

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: 02 February 1997

3. Country:

UK (Scotland)

4. Name of the Ramsar site:

River Spey – Insh Marshes

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 05 24 N 03 59 48 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: Aviemore

The site is adjacent to the town of Kingussie, west of the Cairngorm massif, and south of Inverness.

Administrative region: Highland

10. Elevation (average and/or max. & min.) (metres): **11. Area (hectares):** 1158.77

Min. 224

Max. 238

Mean 227

12. General overview of the site:

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

The Insh Marshes lie either side of the River Spey upstream of Loch Insh.

Partly due to seasonal flooding there is a very large area of swamp, fen and carr which together form the largest single unit of poor-fen floodplain mire in Britain.

The site includes Loch Insh and the River Spey between Newtonmore and Kingussie which support large numbers of wintering wildfowl, as well as a significant assemblage of rare breeding waterfowl. The Feshie-Spey confluence has extensive river shingles which support a large number of rare invertebrates.

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, 3, 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

Holds outstanding examples within a UK context of a large, high-altitude slow-flowing river, a mesotrophic loch (a type that is uncommon in Britain and is also notable for its exceptionally high turnover rate), a floodplain mire and a gravel fan.

Ramsar criterion 2

Supports a large assemblage of nationally-rare and nationally-scarce aquatic plants and invertebrates (including species with a boreal pine distribution), and is one of the best freshwater sites in Britain for otter *Lutra lutra*.

Ramsar criterion 3

A nationally important genetic resource for floodplain mires.

Supports an assemblage of breeding birds indicative of high wetland value and diversity.

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

Qualifying Species/populations (as identified at designation):

Species with peak counts in winter:

Whooper swan , <i>Cygnus cygnus</i> , Iceland/UK/Ireland	98 individuals, representing an average of 1.7% of the GB 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.

See Sections 21/22 for details of noteworthy species

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, shingle, sand, alluvium, peat, nutrient-rich
Geomorphology and landscape	valley, floodplain
Nutrient status	mesotrophic
pH	acidic
Salinity	fresh
Soil	mainly organic
Water permanence	usually permanent, usually seasonal / intermittent

Summary of main climatic features	Annual averages (Braemar, 1971–2000) (www.metoffice.com/climate/uk/averages/19712000/sites/braemar.html) Max. daily temperature: 10.5° C Min. daily temperature: 2.8° C Days of air frost: 103.3 Rainfall: 912.7 mm Hrs. of sunshine: 1210.3
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General description of the Physical Features:

The Insh Marshes lie either side of the River Spey upstream of Loch Insh. They are over 5 km long and over 1 km wide. Partly due to seasonal flooding, there is a very large area of swamp, fen and carr which together form the largest single unit of poor-fen floodplain mire in the UK.

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).

The Insh Marshes lie either side of the River Spey upstream of Loch Insh. They are over 5 km long and over 1 km wide. Partly due to seasonal flooding, there is a very large area of swamp, fen and carr which together form the largest single unit of poor-fen floodplain mire in the UK.

18. Hydrological values:

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

Flood water storage / desynchronisation of flood peaks

19. Wetland types:

Human-made wetland, Inland wetland

Code	Name	% Area
U	Peatlands (including peat bogs swamps, fens)	27.4
4	Seasonally flooded agricultural land	25.7
Ts	Freshwater marshes / pools: seasonal / intermittent	10.2
Tp	Freshwater marshes / pools: permanent	10.2
O	Freshwater lakes: permanent	8.4
M	Rivers / streams / creeks: permanent	7.7
W	Shrub-dominated wetlands	2.9
Xp	Forested peatland	2.5
Other	Other	2.1
L	Inland deltas	2.1
9	Canals and drainage channels	0.8

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.

Within this site the main habitat types are: woodland, floodplain mire, bog, swamp, tall herb fen, wet heath, grassland, river shingles, dynamic alluvial fans.

The site supports a large diversity of plant communities, ranging from aquatic to woodland.

The floodplain mires are varied, but S9 *Carex rostrata* swamp, S11 *Carex vesicaria* swamp, S27 *Carex rostrata*-*Potentilla palustris* tall herb fen and M5 *Carex rostrata*-*Sphagnum squarrosum* mire are the most important communities.

There are also areas of M15 *Scirpus cespitosus*-*Erica tetralix* wet heath; grasslands, particularly MG9 *Holcus lanatus*-*Deschampsia cespitosa*. Woodland includes carr W3 *Salix pentandra*-*Carex rostrata* & W4 *Betula pubescens*-*Molinia caerulea*, riparian woodland W7 *Alnus glutinosa*-*Fraxinus excelsior*-*Lysimachia nemorum*, and small areas of birch *Betula* woodland on better drained soils W11 *Quercus petraea*-*Betula pubescens*-*Dicranum majus*.

