

Northern Ireland Environment Agency

Further information to support the Ramsar proposals

January 2019

Contact information:

Northern Ireland Environment Agency
Conservation Designations and Protection
Klondyke Building
Cromac Avenue
Gasworks Business Park
Lower Ormeau Road
Belfast
BT7 2JA

Telephone: 028 9056 9522

Email: N2K-CMP@daera-ni.gov.uk

Website: www.daera-ni.gov.uk/topics/land-and-landscapes/ramsar-sites

Issued:

January 2019

Overview

The Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA), an Executive Agency within the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA), is running two consultations concurrently:

1. Seeking views on the proposed designation of Derryleckagh Ramsar site.
2. Seeking views on the proposed designation of Teal Lough Ramsar site.

You can submit your views by email or post. When doing so, please remember to indicate which of the designations (Derryleckagh pRamsar or Teal Lough pRamsar) your comments apply to.

Why we are consulting

- **Derryleckagh pRamsar**

This area was declared as Derryleckagh Area of Special Scientific Interest (ASSI) in 1994. The same area was classified as Derryleckagh Special Area of Conservation (SAC) in 2005. The site boundary is coincident with the Derryleckagh Bog part only of Derryleckagh ASSI and Derryleckagh SAC and excludes Derryleckagh Wood to the east. DAERA has identified that this Derryleckagh pRamsar area is an internationally important wetland because it meets the Ramsar Sites Criteria.

- **Teal Lough pRamsar**

This area was declared in two constituent parts as Teal Lough and Slaghtfreeden Bogs ASSI in 1987 and Teal Lough Part II ASSI in 1995. The boundary of the site incorporates part of Teal Lough and Slaghtfreeden Bogs ASSI (Teal Lough part only), and all of Teal Lough Part II ASSI. The same area was classified as Teal Lough SAC in 2005. The boundary of the site is entirely coincident with Teal Lough SAC. DAERA has identified that this Teal Lough pRamsar area is an internationally important wetland because it meets the Ramsar Sites Criteria.

The former Department of the Environment (DOE) previously carried out consultations on the designation of Derryleckagh and Teal Lough as Ramsar sites in 2004 and 2005 respectively. These proposals did not proceed to formal designation. Due to the passage of time since these consultations DAERA is re-consulting on the proposed Ramsar sites.

Contents

Overview	iii
Why we are consulting	iii
List of Figures	iv
1. Background	1
2. Site descriptions	2
Figure 2.1 Photograph of Derryleckagh pRamsar.....	2
Figure 2.2 Photograph of Teal Lough pRamsar	3
3. Reasons for designation	3
4. Assessment of the Ramsar interest	4
5. Site management	4
5.1 Relationship with ASSIs	5
5.2 Relationship with SACs	5
6. Ownership/occupation	6
7. References	7

List of Figures

Figure 2.1 Photograph of Derryleckagh pRamsar	2
Figure 2.2 Photograph of Teal Lough pRamsar	3

1. Background

Ramsar sites are designated under the International Convention on Wetlands of International Importance especially as Waterfowl Habitat (the Ramsar Convention). The UK is a signatory to the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands of International Importance. Article 2.1 provides that each contracting party shall designate suitable wetlands within its territory for inclusion in a list of Wetlands of International Importance.

Derryleckagh pRamsar and Teal Lough pRamsar sites both qualify as Ramsar, Wetlands of International Importance by meeting the Ramsar Sites Criteria.

The Ramsar Sites Criteria (Ramsar, 2014)

The nine criteria for identifying Wetlands of International Importance:

Group A of the Criteria. Sites containing representative, rare or unique wetland types

Criterion 1: *A wetland should be considered internationally important if it contains a representative, rare, or unique example of a natural or near-natural wetland type found within the appropriate biogeographic region.*

Group B of the Criteria. Sites of international importance for conserving biological diversity

Criteria based on species and ecological communities

Criterion 2: *A wetland should be considered internationally important if it supports vulnerable, endangered, or critically endangered species or threatened ecological communities.*

Criterion 3: *A wetland should be considered internationally important if it supports populations of plant and/or animal species important for maintaining the biological diversity of a particular biogeographic region.*

Criterion 4: *A wetland should be considered internationally important if it supports plant and/or animal species at a critical stage in their life cycles, or provides refuge during adverse conditions.*

