

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 Official Respondent:

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Designation date

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Site Reference Number

Name and address of the compiler of this form:

UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum, 102 Broadway, Peterborough, PE1 4DG, UK
Updated by Elizabeth Charter
Wildlife and Conservation Division
Department of Agriculture Fisheries and Forestry
Knockaloe
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Isle of Man
IM5 3AJ

2. Date this sheet was completed/updated:

Designated: 06 September 2006

3. Country:

UK (Isle of Man)

4. Name of the Ramsar site:

Ballaugh Curragh

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):

054 19 00 N 004 31 00 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.

8 km west of Ramsey

Administrative region: Isle of Man

10. Elevation (average and/or max. & min.) (metres): **11. Area** (hectares): 193.4

Min. 10

Max. 20

Mean 15

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 Ballaugh Curragh consists of a complex mosaic of interrelated peatland habitats dominated by grey willow *Salix cinerea* and birch *Betula pubescens* scrub (a habitat known locally as 'curragh'). Associated wetland habitats include bog pools, wet woodland, man-made ditch systems and fen grassland. The area supports a huge winter roost of hen harriers *Circus cyaneus* - at times the largest recorded in Europe. It has a very high diversity of breeding birds and a range of mire and aquatic plants including local rarities and species protected under Manx law. The peat deposits of the Ballaugh Curragh are also of importance for the historical pollen record that they provide. The biodiversity of the Ballaugh Curragh is known to have contributed to its cultural importance as an early settlement, and hence to its considerable value as an archaeological resource. Parts of the area are still farmed, principally for seasonal rough grazing and traditional hay cropping.

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, 4

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).

1 The site consists of a representative example of a peatland habitat mosaic with a high degree of habitat diversity, dominated by a once-typical but now increasingly rare and fragmented willow scrub habitat, known locally as ‘curragh’. Other habitats include wet birch woodland, wet grassland, purple moor-grass-dominated fen pasture with good populations of marsh orchids, floating mats of bog vegetation and well-established man-made ditch systems with good collections of aquatic and emergent species.

2 Corncrake *Crex crex* (SPEC1 – global conservation concern: Vulnerable) settled at Close Sartfield Nature Reserve in the Ballaugh Curragh in 1999, and definitely bred in 2000. The Curragh is known to have been one of the last strongholds for this bird prior to its dramatic population decline throughout the British Isles; the continuing presence of traditionally managed farmland in the area is now important for the return of the corncrake as a Manx breeding species.

The asilid fly *Epitryptus cowini* (RDB2 (Vulnerable), pRDBK) has been recorded from the Ballaugh Curragh area.

3 The Ballaugh Curragh supports the largest hen harrier *Circus cyaneus* winter roost on the Island, with a 5-year mean peak count of 82 (1996/7-2000/01); well over 100 may be seen. This represents a high proportion of all winter roosting hen harriers in the region; in some years it has been recorded as having the highest number in Western Europe.

The Ballaugh Curragh is one of the most biologically diverse sites on the Isle of Man, containing a very high diversity of breeding birds and diverse plantlife. For some rare and threatened plants the Curragh represents the only Manx station; the uncommon habitat types present are in some cases the most diverse examples of their kind on the Island. It is therefore of high importance for the conservation of Manx biodiversity.

4 Regionally important winter roost for hen harrier *Circus cyaneus* – see above.

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):

EU Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC (as amended)

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	alluvium; peat
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Geomorphology and landscape	No information available
Nutrient status	oligotrophic
pH	acidic
Salinity	fresh
Soil	mainly organic
Water permanence	usually permanent
Summary of main climatic features	Cool oceanic lowland: Average rainfall 866 mm/year; Average min. temperature: 4.8°C Average max. temperature: 17.5°C

General description of the Physical Features:

No information available

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).

Part of catchment is within cool oceanic upland climate, as the northern lowlands of the Isle of Man are fed by the Northern Hills, which rise to a maximum of 620 m. Water quality is generally good but acid, base-poor; water supply is relatively steady, although the small catchment area may result in temporary droughts in unusually dry summers. Land use in the catchment is overwhelmingly rural, mostly extensive pasture and moorland.

The Curragh represents a large storage area of water coming off the hills, particularly in winter when the wet pastures are generally flooded at least part of the time. The area has a complex hydrology and a full hydrological assessment is not available.

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:

Inland wetland

Code	Name	% Area
W	Shrub-dominated wetlands	60
U	Peatlands (including peat bogs swamps, fens)	30
4	Seasonally flooded agricultural land	9
9	Canals and drainage channels	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.

Ballaugh Curragh is the largest remaining intact example of a very distinctive Manx habitat which was historically important as a plentiful source of fish, waterfowl and willow. It therefore forms a culturally-defined area of the Island as well as a distinct wetland, and as such has provided valuable archaeological and palynological (historic pollen) records. Although dominated by willow scrub on peat, the Curragh also has open water, damp neutral to acidic grassland, marshy grassland, dry scrub, hedges, birch woodland with heather, modified and wet bog, tall ruderal and swamp vegetation, semi-natural broadleaved woodland and semi-improved pasture. Of particular significance in the regional context is the presence of habitats on Annex I of the EU Habitats Directive (wet bog woodland,

natural dystrophic ponds, *Molinia* meadows on peaty soils, and UK Biodiversity Action Plan Priority Habitats (wet woodland, purple moor-grass and rush pastures, fens, species-rich hedges).

