

COUNTY: SUFFOLK/NORFOLK

SITE NAME: BLO' NORTON AND
THELNETHAM FEN

DISTRICT:

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

Local Planning Authority: Breckland District Council, St Edmundsbury District Council

National Grid Reference: TM 017790

Area: 21.03 (ha.) 51.97 (ac.)

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 144

1:10,000: TM 07 NW

Date Notified (Under 1949 Act): 1959

Date of Last Revision: 1972

Date Notified (Under 1981 Act): 1983

Date of Last Revision: –

Other Information:

The boundary has been modified by the deletion of Hinderclay Fen and of some arable land. Part of the site is managed as a nature reserve by the Suffolk Trust for Nature Conservation.

Reasons for Notification:

This site is of interest mainly because of the plant communities associated with the remaining areas of open fen. Additional interest is provided by the areas of carr woodland and by some of the meadows adjacent to the fen.

The areas of fen least affected by drainage still support calcareous valley fen vegetation with plants such as black bog rush *Schoenus nigricans*, saw sedge *Cladium mariscus*, which is dominant in some parts, and purple moor grass *Molinia caerulea*. A very large number of plant species are associated with these areas, notably 'Fen Orchid' *Dactylorhiza praetermissa*, devil's bit scabious *Succisa pratensis*, long-stalked yellow sedge *Carex lepidocarpa* quaking grass *Briza media*, a small colony of grass of parnassus *Parnassia palustris* and a number of rare mosses. In other parts of the fen, where there is some drying-out in summer, this type of vegetation is replaced by taller vegetation dominated by reed *Phragmites australis* and meadowsweet *Filipendula ulmaria*. This vegetation has a different range of associated species including plants such as hemp agrimony *Eupatorium cannabinum*, purple loosestrife *Lythrum salicaria* and great hairy willowherb *Epilobium hirsutum*.

Woodland and scrub have invaded quite large areas of all three fens. The scrub consists mostly of dense willow, whilst the woodland is mostly alder carr, with ash and oak on the drier parts of Blo' Norton Fen. Beneath the woodland canopy, the ground vegetation is made up of a restricted range of fen plants and weedy species such as nettle and cleavers.

In order to provide some control over the water table in the fen areas the site boundary also encompasses several small fields and ditches. These are of some interest in their own interest with plants such as ragged robin *Lychnis flos-cuculi*, marsh marigold *Caltha palustris* and Marsh thistle *Cirsium palustre* and purple loosestrife all occurring in considerable numbers.