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.*

Assemblage.

The site is internationally important because it contains the following Habitats Directive Annex I features:

- H3130 Oligotrophic to mesotrophic standing waters with vegetation of the *Littorelletea uniflorae* and/or of the *Isoëto-Nanojuncetea*
 H7140 Transition mires and quaking bogs
 H91E0 Alluvial forests with *Alnus glutinosa* and *Fraxinus excelsior* (*Alno-Padion*, *Alnion incanae*, *Salicion albae*)

Nationally important species occurring on the site.

Higher Plants.

Calamagrostis purpurea, *Carex chordorrhiza*, *Cicuta virosa*, *Equisetum pratense*, *Nuphar pumila*

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:

Osprey , <i>Pandion haliaetus</i> , Europe	8 individuals, representing an average of 6.2% of the GB population (Count as at early 1990s)
Spotted crane , <i>Porzana porzana</i> , Europe	4 individuals, representing an average of 5.4% of the GB population (5 year mean 1997-2001)
Wood sandpiper , <i>Tringa glareola</i> , Europe	2 pairs, representing an average of 50% of the GB population (5 year mean 1991-1995)
Black-headed gull , <i>Larus ridibundus</i> , N & C Europe	1644 apparently occupied nests, representing an average of 1.2% of the GB population (Seabird 2000 Census)

Species with peak counts in winter:

Hen harrier, <i>Circus cyaneus</i> , Europe	11 individuals, representing an average of 1.4% of the GB population (5 winter period 1990/1-1994/5)
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Species Information

Internationally important (Habitats Directive Annex II) species occurring on the site.

Mammals.

S1355 *Lutra lutra* Otter

Invertebrates.

Hammerschmidtia ferruginea, Rhamphomyia trigemina, Tachydromia acklandi, Limonia omissinervis, Nephrotoma aculeata, Dorytomus affinis

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
- Aquatic vegetation (e.g. reeds, willows, seaweed)
- Environmental education/ interpretation
- Livestock grazing
- Non-consumptive recreation
- Scientific research
- Sport fishing
- Sport hunting
- 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
Non-governmental organisation (NGO)	+	
Private	+	+

25. Current land (including water) use:

Activity	On-site	Off-site
Nature conservation	+	
Tourism	+	+
Recreation	+	+
Current scientific research	+	+

Commercial forestry		+
Fishing: recreational/sport	+	+
Grazing (unspecified)	+	+
Hunting: recreational/sport	+	+
Sewage treatment/disposal		+

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)	+	
Land owned by a non-governmental organisation for nature conservation	+	+
Management agreement	+	
Site management statement/plan implemented	+	
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.

Fauna.

Numbers of migratory and wintering wildfowl and waders are monitored annually as part of the national Wetland Birds Survey (WeBS) organised by the British Trust for Ornithology, Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust, the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds and the Joint Nature Conservation Committee.

Environment.

Research on site hydrology by Stirling University (e.g. Grieve *et al.* 1995; Willby *et al.* 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.

The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) provides guided walks for visitors, and their birdwatching hides provide interpretative display.

The site is visited by university and school groups.

31. Current recreation and tourism:

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

Activities.

Birdwatching, angling, watersports, shooting.

Facilities provided.

Guided walks, birdwatching observation hides.

Seasonality.

All year.

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

Fojt, W (1989) *A vegetation survey of the Insh Marshes SSSI, August 1988*. Unpublished, Nature Conservancy Council

Gibbons, B (1993) Classic wildlife sites: Insh Marshes, Speyside. *British Wildlife*, 5(1), 41-43

Grieve, IC, Gilvear, DG & Bryant, RG (1995) Hydrochemical and water source variations across a floodplain mire, Insh Marshes, Scotland. *Hydrological Processes*. 9(1), 99-110

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.
www.jncc.gov.uk/SACselection

Prescott, T (2000) *RSPB Scotland's Insh Marshes Management Plan (April 2000 – March 2005)*. Unpublished, Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, Edinburgh

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.)

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

Willby, N, Gilvear, DJ, Grieve, IC & Murphy, K (1998) Hydrological–ecological interactions on the Insh Marshes. In: *Floodplain rivers: hydrological processes and ecological significance*, ed. by A.R.G. Large, 40-52. British Hydrological Society, London (Occasional Paper No. 8)

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