

# Information Sheet on Ramsar Wetlands (RIS)

Categories approved by Recommendation 4.7, as amended by Resolution VIII.13 of the Conference of the Contracting Parties.

Note 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. Once completed, the RIS (and accompanying map(s)) should be submitted to the Ramsar Secretariat. Compilers are strongly urged to provide an electronic (MS Word) copy of the RIS and, where possible, digital copies of maps.

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**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

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**2. Date this sheet was completed/updated:**

9 March 2006

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**3. Country:**

UK (Scotland)

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**4. Name of the Ramsar site:**

Loch Spynie

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**5. Map of site included:**Refer to Annex III of the *Explanatory Notes and Guidelines*, for detailed guidance on provision of suitable maps.**a) hard copy** (required for inclusion of site in the Ramsar List): *yes* ✓ -or- *no***b) digital (electronic) format** (optional): Yes

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**6. Geographical coordinates** (latitude/longitude):

57 41 00 N

03 16 42 W

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**7. 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: Elgin

3 km north of Elgin, north-east Scotland.

**Administrative region:** Moray

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**8. Elevation** (average and/or max. & min.) (metres): **9. Area** (hectares): 93.62

Min. 3

Max. 4

Mean 3

## 10. Overview:

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

Loch Spynie is one of the few large and naturally eutrophic waterbodies in northern Scotland. It supports a diverse aquatic flora with extensive reedbeds fringing and adjacent to the open water body and various stages of hydrosere succession including mesotrophic fen, willow scrub and swamp alder woodland. The reedbeds and fen support a number of regionally scarce species of southern distribution. The abundance of yellow iris *Iris pseudacorus* in the fen and in the adjacent fen-meadow is an unusual feature in the Moray Firth and Grampian area. It is also one of the few Scottish localities for alder swamp woodland. The loch itself contains a nationally uncommon aquatic community and a nationally scarce pondweed species. Loch Spynie regularly supports internationally important numbers of roosting Icelandic greylag geese *Anser anser*.

## 11. 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, 6**

**Secretariat comment: The RIS provides information requiring the application of Criterion 4. This needs to be included in the next update.**

## 12. Justification for the application of each Criterion listed in 11. 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

Loch Spynie is one of very few large and naturally eutrophic waterbodies in northern Scotland. It contains extensive areas of water-fringing vegetation and all stages of succession, through swamp and fen to willow and alder woodland.

Ramsar criterion 2

Loch Spynie supports three nationally scarce wetland vascular plants and several wetland species which are rare in northern Scotland.

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

**Qualifying Species/populations (as identified at designation):**

**Species with peak counts in winter:**

Greylag goose, <i>Anser anser anser</i> , Iceland/UK, Ireland (w)	4700 individuals, representing an average of 4.7% of the biogeographic population (5 year peak mean for 1996/7-2000/01)
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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](http://www.bto.org/survey/webs/webs-alerts-index.htm).

**13. 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

**14. 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	neutral, sand, mud, alluvium, nutrient-rich, sandstone
Geomorphology and landscape	lowland, coastal, floodplain
Nutrient status	eutrophic, mesotrophic
pH	alkaline
Salinity	fresh
Soil	mainly organic
Water permanence	
Summary of main climatic features	Annual averages (Kinloss, 1971–2000) ( <a href="http://www.metoffice.com/climate/uk/averages/19712000/sites/kinloss.html">www.metoffice.com/climate/uk/averages/19712000/sites/kinloss.html</a> ) Max. daily temperature: 12.2° C Min. daily temperature: 5.1° C Days of air frost: 53.5 Rainfall: 624.4 mm Hrs. of sunshine: 1261.4

**General description of the Physical Features:**

Loch Spynie is one of the few large and naturally eutrophic waterbodies in northern Scotland. It supports a diverse aquatic flora with extensive reedbeds fringing the open water body and various stages of hydrosere succession including mesotrophic fen, willow *Salix* spp. scrub and alder *Alnus glutinosa* woodland.

**15. 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).

Loch Spynie developed during the 16th century following the closure of a tidal inlet by a shingle spit. This gave rise to a shallow, fertile lagoon, surrounded by marshes. Much of this area was subsequently drained by the 10 km-long Spynie Canal, built around 1808, which flows into the Moray Firth at Lossiemouth.

