

Information Sheet on Ramsar Wetlands (RIS) – 2009-2014 version

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http://www.ramsar.org/pdf/ris/key_ris_e.pdf

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 and guidelines for the future development of the List of Wetlands of International Importance* (Ramsar Wise Use Handbook 17, 4th edition).
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:

Joint Nature Conservation Committee

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Designation date

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Site Reference Number

2. Date this sheet was completed/updated:

Designated: 5 July 2013

3. Country:

UK (England)

4. Name of the Ramsar site:

The precise name of the designated site in one of the three official languages (English, French or Spanish) of the Convention. Alternative names, including in local language(s), should be given in parentheses after the precise name.

Mersey Narrows and North Wirral Foreshore

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

This RIS is for (tick one box only):

a) Designation of a new Ramsar site ; or

b) 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

The Ramsar site boundary and site area are unchanged:

or

If the site boundary has changed:

- i) the boundary has been delineated more accurately ; or
- ii) the boundary has been extended ; or
- iii) the boundary has been restricted**

and/or

If the site area has changed:

- i) the area has been measured more accurately ; or
- ii) the area has been extended ; or
- iii) the area has been reduced**

** **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:

Refer to Annex III of the *Explanatory Note 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) a hard copy (required for inclusion of site in the Ramsar List): ;
- ii) an electronic format (e.g. a JPEG or ArcView image) ;
- iii) a GIS file providing geo-referenced site boundary vectors and attribute tables .

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 boundary follows the same boundary as Mersey Narrows and North Wirral Foreshore SPA and encompasses the North Wirral Foreshore Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and Mersey Narrows SSSI. For further details please see the maps provided at designation.

8. Geographical coordinates (latitude/longitude, in degrees and minutes):

Provide the coordinates of the approximate centre of the site and/or the limits of the site. If the site is composed of more than one separate area, provide coordinates for each of these areas.

Longitude: 53°24'55.7" N

Latitude: 03°10'53.7" W

9. General location:

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

Mersey Narrows and North Wirral Foreshore is located on the Irish Sea Coast of northwest England at the mouths of the Mersey and Dee estuaries. The site surrounds the top of the Wirral Peninsula, with North Wirral Foreshore running along the northern edge and Mersey Narrows to the east, spanning both sides of the Mersey.

The Local Planning Authorities are Wirral Metropolitan Borough Council and Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council within the county of Merseyside. Nearest large towns are Wallasey on the north eastern tip of the peninsula, Birkenhead at the bottom of the Mersey Narrows and Liverpool on the north bank of the Mersey.

10. Elevation: (in metres: average and/or maximum & minimum)

Min: -17m

Max: 15m

Mean: 0

11. Area: (in hectares):

2,078.41 ha

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 comprises intertidal habitats at Egremont foreshore on the south bank of the Mersey, man-made saline and freshwater lagoons at Seaforth on the north bank and the extensive intertidal flats at North Wirral Foreshore. Egremont is most important as a feeding habitat for waders at low tide whilst Seaforth is primarily a high tide roost site. The two areas are separated by approximately 2km and have a constant exchange of bird populations. North Wirral Foreshore supports large numbers of feeding waders at low tide and also includes important high tide roost sites, it is an area of intertidal sands and mudflats with embryonic saltmarsh.

13. Ramsar Criteria:

Tick the box under 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). All Criteria which apply should be ticked.

1 • 2 • 3 • 4 • 5 • 6 • 7 • 8 • 9

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).

The site qualifies under **Criterion 4** because it regularly supports plant and/or animal species at a critical stage in their life cycles, or provides refuge during adverse conditions:

During 2004/05 - 2008/09 the Mersey Narrows and North Wirral Foreshore Ramsar site supported important numbers of non-breeding little gulls and common terns.

The site qualifies under **Criterion 5** because it regularly supports 20,000 or more waterbirds:

During the winters 2004/05 - 2008/09, the Mersey Narrows and North Wirral Foreshore Ramsar site supported an average peak of 32,402 individual waterbirds.

The site qualifies under **Criterion 6** because it regularly supports 1% of the individuals in the populations of the following species or subspecies of waterbird in any season:

During the winters 2004/05 - 2008/09, the Mersey Narrows and North Wirral Foreshore Ramsar site supported 2.4% of the *islandica* subspecies, W Europe/Waddensea/Britain/Ireland (non-breeding) population of knot and 2.8% of the *lapponica* subspecies W Europe/NW Africa (non-breeding) population of bar-tailed godwits.

