

Information Sheet on Ramsar Wetlands (RIS)

Categories approved by Recommendation 4.7 (1990), as amended by Resolution VIII.13 of the 8th Conference of the Contracting Parties (2002) and Resolutions IX.1 Annex B, IX.6, IX.21 and IX. 22 of the 9th Conference of the Contracting Parties (2005).

Notes for compilers:

1. The RIS should be completed in accordance with the attached *Explanatory Notes and Guidelines for completing the Information Sheet on Ramsar Wetlands*. Compilers are strongly advised to read this guidance before filling in the RIS.
2. Further information and guidance in support of Ramsar site designations are provided in the *Strategic Framework for the future development of the List of Wetlands of International Importance* (Ramsar Wise Use Handbook 7, 2nd edition, as amended by COP9 Resolution IX.1 Annex B). A 3rd edition of the Handbook, incorporating these amendments, is in preparation and will be available in 2006.
3. Once completed, the RIS (and accompanying map(s)) should be submitted to the Ramsar Secretariat. Compilers should provide an electronic (MS Word) copy of the RIS and, where possible, digital copies of all maps.

1. Name and address of the compiler of this form:

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Designation date

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Site Reference Number

2. Date this sheet was completed/updated:

Designated: 12 September 1995

3. Country:

UK (England)

4. Name of the Ramsar site:

Woodwalton Fen

5. Designation of new Ramsar site or update of existing site:

This RIS is for: Updated information on an existing Ramsar site

6. For RIS updates only, changes to the site since its designation or earlier update:

a) Site boundary and area:

** Important note: If the boundary and/or area of the designated site is being restricted/reduced, the Contracting Party should have followed the procedures established by the Conference of the Parties in the Annex to COP9 Resolution IX.6 and provided a report in line with paragraph 28 of that Annex, prior to the submission of an updated RIS.

b) Describe briefly any major changes to the ecological character of the Ramsar site, including in the application of the Criteria, since the previous RIS for the site:

7. Map of site included:

Refer to Annex III of the *Explanatory Notes and Guidelines*, for detailed guidance on provision of suitable maps, including digital maps.

a) A map of the site, with clearly delineated boundaries, is included as:

- i) **hard copy** (required for inclusion of site in the Ramsar List): *yes* ✓ -or- *no* ☐;
- ii) **an electronic format** (e.g. a JPEG or ArcView image) *Yes*
- iii) **a GIS file providing geo-referenced site boundary vectors and attribute tables** *yes* ✓ -or- *no* ☐;

b) **Describe briefly the type of boundary delineation applied:**

e.g. the boundary is the same as an existing protected area (nature reserve, national park etc.), or follows a catchment boundary, or follows a geopolitical boundary such as a local government jurisdiction, follows physical boundaries such as roads, follows the shoreline of a waterbody, etc.

The site boundary is the same as, or falls within, an existing protected area.

For precise boundary details, please refer to paper map provided at designation

8. Geographical coordinates (latitude/longitude):

52 26 36 N 00 11 25 W

9. General location:

Include in which part of the country and which large administrative region(s), and the location of the nearest large town.

Nearest town/city: Peterborough

The site lies 12 km due south of Peterborough.

Administrative region: Cambridgeshire

10. Elevation (average and/or max. & min.) (metres): **11. Area (hectares):** 208.13

Min.	-1
Max.	0
Mean	0

12. General overview of the site:

Provide a short paragraph giving a summary description of the principal ecological characteristics and importance of the wetland.

The site consists of a range of wetland communities, once characteristic of large areas of the East Anglian fens but now restricted to a number of isolated sites. Due to past management the site now has several types of open fen and swamp communities. There is also a relict area of acid peat, some mixed fen and an important network of ditches. The site supports an appreciable assemblage of wetland plants and invertebrates.

13. Ramsar Criteria:

Circle or underline each Criterion applied to the designation of the Ramsar site. See Annex II of the *Explanatory Notes and Guidelines* for the Criteria and guidelines for their application (adopted by Resolution VII.11).

1, 2

14. Justification for the application of each Criterion listed in 13 above:

Provide justification for each Criterion in turn, clearly identifying to which Criterion the justification applies (see Annex II for guidance on acceptable forms of justification).

Ramsar criterion 1

The site is within an area that is one of the remaining parts of East Anglia which has not been drained. The fen is near natural and has developed where peat-digging took place in the 19th century. The site has several types of open fen and swamp communities.

Ramsar criterion 2

The site supports two species of British Red Data Book plants, fen violet, *Viola persicifolia* and fen wood-rush *Luzula pallidula*. Woodwalton also supports a large number of wetland invertebrates including 20 British Red Data Book species. Aquatic beetles, flies and moths are particularly well represented.

