



Ramsar Information Sheet

Published on 7 March 2023

Update version, previously published on : 11 June 1996

Ireland

Sandymount Strand/Tolka Estuary



Designation date	7 June 1996
Site number	832
Coordinates	53°20'22"N 06°11'50"W
Area	643,00 ha

Color codes

Fields back-shaded in light blue relate to data and information required only for RIS updates.

Note that some fields concerning aspects of Part 3, the Ecological Character Description of the RIS (tinted in purple), are not expected to be completed as part of a standard RIS, but are included for completeness so as to provide the requested consistency between the RIS and the format of a 'full' Ecological Character Description, as adopted in Resolution X.15 (2008). If a Contracting Party does have information available that is relevant to these fields (for example from a national format Ecological Character Description) it may, if it wishes to, include information in these additional fields.

1 - Summary

Summary

Sandymount Strand/Tolka Estuary lies on the east coast of Ireland. The site is situated adjacent to Dublin City, the capital of Ireland; an area of intense development with a large seaport. It comprises a substantial part of Dublin Bay - south of the River Liffey to Dún Laoghaire, and also includes a small section of the Tolka Estuary to the north of the River Liffey.

The sediments of the Sandymount Strand areas of the Site are predominantly well-aerated sands, while those of within the Tolka Estuary section are muddier with a high organic content. Some bedrock shore occurs near Dún Laoghaire. The landward boundary is now almost entirely artificially embanked and bordered by road or railway.

The Site is designated an Scientific Area of Conservation due to the extensive intertidal mud and sand flats, which extend for almost 3km at their widest. The sands support the largest stand of seagrass beds (*Zostera noltii*) on the East Coast.

The Site supports an excellent diversity of wintering waterfowl, regularly supporting in excess of 20 000 waterbirds. Sandymount Strand/Tolka Estuary is designated as a EU Natura 2000 Site (Special Protection Area) due to the presence of nationally and internationally important populations of species listed on Annex I/II of E.U. Birds Directive. Under this designation the wetland habitat is also protected as a resource for the regularly-occurring migratory waterbirds that utilise it. An internationally important population of Light-bellied Brent Goose, Black tailed Godwit and Bar-tailed Godwit occur at the site; and a further 19 species occur at nationally important numbers. South Dublin Bay is the premier site in Ireland for the Mediterranean Gull *Larus melanocephalus*, and is a regular autumn roosting ground for significant numbers of terns. A number of these bird species are listed on Annex I of the Birds Directive.

Sandymount Strand/Tolka Estuary occurs within the UNESCO Dublin Bay Biosphere and the Dublin Bay Important Bird Area.

At low tide, the inner parts of the south bay are used for amenity purposes. Bait -digging is a regular activity on the sandy flats. The proximity of the Site to Dublin City results in it being a very popular recreational area. It is also important for educational and research purposes.

2 - Data & location

2.1 - Formal data

2.1.1 - Name and address of the compiler of this RIS

Responsible compiler

Institution/agency	National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage
Postal address	National Parks and Wildlife Service, 90 North King Street, Smithfield, Dublin, Ireland D07 N7CV

National Ramsar Administrative Authority

Institution/agency	National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage
Postal address	National Parks and Wildlife Service, 90 North King Street, Smithfield, Dublin, Ireland D07 N7CV

2.1.2 - Period of collection of data and information used to compile the RIS

From year

To year

2.1.3 - Name of the Ramsar Site

Official name (in English, French or Spanish)

2.1.4 - Changes to the boundaries and area of the Site since its designation or earlier update

(Update) A. Changes to Site boundary Yes No

(Update) B. Changes to Site area No change to area

(Update) For secretariat only: This update is an extension

2.1.5 - Changes to the ecological character of the Site

(Update) 6b i. Has the ecological character of the Ramsar Site (including applicable Criteria) changed since the previous RIS?

2.2 - Site location

2.2.1 - Defining the Site boundaries

b) Digital map/image

<2 file(s) uploaded>

Former maps

Boundaries description

The boundary of Sandymount Strand/Tolka Estuary Ramsar site was delineated as the same boundary as the original Sandymount Strand/Tolka Estuary Special Protection Area in 1994 (but the latter was subsequently enlarged). This site is contained within the boundaries of both the EU Birds Directive (2009/147/EC) Special Protection Area for South Dublin Bay and River Tolka Estuary (004024) together with the EU Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC) boundary for South Dublin Bay Special Area of Conservation (000210). Although the Ramsar site is smaller it is an integral part of the wider wetland complex that is SPA and SAC. Details of the SAC/SPA can be found on the NPWS website at: <https://www.npws.ie/protected-sites>. Within this area a number of GIS data layers were used to define the Ramsar habitats within the site. These included:

- NPWS data (Site-Specific Conservation Objectives)
- CORINE (Co-Ordinated Information on the Environment) land cover data sets (2012).
- Bing Maps Aerial - © Harris Corp, Earthstar Geographics LLC © 2017 Intermap Earthstar Geographics SIO © 2017 Microsoft Corporation.
- NPWS Mapping layers: Saltmarsh and Marine Community types

The mapped layers were subsequently inspected by a site visit to confirm the accuracy of the mapped habitats. Discrepancies between the original boundary for the Ramsar site and the current boundary are likely as a result of mapping projection anomalies.

