

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: 04 March 1997

3. Country:

UK (Northern Ireland)

4. Name of the Ramsar site:

Larne Lough

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):

54 48 54 N 05 44 38 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: Larne

Located on the Co. Antrim coast in the east of Northern Ireland. The town of Larne is located at the northern mouth of the Lough.

Administrative region: Larne

10. Elevation (average and/or max. & min.) (metres): **11. Area** (hectares): 395.94

Min.	0
Max.	10
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.

Larne Lough is a sea lough enclosed to the east by the peninsula of Island Magee. Much of the estuary is shallow, having become extensively infilled with sediments of fine muddy sand, and at low water the largest areas of intertidal flats are exposed in the south of the estuary. The northern parts of the estuary are wider and relatively deep, especially at the mouth where dredging is regularly carried out to maintain the shipping channel to the port of Larne. Previously, a complex spit system existed at the mouth of the estuary, formed where sediments from further along the shore were washed into the relatively calm waters of Larne Lough. Very little evidence of these natural spits remain, having been lost under port and industrial developments. In the upper reaches of the estuary at Ballycarry there is an area of saltmarsh. As the effects of salinity and differing tidal inundations are not greatly felt at these upper parts of Larne Lough, the saltmarsh zonation patterns are not distinct and the main vegetational interest lies in the transition to non-saltmarsh plant communities. The vegetation is dominated by mid-upper saltmarsh communities and a *Phragmites* reedbed, with some saltmarsh pans.

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).

2, 6

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 2

By supporting an important assemblage of vulnerable and endangered Irish Red Data Book bird species. The site regularly supports nationally important numbers of breeding populations of the following species: roseate tern *Sterna dougallii* and common tern *Sterna hirundo*.

Ramsar criterion 6 – species/populations occurring at levels of international importance.

Qualifying Species/populations (as identified at designation):

Species with peak counts in winter:

Light-bellied brent goose, *Branta bernicla hrota*, 222 individuals, representing an average of 1.1% of the population (5 year peak mean 1998/9-2002/3)
East Canada/Ireland

Contemporary data and information on waterbird trends at this site and their regional (sub-national) and national contexts can be found in the Wetland Bird Survey report, which is updated annually. See www.bto.org/survey/webs/webs-alerts-index.htm.

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	mud, clay, sedimentary, gravel, boulder
Geomorphology and landscape	coastal, intertidal sediments (including sandflat/mudflat), enclosed coast (including embayment), estuary, lagoon, intertidal rock
Nutrient status	no information
pH	no information
Salinity	saline / euhaline
Soil	no information
Water permanence	usually permanent

Summary of main climatic features	Annual averages (Aldergrove, 1971–2000) (www.metoffice.com/climate/uk/averages/19712000/sites/aldergrove.html) Max. daily temperature: 12.5° C Min. daily temperature: 5.8° C Days of air frost: 39.1 Rainfall: 862.4 mm Hrs. of sunshine: 1313.7
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General description of the Physical Features:

Larne Lough is a sea lough enclosed to the east by the peninsula of Island Magee. Much of the estuary is shallow, having become extensively infilled with sediments of fine muddy sand, and at low water the largest areas of intertidal flats are exposed in the south of the estuary. The northern parts of the estuary are wider and relatively deep, especially at the mouth where dredging is regularly carried out. In the upper reaches of the estuary at Ballycarry, there is an area of saltmarsh.

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).

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18. Hydrological values:

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

No special values known

19. Wetland types:

Marine/coastal wetland

Code	Name	% Area
G	Tidal flats	78.3
D	Rocky shores	15.2
H	Salt marshes	4.5
J	Coastal brackish / saline lagoons	2

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.

There are diverse habitats around the lough ranging from an artificial brackish lagoon in the northwest, to mudflats, rocky shores and saltmarsh throughout.

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.*

None reported

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 currently occurring at levels of national importance:****Species regularly supported during the breeding season:**

Black-headed gull , <i>Larus ridibundus</i> , N & C Europe	1478 apparently occupied nests, representing an average of 2.7% of the all-Ireland population (Seabird 2000 Census)
Sandwich tern , <i>Sterna (Thalasseus) sandvicensis sandvicensis</i> , W Europe	348 apparently occupied nests, representing an average of 7.9% of the all-Ireland population (Seabird 2000 Census)
Roseate tern , <i>Sterna dougallii dougallii</i> , W Europe	6 pairs, representing an average of 1.5% of the all-Ireland population (5 year mean, 1992-1996)
Common tern , <i>Sterna hirundo hirundo</i> , N & E Europe	521 apparently occupied nests, representing an average of 16.8% of the all-Ireland population (Seabird 2000 Census)

Species with peak counts in spring/autumn:

Great crested grebe , <i>Podiceps cristatus cristatus</i> , NW Europe	131 individuals, representing an average of 3.7% of the all-Ireland population (5 year peak mean 1998/9-2002/3)
Common eider , <i>Somateria mollissima mollissima</i> , NW Europe	122 individuals, representing an average of 6.1% of the all-Ireland population (5 year peak mean 1998/9-2002/3)
Red-breasted merganser , <i>Mergus serrator</i> , NW & C Europe	174 individuals, representing an average of 8.7% of the all-Ireland population (5 year peak mean 1998/9-2002/3)

Species with peak counts in winter:

