Information Sheet on Ramsar Wetlands (RIS)


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.

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1. Name and address of the compiler of this form:
   
   **Joint Nature Conservation Committee**
   
   Monkstone House
   City Road
   Peterborough
   Cambridgeshire PE1 1JY
   UK
   Telephone/Fax: +44 (0)1733 – 562 626 / +44 (0)1733 – 555 948
   Email: RIS@JNCC.gov.uk

2. Date this sheet was completed/updated:
   
   Designated: 05 August 1998

3. Country:
   
   UK (Northern Ireland)

4. Name of the Ramsar site:
   
   Belfast 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 38 00 N 05 54 00 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: Belfast

Belfast Lough is a large intertidal sea lough situated at the mouth of the River Lagan on the east coast of Northern Ireland.

Administrative region: Antrim; Down

10. Elevation (average and/or max. & min.) (metres):
    Min. 0
    Max. 10
    Mean 0

11. Area (hectares): 432.14

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 inner part of the lough comprises areas of intertidal foreshore, comprising of mudflats and lagoons, and land, both land-claimed and being land-claimed, which form important feeding/roosting sites for significant numbers of wintering waders and wildfowl. The outer lough is restricted to mainly rocky shores with some small sandy bays and beach-head saltmarsh.

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).

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

Qualifying Species/populations (as identified at designation):
Species with peak counts in spring/autumn:
Common redshank, *Tringa totanus totanus*, 1897 individuals, representing an average of 1.4% of the population (5 year peak mean 1998/9-2002/3)

Species/populations identified subsequent to designation for possible future consideration under criterion 6.
Species with peak counts in spring/autumn:
Black-tailed godwit, *Limosa limosa islandica*, Iceland/W Europe 521 individuals, representing an average of 1.4% of the population (5 year peak mean 1998/9-2002/3)

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

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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Soil &amp; geology</th>
<th>igneous, sedimentary, sandstone, slate/shale</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Geomorphology and landscape</td>
<td>intertidal sediments (including sandflat/mudflat), estuary, lagoon, intertidal rock</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nutrient status</td>
<td>eutrophic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pH</td>
<td>no information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salinity</td>
<td>brackish / mixosaline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soil</td>
<td>no information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water permanence</td>
<td>usually permanent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(<a href="http://www.metoffice.com/climate/uk/averages/19712000/sites/aldergrove.html">www.metoffice.com/climate/uk/averages/19712000/sites/aldergrove.html</a>)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Max. daily temperature: 12.5° C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Min. daily temperature: 5.8° C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Days of air frost: 39.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rainfall: 862.4 mm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hrs. of sunshine: 1313.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**General description of the Physical Features:**
Belfast Lough is a large, open sea lough located on the north-eastern coast of Northern Ireland. The inner part of the lough includes areas of intertidal foreshore, mainly mudflats and
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).

Belfast Lough is a large, open sea lough located on the north-eastern coast of Northern Ireland. The inner part of the lough includes areas of intertidal foreshore, mainly mudflats and lagoons. In the outer lough the site includes mainly rocky shores with some small sandy bays and beach-head saltmarsh.

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>% Area</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>G</td>
<td>Tidal flats</td>
<td>60.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>Rocky shores</td>
<td>34.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J</td>
<td>Coastal brackish / saline lagoons</td>
<td>5.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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 Ramsar site includes areas of intertidal foreshore, comprising of mudflats and lagoons, and land, both land-claimed and being land-claimed, which form important feeding/roosting sites for significant numbers of wintering waders and wildfowl.

Semi-natural vegetation is confined to a narrow shoreline strip which is fragmented, particularly along the inner reaches of the lough. The sheltered bays and inlets of the south-eastern shore contain pockets of beach-head saltmarsh. Shores with harder rocks support vegetation typical of maritime cliff ledges giving way to maritime grassland. Notable plant species found include spring squill *Scilla verna* and Ray's knotgrass *Polygonum oxyspermum*.