2.2.2 - General location

RIS for Site no. 832, Sandymount Strand/Tolka Estuary, Ireland

a) In which large administrative region does the site lie?

b) What is the nearest town or population centre?

2.2.3 - For wetlands on national boundaries only

a) Does the wetland extend onto the territory of one or more other countries? Yes No

b) Is the site adjacent to another designated Ramsar Site on the territory of another Contracting Party? Yes No

2.2.4 - Area of the Site

Official area, in hectares (ha):

Area, in hectares (ha) as calculated from GIS boundaries

2.2.5 - Biogeography

Biogeographic regions

Regionalisation scheme(s)	Biogeographic region
Marine Ecoregions of the World (MEOW)	Atlantic
EU biogeographic regionalization	Atlantic

Other biogeographic regionalisation scheme

3 - Why is the Site important?

3.1 - Ramsar Criteria and their justification

Criterion 1: Representative, rare or unique natural or near-natural wetland types

Hydrological services provided

The estuarine and intertidal habitats and the communities (plant and invertebrate) which they support are important for nutrient cycling, carbon sequestration and sediment trapping. With the cycling of carbon and nutrients estuarine systems have a role in climate regulation. The estuary provides natural filtration services which are important for coastal water quality, however where input levels (e.g. chemicals, organic waste) are excessive the natural character of the estuary can be greatly affected. While the coastal hinterland at this site has been modified for some time owing the road and urban development, the intertidal habitats remain of importance within the context of coastal dynamics with implications for erosion processes, storm and flood protection. The intertidal sediments of Sandymount Strand play a role in the natural control of flooding and in mitigating the effects of storms.

Other ecosystem services provided

The site is important in terms of habitat provision for biodiversity as it is of international importance for EU Annex habitats and for wintering waterbirds. The site provides cultural services: • Recreation and tourism: this central Dublin location is widely used by members of the public for a range of recreational activities • Scientific and educational: some long-term monitoring studies underway, including annual monitoring of non-breeding waterbirds.

Other reasons

Sandymount Strand/Tolka Estuary is designated as a EU Natura 2000 site (Scientific Area of Conservation Area) as it contains representative and natural examples of marine habitats and natural wetland types within the Atlantic biogeographic region, i.e. estuaries, tidal mudflats, sandflats and saltmarshes. Combined these habitats provide an interconnected and interdependent mosaic of habitats. Sandymount Strand/Tolka Estuary occurs within the UNESCO Dublin Bay Biosphere and the Dublin Bay Important Bird Area.

Criterion 2 : Rare species and threatened ecological communities

Optional text box to provide further information

Rare (high conservation concern) wintering bird species are defined as:
Regularly occurring species (occurring in at least 3 out of 10 seasons of monitoring or 30% of seasons; based on I-Webs data from 2006/07 to 2015/16) and that are:
- Red Listed in Ireland's national Red List (Birds of Conservation Concern in Ireland (BoCCI) published by Colhoun and Cummins (2013)
- Classified as VU in IUCN Global and/or European regional list
- Listed in Annex I of the European Union Birds Directive

Criterion 3 : Biological diversity

Justification

Sandymount Strand/ Tolka Estuary Ramsar Site contains an excellent and extensive area of intertidal mud and sand which is of importance as a habitat for wintering waterbirds. The Site also includes a significant bed of Eel grass, areas of intertidal biogenic reef and a small section of saltmarsh. The Site is of particular importance in maintaining the biodiversity of the complex of small fragmented wetland habitats on the east coast of Ireland which are limited in their extent and distribution. South Dublin Bay is the premier site in Ireland for the Mediterranean Gull (*Larus melanocephalus*), and is a regular autumn roosting ground for significant numbers of terns.

Criterion 4 : Support during critical life cycle stage or in adverse conditions

Optional text box to provide further information

The site is of international importance as the extensive intertidal habitats support important populations of staging, over wintering and post breeding waterbirds. The intertidal mud and sandflat habitats, together with the wider complex of saltmarsh, dune, and inshore waters remain ice free over the winter months and provide key foraging and resting habitat for over wintering and migratory waterbirds.

