

Date Notified: 19 May 1988

COUNTY: Norfolk

SITE NAME: GREAT CRESSINGHAM FEN

DISTRICT: Breckland

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

Local Planning Authority: Breckland District Council

National Grid Reference: TF 848022 Area: 13.69 (ha) 33.85 (ac)

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 144 1:10,000: TF 80 SW
1:10,560: TF 80 SE

Date Notified (Under 1949 Act): N/A Date of Last Revision: N/A

Date Notified (Under 1981 Act): 1988 Date of Last Revision: –

Other Information:
A new site.

Reasons for Notification:

Great Cressingham Fen is located in a small side-valley of the River Wissey and is considered to be one of the best remaining examples of calcareous spring-fed valley-fen in west Norfolk. It has retained the full series of vegetation types, which range from dry unimproved grassland on the highest slopes, through wet, species-rich fen grasslands where springs emerge to tall fen vegetation in the valley bottom. The site supports a very large number of plants including several uncommon species.

The margins of the site, on dry ground, are mostly unimproved neutral grassland dominated by Yorkshire Fog *Holcus lanatus* and Crested Dog's-tail *Cynosurus cristata*. The soils are slightly calcareous in places and species present include Common Quaking Grass *Briza media*, Hoary Plantain *Plantago media*, Ribwort Plantain *P. lanceolata* and Glaucous Sedge *Carex flacca*. Wet neutral grassland is present further down the valley-slope and is dominated by Tall Fescue *Festuca arundinacea* and Reed Sweet Grass *Glyceria maxima* with Hairy Sedge *Carex hirta*, Jointed Rush *Juncus articulatus*, Ragged Robin *Lychnis flos-cuculi* and Devil's-bit Scabious *Succisa pratensis*.

Species-rich, spring-fed fen occurs on low-lying ground and where springs emerge from the valley side. Hard Rush *Juncus inflexus* and Carnation Sedge *Carex panicea* are dominant with frequent Meadowsweet *Filipendula ulmaria*, Marsh Marigold *Caltha palustris*, Marsh Cinquefoil *Potentilla palustris* and Bogbean *Menyanthes trifoliata*. Several uncommon species occur including Bog Pimpernel *Anagallis tenella*, Common Cotton Grass *Eriophorum angustifolium*, Meadow Thistle *Cirsium dissectum*, *Carex lepidocarpa* and Black Bog Rush *Schoenus nigricans*.

Tall fen vegetation occupies the valley bottom. Reed *Phragmites australis* and Soft Rush *Juncus effusus* are dominant with Greater Tussock Sedge *Carex paniculata*, Angelica *Angelica sylvestris*, Water Mint *Mentha aquatica* and Southern Marsh Orchid *Dactylorhiza praetermissa*.

Additional interest is provided by small areas of incipient carr woodland dominated by Grey Sallow *Salix cinerea*, a pond, ditches and a stream.