

COUNTY: Norfolk

SITE NAME: KELLING HEATH

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: TG 101420

Area: 88.2 (ha) 217.9 (ac)

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 133

1:10,000: TG 04 SE, TG 14 SW

Date Notified (Under 1949 Act): 1954

Date of Last Revision: –

Date Notified (Under 1981 Act): 1986

Date of Last Revision: –

Other Information:

### **Reasons for Notification:**

Kelling Heath, together with Salthouse Heath, are two distinct outwash plains dating from different halt stages of the same glaciation. Kelling Heath provides perhaps the best example of a glacial outwash plain in England. Both sites have steep ice-contact slopes and are dissected by deep dry valleys, and are geomorphological sites of national importance. A fine example of oceanic heathland has developed on the sands and gravels. The site is crossed by a railway line whose embankments support a heathland community. A wide variety of heathland birds nest on the site, which also provides a good reptile habitat.

The extensive areas of dry, acid heathland are dominated by Heather *Calluna vulgaris* with frequent Bell Heather *Erica cinerea* and Western Gorse *Ulex gallii*. Small areas of acidic grassland, with Wavy Hair-grass *Deschampsia flexuosa*, form a mosaic with the heath in two places. Bracken *Pteridium aquilinum* is dominant on the steep slopes and Gorse *Ulex europaea* is locally abundant on the northern part of the site. Young Silver Birch *Betula pendula* and Scots Pine *Pinus sylvestris* are thinly scattered over the entire heath. Numerous paths cross the heath and the flora of these includes the introduced Pirri-pirri Bur *Acaena anserinifolia*.

A band of secondary woodland, dominated by Pedunculate Oak *Quercus robur*, is present along a steep escarpment at the eastern margin of the site. Small areas of Hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna* and Blackthorn *Prunus spinosa* scrub are also present.

Nightjars *Caprimulgus europaeus* breed on the site and other typical heathland species include whitethroat *Sylvia communis*, Nightingale *Luscinia megarhynchos* and Linnet *Acanthis cannabina*. The heath supports a Hen Harrier *Circus cyaneus* roost in winter. Reptiles favour the warm, dry conditions present on the heath and Common Lizards *Lacerta vivipara* and Adders *Vipera berus* are abundant.

There is an ancient 'flaking' site on the heath.