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):

European Environmental Agency (2012)

<http://www.eea.europa.eu/data-and-maps/figures/biogeographical-regions-in-europe-1>

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 | clay, mud, sand, sandstone/mudstone |
| Geomorphology and landscape | Cliffs, coastal, estuary, manmade lagoon, intertidal sediments (including sandflat/mudflat), lowland, subtidal sediments (including sandbank/mudbank), saltmarsh |
| Nutrient status | eutrophic, mesotrophic |
| pH | no information |
| Salinity | brackish / mixosaline, saline / euhaline |
| Soil | no information |
| Water permanence | usually permanent |

| | |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| Summary of main climatic features | Annual averages (Blackpool, 1971–2000) (www.metoffice.com/climate/uk/averages/19712000/sites/blackpool.html) Max. daily temperature: 12.9° C Min. daily temperature: 6.4° C Days of air frost: 40.3 Rainfall: 871.3 mm Hrs. of sunshine: 1540.3 |
|-----------------------------------|--|

17. Physical features of the catchment area:

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

The Mersey catchment covers an area of approximately 535 km² and includes the River Mersey and the River Bollin and their tributaries. Several canals and a large number of water bodies, including the Cheshire Meres, large reservoirs and ponds lie within the catchment. The area is heavily urbanised around Greater Manchester, contrasting with the more rural areas of Cheshire to the south and east. Water is abstracted throughout the catchments from both surface waters and groundwater for a number of uses including agricultural, industrial and public water supply. A number of public water supply reservoirs are present within the upper reaches of the catchments including Lamaload, Trentabank and Ridgegate reservoirs. The Mersey Estuary is located on the Irish Sea coast of north-west England. It is a large, sheltered estuary which comprises large areas of saltmarsh and extensive intertidal sand- and mud-flats, with limited areas of brackish marsh, rocky shoreline and boulder clay cliffs, within a rural and industrial environment.

18. Hydrological values:

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

Shoreline stabilisation and dissipation of erosive forces
Sediment trapping
Water supply

19. Wetland Types

a) presence:

Circle or underline the applicable codes for the wetland types of the Ramsar "Classification System for Wetland Type" present in the Ramsar site. Descriptions of each wetland type code are provided in Annex I of the *Explanatory Notes & Guidelines*.

Marine/coastal: A • B • C • D • E • F • G • H • I • J • K • Zk(a)

Inland: L • M • N • O • P • Q • R • Sp • Ss • Tp • Ts • U • Va •
Vt • W • Xf • Xp • Y • Zg • Zk(b)

Human-made: 1 • 2 • 3 • 4 • 5 • 6 • 7 • 8 • 9 • Zk(c)

b) dominance:

List the wetland types identified in a) above in order of their dominance (by area) in the Ramsar site, starting with the wetland type with the largest area.

| Code | Name | % Area |
|---------------------------|-------------------------------------|--------|
| G marine/coastal wetlands | Inter-tidal mud, sand or salt flats | 94.0% |
| J marine/coastal wetlands | Coastal brackish/saline lagoons | 0.5% |
| K marine/coastal wetlands | Coastal freshwater lagoons | 0.5% |
| H marine/coastal wetlands | Intertidal marshes | 5.0% |

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 comprises intertidal habitats at Egremont foreshore, man-made lagoons at Seaforth and the extensive intertidal flats at North Wirral Foreshore. Egremont is most important as a feeding habitat for waders at low tide whilst Seaforth is primarily a high tide roost site. North Wirral Foreshore supports internationally important numbers of feeding waders at low tide and also includes important high tide roost sites.

