



ENVIRONMENT
AND HERITAGE
SERVICE

Register entry UK9020042 under regulation 10 of The Conservation (Natural Habitats, etc) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1995.

This is the register entry for the European site known as Larne Lough Special Protection Area. The site has been classified by the Department of the Environment for Northern Ireland pursuant to Article 4(1) and/or 4(2) of Council Directive 79/409/EEC on the conservation of wild birds as a Special Protection Area.

The register reference number for this European site is UK9020042 and a folder, kept under this reference as part of the register, contains a map of the European site and a citation giving the reasons for the classification of the site as a Special Protection Area. The map and citation are identified by the register reference number and signed by me on the date of registration.

Other details of the European site are as follows:

Date of classification: 4 March 1997

Site centre location (1):

longitude: 05° 44' 38" W
latitude : 54° 48' 54" N

Area: 398 hectares

Priority status(2): N/A

Date of registration: 17 February 1998

Signed:

Dominic Kelly

**on behalf of the Department of the
Environment for Northern Ireland**

**Sealed with the Official Seal
of the Department of the Environment
for Northern Ireland on**

*R. Maclellan,
Civil Servant in Charge
BELFAST.*

1. This indicates the approximate centre of the site. Where the European site consists of several distinct areas, the co-ordinates of the most important sub-area are entered.
2. Indicates if the site has been identified under Article 4.2 of Council Directive 92/43/EEC on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora as hosting one or more priority natural habitat types or priority species.

S001_LMC.DOC

EC DIRECTIVE 2009/147/EC on the Conservation of Wild Birds

LARNE LOUGH SPECIAL PROTECTION AREA

Area: 395.94 hectares

Geographic co-ordinates:

05° 44' 38" W

54° 48' 54" N

Unitary Authority Mid and East Antrim Borough Council

County: County Antrim

Site description:

Larne Lough is situated on the Co. Antrim coast in the east of Northern Ireland. The Special Protection Area covers the inter-tidal area and all islands within the Larne Lough estuary south of the harbour area. Breeding sea-birds occur on both the natural island known as Swan Island (an SPA now subsumed within Larne Lough SPA) and the artificial island known as Blue Circle Island. The site boundary is entirely coincident with that of the Larne Lough Area of Special Scientific Interest. The SPA boundary is also entirely coincident with that of the Larne Lough Ramsar Site.

The principal interests are the breeding colonies of Roseate, Sandwich and Common Tern and the wintering population of Light-bellied Brent Goose.

At the time of classification in 1997 the site qualified for the following species:

Qualifying species:

The site qualifies under **Article 4.1** of the Directive (79/409/EEC) by supporting internationally important populations of the following species:

Annex 1 species	Count and Season	Period	% of population
Roseate Tern <i>Sterna dougallii</i>	6 pairs Breeding	5 year mean (1993-1997)	1.5 % Irish population
Common Tern <i>Sterna hirundo</i>	247 pairs Breeding	5 year mean (1993 - 1997)	8.0 % Irish population



An Agency within the Department of the
Environment
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Northern Ireland
Environment
Agency

The site also qualifies under **Article 4.2** of the Directive (79/409/EEC) by supporting internationally important populations of the following species:

Species relevant to Article 4.2	Count and Season	Period	% of population
Light-bellied Brent Goose <i>Branta bernicla hrota</i>	227 individuals Non-breeding	5yr peak mean 1991/92 to 1995/96	1.1 % of the international biogeographical population

Bird figures from WeBS survey programme

The 2001 UK SPA Review undertook a comprehensive review of qualifying sites. The following additional species was identified as meeting the qualifying criteria:

The site qualifies under **Article 4.1** of the Directive (79/409/EEC) by supporting internationally important populations of the following species:

Annex I species	Count and Season	Period	% of population
Sandwich Tern <i>Thalasseus sandvicensis</i>	192 pairs Breeding	5 year mean (1993 - 1997)	4.4 % of the all-Ireland population

More recently the populations of the above species have been as follows:

Species	Count and Season	Period	% of population
Sandwich Tern <i>Thalasseus sandvicensis</i>	413 pairs Breeding	5 year mean (2010 - 2014)	11.2 % of the all-Ireland population
Common Tern <i>Sterna hirundo</i>	295 pairs Breeding	5 year mean (2010 - 2014)	7.0 % of the all-Ireland population
Roseate Tern <i>Sterna dougallii</i>	1 pair Breeding	5 year mean (2010 - 2014)	<1 % of the all-Ireland population
Light-bellied Brent Goose <i>Branta bernicla hrota</i>	358 individuals – Non-breeding	5yr peak mean 2008/09 – 2012/13	0.9% of the international biogeographical population

Seabird data from annual site monitoring by RSPB and national seabird surveys coordinated by JNCC
Waterbird data from annual WeBS programme coordinated by BTO

While the Roseate Tern population is now less than 1% of the all-Ireland population, the Larne Lough population provides a notable increase in the geographical range of designated sites for this species in Ireland. Positive site management for this species will hopefully result in a population increase. Retention of such site selection features is in line with agreed UK practice.

