
Biodiversity Enhancement Plan

PROPOSED WEDDING SUITE
Little Green Wedding Barn, Marsh Farm, Thrandeston,
Suffolk

October 2023



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Contents Amendment Record

REPORT NUMBER: LITTLEGREENWEDDINGBARN/BES/001

This report has been issued and amended as follows:

Issue	Revision	Description	Date	Signed
1	0	Reviewed draft	10/10/2023	C. Whiting
1	1	Updated enhancements plan	11/10/2023	C. Whiting

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1 INTRODUCTION

Planning permission (Ref. DC/23/00504) was granted for a bridal suite at the Little Green Wedding Barn, Marsh Farm, Thrandeston, Suffolk IP21 4BZ. Amongst the conditions associated with the granting of planning permission, Condition 4 states:

4. PRIOR TO SLAB LEVEL: BIODIVERSITY ENHANCEMENT LAYOUT A Biodiversity Enhancement Layout, providing the finalised details and locations of the enhancement measures contained within the Ecology Report (MHE Consulting, December 2022), 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

A Biodiversity Enhancement Layout plan has been prepared to enable the discharge of Condition 4. It is based on the baseline ecological assessment for the scheme¹ as agreed with the owner and operator of the Little Green Wedding Barn. The following enhancements are to be provided (Figure 1):

- An area of wildflower meadow will be created by overseeding the existing meadow in the spring with Emorsgate EM2F Seed Mix after first cutting the grass short in the spring prior to scarifying to create some bare ground. Once established, a pathway to the pond can be cut through the grassland (with the wildflowers left uncut until they have set seed by the end of July), creating a more structurally diverse sward (see Plate 1).



Plate 1 - pathway cut through a well-established wildflower meadow.

- A grass snake heap (Appendix A1) will be created and maintained with additional material added overtime to top it up.
- A kestrel (*Falco tinnunculus*)² box (Appendix A2) will be positioned on a suitable tree (Figure 1).
- A small heritage fruit tree orchard is to be planted to the east of the bridal suite; and
- A hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*) hedgerow will be planted to demarcate the orchard area.

¹ MHE Consulting Ltd (2022) Ecology Report - PROPOSED BRIDAL SUITE The Little Green Wedding Barn, Marsh Farm, Little Green, Thrandeston, December 2022

² <https://www.keengardener.co.uk/more/wildlife-pets/wildlife-world-kestrel-nest-box.html>

Figures



Wildflower Meadow

A strip of wildflower meadow is to be created that links the bridal suite to the pond. It can be established by cutting the existing meadow short in the spring, and then scarifying it (e.g., to create areas of bare ground for the seed to germinate on) prior to sowing with a suitable seed mix, e.g., Emorsgate's EM2F seed mix.

Aftercare and management

To ensure establishment, the seed should be watered during an extended dry period to aid germination. Once the wildflowers have established a pathway up to 2m wide could be mown and the meadow either side should be allowed to grow to full height with no cutting until late summer and/or the following spring in order to allow the flowers to set seed for the following year. Arisings should be removed and composted on the grass snake egg laying heap

Hawthorn Hedgerow

A hedgerow will be established with a double row of whips or container grown plants planted 40 to 50cm apart along the row; with the two rows offset.

Aftercare and management

The plants must be watered-in to maximise their chances of survival and watered during prolonged dry periods in the first year. Plastic deer guards should not be used to prevent pollution and contamination of the local environment.

Once established after 3 years the hedgerow should be trimmed on both sides to encourage denser growth whilst allowing it to grow in height until the desired height it reached (normally 5 to 6ft) at which point it could then be cut on an annual basis. Arisings could be added to the grass snake egg laying area.

Kestrel Nest Box

A nest box (Appendix A2) will be erected on an existing mature oak tree by the pond at a height of no less than 6m high.

Aftercare and management

The nest box should be inspected for damage on an annual basis. Annual/biannual cleaning can also be undertaken (e.g., removal of old nesting materials and unhatched eggs) in October and November, when there is no chance of disturbing the previous occupants. This will reduce build-up of parasites (e.g., bird fleas and mites etc.) within the nest box. **If the box should fall to the ground and is too damaged to be re-erected it should be replaced within the first 10 years after erection.**

Heritage Fruit Tree Orchard

Six heritage fruit cultivars to be planted to provide fruit for the wedding venue but also a seasonal source of food for birds, including winter migrant species such as fieldfare (*Turdus pilaris*) and redwing (*T. iliacus*), small mammals e.g., hedgehogs (*Erinaceus europaeus*), and invertebrates. Local cultivars from Norfolk and Suffolk can be bought from the <https://www.applesandorchards.org.uk/>

Aftercare and management

Saplings or early mature trees must be watered-in to maximise their chances of survival and watered during prolonged dry periods in the first year. Plastic deer guards should not be used to prevent pollution and contamination of the local environment.

The trees will need little care once the root system is successfully established. Fruit may be picked for use, but some must be left on the trees to provide a food source for wildlife. Fallen fruit should not be disposed of but can be moved to a corner of the garden if desired.

Legend

- Hawthorn hedge
- Grass snake egg laying heap
- Kestrel box
- Wildflower meadow with pathway
- Heritage fruit trees
- Application site boundary

Grass Snake Egg Laying Heap

- An egg laying heap will be created in an area of rough grassland to the south of the pond and area of wet woodland and the adjacent Thrandeston Marsh.
- It must be constructed by using a combination of fresh horse manure, vegetation, and sticks/branches (see Appendix A1).
- It should be positioned in a warm location, within an area of tall vegetation that is not regularly disturbed.

Aftercare and management

The egg laying heap will degrade over time and will require periodic "refreshing", e.g., at the start of the breeding season each year. It should be kept in the same location as grass snakes will become habituated to the egg laying heap if it is used.



Client: Mr Paul Yaxley

Project: Little Green Wedding Venue, Marsh Farm, Little Green, Thrandeston, Suffolk

Drawn:	Date:	Drawing Ref:
CW	10/10/23	LITTLEGREENTHRAND/BES/01

Figure 1 Biodiversity enhancements 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)

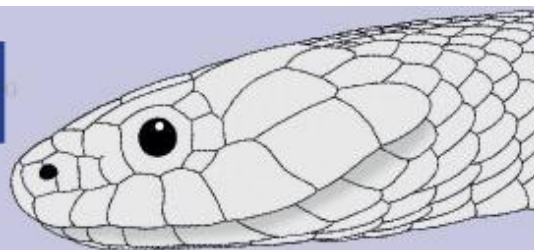


Distribution and habitat

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

Kestrel box