Specific criteria based on waterbirds

Criterion 5: *A wetland should be considered internationally important if it regularly supports 20,000 or more waterbirds.*

Criterion 6: *A wetland should be considered internationally important if it regularly supports 1% of the individuals in a population of one species or subspecies of waterbird.*

Specific criteria based on fish

Criterion 7: *A wetland should be considered internationally important if it supports a significant proportion of indigenous fish subspecies, species or families, life-history stages, species interactions and/or populations that are representative of wetland benefits and/or values and thereby contributes to global biological diversity.*

Criterion 8: *A wetland should be considered internationally important if it is an important source of food for fishes, spawning ground, nursery and/or migration path on which fish stocks, either within the wetland or elsewhere, depend.*

Specific criteria based on other taxa

Criterion 9: *A wetland should be considered internationally important if it regularly supports 1% of the individuals in a population of one species or subspecies of wetland-dependent non-avian animal species.*

2. Site descriptions

- **Derryleckagh pRamsar**

Derryleckagh is situated 1 km east of Newry. It is a long narrow valley mire and contains wetland and adjoining habitat which supports a wide range of plant communities and a number of scarce plant species (Figure 2.1). The variety of these habitats supports a wide diversity of invertebrates, including several notable species. The area of the site is 42.41 ha.

Figure 2.1 Photograph of Derryleckagh pRamsar



**Image courtesy of Bobbie Hamill (2011)*

- **Teal Lough pRamsar**

Teal Lough Bog lies some 10 km north-west of Cookstown beyond Lough Fea at an elevation of 220 m. This is one of the largest and least disturbed upland blanket peat and raised bog habitats in Northern Ireland (Figure 2.2). The features of interest are all hydrologically linked, with actively developing upland raised bog surrounded by active blanket peat, and with an oligotrophic lake to the north. Teal Lough has one of the finest hummock and pool complexes of any peatland complex in Northern Ireland. The area of the site is 198.22 ha.

Figure 2.2 Photograph of Teal Lough pRamsar



**Image courtesy of Bobbie Hamill (2015)*

Maps of these pRamsar sites are provided in the suite of consultation documents.

3. Reasons for designation

DAERA is proposing these two sites as a necessary contribution by the UK to the network of Ramsars. 20 Ramsar sites have already been designated in Northern Ireland. In total 149 Ramsar sites have been designated in the UK (JNCC, 2015). The designation of these sites will help to meet UK commitments under the Ramsar Convention.

4. Assessment of the Ramsar interest

Derryleckagh pRamsar

Derryleckagh pRamsar qualifies as a Wetland of International Importance under the Ramsar Convention because it meets the following selection criteria (Ramsar, 2014):

Criterion 1: *'A wetland should be considered internationally important if it contains a representative, rare, or unique example of a natural or near-natural wetland type found within the appropriate biogeographic region'.*

Derryleckagh pRamsar is internationally important because it contains a representative, rare, or unique example of a natural or near-natural wetland type found within the appropriate biogeographic region. Northern Ireland is within the Atlantic biogeographic region.

The site is selected for the following feature:

- The site contains a mire in a transitional stage between fen and bog and is characterised by a broad range of surface conditions, ranging from slightly base-rich to markedly acidic.

Teal Lough pRamsar

Teal Lough pRamsar qualifies as a Wetland of International Importance under the Ramsar Convention because it meets the following selection criteria (Ramsar, 2014):

Criterion 1: *'A wetland should be considered internationally important if it contains a representative, rare, or unique example of a natural or near-natural wetland type found within the appropriate biogeographic region'.*

Teal Lough pRamsar is internationally important because it contains a representative, rare, or unique example of a natural or near-natural wetland type found within the appropriate biogeographic region. Northern Ireland is within the Atlantic biogeographic region.

The site is selected for the following feature:

- The site contains one of the most extensive and least disturbed examples of upland blanket peat and raised bog habitats in Northern Ireland, including one of the finest hummock and pool complexes of any raised bog in Northern Ireland.

Citation documents for these pRamsar sites are provided in the suite of consultation documents.

