COUNTY: Norfolk SITE NAME: DERSINGHAM BOG

DISTRICT: West Norfolk

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

Local Planning Authority: King's Lynn and West Norfolk District Council

National Grid Reference: TF 675289 Area: 159.1 (ha) 293.2 (ac)

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 132 1:10,000: TF 62 NE

Date Notified (Under 1949 Act): 1964 Date of Last Revision: –

Date Notified (Under 1981 Act): 1986 Date of Last Revision: N/A

Other Information:
The site is included in the "Nature Conservation Review" for its nationally important heathland and peatland habitat.

Description and Reasons for Notification:
Dersingham Bog is the largest, and most intact example of an acid valley mire in East Anglia. The site lies in the Lower Greensand zone with the Sandringham Sands exposed in an old sandpit. The mire itself lies on shallow peat and has extensive areas dominated by bog mosses with several locally rare species of plant. The mire is bordered on one side by an escarpment, which marks the edge of an ancient coastline, which has large areas of heathland on its slopes. Self-regenerating pine woodland has developed on the top of the escarpment. The site also has considerable ornithological and entomological interest.

On the lowest-lying land there is a strong iron pan formation on shallow peat with Common Cottongrass *Eriophorum angustifolium* as the dominant species. The main area dominated by Bog Mosses *Sphagnum* spp. lies along the base of the escarpment. Several uncommon plants are present including Round-leaved Sundew *Drosera rotundifolia*, Bog Asphodel *Narthecium ossifragum*, Cranberry *Vaccinium oxycoccos* and White Beak Sedge *Rhynchospora alba*. Small bog pools are common in this zone which is widest at the southern end of the site. Within the mire are areas of wet heath and marshy grassland dominated by Cross-leaved Heath *Erica tetralix* and Purple Moor-grass *Molinia caerulea* respectively. In the damp heath areas, the rare moss *Dicranum spurium* is locally abundant as is the local *Sphagnum molle*. Scrub and young trees are encroaching on the bog in many places. Bog Myrtle *Myrica gale* is a common shrub on the mire and forms a dense area of scrub with Silver Birch *Betula pendula* at the northern end of the site. In the valley is a small piece of carr dominated by Alder *Alnus glutinosa*.

Up the sides of the escarpment, there is a graduation from wet to dry heath which in turn grades to woodland. The heathland is dominated by Heather *Calluna vulgaris* but there are also large areas of Bracken *Pteridium aquilinum* on the slopes. The woodland is chiefly Scots Pine *Pinus sylvestris* and Silver Birch with Bracken in the field layer. Rhododendron *Rhododendrom ponticum* is invasive in places.

The site is noted for the presence of the dragonfly *Sympetrum scoticum*, a northern species with a very local distribution in SE England.

The site is notable for the large breeding population of Shelduck, with up to 100 pairs nesting. The surrounding heathland is an important breeding site for Nightjars. Other local breeding species are Tree Pipit and Grasshopper Warbler and both Redshank and Curlew have nested. There is a colony of Sand Martins in the exposed face of the sandpit.

Part of the site, Dersingham Pit, is of geological interest and is the type locality for the Dersingham Formation. It shows a section through the topmost Leziate Beds of the Sandringham Sands and the basal Dersingham Formation Sands. The latter underlies the Snettisham Clay locally. This is an important regional locality for elucidation of the Norfolk Lower Cretaceous rock sequences.