

COUNTY: Norfolk

SITE NAME: PRIORY MEADOWS, HICKLING

DISTRICT: North Norfolk

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

Local Planning Authority: North Norfolk District Council

National Grid Reference: TG 417254 Area: 24.0 (ha) 59.3 (ac)

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 134 1:10,000: TG 42 NW, SW

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

Date Notified (Under 1981 Act): 1986 Date of Last Revision: –

Other Information:
A new site.

Description and Reasons for Notification:

This site consists of an extensive area of permanent grassland on damp, acidic peats. The sward receives an annual hay-cut in mid-summer and the meadows retain an exceptionally rich and varied flora due to this traditional management. The acidic plant communities are very unusual for Broadland where the majority of fen meadows are on shallow calcareous peats. A system of dykes drains the meadows and these contain a distinctive assemblage of water-plants.

The grass-sward is dominated by Heath Grass *Danthonia decumbens*, Sweet Vernal-grass *Anthoxanthum odoratum* and Velvet Bent *Agrostis canina* with locally frequent Purple Moor-grass *Molinia caerulea* and Yorkshire Fog *Holcus lanatus*. Many herb species are present which are characteristic of underlying damp acidic soils and include Tormentil *Potentilla erecta*, Heath Bedstraw *Galium saxatile*, Marsh Cinquefoil *Potentilla palustris* and exceptionally large populations of Meadow Thistle *Cirsium dissectum* and Heath Spotted Orchid *Dactylorhiza maculata*. Other notable plants include Common Cotton-grass *Eriophorum angustifolium*, Creeping Willow *Salix repens* and Lousewort *Pedicularis sylvatica*.

A distinctive flora has developed along the dry dyke edges where there is frequent Royal Fern *Osmunda regalis*, White Climbing Fumitory *Corydalis claviculata* and the uncommon Milk Parsley *Peucedanum palustre*. The slightly acidic water in the dykes supports a wide range of water plants including Blunt-leaved Pondweed *Potamogeton obtusifolius*, Bog Pondweed *P. polygonifolius*, Small Bur-reed *Sparganium minimum* and Floating Scirpus *Eleogiton fluitans*.