

COUNTY: Norfolk

SITE NAME: BEETLEY AND HOE MEADOWS

DISTRICT: BRECKLAND

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

Local Planning Authority: Breckland District

National Grid Reference: TF 982174 TF 979169 Area: 11.7 (ha) 28.9 (ac)

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 132 1:10,000: TF 91 NE

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

Date Notified (Under 1981 Act): 1985 Date of Last Revision: N/A

Other Information:
A new site.

Reasons for Notification:

Beetley and HoE Meadows are situated in the valley of a tributary of the River Wensum, and represent one of the finest remaining areas of wet unimproved grassland in Norfolk. Springs emerge from the valley-side and variations in the acidity and dampness of the underlying soils account for the exceptionally wide range of grassland communities occurring on the site. The unimproved grassland is species-rich and includes several locally uncommon plants. The meadows are under a traditional management of summer grazing.

Springs emerge at a number of places on the valley-side and are marked by an abundance of Bogbean *Menyanthes trifoliata*. Basic flushes, characterised by a diverse short fen vegetation, occur on the seepage zones below the springs. Blunt-flowered Rush *Juncus subnodulosus*, mosses (including *Sphagnum* spp.) and Spring Sedge *Carex caryophylla* are dominant and other notable species include Bog Pimpernel *Anagallis tenella*, Lousewort *Pedicularis sylvatica*, Marsh Arrow-grass *Triglochin palustris* and Early Marsh Orchid *Dactylorhiza incarnata*.

Marshy grassland occurs on permanently wet soils in the valley and here Blunt-flowered Rush and Carnation Sedge *Carex panicea* are dominant with frequent Sneezewort *Achillea ptarmica*, Southern Marsh Orchid *Dactylorhiza praetermissa*, Marsh Valerian *Valeriana dioica* and Cuckoo Flower *Cardamine pratensis*. A variant of marshy grassland occurs on less waterlogged soils, where the short vegetation is dominated by Glaucous Sedge *Carex flacca*, Hairy Sedge *C. hirta* and Quaking Grass *Briza media* and Green-winged Orchid *Orchis morio* and Yellow Rattle *Rhinanthus minor* occur in some abundance.

Unimproved neutral grassland with ant-hills is present on the seasonally wet soils. The sward is dominated by Yorkshire Fog *Holcus lanatus*, Red Fescue *Festuca rubra* and Meadow Buttercup *Ranunculus acris* with Common Spotted Orchid *Dactylorhiza fuchsii*, Meadow Saxifrage *Saxifraga granulata*, Twayblade *Listera ovata* and Adder's Tongue Fern *Ophioglossum vulgatum*. The driest areas of neutral grassland have a characteristic flora that includes Common Milkwort *Polygala vulgaris*, Bird's-foot-trefoil *Lotus corniculatus* and Cat's Ear *Hypochaeris radicata*.

Acidic grassland occurs on the dry, sandy soils where Sweet Vernal-grass *Anthoxanthum odoratum* and Common Bent-grass *Agrostis capillaris* are dominant with Harebell *Campanula rotundifolia*, Heath Bedstraw *Gallium saxatile*, Sheep's Sorrel *Rumex acetosella* and bracken *Pteridium aquilinum*.

A pond, secondary lowland birch-pedunculate oak woodland and scrub provide additional interest to the site.