

# 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.

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

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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: 14 December 1999

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## 3. Country:

UK (Northern Ireland)

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## 4. Name of the Ramsar site:

Slieve Beagh

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## 5. Designation of new Ramsar site or update of existing site:

**This RIS is for:** Updated information on an existing Ramsar site

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## 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):**

54 20 53 N                      07 11 38 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. In Counties Tyrone and Fermanagh in the south-west of Northern Ireland, along the international border with the Republic of Ireland.

**Administrative region:** Dungannon; Fermanagh; Tyrone

**10. Elevation (average and/or max. & min.) (metres): 11. Area (hectares): 1884.68**

Min.	0
Max.	380
Mean	290

**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 peatland exhibits a number of notable structural features, which include occasional well-developed hummock and lawn complexes, a few small localised pool complexes, as well as soakways and flushes. The general vegetation is characterised by *Sphagnum* mosses, ericoid dwarf-shrubs and sedges, with the composition and abundance of these components dependent on local edaphic conditions, in particular the water table and relief.

The peatland flora includes a number of rare and unusual species including cowberry *Vaccinium vitis-idaea* and the mosses *Sphagnum fuscum* and *S. imbricatum*.

Several upland, base-poor lakes occur within the complex. The most common type is characterised by the aquatic mosses *Sphagnum cuspidatum*, *S. denticulatum*, *Drepanocladus* spp. and the liverwort *Jungermannia* spp. The floating and marginal vegetation associated with these waterbodies tends to be sparse and restricted, and consists of a scattered swamp and poor acid fen fringe.

The area supports a breeding population of red grouse *Lagopus lagopus*. In addition, it is regularly used throughout the year by golden plover *Pluvialis apricaria* and hen harrier *Circus cyaneus*.

Contemporary geomorphological processes include limited piping, sinks and collapsed hollows in the peat and a number of substantial bog-bursts.

**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**

**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).

## 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.

**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, peat, nutrient-poor, basalt
Geomorphology and landscape	upland
Nutrient status	oligotrophic
pH	acidic, strongly acidic
Salinity	fresh
Soil	mainly organic
Water permanence	usually permanent
Summary of main climatic features	Annual averages (Armagh, 1971–2000) ( <a href="http://www.metoffice.com/climate/uk/averages/19712000/sites/armagh.html">www.metoffice.com/climate/uk/averages/19712000/sites/armagh.html</a> ) Max. daily temperature: 12.9° C Min. daily temperature: 5.8° C Days of air frost: 40.4 Rainfall: 795.4 mm Hrs. of sunshine: 1191.6

**General description of the Physical Features:**

Slieve Beagh is one of the most extensive areas of intact blanket bog in Northern Ireland. It contains a comparatively large undulating upland area of generally *Sphagnum*-rich mire vegetation. It is less markedly oceanic than other Northern Ireland sites but has some limited areas of surface patterning. The peatland complex contains a number of natural dystrophic lakes and ponds that range in size from 5.5 ha to less than 0.5 ha. The site contains the

largest concentration of medium- to large-sized dystrophic lakes in Northern Ireland. The smaller lakes and ponds are steep-sided with banks and bed formed by layers of deep peat. The larger lakes have shallow, shelving shores and hard, stony beds. Although the base-poor waters are low in plant nutrients and tend to have a characteristically impoverished flora and fauna, some important communities are present on the site. The floating and marginal vegetation tends to be sparse and restricted, and consists of a scattered swamp and acid poor-fen fringe.

**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).

Slieve Beagh is one of the most extensive areas of intact blanket bog in Northern Ireland. It contains a comparatively large undulating upland area of generally *Sphagnum*-rich mire vegetation. It is less markedly oceanic than other Northern Ireland sites but has some limited areas of surface patterning. The peatland complex contains a number of natural dystrophic lakes and ponds that range in size from 5.5 ha to less than 0.5 ha, the largest concentration of medium- to large-sized dystrophic lakes in Northern Ireland. The smaller lakes and ponds are steep-sided with banks and bed formed by layers of deep peat. The larger lakes have shallow, shelving shores and hard, stony beds. Although the base-poor waters are low in plant nutrients and tend to have a characteristically impoverished flora and fauna, some important communities are present on the site.

**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
U	Peatlands (including peat bogs swamps, fens)	99
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 area is of special scientific interest because of its geology, physiography and peatland flora and fauna. In geological terms, the area lies within an ancient depositional syncline, extending through much of the Upper Palaeozoic. Physiographical interest is related to contemporary geomorphological processes within the peat mass. Biological interest is associated with the presence of the third-largest intact expanse of upland peatland in Northern Ireland. The peatland complex includes a number of oligotrophic water bodies as well as a number of raised and soligenous bog units, all within an enveloping bog mantle. Together these support an array of associated plant and animal communities.