Criterion 5 : >20,000 waterbirds

Overall waterbird numbers

Start year

End year

Source of data:

Optional text box to provide further information

This Ramsar site supports an excellent diversity of wintering waterfowl, regularly supporting in excess of 20 000 waterbirds. I-WeBS data (2010-2015) lists internationally important populations of the Light-bellied Brent Goose, Bar-tailed Godwit and the Black-tailed Godwit occurring at the site. A further 19 species occur at nationally important numbers.

Criterion 6 : >1% waterbird population

Optional text box to provide further information

Light-bellied Brent Goose winter at this site in numbers of international importance. There are eight populations of Brent Goose including three populations of the Light-bellied hrota subspecies. The Light-bellied Brent goose population that breeds in Canada's eastern Queen Elizabeth Islands, winters almost entirely in Ireland, with small numbers in Britain, France, the Channel Islands and Spain (Lewis et al, 2019).

3.2 - Plant species whose presence relates to the international importance of the site

Phylum	Scientific name	Criterion 2	Criterion 3	Criterion 4	IUCN Red List	CITES Appendix I	Other status	Justification
Plantae								
TRACHEOPHYTA/ LILIOPSIDA	<i>Zostera noltii</i>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	LC	<input type="checkbox"/>	Annex I (Habitats Directive)	Annex I

There is a bed of Dwarf Eelgrass (*Zostera noltii*) within the site (below Merrion Gates) which is the largest stand on the east coast. Green algae (*Ulva* spp.) are distributed throughout the area at a low density.

3.3 - Animal species whose presence relates to the international importance of the site

Phylum	Scientific name	Species qualifies under criterion				Species contributes under criterion				Pop. Size	Period of pop. Est.	% occurrence 1)	IUCN Red List	CITES Appendix I	CMS Appendix I	Other Status	Justification
		2	4	6	9	3	5	7	8								
Birds																	
CHORDATA/ AVES	<i>Anas crecca</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	88	2011-2015		LC	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Amber-listed in Birds of Conservation Concern in Ireland (Colhoun and Cummins 2013)	Part of wintering assemblage, maintaining biodiversity
CHORDATA/ AVES	<i>Anas penelope</i>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	16	2011-2015			<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Red-listed in Birds of Conservation Concern in Ireland (Colhoun and Cummins 2013), and Vulnerable classification IUCN Global & Europe region)	National (BoCCI) classification, IUCN classification, part of wintering assemblage

