

COUNTY: Norfolk

SITE NAME: SWANNINGTON UPGATE COMMON

DISTRICT: Broadland

Status: Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) notified under Section 28 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981

Local Planning Authority: Broadland District Council

National Grid Reference: TG 148181 Area: 20.03 (ha) 49.49 (ac)

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 133 1:10,000: TG 11 NE, TG 11 NW

Date Notified (Under 1949 Act): 1958 Date of Last Revision: –

Date Notified (Under 1981 Act): 1985 Date of Last Revision: –

Other Information:

Much of the site is registered commonland.

Reasons for Notification:

An unusual site supporting a wide variety of habitat types within a small area. Glacial sands and gravels cover much of the common giving way to shallow peats on low-lying ground with impeded drainage by a stream. These variations in soils and wetness and a variable topography have provided conditions for the development of an exceptionally wide range of semi-natural vegetation including dry acidic heathland, wet heathland with acidic flushes, fen, birch and alder woodland, scrub, bracken, rough grassland and ponds. These plant communities are distributed in such a manner that interesting transitions between the different associations are clearly seen.

Small areas of dry acidic heathland are present on high ground and are dominated by Heather *Calluna vulgaris* with occasional Bell Heather *Erica cinerea*. The sandy soils also support areas of grassland with abundant Sheep's Fescue *Festuca ovina*, Sheep's Sorrel *Rumex acetosella* and Tormentil *Potentilla erecta*, scrub and bracken heath. Secondary lowland birch–pedunculate oak woodland now covers much of the high ground and the ground flora includes Wood Sage *Teucrium scorodonia*, Honeysuckle *Lonicera periclymenum* and the moss *Leucobryum glaucum*.

There is an abrupt transition from dry heath to a wet heath and grassland mosaic dominated by Cross-leaved Heath *Erica tetralix*, Heather and Purple Moor-grass *Molinia caerulea* on sloping ground. Springs emerge from the underlying sands and bog mosses *Sphagnum* spp. are abundant along the seepage lines. Young Downy Birch *Betula pubescens* woodland has spread over these wet, acidic areas.

Acid valley alder woodland occurs by the side of the stream. *Sphagnum* is present in the ground flora which also includes the locally scarce Opposite-leaved Golden Saxifrage *Chrysosplenium oppositifolium*. An area of open fen on low-lying ground is dominated by Blunt-flowered Rush *Juncus subnodulosus* and Meadowsweet *Filipendula ulmaria*. The fen is floristically rich and species of interest include Bogbean *Menyanthes trifoliata*, Marsh Cinquefoil *Potentilla palustris*, Southern Marsh Orchid *Dactylorhiza praetermissa* and Panicked Sedge *Carex paniculata*. There is a distinct zone with Great Pond Sedge *Carex riparia* and Reed-grass *Phalaris arundinacea* by the stream.

There are several ponds on the common and they support a rich assemblage of water-plants dominated by Broad-leaved Pondweed *Potamogeton natans* and Stoneworts *Chara* spp. These ponds provide suitable breeding conditions for several species of amphibian including the scarce Warty Newt *Triturus cristatus*.

The variety of habitats supports a wide range of breeding birds including Teal, Woodcock, Lesser Whitethroat, Sedge Warbler and Redpoll.