

COUNTY: Norfolk

SITE NAME: COCKTHORPE COMMON, STIFFKEY

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: TF 985430

Area: 6.9 (ha) 17 (ac)

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 132

1:10,000: TF 94 SE

Date Notified (Under 1949 Act): N/A

Date of Last Revision: N/A

Date Notified (Under 1981 Act): 1984

Date of Last Revision: –

Other Information:

A new site.

Reasons for Notification:

Cockthorpe Common is situated in the valley of the River Stiffkey where the steep slopes support a diverse chalk grassland flora. Unimproved chalk downland is now rare in Norfolk and Cockthorpe Common is considered to be one of the best remaining examples. The flora is extremely rich and includes a number of uncommon species.

The richest areas of chalk grassland consist of short rabbit-grazed turf dominated by Sheep's Fescue *Festuca ovina*, Crested Hair-grass *Koeleria macrantha*, and Quaking-grass *Briza media*. Herb species are abundant and include Salad Burnet *Sanguisorba minor*, Dropwort *Filipendula vulgaris*, Common Rock-rose *Helianthemum nummularium*, Large Thyme *Thymus pulegioides*, Small Scabious *Scabiosa columbaria*, Dwarf Thistle *Cirsium acaule*, Cowslip *Primula veris*, Twayblade *Listera ovata*, Pyramidal Orchid *Anacamptis pyramidalis*, Common Spotted Orchid *Dactylorhiza fuchsii* and Star of Bethlehem *Ornithogallum umbellatum*. Some areas of taller vegetation are present and are dominated by Oat-grass *Arrhenatherum elatius* and Wild Parsnip *Pastinaca sativa*.

Other habitats present include hawthorn scrub, a small area of elm woodland and a disused pit which provide additional interest to the site.