The Curragh is well known locally for its wetland habitats and bird diversity. The presence of impressive winter hen harrier numbers and traditionally-managed meadows with summer displays of thousands of orchids attracts visitors both for bird-watching and the popular 'orchid tours' run by the Manx Wildlife Trust.

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.*

Rare and/or vulnerable plants (protected under Schedule 7 of the Wildlife Act 1990 as amended) recorded in the past two years:

Common spotted-orchid *Dactylorhiza fuchsii*

Heath spotted-orchid *Dactylorhiza maculata* spp ericetorum and hybrids

Northern marsh-orchid *Dactylorhiza purpurella*

Common Twayblade *Listera ovata*

Greater butterfly-orchid *Platanthera chlorantha*

Lesser tussock-sedge *Carex diandra*

Recorded in the past 50 years but not recently:

Pillwort *Pilularia globulifera*

Bladderwort *Utricularia vulgaris*

Greater spearwort *Ranunculus lingua*

Blunt-leaved pondweed *Potamogeton obtusifolius*

Fragrant orchid *Gymnadenia conopsea*

Lesser water-plantain *Baldellia ranunculoides*

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.*

Species Information

(Provisional list)

Breeding birds protected under Schedule 1 of the Wildlife Act 1990 (as amended) include:

Water rail *Rallus aquaticus*

Corncrake *Crex crex* (not regular)

Northern lapwing *Vanellus vanellus*

Eurasian curlew *Numenius arquata*

Song thrush *Turdus philomelos*

Common grasshopper warbler *Locustella naevia*

Non-breeding birds protected under Schedule I of the Wildlife Act 1990 (as amended) include:

Little grebe *Tachybaptus ruficollis*

Whooper swan *Cygnus cygnus*

Northern shoveler *Anas clypeata*

Northern pintail *Anas acuta*

Hen harrier *Circus cyaneus*

Eurasian sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus*
 Common kestrel *Falco tinnunculus*
 Long-eared owl *Asio otus*
 Short-eared owl *Asio flammeus*
 Common kingfisher *Alcedo atthis*
 Spotted flycatcher *Musciapa striata*
 House sparrow *Passer domesticus*

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
 Livestock grazing
 Non-consumptive recreation
 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)	+	+
Local authority, municipality etc.	+	
National/Crown Estate	+	+
Private	+	+

25. Current land (including water) use:

Activity	On-site	Off-site
Tourism	+	+
Recreation	+	+
Arable agriculture (unspecified)		+
Permanent arable agriculture		+
Rough or shifting grazing	+	+

Permanent pastoral agriculture	+	+
Hay meadows	+	
Non-urbanised settlements		+

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?

What measures have been taken / are planned / regulatory processes invoked, to mitigate the effect of these factors?
 Drainage/land-claim for agriculture - Controlled through designation.

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)	+	
Land owned by a non-governmental organisation for nature conservation	+	
Other	+	
Management plan in preparation	+	
IUCN (1994) category IV	+	

b) Describe any other current management practices:

28. Conservation measures proposed but not yet implemented:

e.g. management plan in preparation; official proposal as a legally protected area, etc.

Management plan in preparation - Other parts of the site are subject to management agreements either as part of or comparable to agri-environment scheme management plans; in both cases there is a financial incentive

29. Current scientific research and facilities:

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

Nature reserves in the management of the Manx Wildlife Trust are subject to monitoring; the Curragh area is also subject to bird monitoring by the Manx Bird Atlas.

Current level of archaeological research unknown.

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 variety of interpretive material is produced by Manx National Heritage and the Manx Wildlife Trust.

There may be further interpretation at the Willdife Park which has a nature trail through its part of the Curragh.

31. Current recreation and tourism:

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

Limited public access for walking;

Popular annual 'orchid tours' run by Manx Wildlife Trust at its Close Sartfield nature reserve;

Public access and birdwatching hide at Close Sartfield;

Minor roads through the area used for road racing once a year (Manx International Rally).

32. Jurisdiction:

Include territorial, e.g. state/region, and functional/sectoral, e.g. Dept. of Agriculture/Dept. of Environment, etc.

Isle of Man Government

Wildlife and Conservation Division

Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Knockaloe

Peel

Isle of Man

IM5 3AJ

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.

Wildlife and Conservation Division

Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Knockaloe

Peel

Isle of Man

IM5 3AJ

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

Fairhurst, J (1998) *Ballaugh Curragh Management Plan*. Manx National Heritage, Douglas (unpublished)

Falk, SJ (1991) *A review of the scarce and threatened bees, wasp and ants of Great Britain*. Nature Conservancy Council, Peterborough (Research and Survey in Nature Conservation, No. 35)

Hepburn, I, Oldfield, S & Thompson, K (1992) *UK Dependent Territories Ramsar study: Stage 1*. Unpublished report to Department of the Environment, European and International Habitat Protection Branch, Bristol, from International Waterfowl and Wetlands Research Bureau/ NGO Forum for Nature Conservation in UK Dependent Territories, Slimbridge/ Sandy (Research contract, No. 7/2/126)

Shirt, DB (ed.) (1987) *British Red Data Books: 2. Insects*. Nature Conservancy Council, Peterborough

Pienkowski, MW (ed.) (2005) *Review of existing and potential Ramsar sites in UK Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies*. (Contractor: UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum, Peterborough.) Final report on Contract CR0294 to the UK Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, Bristol. www.ukotcf.org

Pritchard, DE, Housden, SD, Mudge, GP, Galbraith, CA & Pienkowski, MW (eds.) (1992) *Important Bird Areas in the United Kingdom including the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man*. Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, Sandy

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