5. Site management

DAERA do not expect these new designations to change the activity allowed in the proposed areas because these areas are already within existing Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) –namely the Derryleckagh SAC and Teal Lough SAC sites. The European Union Habitats Directive (Council Directive 92/43/EEC on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora) already requires activities which are likely to have a significant effect

on a designated interest feature of a European site, including indirect effects, to be assessed. Therefore activities in the proposed Ramsar areas are already being considered in this way.

5.1 Relationship with ASSIs

It is usual, necessary practice to underpin Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), Special Protection Areas (SPAs) and Ramsar sites on land with Areas of Special Scientific Interest (ASSIs).

- **Derryleckagh pRamsar**

The site is already notified or designated as Derryleckagh ASSI (declared 1994). The site boundary is coincident with the Derryleckagh Bog part only of Derryleckagh ASSI and excludes Derryleckagh Wood to the east. The new designation is not expected to lead to a change in management or permissible activity.

- **Teal Lough pRamsar**

The site is already notified or designated as Teal Lough and Slaghtfreeden Bogs ASSI (declared 1987) and Teal Lough Part II ASSI (declared 1995). The boundary of the site incorporates part of Teal Lough and Slaghtfreeden Bogs ASSI (Teal Lough part only), and all of Teal Lough Part II ASSI. The new designation is not expected to lead to a change in management or permissible activity.

5.2 Relationship with SACs

- **Derryleckagh pRamsar**

The site is already classified as Derryleckagh SAC (designated 2005). The site boundary is coincident with the Derryleckagh Bog part only of Derryleckagh SAC and excludes Derryleckagh Wood to the east.

- **Teal Lough pRamsar**

The site is already classified as Teal Lough SAC (designated 2005). The boundary of the site is entirely coincident with Teal Lough SAC.

As the Derryleckagh pRamsar and Teal Lough pRamsar areas are designated as SACs, and part of the Natura 2000 network, any development proposal is already subject to the provisions of the Habitats Regulations¹.

Under the requirements of the Habitats Regulations, the relevant competent authority is required to consider new plans or projects which have the potential to affect the designated interest feature/s of European (SAC and SPA) or Ramsar sites (directly or indirectly).

¹ As a matter of UK Government policy the Habitat Regulations (The Conservation (Natural Habitats, etc.) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1995 (as amended)) also apply to Ramsar sites, as specified in Policy NH 1 - European and Ramsar Sites - International of Planning Policy Statement 2: Natural Heritage (DOE, 2013) and includes listed or proposed Ramsar sites.

The Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) process aims to screen a project for any significant effects and on the undertaking of an appropriate assessment, whether there may be an adverse effect on the integrity of the site. This process will be informed by the site's Conservation Objectives. If the assessment concludes that there may be an adverse effect on the integrity of a European or Ramsar site, the project cannot proceed unless there are imperative reasons of overriding public interest and subject to securing necessary compensatory measures.

6. Ownership/occupation

- **Teal Lough pRamsar**

Most of the area is owned by DAERA's Forest Service, with the remaining area owned by a few private landowners. Part of the SAC area is currently managed by Ulster Wildlife as a Nature Reserve, to which its members have access by arrangement.

- **Derryleckagh pRamsar**

The site is in multiple private ownership, with a few main large landowners and numerous owners of smaller parcels of land. Sporting and grazing rights are also privately held.

All of the landowners or occupiers in the Derryleckagh pRamsar and Teal Lough pRamsar areas will receive notification of these proposals along with an invitation to comment.

As the areas are already designated as ASSI and SAC sites, the majority of landowners and occupiers will have already been identified by DAERA. These landowners or occupiers will have received communication or engaged with DAERA (or the former Department of the Environment (DOE)) with regard to activities in the ASSI or SAC sites over the period of time since designation. As such, activities taking place in these areas are not anticipated to require any additional management measures above and beyond those which already exist due to designation as ASSI or SAC.

7. References

Department of the Environment (DOE). 2013. *Planning Policy Statement 2: Natural Heritage*. [Online]. [Accessed 24 January 2018]. Available from: https://www.planningni.gov.uk/index/policy/policy_publications/planning_statements/pps2.htm

Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC). 2015. *UK Ramsar sites*. [Online]. [Accessed 24 January 2018]. Available from: <http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/page-1388>

Ramsar. 2014. *The Ramsar Sites Criteria*. [Online]. [Accessed 24 January 2018]. Available from: <https://www.ramsar.org/document/the-ramsar-sites-criteria>