

EC DIRECTIVE 79/409 ON THE CONSERVATION OF WILD BIRDS

LOUGH FOYLE SPECIAL PROTECTION AREA

Area: 2204.36 hectares

Geographic co-ordinates: 07° 01' 37" W
55° 05' 24" N

Lough Foyle is situated on the north coast of Northern Ireland immediately downstream and extending to the north-east of the city of Londonderry. The site is comprised of a large shallow sea lough which includes the estuaries of the rivers Foyle, Faughan and Roe. The site contains extensive intertidal areas of mudflats and sandflats, saltmarsh and associated brackish ditches.

The Special Protection Area includes the whole of Lough Foyle Area of Special Scientific Interest (ASSI) and the intertidal area of Magilligan ASSI in Lough Foyle extending south of Magilligan Point. The boundary of the Special Protection Area is entirely coincident with that of the Lough Foyle Ramsar site and it overlaps with Magilligan candidate Special Area of Conservation.

The site qualifies under Article 4.1 of EC Directive 79/409 on the Conservation of Wild Birds by regularly supporting, in winter, internationally important numbers of the following 3 species: Whooper Swan *Cygnus cygnus* (the five year peak mean for the period 1991/92 to 1995/96 was 890, which comprises 5.6% of the international population); Light-bellied Brent Goose *Branta bernicla hrota* (the five year peak mean for the period 1991/92 to 1995/96 was 3730 which comprises 18.7% of the international population) and Bar-tailed Godwit *Limosa lapponica* (the five year peak mean for the period 1991/92 to 1995/96 was 1896 which comprises 1.9% of the international population).

The site also qualifies under Article 4.2 of the Directive by supporting over 20,000 migratory waterfowl. Peak numbers averaged 36,599 birds in the five years between 1991/92 and 1995/96. This total includes the internationally important species listed above and the following waterfowl species which are nationally important in an all-Ireland context: Red-throated Diver *Gavia stellata* (an average of 27 birds, 2.7% of the all-Ireland wintering population), Great Crested Grebe *Podiceps cristatus* (220, 7.3%), Mute Swan *Cygnus olor* (97, 1.8%), Bewick's Swan *C. columbianus* (78, 3.1%), Greylag Geese *Anser anser* (67, 1.7%), Shelduck *Tadorna tadorna* (287, 4.1%), Teal *Anas crecca* (751, 1.2%), Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos* (1694, 3.4%), Wigeon *Anas penelope* (8107, 6.5%), Eider *Somateria mollissima* (50, 2.5%), Red-breasted Merganser *Mergus serrator* (73, 3.7%), Oystercatcher *Haematopus ostralegus* (2045, 4.1%), Golden Plover *Pluvialis apricaria* (4999, 2.5%), Grey Plover *P. squatarola*

(43, 1.1%), Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus* (3084, 1.2%), Knot *Calidris canutus* (412, 1.1%), Dunlin *Calidris alpina* (4847, 3.9%), Curlew *Numenius arquata* (2152, 2.5%), Redshank *Tringa totanus* (791, 3.2%) and Greenshank *T. nebularia* (30, 3.3%).

In recent years a notable wintering population of the Annex 1 Slavonian Grebe *Podiceps auritus* has been observed in Lough Foyle (a peak of 103 birds was recorded in 1995/96 which comprises 2.1% of the international population).

The Register of European Sites in Northern Ireland

Register reference number UK9020031

Date of registration _____

Signed G. R. Seymour.
on behalf of the Department of the Environment
for Northern Ireland