The stratigraphy includes a limited inlier of Upper Limestone - part of the Dartry Limestone Formation. These consist of D2, coral and brachiopod zone, series sediments, representing clear water marine shelf conditions. As the water became more shallow, a major phase of deltaic sedimentation resulted in the Slieve Beagh Formation of the Leitrim Group. These are mainly fine- to coarse-grained sandstones, notable at Shane Barnagh's Stables, with a high proportion of black shaly goniatite-bearing mudstones in the lower beds, outcropping south of Crockbane. These 580 m of Yoredale type rocks do not pre-date P1 or post-date P2 goniatite stages.

Contemporary geomorphological processes include limited piping, sinks and collapsed hollows in the peat and a number of substantial bog-bursts.

The peatland exhibits a number of notable structural features, which include occasional well-developed hummock and lawn complexes, a few small localised pool complexes, as well as soakways and flushes. The general vegetation is characterised by *Sphagnum* mosses, ericoid dwarf-shrubs and sedges, with the composition and abundance of these components dependent on local edaphic conditions, in particular the water table and relief.

Flat, waterlogged ground is characterised by the presence of such species as cross-leaved heath *Erica tetralix*, cranberry *Vaccinium oxycoccos*, bog asphodel *Narthecium ossifragum* and common cottongrass *Eriophorum angustifolium*, over a lush *Sphagnum* moss mat of predominantly *S. papillosum* with occasional *S. magellanicum*. On more freely-draining slopes, heather *Calluna vulgaris*, bilberry *Vaccinium myrtillus* and hare's-tail cottongrass *Eriophorum vaginatum* are more typical, over a more mixed bryophyte mat. The presence of weak flushing of acidic water through the surface peat layer is indicated by the occurrence of scattered purple moor-grass *Molinia caerulea* or sharp-flowered rush *Juncus acutiflorus*. Where flushing is concentrated over thinner peats or on peaty gley soils, the vegetation is characterised by a small sedge community where yellow-sedge *Carex viridula*, carnation sedge *C. panicea* and star sedge *C. echinata* predominate, while the presence of more mesotrophic water is indicated by the presence of tawny sedge *C. hostiana*, dioecious sedge *C. dioica* and flea sedge *C. pulicaris*.

The peatland flora includes a number of rare and unusual species including cowberry *Vaccinium vitis-idaea* and the mosses *Sphagnum fuscum* and *S. imbricatum*.

Several upland, base-poor lakes occur within the complex. The most common type is characterised by the bog-mosses *Sphagnum cuspidatum*, *S. denticulatum*, *Drepanocladus* spp. and the liverwort *Jungermannia* spp. The floating and marginal vegetation associated with these water bodies tends to be sparse and restricted, and consists of a scattered swamp and poor acid fen fringe.

The area supports a breeding population of red grouse *Lagopus lagopus*. In addition, it is regularly used throughout the year by golden plover *Pluvialis apricaria* and hen harrier *Circus cyaneus*.

The upland lakes support a species-poor but notable upland insect fauna. The characteristic upland water beetle *Agabus arcticus* and the water bug *Callicorixa wollastoni* are common in the lakes and pools and the concentration of records of both species is the greatest recorded in Northern Ireland. Acidophile species and those typical of oligotrophic waters are also common, reflecting the prevailing conditions including *Hydroporus gyllenhali*, *H. obscurus* and *Sigara scotti*. The most notable species are found in the highest lake, Lough Sallagh, where the rare upland beetle *Potamonectes griseostriatus* and corixid *Glaenocorisa propinqua* are found. The natural acid flushes and the shallow pools associated with the many bog-bursts support a different suite of species including the local water beetles *Agabus guttatus*, *Stictonectes lepidus* and the corixid *Sigara nigrolineata*.

Ecosystem services

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## 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.

Internationally important species occurring on the site

Habitat:

Blanket bog

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**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.

No special values known

**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
National/Crown Estate	+	+
Private		+

**25. Current land (including water) use:**

Activity	On-site	Off-site
Nature conservation	+	
Rough or shifting grazing		+
Mineral exploration (excl. hydrocarbons)	+	

**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?
Overgrazing by domestic livestock	2		+		+

For category 2 factors only.

What measures have been taken / are planned / regulatory processes invoked, to mitigate the effect of these factors?  
 Overgrazing by domestic livestock - Conservation objectives for the site have been developed. These highlight the need to address overgrazing. Positive Grazing Management schemes are being introduced. A new cross-border management initiative is currently being planned. This will also address the overgrazing issue.

Is the site subject to adverse ecological change? YES

**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)	+	
National Nature Reserve (NNR)	+	
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.

- The site was subject to detailed habitat and species surveys prior to its designation as an ASSI
- The integrity of the site is regularly monitored.

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**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

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**31. Current recreation and tourism:**

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

None reported

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**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

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**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

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**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

Crowe, O (2005) *Ireland's wetlands and their waterbirds: status and distribution*. BirdWatch Ireland, Newcastle, Co. Wicklow

Frazer, JS, Cruickshank, MM & Tomlinson, RW (1988) *Northern Ireland Peatland Survey*. 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.  
[www.jncc.gov.uk/SACselection](http://www.jncc.gov.uk/SACselection)

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