21. Noteworthy flora:

Provide additional information on particular species and why they are noteworthy (expanding as necessary on information provided in 14. 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.*

22. Noteworthy fauna:

Provide additional information on particular species and why they are noteworthy (expanding as necessary on information provided in 14. 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 occurring at levels of European importance (as identified at designation):**Over winter the area regularly supports:**

It is used regularly by 1% or more of the Great Britain populations of the following species listed in Annex I in any season:

| Annex I Species | Count (period) | % of population |
|--|--|-----------------|
| Bar-tailed Godwit <i>Limosa lapponica</i> | 3,344 individuals – non-breeding (2008/09) | 6.6% GB |

In addition it is one of the most important locations in the UK for:

| Annex I Species | Count (period) | % of population |
|------------------------------------|---|---------------------------------|
| Little Gull <i>Hydrocoloeus</i> | 213 individuals – non-breeding (2004/05 – | No national population estimate |

| | | |
|--------------------------------------|---|---------------------------------|
| <i>minutus</i> | 2008/09) | |
| Common Tern <i>Sterna hirundo</i> | 1,475 individuals – non-breeding (2004 – 2008) | No national population estimate |

It is used regularly by 1% or more of the biogeographical populations of the following regularly occurring migratory species (other than those listed in Annex I) in any season:

| Species | Count (period) | % of population |
|---|---|--|
| Knot <i>Calidris canutus islandica</i> | 10,655 individuals - non-breeding (2004/05 - 2008/09) | 2.4% W Europe/Waddensea/Britain/Ireland |

Waterbird species present in nationally important numbers or where numbers exceed 2,000 individuals during the non-breeding season

| Species name | Count (period) | % GB population |
|---|---------------------------------------|-------------------|
| Cormorant <i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i> | 972 individuals (2004/05 - 2008/09) | 4.2% |
| Oystercatcher <i>Haematopus ostralegus</i> | 2,718 individuals (2004/05 - 2008/09) | >2000 individuals |
| Grey Plover <i>Pluvialis squatarola</i> | 593 individuals (2004/05 - 2008/09) | 1.1% |
| Sanderling <i>Calidris alba</i> | 510 individuals (2004/05 - 2008/09) | 2.4% |
| Dunlin <i>Calidris alpina alpina</i> | 7,645 individuals (2004/05 - 2008/09) | 1.4% |
| Redshank <i>Tringa totanus</i> | 1,209 individuals (2004/05 - 2008/09) | 1.0% |

23. Social and cultural values:

a) 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
- Fisheries production
- Conservation education
- Environmental education/ interpretation
- Non-consumptive recreation
- Scientific research
- Sport fishing

- Tourism
- Transportation/navigation
- Port

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, tick the box and 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:

a) within the Ramsar site:

b) in the surrounding area:

| Ownership category | a) On-site | b) Off-site |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------|--------------------|
| Non-governmental organisation (NGO) | + | + |
| Local authority, municipality etc. | + | + |
| Private | + | + |
| Other | + | + |

25. Current land (including water) use:

a) within the Ramsar site:

b) in the surroundings/catchment:

| Activity | a) on site | b) off site |
|-----------------------------|-------------------|--------------------|
| Nature conservation | + | + |
| Tourism | + | + |
| Recreation | + | + |
| Current scientific research | + | + |
| Fishing: recreational/sport | + | + |
| Grazing | | |
| Flood control | | |

| | | |
|---------------------------|---|---|
| Transport route | | + |
| Urban development | | + |
| Domestic water supply | | |
| Agriculture | | + |
| Non-urbanised settlements | | + |
| Cockling | + | + |

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

a) within the Ramsar site:

b) in the surrounding area:

| Adverse Factor category | Description of problem | a) on site | b) off site | Major impact |
|----------------------------------|---|-------------------|--------------------|--|
| Unspecific development urban use | Egremont Foreshore is vulnerable to both social and economic pressures to return the foreshore back to sandy beaches. Egremont also is vulnerable to physical pressures through sedimentation of the foreshore by the coastal processes reducing the available low tide feeding habitat | + | + | Sand sedimentation at Egremont foreshore is increasing reducing the low tide feeding area (hard rocky substrates, boulder clay). Consequently the build of beaches will increase recreation pressure both summer and winter overtime. The artificial replenishment of sand is likely to enhance this pressure. |
| Recreation/tourism disturbance | Threats from increasing recreational activities particularly on North Wirral Foreshore. The intensity and location of recreational activities is affecting the way birds use the foreshore and move between sites along the North West Coast. Natural England work with Wirral Borough Council to manage group recreational activities through voluntary agreements, licensing and permitting arrangements. | + | + | Recreation and levels of activity on North Wirral Foreshore are thought to be contributing to declines bird numbers and their usage of the site. |
| Vegetation succession | Issues of sedimentation and vegetation succession at Hoylake Beach will be addressed through | + | | Sedimentation and associated vegetation succession could |

| | | | | |
|--|---|--|--|---|
| | management plans and community engagement, supported by powers within Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 as amended and the Conservation of Habitats & Species Regulations 2010. | | | result in changes to species of birds using the site. |
|--|---|--|--|---|

27. Conservation measures taken:

a) List national and/or international category and legal status of protected areas, including boundary relationships with the Ramsar site:

In particular, if the site is partly or wholly a World Heritage Site and/or a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve, please give the names of the site under these designations.