15. Biogeography (required when Criteria 1 and/or 3 and /or certain applications of Criterion 2 are applied to the designation):

Name the relevant biogeographic region that includes the Ramsar site, and identify the biogeographic regionalisation system that has been applied.

a) biogeographic region:

Atlantic

b) biogeographic regionalisation scheme (include reference citation):

Council Directive 92/43/EEC

16. Physical features of the site:

Describe, as appropriate, the geology, geomorphology; origins - natural or artificial; hydrology; soil type; water quality; water depth, water permanence; fluctuations in water level; tidal variations; downstream area; general climate, etc.

Soil & geology	acidic, neutral, clay, peat
Geomorphology and landscape	lowland
Nutrient status	no information
pH	acidic, circumneutral
Salinity	fresh
Soil	mainly organic
Water permanence	usually permanent
Summary of main climatic features	Annual averages (Cambridge, 1971–2000) (www.metoffice.com/climate/uk/averages/19712000/sites/cambridge.html) Max. daily temperature: 14.1° C Min. daily temperature: 6.1° C Days of air frost: 41.9 Rainfall: 553.5 mm Hrs. of sunshine: 1501.2

General description of the Physical Features:

No information available

17. Physical features of the catchment area:

Describe the surface area, general geology and geomorphological features, general soil types, general land use, and climate (including climate type).

Woodwalton Fen lies at the lowest and most westerly part of the East Anglian fens.

18. Hydrological values:

Describe the functions and values of the wetland in groundwater recharge, flood control, sediment trapping, shoreline stabilization, etc.

Flood water storage / desynchronisation of flood peaks

19. Wetland types:

Inland wetland

Code	Name	% Area
U	Peatlands (including peat bogs swamps, fens)	100

20. General ecological features:

Provide further description, as appropriate, of the main habitats, vegetation types, plant and animal communities present in the Ramsar site, and the ecosystem services of the site and the benefits derived from them.

The site was once a raised bog and was dug for peat which removed most of the acidic peat, exposing the underlying fen peat. The open fen and swamp communities present today are, therefore, of several types. A relict area of acid peat holds stands of *Molinia caerulea* with *Calluna vulgaris*, *Myrica gale*, *Potentilla erecta* and *Cladium mariscus*. A further swamp community is dominated by *Calamagrostis epigejos*. Mixed fen covers a significant part of the site. This vegetation community is floristically rich and contains species such as *Thalictrum flavum*, *Iris pseudacorus*, *Poa palustris*, *Luzula pallidula* and *Viola persicifolia*. The network of ditches on the site hold many uncommon British plant species and two meres have been dug which are also valuable for aquatic plants. Further habitats of significance include marshy grassland, birch and alder woodland and fen carr. The carr is varied in composition and contains *Salix* spp., *Prunus spinosa*, *Betula* spp. and *Viburnum opulus*.

Ecosystem services

21. Noteworthy flora:

Provide additional information on particular species and why they are noteworthy (expanding as necessary on information provided in 12. Justification for the application of the Criteria) indicating, e.g. which species/communities are unique, rare, endangered or biogeographically important, etc. *Do not include here taxonomic lists of species present – these may be supplied as supplementary information to the RIS.*

Nationally important species occurring on the site.**Higher Plants.***Viola persicifolia**Luzula pallidula***22. Noteworthy fauna:**

Provide additional information on particular species and why they are noteworthy (expanding as necessary on information provided in 12. Justification for the application of the Criteria) indicating, e.g. which species/communities are unique, rare, endangered or biogeographically important, etc., including count data. *Do not include here taxonomic lists of species present – these may be supplied as supplementary information to the RIS.*

Birds**Species Information****Assemblage.**

The site supports a diverse assemblage of invertebrates including *Perizoma sagittata* and *Chortodes extrema*.

23. Social and cultural values:

Describe if the site has any general social and/or cultural values e.g. fisheries production, forestry, religious importance, archaeological sites, social relations with the wetland, etc. Distinguish between historical/archaeological/religious significance and current socio-economic values.

Aesthetic

Archaeological/historical site

Non-consumptive recreation

b) Is the site considered of international importance for holding, in addition to relevant ecological values, examples of significant cultural values, whether material or non-material, linked to its origin, conservation and/or ecological functioning? No

If Yes, describe this importance under one or more of the following categories:

- i) sites which provide a model of wetland wise use, demonstrating the application of traditional knowledge and methods of management and use that maintain the ecological character of the wetland:
- ii) sites which have exceptional cultural traditions or records of former civilizations that have influenced the ecological character of the wetland:
- iii) sites where the ecological character of the wetland depends on the interaction with local communities or indigenous peoples:
- iv) sites where relevant non-material values such as sacred sites are present and their existence is strongly linked with the maintenance of the ecological character of the wetland:

24. Land tenure/ownership:

Ownership category	On-site	Off-site
Private	+	+

25. Current land (including water) use:

Activity	On-site	Off-site
Nature conservation	+	
Current scientific research	+	
Permanent pastoral agriculture	+	

26. Factors (past, present or potential) adversely affecting the site’s ecological character, including changes in land (including water) use and development projects:

Explanation of reporting category:

1. Those factors that are still operating, but it is unclear if they are under control, as there is a lag in showing the management or regulatory regime to be successful.
2. Those factors that are not currently being managed, or where the regulatory regime appears to have been ineffective so far.