This current reassessment of the bird populations occurring within Larne Lough SPA identifies the following species which additionally meet the qualifying criteria:

The site also qualifies under **Article 4.1** of the Directive (2009/147/EC) by regularly supporting internationally important populations of the following species:

Annex I species	Count and Season	Period	% of population
Mediterranean Gull <i>Ichthyaetus melanocephalus</i>	3 pairs Breeding	5 year mean (2010 – 2014)	30 % of the all-Ireland population (assessed against 2004 population estimate)

More recently the population significance of the above species has been as follows –

Species	Count and Season	Period	% of population
Mediterranean Gull <i>Ichthyaetus melanocephalus</i>	3 pairs Breeding	5 year mean (2010 – 2014)	10 % of the all-Ireland population (assessed against 2014 population estimate)

Status of SPA

Larne Lough Special Protection Area was renotified as a Special Protection Area on 23 November 2015.

Larne Lough Special Protection Area



Roseate Tern (Geoff Campbell)

A Special Protection Area (SPA) is a designation under the European Union Directive on the Conservation of Wild Birds. Under the Directive, Member States of the European Union have a duty to safeguard the habitats of migratory birds and certain particularly threatened birds.

With the correct management, SPAs have been shown to make a significant contribution to the conservation needs of these notable species, together with other species using the designated sites.



Sandwich Tern
(Laurie Campbell)

Collectively they provide a network of important sites at regional, national and international scales.

Larne Lough SPA has been selected because of the important populations of breeding Sandwich, Common and Roseate Tern together with the non-breeding population of Light-bellied Brent Geese. The SPA provides suitable habitat to meet their various needs including sites for breeding (for the Tern species), feeding and roosting.

The tern species are migratory visitors, coming to Larne Lough to breed, using Swan Island and Blue Circle Island for nesting and feeding on a range of small fish in adjoining coastal waters. Sand-eel is a particularly important prey item.

After breeding Sandwich Tern spend our winter around the coasts of the western

Mediterranean as well as western and southern Africa, although increasingly some birds are present through the winter.



Common Tern
(Laurie Campbell)

Common Tern also avoid the winter blues by spending our winter in coastal waters around southern Africa.

Our rarest tern species, Roseate Tern, also heads to Africa, spending our winter around the coast of western Africa.



Light-bellied Brent Geese
(Geoff Campbell)

In contrast, the non-breeding Light-bellied Brent Geese enjoy a relatively mild winter in Northern Ireland compared to conditions they would be exposed to if they remained on their breeding grounds. Their breeding areas are in high latitudes of north-east Canada and they migrate via Greenland and Iceland to Ireland every year, making the return journey in the spring back to the breeding grounds.

Ireland is a particularly important site for Light-bellied Brent Geese, with almost all of the world's breeding population wintering on coastal sites here.

Most of these visitors spend at least some time feeding on Lough Foyle and particularly Strangford Lough before dispersing to other sites including Larne Lough. The geese are highly dependent on inter-tidal swards of Eel-grass as their main food although they will also eat a range of

other grasses and algae.

The purpose of the SPA is to ensure that shoreline and intertidal areas of Larne Lough are managed to meet all the



Light-bellied Brent Geese
(Paul Corbett)

needs of these species while they are with us and once they migrate elsewhere, that the habitats they use are maintained year-round.

