

# 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: 02 February 1999 / updated 12 May 2005

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**3. Country:**

UK (Northern Ireland)

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

Lough Foyle

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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):

55 05 24 N                      07 01 37 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: Londonderry

Lough Foyle is situated on the north coast of Northern Ireland immediately downstream and extending to the north-east of the city of Londonderry.

**Administrative region:** Derry; Derry City; Limavady

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**8. Elevation** (average and/or max. & min.) (metres):    **9. Area** (hectares): 2204.36

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.

The site is comprised of a large shallow sea lough which includes the estuaries of the rivers Foyle, Faughan and Roe. The site contains extensive intertidal areas of mudflats and sandflats, saltmarsh and associated brackish ditches.

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## 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, 3, 5, 6**

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

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## 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

This is a particularly good representative example of a wetland complex including intertidal sand and mudflats with extensive seagrass beds, saltmarsh, estuaries and associated brackish ditches.

This is a particularly good representative example of a wetland, which plays a substantial hydrological, biological and ecological system role in the natural functioning of a major river basin which is located in a trans-border position.

### Ramsar criterion 2

The site supports an appreciable assemblage of rare, vulnerable or endangered species or sub-species of plant and animal. A range of notable fish species have been recorded for the Lough Foyle estuary and the lower reaches of some of its tributary rivers. These include allis shad *Alosa alosa*, twaite shad *A. fallax fallax*, smelt *Osmerus eperlanus* and sea lamprey *Petromyzon marinus*, all of which are Irish Red Data Book species. In addition, important populations of Atlantic salmon *Salmo salar* migrate through the system to and from their spawning grounds.

### Ramsar criterion 3

The site supports a diverse assemblage of wintering waterfowl which are indicative of wetland values, productivity and diversity. These include internationally important populations of Whooper Swan *Cygnus cygnus*, Light-bellied Brent Goose *Branta bernicla hrota* and Bar-tailed Godwit *Limosa lapponica*. Additional wildfowl species which are nationally important in an all-Ireland context are Red-throated Diver *Gavia stellata*, Great crested Grebe *Podiceps cristatus*, mute swan *Cygnus olor*, Bewick's Swan *C. columbianus*, Greylag Geese *Anser anser*, Shelduck *Tadorna tadorna*, Teal *Anas crecca*, Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos*, Wigeon *A. penelope*, Eider *Somateria mollissima*, and Red-breasted Merganser *Mergus serrator*. Nationally important wader species are Oystercatcher *Haematopus ostralegus*, Golden Plover *Pluvialis apricaria*, Grey Plover *Pluvialis squatarola*, Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus*, Knot *Calidris canutus*, Dunlin *C. aplina*, Curlew *Numenius arquata*, Redshank *Tringa tetanus* and Greenshank *T. nebularia*.

### Ramsar criterion 5

The site supports about 29000 migrating birds. Species and numbers are listed in section 20

**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:**

Whooper swan , <i>Cygnus cygnus</i> , Iceland/UK/Ireland	882 individuals, representing an average of 4.2% of the population (5 year peak mean 1998/9- 2002/3)
Light-bellied brent goose, <i>Branta bernicla hrota</i> , East Canada/Ireland	2270 individuals, representing an average of 11.3% of the population (5 year peak mean 1998/9-2002/3)

**Species with peak counts in winter:**

Bar-tailed godwit , <i>Limosa lapponica lapponica</i> , W Palearctic	2028 individuals, representing an average of 1.6% 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).

See Sections 19/20 for details of noteworthy species

Details of bird species occurring at levels of National importance are given in Section 20

**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	sand, mud
Geomorphology and landscape	intertidal sediments (including sandflat/mudflat), estuary, lagoon
Nutrient status	no information
pH	no information
Salinity	brackish / mixosaline, saline / euhaline
Soil	no information
Water permanence	usually permanent
Summary of main climatic features	Annual averages (Carmony, 1971–2000) ( <a href="http://www.metoffice.com/climate/uk/averages/19712000/sites/carmony.html">www.metoffice.com/climate/uk/averages/19712000/sites/carmony.html</a> ) Max. daily temperature: 12.1° C Min. daily temperature: 5.9° C Days of air frost: 27.6 Rainfall: 993.0 mm Hrs. of sunshine: 1179.0

**General description of the Physical Features:**

Lough Foyle comprises a large, shallow sea lough that includes the estuaries of the rivers Foyle, Faughan and Roe. The site contains extensive intertidal mudflats and sandflats (with mussel *Mytilus edulis* beds), saltmarsh and associated brackish ditches.