Great cormorant , <i>Phalacrocorax carbo carbo</i> , NW Europe	97 individuals, representing an average of 1.9% of the all-Ireland population (5 year peak mean 1998/9-2002/3)
Common shelduck , <i>Tadorna tadorna</i> , NW Europe	650 individuals, representing an average of 9.2% of the all-Ireland population (5 year peak mean 1998/9-2002/3)
Common goldeneye , <i>Bucephala clangula clangula</i> , NW & C Europe	175 individuals, representing an average of 1.5% of the all-Ireland population (5 year peak mean 1998/9-2002/3)
Common redshank , <i>Tringa totanus totanus</i> ,	397 individuals, representing an average of 1.6% of the all-Ireland population (5 year peak mean 1998/9-2002/3)
Common greenshank , <i>Tringa nebularia</i> , Europe/W Africa	12 individuals, representing an average of 1.3% of the all-Ireland population (5 year peak mean 1998/9-2002/3)

Mew gull , *Larus canus canus*, Europe to N Africa

1202 individuals, representing an average of 1.7% of the all-Ireland population (5 year peak mean 1998/9-2002/3)

Species Information

None reported

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.

- Archaeological/historical site
- Fisheries production
- Sport hunting
- Transportation/navigation

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
Non-governmental organisation (NGO)	+	
Local authority, municipality etc.	+	
National/Crown Estate	+	
Private	+	+
Public/communal	+	+

25. Current land (including water) use:

Activity	On-site	Off-site
Nature conservation	+	
Tourism		+
Recreation	+	
Current scientific research	+	
Marine/saltwater aquaculture	+	
Gathering of shellfish	+	
Bait collection	+	

Grazing (unspecified)	+	
Hunting: recreational/sport	+	
Industrial water supply		+
Industry		+
Sewage treatment/disposal		+
Harbour/port		+
Oil/gas production		+
Transport route		+

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?
No factors reported	NA				

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)	+	
Special Protection Area (SPA)	+	
Land owned by a non-governmental organisation for nature conservation	+	
Site management statement/plan implemented	+	

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.

None reported

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.

An adjoining 'open farm' has developed a nature trail in close proximity to the lough shore.

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.

Most recreation occurs along the eastern shore and includes occasional power-boating, water-skiing, canoeing which is concentrated around Larne and outside the estuary mouth, and sailing. There are no marinas within the estuary but there are moorings at Larne and at Ballydown. Bathing and beach recreation occurs on the beaches just outside the estuary mouth.

32. Jurisdiction:

Include territorial, e.g. state/region, and functional/sectoral, e.g. Dept. of Agriculture/Dept. of Environment, etc.

Department of the Environment (Northern Ireland), Environment and Heritage Service,
Commonwealth House, Castle Street, Belfast, Northern Ireland, BT1 1GU

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.

Department of the Environment (Northern Ireland), Environment and Heritage Service,
Commonwealth House, Castle Street, Belfast, Northern Ireland, BT1 1GU

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

ASSI Survey report – Habitat Survey Team, Environment and Heritage Service

Barne, JH, Robson, CF, Kaznowska, SS, Doody, JP, Davidson, NC & Buck, AL (eds.) (1997) *Coasts and seas of the United Kingdom. Region 17. Northern Ireland*. Joint Nature Conservation Committee, Peterborough. (Coastal Directories Series.)

Buck, AL & Donaghy, A (eds.) (1996) *An inventory of UK estuaries. Volume 7. Northern Ireland*. Joint Nature Conservation Committee, Peterborough

Crowe, O (2005) *Ireland's wetlands and their waterbirds: status and distribution*. BirdWatch Ireland, Newcastle, Co. Wicklow

Department of the Environment (Northern Ireland) (1995) *Larne Lough Conservation Plan – Draft*. Department of the Environment (Northern Ireland), Belfast

Kirk, McClure & Morton (1994) *Magheramorne Landfill Project Environmental Statement*.

KMM Marengo (****) *Marine flora and fauna of Larne Lough*. (Contractor: KMM Marengo, Belfast)

Musgrove, AJ, Pollitt, MS, Hall, C, Hearn, RD, Holloway, SJ, Marshall, PE, Robinson, JA & Cranswick, PA (2001) *The Wetland Bird Survey 1999–2000: wildfowl and wader counts*. British Trust for Ornithology, Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust, Royal Society for the Protection of Birds & Joint Nature Conservation Committee, Slimbridge.
www.wwt.org.uk/publications/default.asp?PubID=14

Stroud, DA, Chambers, D, Cook, S, Buxton, N, Fraser, B, Clement, P, Lewis, P, McLean, I, Baker, H & Whitehead, S (eds.) (2001) *The UK SPA network: its scope and content*. Joint Nature Conservation Committee, Peterborough (3 vols.)
www.jncc.gov.uk/UKSPA/default.htm

Way, LS, Grice, P, MacKay, A, Galbraith, CA, Stroud, DA & Pienkowski, MW (1993) *Ireland's Internationally Important Bird Sites: a review of sites for the EC Special Protection Area network*. Joint Nature Conservation Committee, Peterborough, for Department of the Environment (Northern Ireland), Belfast, and Irish Wildlife Service, Dublin

Weighell, AJ, Donnelly, AP & Calder, K (eds.) (2000) *Directory of the Celtic coasts and seas*. Joint Nature Conservation Committee, Peterborough

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