- The land is also protected under domestic legislation as SSSI and under EU legislation as SPA and part of the Dee Estuary SAC, which in turn comprises a component of the Dee Estuary European Marine Site.

b) If appropriate, list the IUCN (1994) protected areas category/ies which apply to the site (tick the box or boxes as appropriate):

Ia ; Ib ; II ; III ; IV ; V ; VI

c) Does an officially approved management plan exist; and is it being implemented?:

- There is a Site Management Agreement for Hoylake Beach in place until 2015. The need for the Management Agreement will be reviewed before it expires

d) Describe any other current management practices:

28. Conservation measures proposed but not yet implemented:

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

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.

29. Current scientific research and facilities:

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

Fauna

- Numbers of migratory and wintering wildfowl and waders are monitored annually as part of the national Wetland Birds Survey (WeBS) organised by the British Trust for Ornithology, Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust, the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds and the Joint Nature Conservation Committee.

Environment

- The Environment Agency has ongoing research/monitoring of water quality, management required under the Water Framework Directive.
- Research/monitoring is undertaken by departments within the University of Liverpool.

- The Liverpool Bay Shoreline Management Plan (Liverpool Bay Coastal Group, 1999a; 1999b; 1999c) expands knowledge of natural resources and physical processes within and affecting the estuary. In future, this will be enhanced by development of the Mersey Estuary Shoreline Management Plan which has not yet been prepared.
 - Shoreline Management Plan 2 – North west England and North Wales Coastal Group. On going
 - Ongoing SSSI unit monitoring
 - Local Wildlife Trust monitoring at Seaforth

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

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

- The Lancashire Wildlife Trust has a Visitor Centre at Seaforth Nature Reserve.
- The RNLI host open days at Hoylake Life Boat Station.
- Leosowe Lighthouse is managed as an education resource by Friends of Leosowe Lighthouse.
- Wirral Council perform an important public awareness service with a full programme of events, interpretation and education at the site.

31. Current recreation and tourism:

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

Recreational Activities include: bird watching, walking, dog walking, fishing, sailing, canoeing, cycling, sand yachting, kite surfing, all carried out at intensive levels.

32. Jurisdiction:

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

International Protected Areas Team

Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, International Protected Areas Team,
Zone 1/16, Temple Quay House, 2 The Square, Temple Quay, Bristol, BS1 6PN

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, Natural England, Suite D, Unex House, Bourges
Boulevard, Peterborough, PE1 1NG

34. Bibliographical references:

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

Baker, H., Stroud, D.A., Aebischer, N.J., Cranswick, P.A., Gregory, R.D., McSorley, C.A., Noble, D.G. & Rehfisch, M.M. 2006. *Population estimates of birds in Great Britain and the United Kingdom.* British Birds 99: 25-44

Calbrade, N., Holt, C., Austin, G., Mellan, H., Hearn, R., Stroud, D., Wotton, S. & Musgrove, A. 2010. *Waterbirds in the UK 2008/09: The Wetland Bird Survey.* BTO/WWT/RSPB/JNCC, Slimbridge.

Cheshire and Wirral Bird Report. 2004. Cheshire & Wirral Ornithological Society.

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Delany, S. & Scott, D. 2006. *Waterfowl Population Estimates - Fourth edition.* Wetlands International Publication. Wageningen, The Netherlands.
Stroud, D.A., Chambers, D., Cook, S., Buxton, N., Fraser, B., Clement, P., Lewis, P., McLean, I., Baker, H. & Whitehead, S. 2001. *The UK SPA network: its scope and content.* Joint Nature Conservation Committee, Peterborough.
Hanik, J. 2010. *Hoylake Beach Site Management Agreement* Wirral Borough Council.

Please return to: **Ramsar Convention Secretariat, Rue Mauverney 28, CH-1196 Gland, Switzerland**
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