

COUNTY: Norfolk

SITE NAME: BROAD FEN DILHAM

DISTRICT: North Norfolk

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 343255 Area: 36.6 (ha) 91.08 (ac)

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 134 1:10,000: TG 32 NW, SW

Date Notified (Under 1949 Act): 1959 Date of Last Revision: N/A

Date Notified (Under 1981 Act): 1983 Date of Last Revision: -

Other Information:

Boundary amended by small deletion in North-east corner

Reasons for Notification:

Broad Fen occupies the basin of the former Dilham Broad and now supports a mixture of fen, fen meadow, open water and carr woodland communities. Open areas of fen are maintained through regular cutting of reed, sedge and for marsh hay and as a result a species-rich vegetation has developed characteristic of undrained wetland in Broadland.

Tall fen communities are dominated by reed *Phragmites australis* and Saw-Sedge *Cladium mariscus* often with abundant Purple Reed-Grass *Calamagrostis canescens* and herbs such as Yellow Loosestrife *Lysimachia vulgaris* and Milk Parsley *Peucedanum palustre* – the food plant of the larva of the Swallowtail Butterfly *Papilio machaon* which is well established here. Sweet Gale *Myrica gale* is a common shrub in those areas dominated by Saw-Sedge. A shorter more diverse fen vegetation occurs closer to the edge of the basin which is dominated by mixtures of Fen Rush *Juncus subnodulosus* and Bog Rush *Schoenus nigricans* with Marsh Helleborine *Epipactis palustris*, Bogbean *Menyanthes trifoliata*, Marsh Loosewort *Pedicularis palustris*, Marsh Cinquefoil *Potentilla palustris* and several species of Sedge *Carex* spp. as typical associates.

These fen communities grade into fen meadow with abundant Fen Rush with Marsh Stitchwort *Stellaria palustris*, Lesser Spearwort *Ranunculus flammula*, Large Birdsfoot-Trefoil *Lotus uliginosus*, Yellow Flag *Iris pseudacorus*, Water Dropwort *Oenanthe fistulosa* and Marsh Marigold *Caltha palustris*.

The open water areas consist of dykes, a section of the Dilham Canal and a series of ponds, most of which were dug to attract wildfowl. The Dilham Canal and dykes linked to it are nutrient enriched and with turbid water support rather few aquatic plants. The ponds away from this influence contain low nutrient, low alkalinity water, and aquatic plant development is limited to a few species which favour these conditions. The pondweeds *Potamogeton obtusifolius* and *P. friesii* are frequent with Bladderwort *Utricularia vulgaris* and White Water Lily *Nymphaea alba*.

Surrounding the open fen are large areas of semi-mature alder carr. Here the ground flora is dominated by Lesser Pond-Sedge *Carex acutiformis* and Marsh Fern *Thelypteris palustris*, with Lesser Tussock-Sedge *Carex appropinquata*, Yellow Flag *Iris pseudacorus* and Twayblade *Listera ovata* as characteristic associates. Oak *Quercus robur* and Ash *Fraxinus excelsior* woodland is developing along the drier western edge of the site.

Breeding birds include Sedge, Reed and Grasshopper Warblers. Bitterns are regular during the winter but have not nested for several years. The rare fen slug *Agriolimax agrestis* has been recorded.