NA = Not Applicable because no factors have been reported.

Adverse Factor Category	Reporting Category	Description of the problem (Newly reported Factors only)	On-Site	Off-Site	Major Impact?
Vegetation succession	1		+		+
Drainage/land-claim for agriculture	1			+	+
Eutrophication	1		+	+	

For category 2 factors only.

What measures have been taken / are planned / regulatory processes invoked, to mitigate the effect of these factors?

Is the site subject to adverse ecological change? NO

27. Conservation measures taken:

List national category and legal status of protected areas, including boundary relationships with the Ramsar site; management practices; whether an officially approved management plan exists and whether it is being implemented.

Conservation measure	On-site	Off-site
Site/ Area of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI/ASSI)	+	
National Nature Reserve (NNR)	+	
Site management statement/plan implemented	+	
Special Area of Conservation (SAC)	+	

b) Describe any other current management practices:

The management of Ramsar sites in the UK is determined by either a formal management plan or through other management planning processes, and is overseen by the relevant statutory conservation agency. Details of the precise management practises are given in these documents.

28. Conservation measures proposed but not yet implemented:

e.g. management plan in preparation; official proposal as a legally protected area, etc.

No information available

29. Current scientific research and facilities:

e.g. details of current research projects, including biodiversity monitoring; existence of a field research station, etc.

Flora.

Fen violet *Viola persicifolia* species recovery programme.

Fen ragwort *Senecio paludosus* species recovery programme.

Fauna.

Long, and ongoing, history of research and monitoring, e.g. plant and butterfly transects, breeding bird surveys, monitoring of water levels, dyke flora surveys.

30. Current communications, education and public awareness (CEPA) activities related to or benefiting the site:

e.g. visitor centre, observation hides and nature trails, information booklets, facilities for school visits, etc.

There is an interpretation board on site where leaflets can be obtained. A traditional thatched bungalow is used for meetings, reserve events and visiting school parties. It houses displays illustrating the history and wildlife of the fen.

31. Current recreation and tourism:

State if the wetland is used for recreation/tourism; indicate type(s) and their frequency/intensity.

Activities, Facilities provided and Seasonality.

There are no public rights of way across the reserve but visitors are allowed access after obtaining a permit from English Nature.

32. Jurisdiction:

Include territorial, e.g. state/region, and functional/sectoral, e.g. Dept. of Agriculture/Dept. of Environment, etc.
Head, Natura 2000 and Ramsar Team, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs,
European Wildlife Division, Zone 1/07, Temple Quay House, 2 The Square, Temple Quay, Bristol,
BS1 6EB

33. Management authority:

Provide the name and address of the local office(s) of the agency(ies) or organisation(s) directly responsible for managing the wetland. Wherever possible provide also the title and/or name of the person or persons in this office with responsibility for the wetland.

Site Designations Manager, English Nature, Sites and Surveillance Team, Northminster House,
Northminster Road, Peterborough, PE1 1UA, UK

34. Bibliographical references:

Scientific/technical references only. If biogeographic regionalisation scheme applied (see 15 above), list full reference citation for the scheme.

Site-relevant references

- Bratton, JH (ed.) (1991) *British Red Data Books: 3. Invertebrates other than insects*. Joint Nature Conservation Committee, Peterborough
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- English Nature (2004) *Woodwalton Fen NNR site management plan*. English Nature
- Great Fen Project (2003) *Great Fen Project*. Great Fen Project, Sawston. www.greatfen.org.uk
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- Ratcliffe, DA (ed.) (1977) *A Nature Conservation Review. The selection of biological sites of national importance to nature conservation in Britain*. Cambridge University Press (for the Natural Environment Research Council and the Nature Conservancy Council), Cambridge (2 vols.)
- Shirt, DB (ed.) (1987) *British Red Data Books: 2. Insects*. Nature Conservancy Council, Peterborough
- Sheail, J (1976) The land-use history of the Huntingdonshire Fenland, with special reference to the Holme Fen and Woodwalton Fen National Nature Reserves. (Contractor: Institute of Terrestrial Ecology, Huntingdon) *Nature Conservancy Council, CSD Report, No. 81*
- Stewart, NF (2004) *Important stonewort areas. An assessment of the best areas for stoneworts in the United Kingdom*. Plantlife International, Salisbury
- Webb, M & Pullin, A (1997) The orange argus – a history of the large copper butterfly in Britain. *British Wildlife*, 9(1), 29-37
- Wiggington, M (1999) *British Red Data Books. 1. Vascular plants*. 3rd edn. Joint Nature Conservation Committee, Peterborough
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