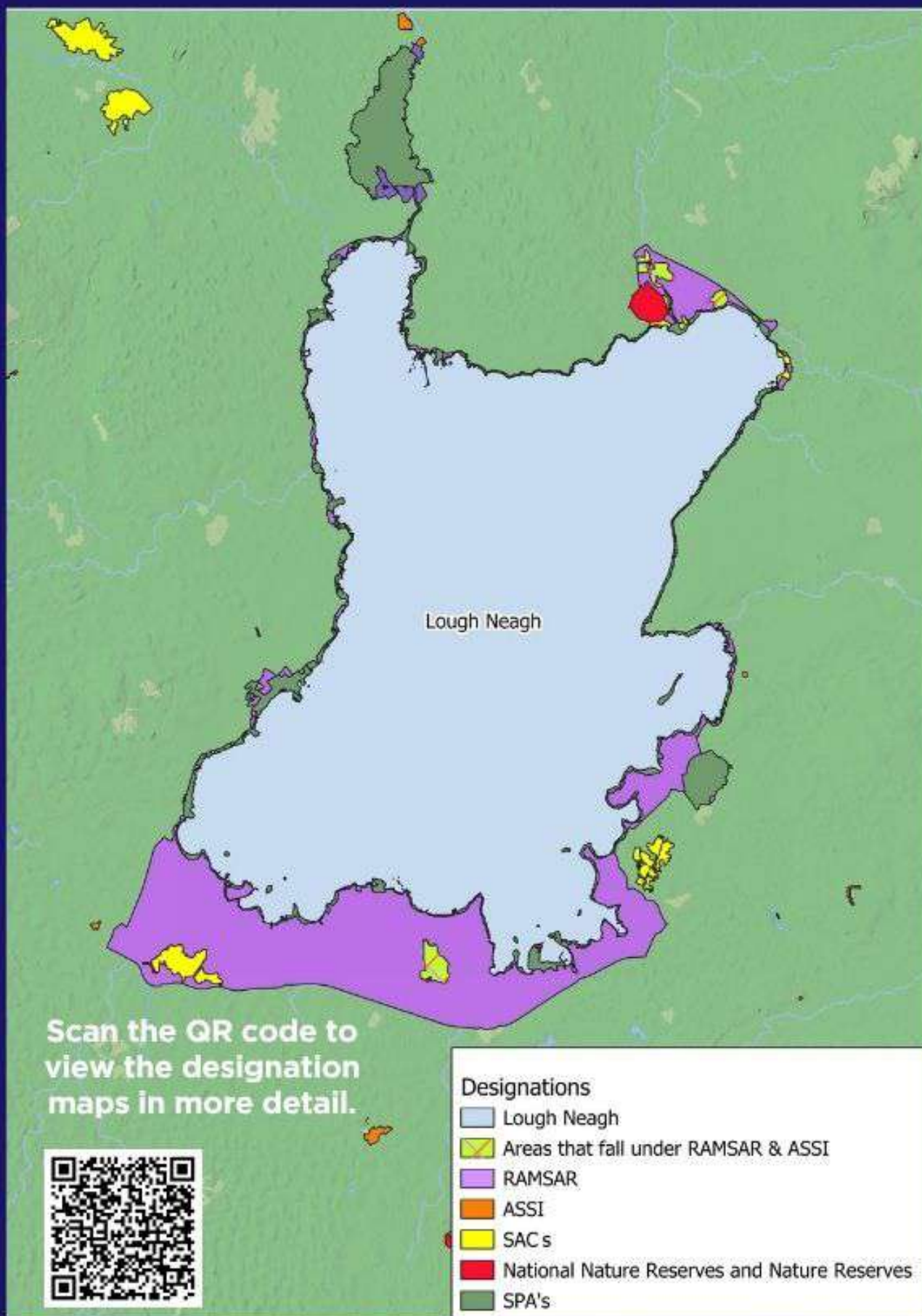


# Lough Neagh's Environmental Designations



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# Lough Neagh's Environmental Designations

*Protecting one of the UK and Ireland's most important natural landscapes*

## > Why is Lough Neagh Protected?

Lough Neagh, the largest freshwater lough in the UK and Ireland, is a vital ecological site. Its wetlands, reed beds, islands, and surrounding grasslands provide a home for rare wildlife, important fish species, and internationally significant populations of waterfowl.

To safeguard its biodiversity and natural features, Lough Neagh is designated under several conservation protections.

## > Why Do These Designations Matter?

These designations are there to:

- Preserve vital habitats for birds, fish, and plant life.
- Ensure sustainable management of the Lough and its surrounding landscape.
- Support conservation efforts to protect rare and endangered species.
- Safeguard water quality and maintain the Lough's role in supplying fresh water.

## > Special Protection Area (SPA)

Lough Neagh, along with Lough Beg and Portmore Lough, is a Special Protection Area (SPA), recognised under UK legislation to protect important bird populations. The Lough regularly supports:

- **Internationally important wintering waterfowl** - Including Whooper Swans, Pochard, Tufted Duck, Scaup, and Goldeneye.
- **Nationally important breeding birds** - Species such as Great Crested Grebe, Curlew, Lapwing, Snipe, and Redshank.
- **Common Tern populations** - Protected under Article 4.1 of the EC Birds Directive, now retained in UK law through the Conservation (Natural Habitats, etc.) Regulations.

## > Ramsar Site - Wetland of International Importance

Lough Neagh is a Ramsar site, an international designation under the Ramsar Convention, recognising its significance as one of the most important wetlands in the world. This status highlights the Lough's role in:

- **Supporting large numbers** of migratory and wintering birds.
- **Providing essential wetland habitats** for a wide range of wildlife.
- **Maintaining global biodiversity** by protecting rare and endangered species.

## > Area of Special Scientific Interest (ASSI)

Lough Neagh is designated as an Area of Special Scientific Interest (ASSI) under Northern Ireland's conservation laws. This designation protects:

- Important wetland habitats, including Wet grassland, Reed beds and Fens and extensive of Wet Woodland which is also partly designated as a Special Area for Conservation (SAC)
- Over 40 rare plant species, such as Irish Lady's Tresses Orchid, Marsh Pea, and Eight-stemmed Waterwort.
- Diverse invertebrates, including rare beetles, dragonflies, and molluscs.
- Significant fish species, including Pollan and River Lamprey, both listed as Irish Red Data species.
- Important populations of wintering and breeding birds

## > Earth Science Conservation Review Site (ESCRS)

Lough Neagh also contains a nationally important Earth Science Conservation Review Site at Traad Point. This site features a sand bar formation, highlighting the Lough's geological importance.