

COUNTY: Norfolk

SITE NAME: LIMPENHOE MEADOWS

DISTRICT: Broadland

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

Local Planning Authority: Broads Authority

National Grid Reference: TG 399031

Area: 11.6 (ha) 28.7 (ac)

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 134

1:10,000: TG 30 SE TG 40 SW

Date Notified (Under 1949 Act): N/A

Date of Last Revision: N/A

Date Notified (Under 1981 Act): 1985

Date of Last Revision: –

Other Information:

A new site.

Reasons for Notification:

Limpenhoe Meadows are situated in the Lower Yare valley and form a large and particularly fine example of unimproved fen grassland with dykes. The underlying soils change from deep, poorly-drained fenland peats at the upland edge to alluvial clays in the valley bottom. Springs emerge from the peats in places and an unusual sequence of communities occur around flushed areas which are not found elsewhere in the Yare valley. Many uncommon plants are present in the species-rich meadows and the site forms an interesting contrast to the more calcareous conditions found on the nearby Poplar Farm Meadows, Langley SSSI.

Unimproved mixed fen grassland, maintained by summer grazing, occurs on the fenland peats and this community is dominated by a mosaic of Jointed Rush *Juncus articulatus* and Blunt-flowered Rush *Juncus subnodulosus*. This fen grassland community is exceptionally diverse with frequent Common Quaking Grass *Briza media*, Lesser Spearwort *Ranunculus flammula*, Ragged Robin *Lychnis flos-cuculi*, Marsh Arrow-grass *Triglochin palustris* and Yellow Rattle *Rhinanthus minor*. Several uncommon species are also present, notably Bog Pimpernel *Anagallis tenella*, Marsh Lousewort *Pedicularis palustris*, Fragrant Orchid *Gymnadenia conopsea*, Marsh Helleborine *Epipactis palustris*, Southern Marsh Orchid *Dactylorhiza praetermissa* and Marsh Fern *Thelypteris thelypteroides*.

Springs emerge within the meadows close to the base of the valley slope. These wet boggy conditions are very localised and quickly grade into drier areas. The spring flushes are dominated by Bog Mosses *Sphagnum* spp. with Sundew *Drosera rotundifolia*, a locally uncommon species, being frequent. Other notable species associated with the *Sphagnum* areas are Grass of Parnassus *Parnassia palustris*, Marsh Helleborine, Creeping Willow *Salix repens*, Bog Pimpernel, cotton Grass *Eriophorum* sp. and Heath Lousewort *Pedicularis sylvatica*.

A drier variant of fen grassland occurs on the highest ground and is dominated by Purple Moor-grass *Molinia caerulea* with an abundance of low-growing sedges including Star Sedge *Carex echinata*, Carnation Sedge *C. panicea* and Flea Sedge *C. pulicaris*. Several species associated with more acidic conditions are present including Heath Grass *Danthonia decumbens*, Eyebright *Euphrasia officinalis*, Tormentil *Potentilla erecta*, Creeping Willow, Devil's-bit Scabious *Succisa pratensis* and Many-headed Woodrush *Luzula multiflora*.

The remainder of the site is mostly unimproved or semi-improved wet neutral grassland. Yorkshire Fog *Holcus lanatus* is generally co-dominant with Soft Rush *Juncus effusus* and there is a less well developed flora including Water Mint *Mentha aquatica*, Greater

Bird'sfoot Trefoil *Lotus uliginosus* and Reed-grass *Glyceria maxima*. The grassland on the alluvial clays has been partly improved but wet hollows are dominated by Marsh Foxtail *Alopecurus geniculatus* and Flote-grass *Glyceria fluitans* with Silverweed *Potentilla anserina* and Red Shank *Polygonum persicaria*.

A network of dykes drains the site, supporting a good range of emergent and aquatic plants including a nationally rare species of pondweed *Potamogeton acutifolius* and the local species, Water Soldier *Stratiotes aloides*.