RIS for Site no. 832, Sandymount Strand/Tolka Estuary, Ireland

Phylum	Scientific name	Species qualifies under criterion				Species contributes under criterion				Pop. Size	Period of pop. Est.	% occurrence 1)	IUCN Red List	CITES Appendix I	CMS Appendix I	Other Status	Justification
		2	4	6	9	3	5	7	8								
CHORDATA/AVES	<i>Branta bernicla hrota</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	1380	2011-2015	3.4		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Amber-listed in Birds of Conservation Concern in Ireland (Colhoun and Cummins 2013)	Part of wintering assemblage, maintaining biodiversity, >1% pop - Internationally important numbers of the <i>Branta bernicla hrota</i> population of Brent Goose.
CHORDATA/AVES	<i>Calidris alpina</i>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	2060	2011-2015		LC	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Red-listed in Birds of Conservation Concern in Ireland (Colhoun and Cummins 2013), and Vulnerable classification IUCN Global & Europe region)	National (BoCCI) classification, IUCN classification, part of wintering assemblage
CHORDATA/AVES	<i>Calidris canutus</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	2288	2011-2015		NT	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Amber-listed in Birds of Conservation Concern in Ireland (Colhoun and Cummins 2013)	Part of wintering assemblage, maintaining biodiversity
CHORDATA/AVES	<i>Cygnus olor</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	3	2011-2015		LC	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Amber-listed in Birds of Conservation Concern in Ireland (Colhoun and Cummins 2013)	Part of wintering assemblage, maintaining biodiversity
CHORDATA/AVES	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	14	2011-2015		LC	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Annex I listed (EU Birds Directive)	Annex I listing
CHORDATA/AVES	<i>Gallinago gallinago</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	25	2011-2015		LC	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Amber-listed in Birds of Conservation Concern in Ireland (Colhoun and Cummins 2013)	Part of wintering assemblage, maintaining biodiversity
CHORDATA/AVES	<i>Gavia immer</i>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	1	2011-2015		LC	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Listed on Annex I (Birds Directive), Amber-listed in Birds of Conservation Concern in Ireland (Colhoun and Cummins 2013), and Endangered classification (IUCN Europe region)	Annex I listing and IUCN classifications, part of wintering assemblage.
CHORDATA/AVES	<i>Gavia stellata</i>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	5	2011-2015		LC	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Listed on Annex I (Birds Directive), Amber-listed in Birds of Conservation Concern in Ireland (Colhoun and Cummins 2013)	Annex I listing, part of wintering assemblage.
CHORDATA/AVES	<i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	1553	2011-2015		NT	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Amber-listed in Birds of Conservation Concern in Ireland (Colhoun and Cummins 2013), and Vulnerable classification (IUCN Europe region)	IUCN classification, part of wintering assemblage.
CHORDATA/AVES	<i>Ichthyaeetus melanocephalus</i>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	2	2011-2015			<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Listed on Annex I (Birds Directive), Amber-listed in Birds of Conservation Concern in Ireland (Colhoun and Cummins 2013)	Annex I listing and part of staging assemblage.
CHORDATA/AVES	<i>Limosa lapponica</i>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	883	2011-2015		NT	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Listed on Annex I (Birds Directive), Amber-listed in Birds of Conservation Concern in Ireland (Colhoun and Cummins 2013)	Annex I listing, part of wintering assemblage.
CHORDATA/AVES	<i>Limosa limosa</i>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	269	2011-2015		NT	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Amber-listed in Birds of Conservation Concern in Ireland (Colhoun and Cummins 2013), and Vulnerable classification (IUCN Europe region)	IUCN classification, part of wintering assemblage
CHORDATA/AVES	<i>Numenius arquata</i>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	92	2011-2015		NT	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Red-listed in Birds of Conservation Concern in Ireland (Colhoun and Cummins 2013), and Vulnerable classification (IUCN Europe region)	National (BoCCI) and IUCN classifications, part of wintering assemblage.
CHORDATA/AVES	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	62	2011-2015		LC	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Amber-listed in Birds of Conservation Concern in Ireland (Colhoun and Cummins 2013)	Part of wintering assemblage, maintaining biodiversity
CHORDATA/AVES	<i>Podiceps cristatus</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	443	2011-2015		LC	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Amber-listed in Birds of Conservation Concern in Ireland (Colhoun and Cummins 2013)	Part of wintering assemblage, maintaining biodiversity
CHORDATA/AVES	<i>Sterna hirundo</i>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	1	2011-2015		LC	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Listed on Annex I (Birds Directive), Amber-listed in Birds of Conservation Concern in Ireland (Colhoun and Cummins 2013)	Annex I listing, staging/passage site for post breeding tern assemblage.
CHORDATA/AVES	<i>Tadorna tadorna</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	10	2011-2015		LC	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Amber-listed in Birds of Conservation Concern in Ireland (Colhoun and Cummins 2013)	Part of wintering assemblage, maintaining biodiversity
CHORDATA/AVES	<i>Thalasseus sandvicensis</i>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	10	2011-2015		LC	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Listed on Annex I (Birds Directive), Amber-listed in Birds of Conservation Concern in Ireland (Colhoun and Cummins 2013)	Annex I listing, staging/passage site for post breeding tern assemblage.

Phylum	Scientific name	Species qualifies under criterion				Species contributes under criterion				Pop. Size	Period of pop. Est.	% occurrence ¹⁾	IUCN Red List	CITES Appendix I	CMS Appendix I	Other Status	Justification
		2	4	6	9	3	5	7	8								
CHORDATA/ AVES	<i>Tringa totanus</i>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	511	2011-2015		LC	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Red-listed in Birds of Conservation Concern in Ireland (Colhoun and Cummins 2013), and Vulnerable classification IUCN Global & Europe region)	National (BoCCI) classification, part of wintering assemblage.
CHORDATA/ AVES	<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	3	2011-2015		NT	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Red-listed in Birds of Conservation Concern in Ireland (Colhoun and Cummins 2013), and Vulnerable classification (IUCN Europe region)	National (BoCCI) and IUCN classifications, part of wintering assemblage.

1) Percentage of the total biogeographic population at the site

Wintering bird species listed under 3.3 have been selected based on an assessment of Irish Wetland Bird Survey data from the period 2006/07 to 2015/16. Sandymount Strand/Tolka Estuary is a Special Protection Area (SPA) for birds, however not all species listed for the SPA may be listed under 3.3 (or vice versa) as the SPA designation is based on other data and criteria.