**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).

Lough Foyle comprises a large, shallow sea lough that includes the estuaries of the rivers Foyle, Faughan and Roe. The site contains extensive intertidal mudflats and sandflats (with mussel *Mytilus edulis* beds), saltmarsh and associated brackish ditches.

The Foyle Basin comprises eastern Co. Donegal from Inishowen Head to Lough Derg, western Co. Derry from Binevenagh through to Fintona in West Co. Tyrone.

**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
G	Tidal flats	94.4
H	Salt marshes	3.6
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.

The littoral communities found in Lough Foyle reflect the dominance of intertidal sands and muds. While rocky substrate is very limited, the extensive beds of common mussel *Mytilus edulis* provide a stable surface for acorn barnacle *Semibalanus balanoides* and edible periwinkle *Littorina littorea*. The polychaete green leaf worm *Eulalia viridis* is a common associate. The soft shores hold a range of invertebrates typical of mud and sand shores, with a number of species, such as the polychaete worm *Hediste diversicolor*, indicative of reduced salinity conditions. Balls Point has the highest diversity of sediment and community types in Lough Foyle and holds large populations of the bivalves sand gaper *Mya arenaria* and peppery furrow shell *Scrobicularia plana*.

The intertidal area consists of extensive mudflats, which support large beds of both common mussel *Mytilus edulis* and eelgrass *Zostera* spp. The latter are amongst the largest colonies of this vegetation type in Northern Ireland and includes two species, narrow-leaved eelgrass *Zostera angustifolia* and dwarf eelgrass *Z. noltei*. Large stands of saltmarsh vegetation occur along the foreshore, displaying a transitional sequence of community types. The lower colonising saltmarsh consists of a community dominated by common saltmarsh-grass *Puccinellia maritima*. As tidal influence declines up the shore, this is replaced by a 'middle-marsh' community, characterised by red fescue *Festuca rubra* and mud rush *Juncus gerardii*. Localised stands of sea club-rush *Bolboschoenus maritimus* and common reed *Phragmites australis* also occur. The uppermost saltmarsh features a community dominated by common couch *Elytrigia repens*. Just west of the Ballykelly Bank, on the large intertidal mudflats which form part of a larger creek network, the lower saltmarsh communities are replaced by extensive stands of common cord-grass *Spartina anglica*. Brackish dykes behind the shore support a maritime aquatic and swamp vegetation, including the rare reflexed saltmarsh-grass *Puccinellia distans* and spiral tasselweed *Ruppia cirrhosa*.

**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 with peak counts in spring/autumn:**

Great crested grebe , <i>Podiceps cristatus cristatus</i> , NW Europe	179 individuals, representing an average of 5.1% of the all-Ireland population (5 year peak mean 1998/9-2002/3)
Great cormorant , <i>Phalacrocorax carbo carbo</i> , NW Europe	102 individuals, representing an average of 2% of the all-Ireland population (5 year peak mean 1998/9-2002/3)
Eurasian wigeon , <i>Anas penelope</i> , NW Europe	7259 individuals, representing an average of 5.8% of the all-Ireland population (5 year peak mean 1998/9-2002/3)
Eurasian teal , <i>Anas crecca</i> , NW Europe	1232 individuals, representing an average of 1.8% of the all-Ireland population (5 year peak mean 1998/9-2002/3)
Mallard , <i>Anas platyrhynchos platyrhynchos</i> , NW Europe	1214 individuals, representing an average of 2.4% of the all-Ireland population (5 year peak mean 1998/9-2002/3)
Common eider , <i>Somateria mollissima mollissima</i> , NW Europe	231 individuals, representing an average of 11.5% of the all-Ireland population (5 year peak mean 1998/9-2002/3)
Ringed plover , <i>Charadrius hiaticula</i> , Europe/Northwest Africa	199 individuals, representing an average of 1.5% of the all-Ireland population (5 year peak mean 1998/9-2002/3 - spring peak)
Ruff , <i>Philomachus pugnax</i> , Europe/W Africa	5 individuals, representing an average of 25% of the all-Ireland population (5 year peak mean 1998/9-2002/3)
Whimbrel , <i>Numenius phaeopus</i> , Europe/Western Africa	6 individuals, representing an average of 40% of the all-Ireland population (5 year peak mean 1998/9-2002/3)
Common greenshank , <i>Tringa nebularia</i> , Europe/W Africa	44 individuals, representing an average of 4.8% of the all-Ireland population (5 year peak mean 1998/9-2002/3)
Mew gull , <i>Larus canus canus</i> , Europe to N Africa	3760 individuals, representing an average of 5.5% of the all-Ireland population (5 year peak mean 1998/9-2002/3)
<b>Species with peak counts in winter:</b>	
Red-throated diver , <i>Gavia stellata</i> , NW Europe	14 individuals, representing an average of 1.4% of the all-Ireland population (5 year peak mean 1998/9-2002/3)
Slavonian grebe , <i>Podiceps auritus</i> , Northwest Europe	6 individuals, representing an average of 20% of the all-Ireland population (5 year peak mean 1998/9-2002/3)
Greylag goose , <i>Anser anser anser</i> , Iceland/UK, Ireland	67 individuals, representing an average of 1.7% of the all-Ireland population (5 year peak mean 1991/92-1995/96)
Common shelduck , <i>Tadorna tadorna</i> , NW Europe	382 individuals, representing an average of 5.4% of the all-Ireland population (5 year peak mean 1998/9-2002/3)

