

COUNTY: Norfolk

SITE NAME: BUXTON HEATH

DISTRICT: Broadland

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

Local Planning Authority: Broadland District Council

National Grid Reference: TG 175218 Area: 67.03 [ha] 165.63 [ac]

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 133 1:10,000: TG 12 SE

Date Notified [Under 1949 Act]: 1955 Date of Last Revision: -

Date Notified [Under 1981 Act]: 1986 Date of Last Revision: -

Other Information:

The site is listed in "A Nature Conservation Review" [Ratcliffe 1977, Cambridge University Press]. The boundary has been amended at the '85 Revision.

Reasons for Notification:

Buxton Heath is a diverse heath-with-fen area situated in a basin of glacial sands which, together with Roydon Fen, form the best examples of this rare habitat type in Norfolk. The valley mire is floristically rich and there is a rapid transition from calcareous to acidic plant communities with dry acidic heathland on higher ground. These communities have remained undisturbed for a long period of time and a number of rare relict mosses, liverworts and fungi occur on the site. Several uncommon invertebrates have also been recorded including one species new to Britain.

The principal interest is centred on a valley mire which has developed along the length of a small stream. A complex series of communities have developed in response to variations in acidity and drainage of the underlying peats. The stream carries alkaline waters and a narrow band of calcareous fen occurs on either side of its course. This community is dominated by Blunt-flowered Rush *Juncus subnodulosus* and Quaking Grass *Briza media* with a discontinuous bryophyte carpet. Other species of interest include Grass of Parnassus *Parnassia palustris*, Marsh Lousewort *Pedicularis palustris*, Southern Marsh Orchid *Dactylorhiza praetermissa*, Marsh Helleborine *Epipactis palustris* and the locally uncommon Marsh Fern *Thelypteris thelypteroides*. A small reedbed *Phragmites australis* is also present with the Meadowseet *Filipendula ulmaria*, Ragged Robin *Lychnis flos-cuculi* and Bogbean *Menyanthes trifoliata*.

The calcareous fen grades into acidic flush communities on the valley sides. Purple Moor-grass *Molinia caerulea* is dominant with a variety of mosses including thick carpets of bog moss *Sphagnum* spp. This species-rich community includes Common Butterwort *Pinguicula vulgaris*, Marsh Gentian *Gentiana pneumonanthe*, Meadow Thistle *Cirsium dissectum* and Bog Pimpernel *Anagallis tenella*. Marshy grassland is present on drier ground around the source of the stream. Purple Moor-grass is again dominant but Cross-leaved Heath *Erica tetralix* is frequent. Alder *Alnus glutinosa* forms carr woodland with abundant Common Sallow *Salix cinerea* in places by the stream.

A zone of wet heathland surrounds the mire and is dominated by Cross-leaved Heath with Purple Moor-grass, Common Cotton-grass *Eriophorum angustifolium*, Round-leaved Sundew *Drosera rotundifolia*, Heather *Calluna vulgaris* and Bog Mosses.

Dry acidic heathland covers the remainder of the site. Large areas are dominated by Heather and the locally scarce Western Gorse *Ulex gallii*. Bracken *Pteridium aquilinum* and Gorse *U. europaeus* occur on other parts of the heath and there are scattered, young trees of

Pedunculate Oak *Quercus robur* and Silver Birch *Betula pendula*. Encroachment by scrub and secondary woodland is prevented by regular, though accidental fires.