

Ramsar sites

1. Ramsar sites are wetlands designated under the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands of International Importance, especially as waterfowl habitat. The mission of the Convention is ‘the conservation and wise use of all wetlands through local and national actions and international cooperation, as a contribution towards achieving sustainable development throughout the world.’

2. The Scottish Government’s [principal?] policy statement on how nationally important land use planning matters should be addressed across the country is Scottish Planning Policy published in 2014 (SPP).

3. This includes the policy (paragraphs 207-211) to be adopted in relation to international designations, including Natura 2000 sites – sites designated as Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) and Special Protection Areas (SPA) – and Ramsar sites; and in relation to national designations (National Parks, National Scenic Areas, Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), National Nature Reserves) (paragraphs 212, 213).

[option to include the text of these paragraphs or only to quote 211]

4. The policy in SPP applying to Ramsar sites (paragraph 211) is, ‘All Ramsar sites are also Natura 2000 sites and/or Sites of Special Scientific Interest and are protected under the relevant statutory regimes.’

5. This reflects the Scottish Government’s approach to the protection of Ramsar sites through co-designation with Natura 2000 sites (SPA, SAC) and/or a SSSI.

6. Paragraphs 203 and 204 of SPP 2014 are also relevant, in their generality, to the protection of designated sites as part of the protection of the natural environment and of internationally significant natural heritage resources.

[option to include the text of these paragraphs]

7. [DN not sure of the correct expression to capture Liz’s point about Natura sites in Scotland being protected under the law.]

8. The Conservation (Natural Habitats &c.) Regulations 1994 – ‘the Habitats Regulations’ – govern the assessment of likely impacts on Natura sites (with reference to published conservation objectives).

9. Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) has guidance on Ramsar sites in their Natura Casework Guidance.

[Option to include text from website] Ramsar sites In the vast majority of cases in Scotland, Ramsar sites fully overlap with Natura sites and the interests of the different designations are either the same or are closely aligned. For this reason, consideration of the Natura qualifying interests will normally be sufficient to ensure the protection of the Ramsar site

interest and there is no need to give details of impacts on Ramsar sites separately in consultation responses. Scottish Planning Policy 2014 sets out current Scottish Government policy on Ramsar sites in paragraph 211 as follows: "All Ramsar sites are also Natura sites and/or Sites of Special Scientific Interest and are protected under the relevant statutory regimes." Where Ramsar interests are not the same as Natura qualifying interests but instead match SSSI features, they will receive protection under the SSSI regime. In such cases, the Ramsar interests should be covered in the same section of a response letter as the SSSI concerns.

10. The following Answers to Oral and Written PQs in the Scottish Parliament in 2018 are relevant.

[insert text, perhaps as an Annex, from the substantive PQs in April, July and September]

[not sure if it's necessary to include the text from the Scottish Government website, updated in April 2018]

11. [Redacted]

[Redacted]