

# 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:**

Designated: 04 March 1997 / updated 12 May 2005

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**3. Country:**

UK (Northern Ireland)

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

Larne Lough

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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):**

54 48 54 N

05 44 38 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: 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

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**8. Elevation** (average and/or max. & min.) (metres): **9. Area** (hectares): 395.94

Min. 0

Max. 10

Mean 0

## 10. Overview:

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.

## 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).

**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 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, <i>Branta bernicla hrota</i> , East Canada/Ireland	222 individuals, representing an average of 1.1% of the population (5 year peak mean 1998/9- 2002/3)
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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	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) ( <a href="http://www.metoffice.com/climate/uk/averages/19712000/sites/aldergrove.html">www.metoffice.com/climate/uk/averages/19712000/sites/aldergrove.html</a> ) 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

**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.

**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).

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.

**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**

Marine/coastal wetland

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

**18. General ecological features:**

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

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

**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.*

None reported

**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 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 , *Tringa totanus totanus*,

397 individuals, representing an average of 1.6% of the all-Ireland population (5 year peak mean 1998/9-2002/3)

Common greenshank , *Tringa nebularia*, 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

### 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.

Archaeological/historical site

Fisheries production

Sport hunting

Transportation/navigation

### 22. Land tenure/ownership:

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

### 23. 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		+

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

**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.

None reported

**28. Current conservation education:**

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.

### 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.

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.

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### 30. 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

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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.

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

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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

- 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](http://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](http://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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