Sandymount Strand/Tolka Estuary is designated as an EU Natura 2000 site (Special Protection Area). The area is designated due to the presence of the following Annex I and/or migratory species: Light Bellied Brent Goose (*Branta bernicla hrota*), Oystercatcher (*Haematopus ostralegus*), Ringed Plover (*Charadrius hiaticula*), Grey Plover (*Pluvialis squatarola*), Knot (*Calidris canutus*), Sanderling (*Calidris alba*), Dunlin (*Calidris alpina*), Bar-tailed Godwit (*Limosa lapponica*), Redshank (*Tringa totanus*), Black-headed Gull (*Chroicocephalus ridibundus*), Roseate Tern (*Sterna dougallii*), Common Tern (*Sterna hirundo*) and Arctic Tern (*Sterna paradisaea*). Under this SPA designation the wetland habitat is also protected as a source for the regularly-occurring migratory water birds that utilise it.

3.4 - Ecological communities whose presence relates to the international importance of the site

Name of ecological community	Community qualifies under Criterion 2?	Description	Justification
Saltmarsh community	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Atlantic salt meadows and Mediterranean salt meadows occur within the site.	This community has a restricted distribution within the biogeographical range.
Zostera noltii community	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	The Site supports a significant area of eelgrass.	This habitat has a restricted distribution in Ireland. It is considered threatened on the OSPAR list of threatened or declining habitats.
[1140] Tidal Mudflats and Sandflats	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		Annex habitat (Habitats Directive)
[1310] Salicornia and other annuals colonising mud and sand	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		Annex habitat (Habitats Directive)

Optional text box to provide further information

There are additional ecological communities associated with the larger South Dublin Bay and River Tolka Estuary SPA and North Bull Island SAC but they lie outside of the Ramsar Site. Nonetheless the Ramsar Site is an integral part of this wider wetland system and the communities (birds, invertebrates, marine mammals) which it supports.

4 - What is the Site like? (Ecological character description)

4.1 - Ecological character

Sandymount Strand/Tolka Estuary Ramsar Site is an intertidal system of sandflats with smaller elements of intertidal reef, an eelgrass bed and a small area of saltmarsh. The sediments of the main section of the Site at Sandymount Strand are comprised of fine sands with *Angulus tenuis* community complex with a well-developed macro invertebrate fauna. The sediments of the Tolka Estuary area are muddier and more anoxic. Various species of annelids, bivalves and small gastropods occur. A bed of the intertidal Eel grass (*Zostera noltii*) occurs on the sandy sediments in the southern section of the Site.

The Site is important for its assemblage of migratory waterbirds, including internationally important numbers of Brent Geese, which use the rich intertidal mud and sandflat habitats for foraging and roosting. The Site is also important for large numbers of roosting gulls and terns (post breeding/staging/passage). Sandymount Strand/Tolka Estuary is part of a larger wetland complex which includes all of Sandymount Strand, the nearshore waters of Dublin Bay, all of the Tolka Estuary and North Bull Island. The interconnectedness of the site is demonstrated not least by the movement of waterbirds between all parts of Dublin Bay. #

The proximity of the Site to the large urban area of Dublin lends to its high amenity use for water sports, walking and recreation. Bait-digging is also a regular activity on the sandy flats.

4.2 - What wetland type(s) are in the site?

Marine or coastal wetlands

Wetland types (code and name)	Local name	Ranking of extent (1: greatest - 4: least)	Area (ha) of wetland type	Justification of Criterion 1
D: Rocky marine shores	Intertidal reef	2	1.5	Representative
G: Intertidal mud, sand or salt flats	Intertidal mudflats and sandflats	1	633	Representative
H: Intertidal marshes	Saltmarsh	3	0.5	Representative

4.3 - Biological components

4.3.1 - Plant species

<no data available>

4.3.2 - Animal species

<no data available>

4.4 - Physical components

4.4.1 - Climate

Climatic region	Subregion
C: Moist Mid-Latitude climate with mild winters	Cfb: Marine west coast (Mild with no dry season, warm summer)

4.4.2 - Geomorphic setting

a) Minimum elevation above sea level (in metres)

a) Maximum elevation above sea level (in metres)

Entire river basin

Upper part of river basin

Middle part of river basin

Lower part of river basin

More than one river basin

Not in river basin

Coastal

Please name the river basin or basins. If the site lies in a sub-basin, please also name the larger river basin. For a coastal/marine site, please name the sea or ocean.

Irish Sea

4.4.3 - Soil

Mineral

(Update) Changes at RIS update No change Increase Decrease Unknown

Organic

(Update) Changes at RIS update No change Increase Decrease Unknown

No available information

Are soil types subject to change as a result of changing hydrological conditions (e.g., increased salinity or acidification)? Yes No

Please provide further information on the soil (optional)

The Site itself is largely marine and comprised of sands and muds and tidal marsh.

