

Information Sheet on Ramsar Wetlands (RIS)

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 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.

1. Name and address of the compiler of this form:

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Designation date

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Site Reference Number

2. Date this sheet was completed/updated:

Designated: 31 December 1998

3. Country:

UK (Northern Ireland)

4. Name of the Ramsar site:

Garron Plateau

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):

55 00 10 N 06 03 40 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: Carnlough.

The site is situated in County Antrim in the north-east of Northern Ireland immediately north-west of Carnlough. It forms part of a large upland block extending to the coast between the valleys of Glencloy and Glenariff.

Administrative region: Antrim; Ballymena; Larne; Moyle

10. Elevation (average and/or max. & min.) (metres): 11. Area (hectares): 4650.07

Min.	0
Max.	0
Mean	0

12. General overview of the site:

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

Garron Plateau is situated in Antrim in the north-east of Northern Ireland. The Garron Plateau is the largest area of intact blanket bog in Northern Ireland. The peatland complex is comprised of a series of raised and flushed peat bog units, and a number of oligotrophic/ mesotrophic water bodies, all within the enveloping blanket bog peat mantle. The peatland supports a number of rare and notable plant and animal species and diverse upland bird population.

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).

1, 2

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 1

The site is a large and relatively intact example of a blanket bog and one of the best examples of this habitat in the UK. It also contains nationally important examples of transitional and alkaline fen and oligotrophic/mesotrophic lakes.

Ramsar criterion 2

Supports at least six species listed in the Irish Red Data Book-Vascular Plants and up to five species of birds (one of which breeds in nationally important numbers) which are listed in the Irish Red Data Book.

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):

Council Directive 92/43/EEC

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	acidic, basic, neutral, peat, nutrient-poor, basalt
Geomorphology and landscape	upland, hilly
Nutrient status	mesotrophic, oligotrophic
pH	acidic, alkaline, strongly acidic
Salinity	fresh
Soil	mainly organic
Water permanence	usually permanent
Summary of main climatic features	Annual averages (Aldergrove, 1971–2000) (www.metoffice.com/climate/uk/averages/19712000/sites/aldergrove.html) 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:

Garron is the most extensive area of intact upland blanket bogs in Northern Ireland. The peatland complex is composed of a series of raised and flushed peat bog units and a number of oligotrophic lakes. There are large areas of well-developed bog microtopography. Where the peats are thinner, localised flushing by mineral-enriched water results in the formation of alkaline fen vegetation.

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).

Garron is the most extensive area of intact upland blanket bogs in Northern Ireland. The peatland complex is composed of a series of raised and flushed peat bog units and a number of oligotrophic

lakes. There are large areas of well-developed bog microtopography. Where the peats are thinner, localised flushing by mineral-enriched water results in the formation of alkaline fen vegetation.

18. Hydrological values:

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

Water supply

19. Wetland types:

Inland wetland

Code	Name	% Area
U	Peatlands (including peat bogs swamps, fens)	70
Other	Other	29
O	Freshwater lakes: permanent	1

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 blanket bog exhibits a number of notable features such as extensive areas with hummock and lawn, and well-developed pool complexes and areas of quaking bogs and saddle mires. There are also areas of eroding peat. Bog vegetation is characterised by *Sphagnum* mosses notably *Sphagnum imbricatum* and *Sphagnum fuscum*. Vegetation on deeper waterlogged peat is characterised by the prominence of cross-leaved heath *Erica tetralix*, bog asphodel *Narthecium ossifragum* and common cottongrass *Eriophorum angustifolium*. On the more freely-draining slopes heather *Calluna vulgaris*, crowberry *Empetrum nigrum*, and hare's-tail cotton-grass *Eriophorum vaginatum* are dominant.

The area has well-developed flushes. The base-rich flushes characterised by black bog-rush *Schoenus nigricans*, sedges *Carex* spp. and brown mosses such as *Drepanocladus* spp. and *Calliergon* spp. A number of rare vascular plants are associated with this habitat.

Several types of upland and base-poor lakes occur on the plateau. The most common lake types are characterised either by the association of yellow waterlily *Nuphar lutea* with white water-lily *Nymphaea alba* or by an association in which water lobelia *Lobelia dortmanna* is prominent. Loughnatrosk is a mid-altitude lake which contains the rare opposite-leaved pondweed *Groenlandia densa*. The marginal lake vegetation around most of the lakes tends to be sparse, consisting of a scattered swamp and poor acid fen fringe.

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.*

Nationally important species occurring on the site.

Higher Plants.

Dactylorhiza traunsteineri, *Hammarbya paludosa*, *Carex pauciflora*, *Carex magellanica*,
Groenlandia densa.

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 regularly supported during the breeding season:**

European golden plover, *Pluvialis apricaria* 12 pairs, representing an average of 3% of the all-Ireland population (Source period not collated)
apricaria, Britain/Ireland/Denmark/Germany

Species Information**Assemblage.**

The site supports a diverse assemblage of breeding birds, including:

Lagopus lagopus, *Pluvialis apricaria*, *Calidris alpina*, *Falco columbarius* and *Circus cyaneus*.

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

Livestock grazing

Non-consumptive recreation

Sport fishing

Tourism

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:

Ownership category	On-site	Off-site
Private	+	+
Public/communal	+	+

25. Current land (including water) use:

Activity	On-site	Off-site
Nature conservation		+

Rough or shifting grazing	+	
Domestic water supply	+	

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.

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

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.

Conservation measure	On-site	Off-site
Site/ Area of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI/ASSI)	+	
Management agreement	+	
Site management statement/plan implemented	+	
Area of Outstanding National Beauty (AONB)	+	
Special Area of Conservation (SAC)	+	

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 practises 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.
 The site was subject to detailed habitat and species surveys prior to its designation as an ASSI.
 The integrity of site is regularly monitored.
 The status of the yellow marsh saxifrage *Saxifraga hirculus* was assessed in 1995.
 Preliminary trials on monitoring blanket bog vegetation were held in 1996.

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.
 None reported

31. Current recreation and tourism:

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

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

- Corbett, P. McM & Seymour, GR (1997) The conservation of peatland in Northern Ireland. In: *Conserving peatlands*, ed by L Parkyn, RE Stoneman & HAP Ingram. CAB International, Wallingford, for Scottish Wildlife Trust
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- Frazer, JS, Cruickshank, MM & Tomlinson, RW (1988) *Northern Ireland Peatland Survey. Part 5 – Fermanagh and South Tyrone*. Unpublished report to Department of the Environment (Northern Ireland), Countryside and Wildlife Branch, Belfast
- McLeod, CR, Yeo, M, Brown, AE, Burn, AJ, Hopkins, JJ & Way, SF (eds.) (2004) *The Habitats Directive: selection of Special Areas of Conservation in the UK*. 2nd edn. Joint Nature Conservation Committee, Peterborough.
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- 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.)
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- Whilde, A (1993) *Threatened mammals, amphibians and fish in Ireland – Irish Red data book 2: Vertebrates*. HMSO, Belfast
- Wolfe-Murphy, SA, Lawrie, EW, Smith, SJ & Gibson, CE (1993) *Northern Ireland Lakes Survey*. Unpublished report to Northern Ireland Department of Environment, Countryside and Wildlife, Belfast

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