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 with peak counts in spring/autumn:
Great cormorant, *Phalacrocorax carbo carbo*, NW Europe

- 279 individuals, representing an average of 5.5% of the all-Ireland population (5 year peak mean 1998/9-2002/3)

Common eider, *Somateria mollissima mollissima*, NW Europe

- 867 individuals, representing an average of 43.3% of the all-Ireland population (5 year peak mean 1998/9-2002/3)

Eurasian oystercatcher, *Haematopus ostralegus ostralegus*, Europe & NW Africa -wintering

- 4648 individuals, representing an average of 9.2% of the all-Ireland population (5 year peak mean 1998/9-2002/3)

Ruff, *Philomachus pugnax*, Europe/W Africa

- 3 individuals, representing an average of 15% of the all-Ireland population (5 year peak mean 1998/9-2002/3)

**Species with peak counts in winter:**

- **Red-throated diver**, *Gavia stellata*, NW Europe
  - 27 individuals, representing an average of 2.7% of the all-Ireland population (5 year peak mean 1998/9-2002/3)

- **Great crested grebe**, *Podiceps cristatus cristatus*, NW Europe
  - 1550 individuals, representing an average of 44.2% of the all-Ireland population (5 year peak mean 1998/9-2002/3)

- **Common shelduck**, *Tadorna tadorna*, NW Europe
  - 251 individuals, representing an average of 3.5% of the all-Ireland population (5 year peak mean 1998/9-2002/3)

- **Greater scaup**, *Aythya marila marila*, W Europe
  - 340 individuals, representing an average of 11.3% of the all-Ireland population (5 year peak mean 1998/9-2002/3)

- **Common goldeneye**, *Bucephala clangula clangula*, NW & C Europe
  - 184 individuals, representing an average of 1.6% of the all-Ireland population (5 year peak mean 1998/9-2002/3)

- **Red-breasted merganser**, *Mergus serrator*, NW & C Europe
  - 155 individuals, representing an average of 7.7% of the all-Ireland population (5 year peak mean 1998/9-2002/3)

- **Ringed plover**, *Charadrius hiaticula*, Europe/Northwest Africa
  - 133 individuals, representing an average of 1% of the all-Ireland population (5 year peak mean 1998/9-2002/3)

- **Red knot**, *Calidris canutus islandica*, W & Southern Africa
  - (wintering)
  - 386 individuals, representing an average of 1% of the all-Ireland population (5 year peak mean 1998/9-2002/3)

- **Ruddy turnstone**, *Arenaria interpres interpres*, NE Canada, Greenland/W Europe & NW Africa
  - 385 individuals, representing an average of 1.7% of the all-Ireland population (5 year peak mean 1998/9-2002/3)

- **Mew gull**, *Larus canus canus*, Europe to N Africa
  - 1167 individuals, representing an average of 1.7% of the all-Ireland population (5 year peak mean 1998/9-2002/3)

**Species Information**

None reported

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**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
- Environmental education/ interpretation
- Non-consumptive recreation
Tourism
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:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ownership category</th>
<th>On-site</th>
<th>Off-site</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Non-governmental organisation (NGO)</td>
<td>+</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local authority, municipality etc.</td>
<td>+</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National/Crown Estate</td>
<td>+</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>+</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 25. Current land (including water) use:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>On-site</th>
<th>Off-site</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nature conservation</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tourism</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recreation</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current scientific research</td>
<td>+</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fishing: commercial</td>
<td>+</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gathering of shellfish</td>
<td>+</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bait collection</td>
<td>+</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industrial water supply</td>
<td>+</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industry</td>
<td>+</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sewage treatment/disposal</td>
<td>+</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Harbour/port</td>
<td>+</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Transport route</td>
<td>+</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban development</td>
<td>+</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-urbanised settlements</td>
<td>+</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Adverse Factor Category</th>
<th>Reporting Category</th>
<th>Description of the problem (Newly reported Factors only)</th>
<th>On-Site</th>
<th>Off-Site</th>
<th>Major Impact?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No factors reported</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conservation measure</th>
<th>On-site</th>
<th>Off-site</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Site/ Area of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI/ASSI)</td>
<td>+</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special Protection Area (SPA)</td>
<td>+</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management agreement</td>
<td>+</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Site management statement/plan implemented</td>
<td>+</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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 practices 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.

Fauna.
Numbers of migratory birds and wildfowl and waders are monitored annually as part of the national Irish Wetland Birds Survey (I-WEBS) organised by the IWC Birdwatch Ireland, the National Parks and Wildlife Service (Ireland) and the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust.
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.
The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds presence on the site is centred around a brackish lagoon with well developed educational facilities including observation hides and a large observation room and a warden for the site.

31. **Current recreation and tourism:**
State if the wetland is used for recreation/tourism; indicate type(s) and their frequency/intensity.
None reported

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**


www.jncc.gov.uk/UKSPA/default.htm


Please return to: **Ramsar Secretariat, Rue Mauverney 28, CH-1196 Gland, Switzerland**
Telephone: +41 22 999 0170 • Fax: +41 22 999 0169 • email: ramsar@ramsar.org