4.4.4 - Water regime

Water permanence

Presence?	Changes at RIS update
Usually permanent water present	

Source of water that maintains character of the site

Presence?	Predominant water source	Changes at RIS update
Marine water	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No change
Water inputs from surface water	<input type="checkbox"/>	unknown

Water destination

Presence?	Changes at RIS update
Marine	No change

Stability of water regime

Presence?	Changes at RIS update
Water levels fluctuating (including tidal)	No change

4.4.5 - Sediment regime

Sediment regime unknown

4.4.6 - Water pH

Alkaline (pH>7.4)

(Update) Changes at RIS update No change Increase Decrease Unknown

Unknown

4.4.7 - Water salinity

Mixohaline (brackish)/Mixosaline (0.5-30 g/l)

(Update) Changes at RIS update No change Increase Decrease Unknown

Euhaline/Eusaline (30-40 g/l)

(Update) Changes at RIS update No change Increase Decrease Unknown

Unknown

4.4.8 - Dissolved or suspended nutrients in water

Unknown

Please provide further information on dissolved or suspended nutrients (optional):

Coastal Waterbody WFD Status 2010-2015 for Dublin Bay is GOOD. The site is subject to natural eutrophication at a medium level and is under threat (high) from the accumulation of organic material. These threats are taken from NPWS (2015b, 2015e).

4.4.9 - Features of the surrounding area which may affect the Site

Please describe whether, and if so how, the landscape and ecological characteristics in the area surrounding the Ramsar Site differ from the site itself: i) broadly similar ii) significantly different

Surrounding area has greater urbanisation or development

Surrounding area has higher human population density

Surrounding area has more intensive agricultural use

Surrounding area has significantly different land cover or habitat types

Please describe other ways in which the surrounding area is different:

Large centres of human habitation lie adjacent to this Site i.e. Sandymount and Dun Laoghaire. The Site is situated adjacent to Dublin City, the capital of Ireland; an area of intense development with a large seaport.

4.5 - Ecosystem services

4.5.1 - Ecosystem services/benefits

Provisioning Services

Ecosystem service	Examples	Importance/Extent/Significance
Food for humans	Sustenance for humans (e.g., fish, molluscs, grains)	Low

Regulating Services

Ecosystem service	Examples	Importance/Extent/Significance
Erosion protection	Soil, sediment and nutrient retention	Medium
Pollution control and detoxification	Water purification/waste treatment or dilution	Low
Climate regulation	Local climate regulation/buffering of change	Low
Climate regulation	Regulation of greenhouse gases, temperature, precipitation and other climactic processes	Low
Hazard reduction	Coastal shoreline and river bank stabilization and storm protection	Medium
Hazard reduction	Flood control, flood storage	Medium

Cultural Services

Ecosystem service	Examples	Importance/Extent/Significance
Recreation and tourism	Picnics, outings, touring	High
Recreation and tourism	Nature observation and nature-based tourism	High
Recreation and tourism	Water sports and activities	High
Scientific and educational	Long-term monitoring site	Medium
Scientific and educational	Important knowledge systems, importance for research (scientific reference area or site)	Medium

Supporting Services

Ecosystem service	Examples	Importance/Extent/Significance
Biodiversity	Supports a variety of all life forms including plants, animals and microorganisms, the genes they contain, and the ecosystems of which they form a part	Medium
Soil formation	Sediment retention	Low
Soil formation	Accumulation of organic matter	Low
Nutrient cycling	Carbon storage/sequestration	Low
Nutrient cycling	Storage, recycling, processing and acquisition of nutrients	Low

Within the site:

Outside the site:

Have studies or assessments been made of the economic valuation of ecosystem services provided by this Ramsar Site? Yes No Unknown

4.5.2 - Social and cultural values

i) the site provides 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) the site has exceptional cultural traditions or records of former civilizations that have influenced the ecological character of the wetland

iii) the ecological character of the wetland depends on its interaction with local communities or indigenous peoples

iv) 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

<no data available>

4.6 - Ecological processes

<no data available>

5 - How is the Site managed? (Conservation and management)

5.1 - Land tenure and responsibilities (Managers)

5.1.1 - Land tenure/ownership

Public ownership

Category	Within the Ramsar Site	In the surrounding area
Provincial/region/state government	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Private ownership

Category	Within the Ramsar Site	In the surrounding area
Foundation/non-governmental organization/trust	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other types of private/individual owner(s)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Provide further information on the land tenure / ownership regime (optional):

Boosterstown marsh was leased by An Taisce in the 1970's, the marsh is now managed as a Nature Reserve (and lies directly adjacent to the Ramsar Site).
All of the foreshore of Ireland is deemed owned by the State, unless a valid alternative title is provided. The foreshore of Ireland is classed as the land and seabed between the high water of ordinary or medium tides (shown HWM on Ordnance Survey maps) and the twelve-mile limit (12 nautical miles equals approximately 22.24 kilometers). Foreshore also covers tidal areas of rivers particularly estuaries (Housing.gov.ie).