**16. Hydrological values:**

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

No special values known

**17. Wetland types**

Inland wetland

Code	Name	% Area
O	Freshwater lakes: permanent	26.8
Tp	Freshwater marshes / pools: permanent	32.1
U	Peatlands (including peat bogs swamps, fens)	6.6
9	Canals and drainage channels	6.6
Other	Other	5.4
Xf	Freshwater, tree-dominated wetlands	22.5

**18. General ecological features:**

Provide further description, as appropriate, of the main habitats, vegetation types, plant and animal communities present in the Ramsar site.

Loch Spynie contains extensive reedbeds, and smaller areas of mesotrophic fen, and willow and alder woodland. The reedbeds vary from pure stands of *Phragmites* to more mixed stands with other swamp and fen species, and include NVC types S4a, S4b, S4c, S26a and S26b, and regionally scarce species of southern distribution such as *Epilobium hirsutum* and *Berula erecta*. The mixed fen is dominated by combinations of tall herb and sedge species (NVC type S27), and supports several regionally rare species such as *Carex diandra* and *Ranunculus lingua*. The abundance of *Iris pseudacorus* in the fen, and in the adjacent fen-meadow (cf M28), is an unusual feature in the Moray Firth Basin and in Grampian. As well as extensive willow scrub (NVC types W1 and W3) there is also alder swamp woodland (cf. W5). The loch itself is eutrophic and contains a particularly diverse aquatic water flora, including the local and nationally uncommon NVC type A11 and a nationally scarce pondweed species, *Potamogeton filiformis*.

**19. 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.**

*Potamogeton filiformis, Corallorhiza trifida, Juncus balticus*

**20. 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**

None reported

**21. Social and 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  
Environmental education/ interpretation  
Scientific research  
Sport fishing  
Sport hunting

**22. Land tenure/ownership:**

Ownership category	On-site	Off-site
Private	+	+

**23. Current land (including water) use:**

Activity	On-site	Off-site
Nature conservation	+	
Recreation	+	
Current scientific research	+	
Commercial forestry	+	+
Arable agriculture (unspecified)		+

Grazing (unspecified)		+
Hunting: recreational/sport	+	
Irrigation (incl. agricultural water supply)		+
Transport route		+

**24. Factors 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

**25. 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)	+	
Special Protection Area (SPA)	+	
Management agreement	+	
Site management statement/plan implemented	+	
Other	+	

**26. Conservation measures proposed but not yet implemented:**

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

No information available

**27. Current scientific research and facilities:**

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

**Contemporary.**

**Fauna.**

Occasional research on fish.

**Completed.**

**Flora.**

Fen vegetation survey completed (Smedley 1998).

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**28. Current conservation education:**

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

A limited amount of interpretation is provided in the bird hide.

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**29. 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.**

Bird watching occurs on the site, for which a bird hide has been provided.

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**30. Jurisdiction:**

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

Scottish Executive, Environment and Rural Affairs Department

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**31. 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.

Scottish Natural Heritage, 2 Anderson Place, Edinburgh, EH6 5NP

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**32. Bibliographical references:**

Scientific/technical references only. If biogeographic regionalisation scheme applied (see 13 above), list full reference citation for the scheme.

**Site-relevant references**

Barne, JH, Robson, CF, Kaznowska, SS, Doody, JP & Davidson, NC (eds.) (1996) *Coasts and Seas of the United Kingdom. Region 3. North-east Scotland: Cape Wrath to St Cyrus*. Joint Nature Conservation Committee, Peterborough (Coastal Directories Series)

Cranswick, PA, Waters, RJ, Musgrove, AJ & Pollitt, MS (1997) *The Wetland Bird Survey 1995–96: wildfowl and wader counts*. British Trust for Ornithology, Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust, Royal Society for the Protection of Birds & Joint Nature Conservation Committee, Slimbridge

Doody, JP, Johnston, C & Smith, B (1993) *Directory of the North Sea coastal margin*. Joint Nature Conservation Committee, Peterborough

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[www.wwt.org.uk/publications/default.asp?PubID=14](http://www.wwt.org.uk/publications/default.asp?PubID=14)

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.)

Ross, S (1992) *The Culbin Sands – fact and fiction*. University of Aberdeen, Centre for Scottish Studies, Aberdeen

Smedley, MD (1998) *Loch Spynie SSSI. Fen vegetation survey (NVC) and monitoring baseline, 1995*. Scottish Natural Heritage (unpublished survey report)

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](http://www.jncc.gov.uk/UKSPA/default.htm)

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