Red-breasted merganser , <i>Mergus serrator</i> , NW & C Europe	36 individuals, representing an average of 1.8% of the all-Ireland population (5 year peak mean 1998/9-2002/3)
Eurasian oystercatcher , <i>Haematopus ostralegus ostralegus</i> , Europe & NW Africa -wintering	2809 individuals, representing an average of 5.6% of the all-Ireland population (5 year peak mean 1998/9-2002/3)
Northern lapwing , <i>Vanellus vanellus</i> , Europe - breeding	3430 individuals, representing an average of 1.3% of the all-Ireland population (5 year peak mean 1998/9-2002/3)
Dunlin , <i>Calidris alpina alpina</i> , W Siberia/W Europe	4595 individuals, representing an average of 3.6% of the all-Ireland population (5 year peak mean 1998/9-2002/3)
Eurasian curlew , <i>Numenius arquata arquata</i> , N. a. arquata Europe (breeding)	2162 individuals, representing an average of 2.4% of the all-Ireland population (5 year peak mean 1998/9-2002/3)
Common redshank , <i>Tringa totanus totanus</i> ,	1286 individuals, representing an average of 5.2% of the all-Ireland population (5 year peak mean 1998/9-2002/3)

### Species Information

#### Nationally important species occurring on the site.

#### Fish.

*Alosa alosa*, *Alosa fallax*, *Osmerus eperlanus*, *Petromyzon marinus*

### 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
- Environmental education/ interpretation
- Fisheries production
- Livestock grazing
- Scientific research
- Sport hunting
- Tourism

### 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	+	
Gathering of shellfish	+	

Bait collection	+	
Hunting: recreational/sport	+	
Industrial water supply	+	
Sewage treatment/disposal	+	
Harbour/port		+
Flood control	+	
Transport route		+
Urban development		+

**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?
Introduction/invasion of non-native plant species	2		+		+

For category 2 factors only.  
 What measures have been taken / are planned / regulatory processes invoked, to mitigate the effect of these factors?  
 Introduction/invasion of non-native plant species - Conservation Objectives for the site have been developed. These highlight the need for addressing the *Spartina* issue. Extent of *Spartina* extent being monitored. Future trials of selective herbicides to be undertaken ASAP.  
 Site to be assessed to determine effectiveness of *Spartina* spraying. Rotovating techniques may be trialed.

Is the site subject to adverse ecological change? YES

**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	+	

Management agreement	+	
Site management statement/plan implemented	+	
Other		+
Area of Outstanding National Beauty (AONB)	+	
Special Area of Conservation (SAC)	+	

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**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

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

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

The site is occasionally used by local academic institutions.

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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 small education centre at Magilligan occasionally uses the Lough for study and research.

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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.**

Magilligan Point is a popular recreation venue for bathing.

**Facilities provided.**

Discussions regarding a passenger ferry from Magilligan Point to Greencastle on the Southern Irish shores of the Lough have been on-going.

**Seasonality.**

During the summer months

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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**

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.)

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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

- Crowe, O (2005) *Ireland's wetlands and their waterbirds: status and distribution*. BirdWatch Ireland, Newcastle, Co. Wicklow
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- Weighell, AJ, Donnelly, AP & Calder, K (eds.) (2000) *Directory of the Celtic coasts and seas*. Joint Nature Conservation Committee, Peterborough
- Wilkinson, M, Fuller, IWA, Telfer, TC, Moore, CG & Kingston, PF (1988) *Northern Ireland Littoral Survey: A conservation-orientated survey of the intertidal seashore of Northern Ireland*. Institute of Offshore Engineering, Heriot-Watt University, Edinburgh

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