5.1.2 - Management authority

Please list the local office / offices of any agency or organization responsible for managing the site:

National Parks & Wildlife Service (NPWS), Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage
Dublin City Council.
Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).
Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment.
Marine Institute.

Provide the name and/or title of the person or people with responsibility for the wetland:

Maurice Eakin

Postal address:

National Parks and Wildlife Service,
90 North King Street,
Smithfield, Dublin,
Ireland
D07 N7CV

E-mail address:

maurice.eakin@housing.gov.ie

5.2 - Ecological character threats and responses (Management)

5.2.1 - Factors (actual or likely) adversely affecting the Site's ecological character

Human settlements (non agricultural)

Factors adversely affecting site	Actual threat	Potential threat	Within the site	Changes	In the surrounding area	Changes
Housing and urban areas	High impact		<input type="checkbox"/>	No change	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No change
Commercial and industrial areas	High impact		<input type="checkbox"/>	No change	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No change

Transportation and service corridors

Factors adversely affecting site	Actual threat	Potential threat	Within the site	Changes	In the surrounding area	Changes
Roads and railroads	High impact		<input type="checkbox"/>	No change	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No change

Biological resource use

Factors adversely affecting site	Actual threat	Potential threat	Within the site	Changes	In the surrounding area	Changes
Fishing and harvesting aquatic resources	Medium impact		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No change	<input type="checkbox"/>	No change

Human intrusions and disturbance

Factors adversely affecting site	Actual threat	Potential threat	Within the site	Changes	In the surrounding area	Changes
Recreational and tourism activities	Medium impact		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No change	<input type="checkbox"/>	No change

Natural system modifications

Factors adversely affecting site	Actual threat	Potential threat	Within the site	Changes	In the surrounding area	Changes
Vegetation clearance/ land conversion	High impact		<input type="checkbox"/>	No change	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No change

Pollution

Factors adversely affecting site	Actual threat	Potential threat	Within the site	Changes	In the surrounding area	Changes
Household sewage, urban waste water	High impact		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No change	<input type="checkbox"/>	No change
Industrial and military effluents	High impact		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No change	<input type="checkbox"/>	No change

Please describe any other threats (optional):

The site is subject to natural eutrophication at a medium level and is under threat (high) from the accumulation of organic material. These threats are taken from NPWS (2015b, 2015e).

5.2.2 - Legal conservation status

Global legal designations

Designation type	Name of area	Online information url	Overlap with Ramsar Site
UNESCO Biosphere Reserve	Dublin Bay	http://www.unesco.org/new/en/natural-sciences/environment/ecological-sciences/biosphere-reserves/europe-north-america/ireland/dublin-bay/	whole

Regional (international) legal designations

Designation type	Name of area	Online information url	Overlap with Ramsar Site
EU Natura 2000	Sandymount Strand/Tolka Estuary Site Code 004024	https://www.npws.ie/protected-sites/spa/004024	whole
EU Natura 2000	South Dublin Bay SAC Site Code 0000210	https://www.npws.ie/protected-sites/sac/000210	whole

Non-statutory designations

Designation type	Name of area	Online information url	Overlap with Ramsar Site
Important Bird Area	Dublin Bay	http://datazone.birdlife.org/site/factsheet/dublin-bay-iba-ireland	whole

5.2.3 - IUCN protected areas categories (2008)

- Ia Strict Nature Reserve
- Ib Wilderness Area: protected area managed mainly for wilderness protection
- II National Park: protected area managed mainly for ecosystem protection and recreation
- III Natural Monument: protected area managed mainly for conservation of specific natural features
- IV Habitat/Species Management Area: protected area managed mainly for conservation through management intervention
- V Protected Landscape/Seascape: protected area managed mainly for landscape/seascape conservation and recreation
- VI Managed Resource Protected Area: protected area managed mainly for the sustainable use of natural ecosystems

5.2.4 - Key conservation measures

Legal protection

Measures	Status
Legal protection	Implemented

Habitat

Measures	Status
Catchment management initiatives/controls	Implemented
Land conversion controls	Implemented

