

COUNTY: Norfolk

SITE NAME: POTTER AND SCARNING FENS

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: TF 982120 Area: 5.53 (ha) 13.66 (ac)

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

Date Notified (Under 1949 Act): 1959 Date of Last Revision: 1971

Date Notified (Under 1981 Act): 1984 Date of Last Revision: –

Other Information:

Part of this site (Scarning Fen) is of international importance and has been recommended for inclusion in the list of wetlands of international importance under the Ramsar Convention.

Part of this site is owned by the Norfolk Naturalists' Trust. There has been a small boundary adjustment to exclude land taken for the Dereham Bypass.

Reasons for Notification:

Potter and Scarning Fens are small calcareous valley fens on shallow peat and are among the finest of their type in Britain. The site grades from bryophyte-dominated communities on the open, wet parts of the site, through calcareous fen, to heathland on the drier ground. The flora is exceptionally diverse and a number of uncommon mosses and liverworts are present. The site has great entomological interest and supports a rare species of damsel-fly.

The central, open area of the fen is dominated by bryophytes, Bog Rush *Schoenus nigricans* and Blunt Flowered Rush *Juncus subnodulosus*. Such plant communities are now rare in Britain. The range of flowering plants is exceptional and includes Grass of Parnassus *Parnassia palustris*, Great Sundew *Drosera anglica*, Common Butterwort *Pinguicula vulgaris*, Marsh Helleborine *Epipactis palustris*, Common Twayblade *Listera ovata* and Bogbean *Menyanthes trifoliata*. A tall calcareous fen community surrounds the central area and is dominated by Reed *Phragmites australis*, Meadowsweet *Filipendula ulmaria* and Blunt Flowered Rush. A number of interesting plants are present including Marsh Orchid *Dactylorhiza sp.*, Marsh Lousewort *Pedicularis palustris*, Marsh Pennywort *Hydrocotyle vulgaris*, Common Quaking Grass *Briza media* and Ragged Robin *Lychnis flos-cuculi*.

On the highest ground is an area of grassy heath with much Gorse *Ulex europaeus* and some Heather *Calluna vulgaris*. The calcareous soils are reflected in a number of the species present including Common Quaking Grass, and Heath Speedwell *Veronica officinalis*.

Alder *Alnus glutinosa* carr, has grown up on parts of the site and is gradually reducing the remaining open areas of Potter Fen. Reed, Meadowsweet, Yellow Iris *Iris pseudacorus* and Marsh Marigold *Caltha palustris* are present in the ground flora.

The nationally rare small red Damsel-Fly *Ceriagrion tenellum* is present on the site.