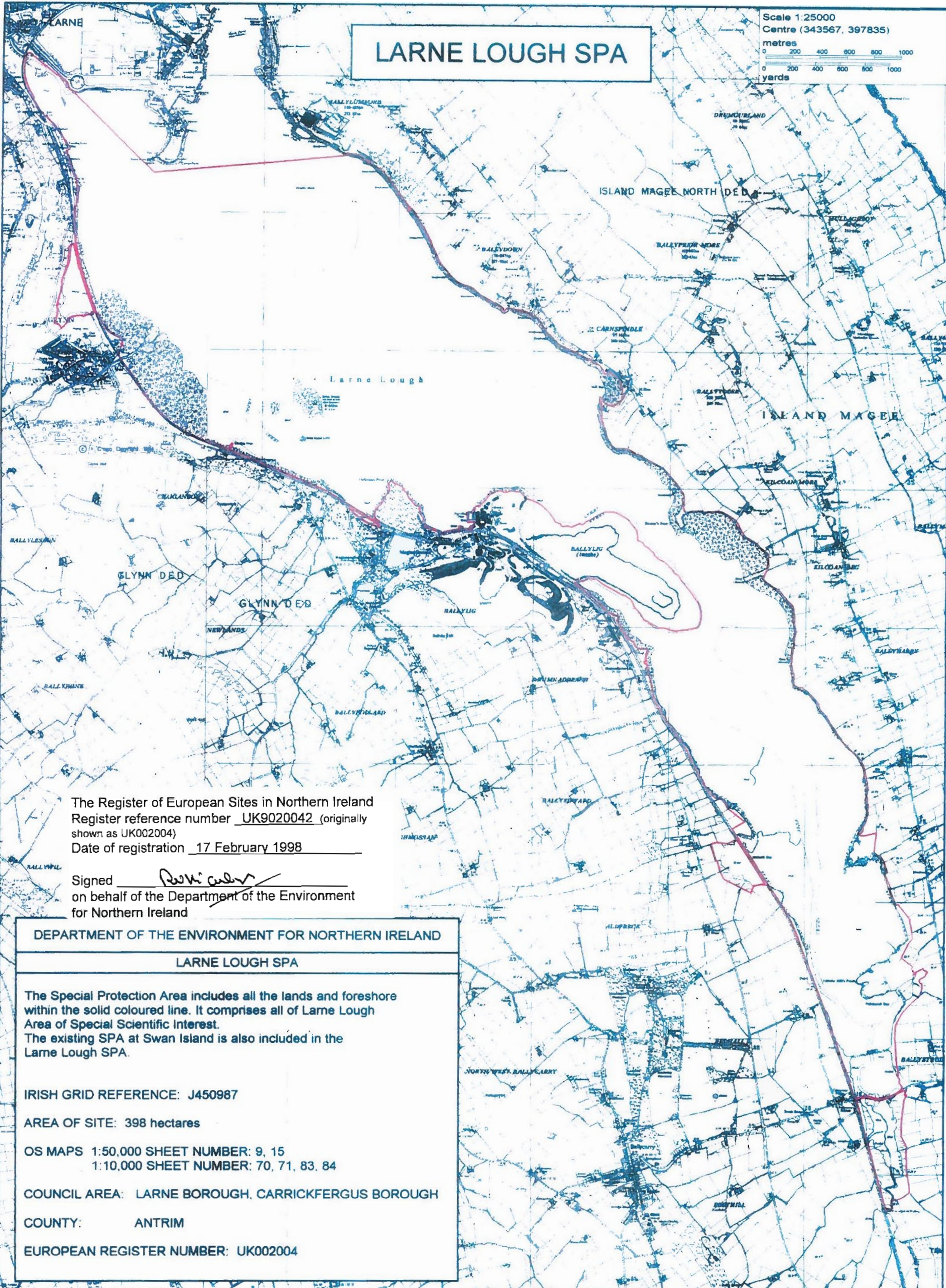
The Larne Lough area is of course a very busy place with a lot of human activities including businesses, industry, shipping, commercial fishing

and shellfish aquaculture and land and water-based recreational activities.

The SPA designation means that any new projects, developments or other significant activities (including changes to existing activities) within or beyond the site are assessed to ensure they will have no direct or indirect impacts on these bird populations or the habitats on which they depend.

The objective is to achieve a site that continues to benefit our society, but not at the cost of losing these internationally important bird populations.

Northern Ireland Environment Agency aims to work with site owners and users to ensure that special places like Larne Lough are protected for the future.



LARNE LOUGH SPA

Scale 1:25000
 Centre (343567, 397835)
 metres
 0 200 400 600 800 1000
 yards
 0 200 400 600 800 1000

The Register of European Sites in Northern Ireland
 Register reference number UK9020042 (originally shown as UK002004)
 Date of registration 17 February 1998

Signed *Pauline Colver*
 on behalf of the Department of the Environment for Northern Ireland

DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT FOR NORTHERN IRELAND

LARNE LOUGH SPA

The Special Protection Area includes all the lands and foreshore within the solid coloured line. It comprises all of Larne Lough Area of Special Scientific Interest. The existing SPA at Swan Island is also included in the Larne Lough SPA.

IRISH GRID REFERENCE: J450987

AREA OF SITE: 398 hectares

OS MAPS 1:50,000 SHEET NUMBER: 9, 15
 1:10,000 SHEET NUMBER: 70, 71, 83, 84

COUNCIL AREA: LARNE BOROUGH, CARRICKFERGUS BOROUGH

COUNTY: ANTRIM

EUROPEAN REGISTER NUMBER: UK002004