

COUNTY: NORFOLK

SITE NAME: KENNINGHALL AND BANHAM
FENS WITH QUIDENHAM MERE

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: TM 041875 Area: 48.9 (ha.) 120.8 (ac.)

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 144 1:10,000: TM 08 NW

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

Date Notified (Under 1981 Act): 1985 Date of Last Revision: –

Other Information:

A new site.

Reasons for Notification:

This complex site occupies a section of the valley of the River Whittle. It consists of areas of tall fen, species-rich fen and calcareous grassland (Kenninghall Fen and Banham Great Fen) and a deep natural mere (Quidenham Mere). Additional interest is provided by areas of wet woodland and by an area of drier unmanaged fen.

Kenninghall Fen is bounded on the eastern side by an area of chalk grassland with several typical calcicoles including common quaking grass *Briza media*, hoary plantain *Plantago media*, bird's-foot trefoil *Lotus corniculatus* and common milkwort *Polygala vulgaris*. Springs emerge from the base of the chalk uplands and give rise to a zone of fen grassland and rich-fen vegetation dominated by blunt-flowered rush *Juncus subnodulosus*, purple moor grass *Molinia caerulea* and black bog rush *Schoenus nigricans*. A number of unusual species are present including common butterwort *Pinguicula vulgaris*, dog pimpernel *Anagallis tenella* marsh helleborine *Epipactis palustris*, grass of parnassus *Parnassia palustris* and marsh lousewort *Pedicularis palustris*. On the lowest lying ground, the rush-dominated fen is replaced by tall fen with common reed *Phragmites australis*, and saw sedge *Cladium mariscus*. southern marsh orchid *Dactylorhiza praetermissa* bogbean *Menyanthes trifoliata* and marsh arrow grass *Triglochin palustris* are frequent. The fen and chalk grassland are grazed by cattle and horses during the summer months.

Banham Great Fen complements Kenninghall Fen with its extensive beds of managed saw sedge and reed. A species-rich fen vegetation occurs along a mown ride that has a similar plant assemblage to Kenninghall Fen.

Quidenham Mere is a natural, deep, non-fluctuating Breckland mere with a fringing vegetation dominated by lesser bulrush *Typha angustifolia*, common club rush *Scirpus lacustris* and reed. Water plants include a zone of white and yellow water lilies *Nymphaea alba* and *Nuphar lutea*. The surrounding carr woodland is dominated by ash *Fraxinus excelsior* with frequent pedunculate oak *Quercus robur* and alder *Alnus glutinosa*. There has been considerable planting but the shrubs and ground flora are of interest with dogwood *Cornus sanguinea*, spindle tree *Euonymus europaeus*, guelder rose *Viburnum opulus*, yellow iris *Iris pseudacorus*,

angelica *Angelica sylvestris*, Primrose *Primula vulgaris* and purple snail
reed *Calamagrostis canescens*.

An area of dry, unmanaged tall fen with abundant reed sweetgrass *Glyceria maxima* and
great willowherb *Epilobium hirsutum* occurs on the western side of Quidenham Mere.