

# Information Sheet on Ramsar Wetlands (RIS)

*Categories approved by Recommendation 4.7 (1990), as amended by Resolution VIII.13 of the 8<sup>th</sup> Conference of the Contracting Parties (2002) and Resolutions IX.1 Annex B, IX.6, IX.21 and IX. 22 of the 9<sup>th</sup> 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:

### 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](mailto:RIS@JNCC.gov.uk)

FOR OFFICE USE ONLY.

DD MM YY

--	--	--

Designation date

--	--	--	--	--	--

Site Reference Number

---

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

Designated: 31 August 1992

---

## 3. Country:

UK (Scotland)

---

## 4. Name of the Ramsar site:

Loch Spynie

---

## 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):**

57 41 00 N                      03 16 42 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: Elgin

3 km north of Elgin, north-east Scotland.

**Administrative region:** Moray

**10. Elevation** (average and/or max. & min.) (metres):    **11. Area** (hectares): 93.62

Min.      3

Max.      4

Mean     3

**12. General overview of the site:**

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*.

**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, 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 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 , *Anser anser anser*, Iceland/UK, 4700 individuals, representing an average of 5.2% of the population (5 year peak mean for 1996/7-2000/01)  
Ireland

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).

**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	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 hydroseral succession including mesotrophic fen, willow *Salix* spp. scrub and alder *Alnus glutinosa* woodland.

**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).

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.

**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:**

Inland wetland

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

**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.

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*.

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.**

*Potamogeton filiformis, Corallorhiza trifida, Juncus balticus*

**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 Information**

None reported

**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
- Archaeological/historical site
- Environmental education/ interpretation
- Scientific research
- Sport fishing
- Sport hunting

**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	+	+

**25. 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		+

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

**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.

**Contemporary.**

**Fauna.**

Occasional research on fish.

**Completed.**

**Flora.**

Fen vegetation survey completed (Smedley 1998).

---

**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.

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

---

**31. 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.

---

**32. 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

---

**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.

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

---

**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**

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

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)

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)

---

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](mailto:ramsar@ramsar.org)