

Ramsar Convention on Wetlands of International Importance Especially as  
Waterfowl Habitat

**CITATION FOR RAMSAR SITE**

**(Kampala criteria, 2005)**

**Lewis Peatlands (UK13028)**

**Site Description**

The Lewis Peatlands Ramsar site is located on the island of Lewis, the northernmost of the main islands of the Outer Hebrides off the north-west coast of Scotland. The site comprises an extensive area of deep blanket bog, interspersed with wet heath, bog pool complexes and lochs. Blanket bog is rare in world terms and Britain has a significant proportion of the total world resource. Within Britain, the Lewis Peatlands are second in extent only to the Caithness and Sutherland peatlands. With their north westerly and island location the Lewis peatlands are probably the most extremely 'Atlantic' of all the blanket mires in Great Britain.

**Interest Features (marked in bold)** N.B All bird figures relate to numbers at the time of designation:

Lewis Peatlands Ramsar site qualifies under Ramsar Criterion 1 by virtue of it containing a variety of wetland types:

- One of the largest and most intact known areas of **blanket bog** in the world.

It includes extensive areas of ombrotrophic or rain-fed bog together with numerous smaller areas where the peatland lies in depressions and is subject to a flow of water carrying nutrients dissolved from rock and mineral soil. These latter areas support a more species-rich flora characterised in particular by the relative abundance of sedge *Carex* species. One particularly characteristic feature of the Lewis Peatlands flora is the widespread occurrence of the woolly fringe moss *Racomitrium lanuginosum* which, in addition to its typical hummocks, forms extensive carpets, a niche which elsewhere is the preserve of species of *Sphagnum*. Surface patterns of the Lewis Peatlands though not exceptionally diverse are nonetheless an important feature of the area, and complement rather than replicate their mainland counterparts. They comprise round, deep pools on watersheds and level plains and linear, narrow pools separated by equally narrow ridges on the steeper slopes. Another significant aspect of the area is the extent and diversity of erosion features, even at relatively low altitudes. Elsewhere in the UK extensive blanket bog erosion is generally a feature of upland areas alone.

- Numerous **oligotrophic lochs** (particularly in the south), **dystrophic lochs**, **lochans** and **pools** (bog pool complex), **wet heath**, grassland, fen communities (surrounding the lochs, lochans and pools) and rivers occur in a

mosaic with the blanket bog. These provide the diversity of habitats necessary to support a wide range of wetland and moorland species.

Lewis Peatlands Ramsar site also qualifies under Ramsar Criterion 2 by supporting: (1994 to 1996):

- **Red-throated diver** *Gavia stellata* (80 pairs, 9% of the GB population).
- **Black-throated diver** *Gavia arctica* (13 pairs, 8% of the GB population).
- **Golden eagle** *Aquila chrysaetos* (5 pairs, 1% of the GB population).
- **Merlin** *Falco columbarius* (20 pairs, 2% of the GB population).
- **Golden plover** *Pluvialis apricaria* (1,800 pairs, 8% of the GB population), and
- **Dunlin** *Calidris alpina schinzii* (3,400 pairs, 37% of the GB population).

Lewis Peatlands Ramsar site further qualifies under Ramsar criterion 4 by supporting the following waterbird species at a critical stage in their life cycle:

- **Greenshank** *Tringa nebularia* (1994 to 1996, 140 pairs, 10.4% of the GB population).

Area: 58,959.87 ha  
National Grid Ref: NB326379  
OS Sheet 1:50,000 – 8, 13, 14

Designated on the 7 December 2000.

This (amended) citation adopted on 8 September 2025.

Measured site area corrected from 58,943.45 ha

### **Associated Designations**

The boundary of the Ramsar site is coincident with the Lewis Peatlands Special Protection Area (SPA) and contains the entire area of the smaller Lewis Peatlands Special Area of Conservation (SAC).