Species

Measures	Status
Threatened/rare species management programmes	Implemented

Human Activities

Measures	Status
Regulation/management of wastes	Implemented
Fisheries management/regulation	Implemented
Harvest controls/poaching enforcement	Implemented
Regulation/management of recreational activities	Implemented
Research	Implemented

Other:

The Sandymount Strand/Tolka Estuary Ramsar site lies within the South Dublin Bay SAC (0000210) and the South Dublin Bay and River Tolka Estuary SPA (004024). Under the European and national legislation, Ireland must maintain at a favourable conservation status the areas designated as Special Protection Areas. The Government and its agencies are responsible for the implementation and enforcement of regulations that will ensure the ecological integrity of these sites. Conservation objectives of this Site have been set for the SAC and SPA and are listed below; these can be accessed on NPWS.ie.

- To maintain or restore the favourable conservation condition of the Annex I habitat(s) for which the SAC has been selected: Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide [1140].
- To maintain or restore the favourable conservation condition of the bird species listed as Special Conservation Interests for this SPA; and Wetlands [A999].

Legislation in the Republic of Ireland affords protection to bird species outside of designated sites e.g. all wild bird species are afforded protection by The Wildlife Act 1976.

Waterfowl shooting is under license only, managed by the National Parks & Wildlife Service.

5.2.5 - Management planning

Is there a site-specific management plan for the site? No

Has a management effectiveness assessment been undertaken for the site? Yes No

If the site is a formal transboundary site as indicated in section Data and location > Site location, are there shared management planning processes with another Contracting Party? Yes No

5.2.6 - Planning for restoration

Is there a site-specific restoration plan? No need identified

5.2.7 - Monitoring implemented or proposed

Monitoring	Status
Water regime monitoring	Implemented
Water quality	Implemented
Plant community	Implemented
Plant species	Implemented
Animal community	Implemented
Birds	Implemented

A requirement of the Water Framework Directive is that benthic macro-invertebrates must be sampled from coastal and transitional waters at least twice within a river basin cycle (6 years) in order to classify these water bodies. The Site is sampled and monitored under this programme. As an EU Natura 2000 site, it is required under Article 12 and 17 of the EU Birds and Habitats Directives respectively, that the status and trends of the conservation objectives within the site are monitored and reported on every 6 years.

Sandymount Strand/Tolka Estuary is routinely surveyed as part of I-WeBS which provides comprehensive counts of the bird species using the site.

The Site is regularly inspected by the National Parks and Wildlife Service Conservation Rangers for the area.

6 - Additional material

6.1 - Additional reports and documents

6.1.1 - Bibliographical references

NPWS (2013) Conservation Objectives: South Dublin Bay SAC 000210. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.

NPWS (2015a) Site Synopsis: South Dublin Bay SAC 000210. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.

NPWS (2015b) Natura Form: South Dublin Bay SAC 000210. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.

NPWS (2014) Conservation objectives supporting document-Marine Habitat-for South Dublin Bay SAC 000210. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.

NPWS (2015c) Conservation Objectives: South Dublin Bay and River Tolka Estuary SPA 004024. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.

NPWS (2015d) Site Synopsis: South Dublin Bay and River Tolka Estuary SPA 004024. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.

NPWS (2015e) Natura 2000 Form: South Dublin Bay and River Tolka Estuary SPA 004024. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.

NPWS (2014) Conservation objectives supporting document for South Dublin Bay and River Tolka Estuary SPA 004024. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.

IUCN 2017. The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species. Version 2017-2. <http://www.iucnredlist.org>. Downloaded on 14 October 2017.

[Birdwatchireland.ie](http://birdwatchireland.ie)

<http://irishwetlands.ie>

<http://www.ramsar.org>

<http://eunis.eea.europa.eu>

<http://www.gis.epa.ie>

The Irish Wetland Bird Survey (I-WeBS).

BirdLife International (2017) Important Bird Areas factsheet: Dublin Bay. Downloaded from <http://www.birdlife.org> on 17/10/2017

6.1.2 - Additional reports and documents

i. taxonomic lists of plant and animal species occurring in the site (see section 4.3)

<no file available>

ii. a detailed Ecological Character Description (ECD) (in a national format)

<no file available>

iii. a description of the site in a national or regional wetland inventory

<no file available>

iv. relevant Article 3.2 reports

<no file available>

v. site management plan

<no file available>

vi. other published literature

<no file available>

<no data available>

6.1.3 - Photograph(s) of the Site

Please provide at least one photograph of the site:



Sandy Mount Strand/Tolka Estuary (NPWS, June 2016)

6.1.4 - Designation letter and related data

Designation letter

<1 file(s) uploaded>

Date of Designation