
Biodiversity Enhancement Plan

PROPOSED EXTENSION

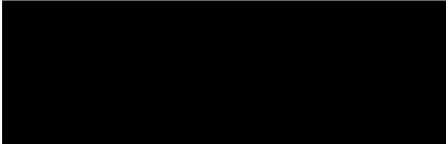
Fairfield Cottage, Meadow View Farm, Stowmarket
Road, Earl Stonham, Suffolk

October 2023



REPORT PRODUCED BY:

MHE Consulting Ltd
Mill House
Homersfield
Harleston
IP20 0ET



CLIENT:

Mr Hart
Meadow View Farm
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Contents Amendment Record

REPORT NUMBER: FAIRFIELD COTTAGE EARLSTONHAM/BES/001

This report has been issued and amended as follows:

Issue	Revision	Description	Date	Signed
1	0	Initial draft	09/10/2023	A. Gregory
1	1	Reviewed draft	10/10/2023	C. Whiting

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1 INTRODUCTION

Planning permission (Ref. DC/23/03545) was granted for a Householder Application to erect a single storey rear extension at Fairfield Cottage, Meadow View Farm, Earl Stonham, Stowmarket Suffolk IP14 5DZ

Amongst the conditions associated with the granting of planning permission, Condition 4 states:

4. PRIOR TO OCCUPATION: BIODIVERSITY ENHANCEMENT LAYOUT

A Biodiversity Enhancement Layout, providing the finalised details and locations of the enhancement measures contained within the Ecology Report (MHE Consulting, August 2023) shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The enhancement measures shall be implemented in accordance with the approved details prior to occupation and all features shall be retained in that manner thereafter.

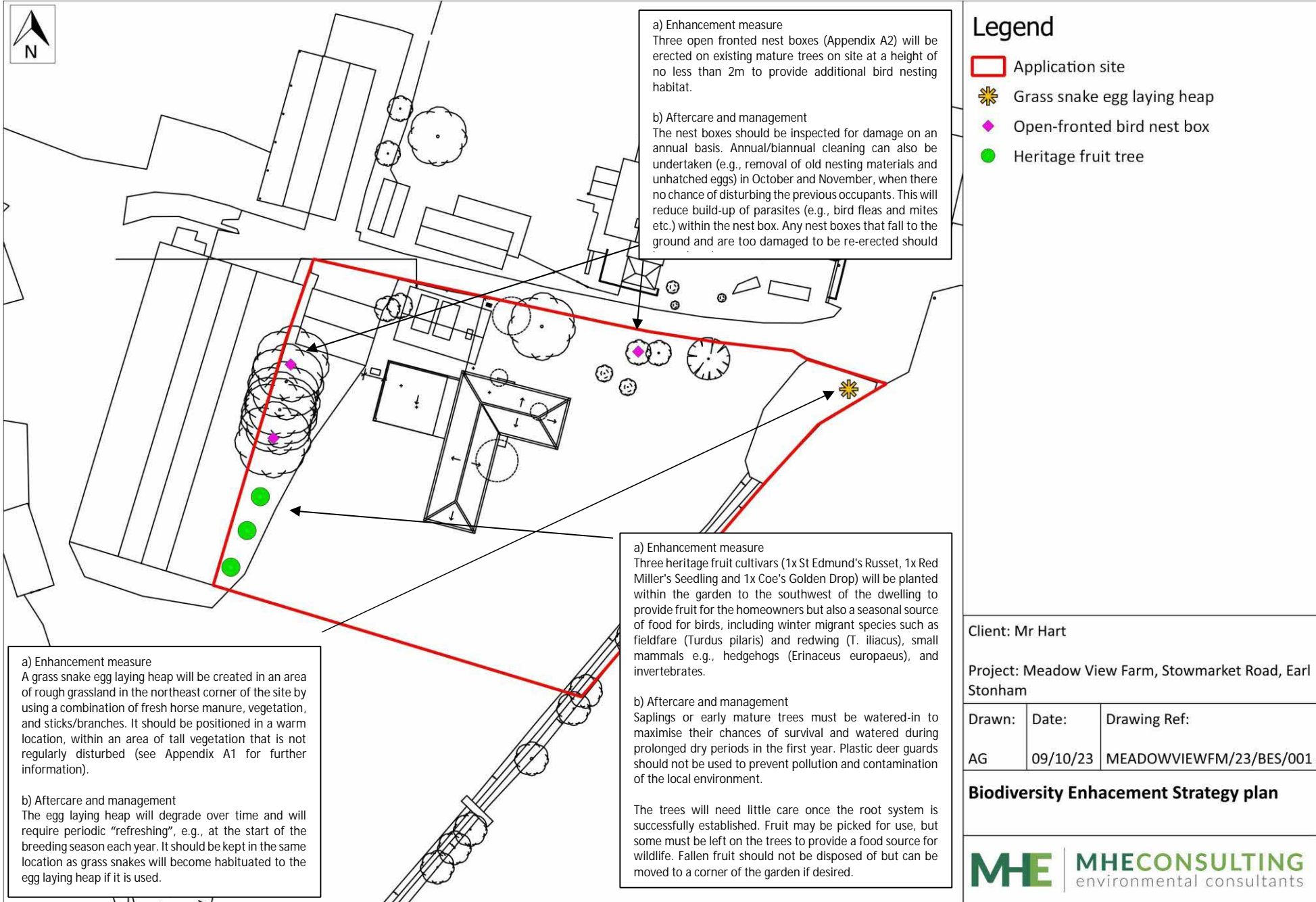
Reason - To enhance Protected and Priority Species and allow the LPA to discharge its duties under the s40 of the NERC Act 2006 (Priority habitats & species).

