

COUNTY: Norfolk

SITE NAME: COSTON FEN, RUNHALL

DISTRICT: South Norfolk

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

Local Planning Authority: South Norfolk District Council

National Grid Reference: TG 062 066      Area: 7.30 (ha) 18.04 (ac)

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 144      1:10,000: TG 00 NE

Date Notified (Under 1949 Act): –      Date of Last Revision: –

Date Notified (Under 1981 Act): 1992      Date of Last Revision: –

Other Information:  
This is a new site.

**Description and Reasons for Notification:**

Coston Fen is a spring-line fen situated on a slope of the Yare Valley along its upper to middle reaches. There is movement of calcareous groundwater from a seepage zone along the top of the slope down to a collecting drain along the base, and this has resulted in the development of a wide diversity of open fen habitats, including a nationally rare calcareous mire community which is largely confined to East Anglia. The site supports a number of locally uncommon plants.

In the wettest area on peat at the base of the slope, tussocks of Black Bog-rush *Schoenus nigricans* and Purple Moor Grass *Molinia caerulea* dominate. This flush is particularly herb-rich and associated species include Fragrant Orchid *Gymnadenia conopsea*, Grass of Parnassus *Parnassia palustris*, Bog Pimpernel *Anagallis tenella*, Long-stalked Yellow Sedge *Carex lepidocarpa*, Marsh Helleborine *Epipactis palustris* and large amounts of Marsh Lousewort *Pedicularis palustris*. In one area where the vegetation is very short Common Cotton Grass *Eriophorum angustifolium* is abundant.

Small areas of damp unimproved grassland are present. On mineral soils Tufted Hair Grass *Deschampsia cespitosa* dominates, whilst calcareous peat supports Blunt-flowered Rush *Juncus subnodulosus* and Sweet Vernal Grass *Anthoxanthum odoratum* together with species such as Common Spotted Orchid *Dactylorhiza fuchsii*, Devil's-bit Scabious *Succisa pratensis* and Yellow Rattle *Rhinanthus minor*. Within this area raised ground has a dry calcareous grassland flora dominated by Red Fescue *Festuca rubra*, with Purging Flax *Linum catharticum*, Lady's Bedstraw *Galium verum* and Harebell *Campanula rotundifolia*.

Reed *Phragmites australis* dominates the upper slopes with a variety of tall herbs. This gives way to patches of Greater and Lesser Pond Sedge *Carex riparia* and *C. acutiformis* near drains.

Small patches of scrub occur on the flushed slopes, whilst the rest of the field is improved pasture on the valley floor.