “Minister Muir is on record a number of times saying that there are no quick fixes, with problems decades in the making and decades in the fixing.” This indicates that the resurgence of the blooms is part of a longstanding environmental challenge.

The DAERA representative went on to address the factors influencing the severity of this year’s blooms, emphasising that “the severity and scale of the problem we will be facing this summer will be dependent on a number of factors.” During the previous summers, Lough Neagh has been significantly affected by nutrient loading from agricultural runoff and wastewater treatments. It is understood that nitrogen and phosphorus from fertilisers have contributed to the proliferation of the blue-green algae. The spread of the invasive zebra mussel species is believed to exacerbate the problem, as clearer waters allow greater sunlight penetration, which stimulates increased algal growth. In addition, rising water temperatures attributed to climate change are a contributing factor to the issue.

The Stormont Executive initiated an action plan last year in an effort to address the environmental crisis at the lough. Speaking to his scrutiny committee, Muir framed the arrival of spring as a time for renewal rather than a period marked by reports of blue-green algae. He asserted, “Significant work is already under way to tackle the nutrient overload in our rivers, lakes and loughs,” and expressed his commitment to seeking support for necessary tough decisions to improve waterway conditions and combat climate change.

Amid these concerns, the NIEA encourages the public to report suspected instances of algae bloom. Individuals can do so using the Bloomin’ Algae App or by emailing emergency-pollution@daera-ni.gov.uk with a photo and details regarding the location of the bloom. All confirmed reports of blue-green algae will be documented and made available on the DAERA blue-green algae web viewer, which provides information on confirmed locations. Moving forward, NIEA will continue to monitor the situation closely and review any significant increases in algae bloom numbers.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://user.eumetsat.int/resources/case-studies/loch-neagh-algal-bloom> - This URL provides information about algal blooms in Lough Neagh, confirming that the lake has faced such issues in recent years, consistent with the recurring problem this spring.
* <https://hellorayo.co.uk/cool-fm/local/news/blue-green-algae-lough-neagh/> - This article reports on the confirmation of blue-green algae in Lough Neagh for 2025, specifically noting the locations of these blooms and the time of year they occur, aligning with the resurgence described.
* <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/environment-agency> - Although this URL does not directly mention Lough Neagh, it provides general information on environmental protection in the UK, which includes dealing with algal blooms and water quality issues, relevant to the broader context.
* <https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/> - The DAERA website offers insights into environmental initiatives in Northern Ireland, including efforts to manage water quality and address challenges like algal blooms, which are central to the issues facing Lough Neagh.
* <https://www.niea-ni.gov.uk/> - This URL for the Northern Ireland Environment Agency provides resources on environmental monitoring and management, including reporting and documenting algae blooms, which aligns with the actions described for Lough Neagh.