2 SCOPE

This Biodiversity enhancement plan has been prepared to enable the discharge of Condition 4. It is based on the baseline ecological assessment for the scheme¹ and drawings by Roger Balmer Design architects.

¹ MHE Consulting Ltd (2021) Ecology Report - PROPOSED EXTENSION TO A RECENTLY BUILT BUNGALOW - Meadow View Farm, Earl Stonham, Suffolk - August 2023

3 BIODIVERSITY ENHANCEMENT STRATEGY PLAN



Appendices

Appendix A1

Grass snake egg laying heap

Creating grass snake egg-laying heaps



RAVON



ARG UK

Identification

The grass snake *Natrix helvetica* is the largest British native snake, and can grow to over 1 metre in length. Grass snakes range from grey to green or brown in colour. They have a distinctive yellow or cream collar, bordered to the rear by contrasting dark markings. There is a series of dark bars running along the flanks and some individuals have dark spots on the back as well. Often found near water, grass snakes can sometimes be spotted swimming, or hunting for favoured prey species, which are mainly amphibians. Grass snakes are non-venomous, but they can exude an unpleasant smelling musk if caught. They can live for up to 15 years in the wild.

Introduction



Life cycle

In common with other native reptiles, grass snakes hibernate over winter from October to March, emerging as the weather warms in early spring to replenish their energy reserves by feeding and basking. During April and May they find a mate, and in June or July females lay 10 to 40 leathery white eggs, often in warm compost, piles of leaves or manure heaps, which helps the eggs to incubate and hatch. Several females may use the same egg laying spot, so it may be possible to find large numbers of eggs in a suitable heap. After 6 to 10 weeks the pencil sized (14-22 cm long) young grass snakes emerge. Hatchlings cut their way out of the egg with an egg tooth, which they lose once they have emerged. It then takes three to four years for the young grass snakes to reach adulthood and sexual maturity.



Hatched grass snake eggs

Grass snake distribution
in the British Isles
(© NBN Atlas)

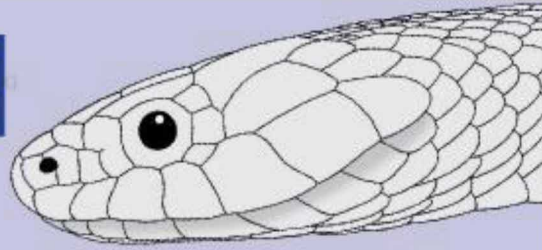


Distribution and habitat

Grass snakes are widely distributed across much of England and Wales, though they are less commonly recorded in the North East of England, and Scotland. Generally, grass snakes prefer to live near water, where they can readily find their amphibian prey; but two other essential habitat features are egg-laying sites and places to hibernate. Natural grass snake egg-laying sites include heaps of organic material, or rotted tree stumps. Many grass snakes, however, take advantage of human activities and lay their eggs in manure or compost heaps. As a result, grass snakes are sometimes seen near riding stables and allotments during the spring and summer months. Over-wintering or hibernation occurs in dry, frost free and relatively undisturbed locations. Hibernation sites may be located in burrows or holes, heaps of rubble or wood, or dilapidated stone walls or buildings. In some areas, a vegetated earth bank or hedge bank, sea wall or even a road or rail embankment may be used.



