

COUNTY: Norfolk

SITE NAME: GRIME'S GRAVES

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 Council

National Grid Reference: TL 815900

Area: 64.9 (ha) 160.3 (ac)

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 144

1:10,000: TL 89 SW, TL 88 NW

Date Notified (Under 1949 Act): 1969

Date of Last Revision: N/A

Date Notified (Under 1981 Act): 1985

Date of Last Revision: –

Other Information:

The boundary is unchanged. Part of this site is a Scheduled Ancient Monument in custody of DOE.

Reasons for Notification:

Grime's Graves has many of the characteristic features of a Breckland 'Heath'. There is a wide range of plant communities, each in close proximity to one another and reflecting differences in management and soil type. Heather heathland is found in the northern part of the site, where it is arranged in a series of parallel stripes which alternate with bands of acidic grassland. This pattern reflects differences in the composition of the underlying drift. The stripes are considered to have formed periglacially during the Devensian Glaciation.

The acid grassland that grows in close association with heather is dominated by Wavy Hair-Grass *Deschampsia flexuosa* with a limited range of other plants such as Sheep's Sorrel *Rumex acetosella* and Common Speedwell *Veronica officinalis*.

Acid grassland also covers a substantial portion of the southern part of the site. Most of this area is dominated by species of Bent Grass *Agrostis* spp. and Sheep's Fescue *Festuca ovina*. Sheep grazing has encouraged a wider range of associated species, with Heath Bedstraw *Galium saxatile* and Many-Headed Woodrush *Luzula multiflora* amongst the species that are more noticeable.

The Heath and grassland communities grade into chalk grassland where chalk is close to or at the surface. Many plants typical of calcareous grassland are found, such as Wild Thyme *Thymus praecox*, Small Scabious *Scabiosa columbaria* and Bird's-foot Trefoil *Lotus corniculatus*. There are also some plants indicative of true chalk grassland conditions, most notably Rock Rose *Helianthemum nummularium*, which is unusual in Breckland.

Bracken, scrub and self-set pines have invaded parts of the site, especially in the area that is not grazed by sheep.

The re-excavated Neolithic flint-mines provide an important winter roost-site for five species of bat.