Why create egg-laying heaps?



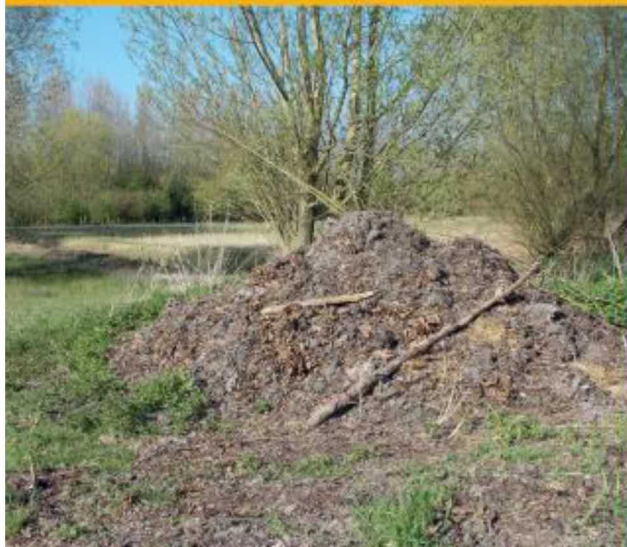
How you can help grass snakes

Grass snakes and humans have been intricately linked through livestock husbandry for many thousands of years across large parts of Europe. Historically, grass snakes have made use of manure heaps, and latterly compost heaps, as egg-laying sites, since these structures generate the heat that the snakes need to incubate and successfully hatch their eggs. In previous times this close association led to the grass snake being regarded as a house god in some parts of Europe, the symbol of spring, wisdom and protecting livestock.

However, in common with much of our native wildlife, we are seeing declines in grass snakes as agricultural and livestock husbandry practices change. One factor is thought to be availability of egg-laying sites, since there are fewer suitable heaps of manure accessible to grass snakes in the wider countryside. One means of boosting grass snake numbers may therefore be to create egg-laying heaps. These heaps also provide shelter and overwintering sites for slow-worms, amphibians, invertebrates and small mammals such as hedgehogs, mice and voles.



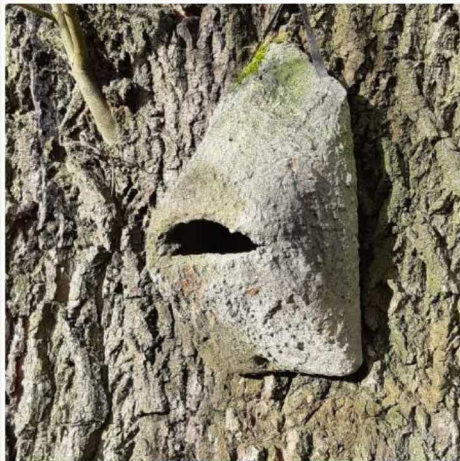
How to create a grass snake egg-laying heap



- **Where:** In a sunny spot, adjacent to tall vegetation, away from busy roads and no more than 400m from a water body. Female grass snakes become habituated to using a successful heap for several years, so when refreshing a heap, ensure you always use the same location.
- **When:** Mid-March to late April
- **Materials:**
 - One third fresh horse manure
 - One third vegetation (leaves, clippings) or compost
 - One third large sticks or branches
- **Instructions:**
 - Clear the ground where you want the heap
 - Create a base layer of leaves and clippings
 - Lay the largest sticks/branches on top of this
 - Place half of the horse manure on top of the sticks and branches.
 - Add another layer of smaller sticks.
 - Mix the remaining manure with the vegetation/compost and add this to the heap. Add some branches and smaller sticks to keep these layers well ventilated.
 - Ensure that the egg-laying heap is not too compacted, so the animals can easily get into it, and to prevent it from overheating.

Appendix A2

Bird nest boxes



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