

## Management Plan, Draft Version 2.0, February 2025

### The Bumpy Nature Reserve, Littlebury Green

#### 1 Introduction

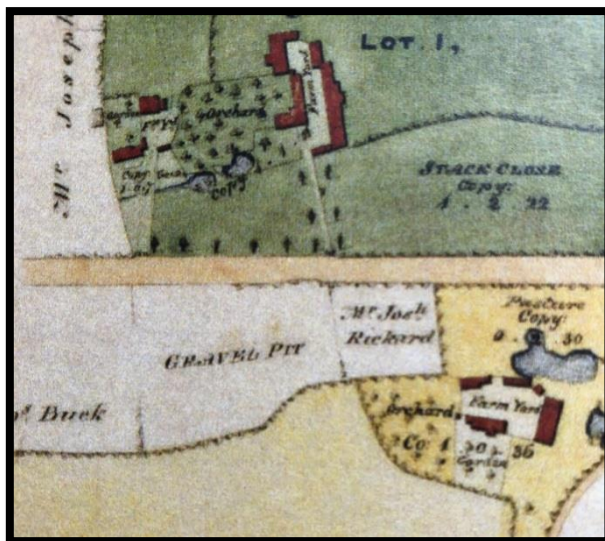
Once part of “the Green” at Littlebury Green, the former gravel pit, known locally as “The Bumpy” appears in maps of the area from as long ago as 1805. The workings and extractions of two centuries ago have created the undulating landscape we see today.

Over the years, the area was reclaimed by trees (mostly Ash, and Elm) and scrub. Badgers have added to the irregularity of the terrain by digging a network of setts in several parts of the Reserve. In recent years, the local Fallow deer population has exploded, and deer adore young tree foliage! This has resulted in no young trees being able to establish in the Bumpy for many years, while the mature trees continue to age. Ash die-back reached us some years ago, and most of the mature Ash trees subsequently had to be felled and cleared, for safety reasons.

The land is owned by Littlebury Parish Council, who have made it available for everyone to enjoy as a nature reserve. A group of local volunteers formed The Bumpy Volunteer Group (BVG) in 2020 to manage and improve the land for the benefit of local wildlife. Financially supported by the Parish Council, local residents and fundraising initiatives, the BVG has planted more than 500 trees and shrubs, created meadow and scrub areas and protected these by the installation of perimeter deer fencing. Paths are mown and maintained throughout the reserve each year to ensure that the area is accessible to as many visitors as possible.

Bird nesting boxes are surveyed and cleaned annually in mid-winter. If a box hasn't been used for two or more consecutive years, its location may be moved elsewhere in the Reserve. Solitary Bee nurseries will be maintained according to recent best practice. The addition of further bat roosting boxes is under consideration. Biodiversity is monitored via regular surveying, including use of a trail camera (see Appendix II). A regularly updated Species List (see Appendix III) is available at the entrance to the Reserve. Between 2020 and 2024, 85 species of wildflower, 96 species of insect, 32 species of bird and 10 species of mammal had been recorded in The Bumpy.

In 2023, Essex Wildlife Trust advised the BVG on how to maximise the site's potential for wildlife, with an aim to increasing biodiversity significantly over the coming years. Best practice suggests that a written Management Plan will assist the Group to achieve this aim. The Plan which follows should be reviewed annually by the BVG, and any agreed changes documented.



*Location of the (now disused) Gravel Pit, opposite Catlins Farm, 1805*

## **2 Bumpy Volunteer Group Mission Statement**

To develop The Bumpy into a nature reserve with broad eco-diversity, resilience and sustainability, suitable for access and enjoyment by all residents of the Parish.

## **3 General Principles of Reserve Management**

All maintenance activities (with the exception of tree surgery, which will be organised and funded by the Parish Council) are carried out by the BVG during Work Parties organised within the Group. Volunteers provide their own tools and fuel (for which the BVG is very appreciative) and are responsible for their own safety and that of others whilst working in The Bumpy. Any proposed activity that is not detailed in the Plan will be agreed by BVG Committee before action is taken.

The following, general principles apply to all maintenance work carried out in The Bumpy:

- i) The principle of minimum interference, whilst meeting the mission statement, and a recognition that tidiness is an enemy of biodiversity, will be followed.
- ii) Only local, native species will be planted/sown.
- iii) Insecticides, herbicides and wood preservatives will not be used.
- iv) Plastic tree guards will be removed and recycled, when no longer needed.
- v) Where possible, fallen wood, or that cut for reasons of safety or good management practice, will be re-used in the Reserve. However, where trees have been cut for safety reasons, and where there is already a lot of decaying wood of similar age in the Bumpy, the BVG may turn this into logs for use by members as firewood, or it may be offered to the wider community. Trees will never be cut down for the purpose of providing firewood, however. Unusable wood will be retained within the reserve in lengths as long as practically possible (to encourage fungal growth) and allowed to naturally decompose, for the benefit of wildlife.
- vi) All grass clippings, weeds, prunings, etc will be piled at the edge of the reserve for natural decomposition. Bonfires will be avoided.
- vii) Paths will be maintained by regular mowing/strimming throughout the spring/summer months.
- viii) Visitors will be encouraged to keep to the footpaths. Dogs will be excluded.
- ix) Tools and equipment are not kept in the Bumpy, but a small, screened working area is maintained at the boundary with St Peter's church.
- x) Man-made structures within the Bumpy will be limited in number and made from natural materials wherever possible.
- xi) Regular updates on management progress/decisions and points of seasonal interest to be made in the Parish magazine.

## **4 Habitat Features of The Bumpy & their Management**

Although only a very small piece of land (around one acre), The Bumpy contains a number of distinct habitat features, due to its very variable topography. These are numbered on the attached map (Appendix I), for clarity and ease of reference.

### **4.1 Roadside Hedge**

This was planted, using native species of locally occurring hedging saplings, in the winter of 2021/22.

**Long-term objective:**

To create a diverse hedge that will mask the deer fencing and provide shelter and nesting sites for birds, small mammals and insects. The hedge will also reduce noise from passing traffic, to the benefit of both visitors and wildlife.

**Management Requirements:**

Short-term:

- i) Protect saplings with tree guards until they are robust enough to withstand browsing by Muntjac
- ii) Remove pernicious weeds from proximity of saplings, as required, until well established.

Long-term:

- i) Remove tree guards and re-use or recycle.
- ii) Trim back when plants reach c. 2m high, to encourage branching and bushy growth.
- iii) Trim back on an approximate 5 year rotation.
- iv) Consider laying, as the hedge matures.

**4.2 Plateau Area, just inside Pedestrian Access Gate**

This area was cleared, rotavated and sown with a grass/wildflower mix in 2021. Locally sourced Yellow Rattle and other wildflower seeds have been added to the sward in 2022 and 2023. A number of native trees were planted along the rim of the plateau in 2021.

**Long-term objective:**

To create a wildflower meadow; a haven for pollinator insects and an attractive, interesting habitat to welcome visitors to The Bumpy.

**Management Requirements:**

Short-term:

- i) The plateau will be mown in March 2025 and, if it is a mild spring, again in April. Native species plug plants will be added to a defined area and protected from the resident Muntjac. The remainder of the plateau will be left to nature to see what grows this year. Mid-summer, the Committee will consider next steps, but it is probable that it will not be mown again until the end of the summer. All mowings to be removed from the area and used to mulch the hedging plants along the boundary with Seaman's farm.
- ii) Stinging Nettles and Creeping Thistles to be removed by hand as and when they appear.

Long-term:

- i) The short-term strategy will be reviewed mid-season 2025. The BVG will reconsider the strategy for the following year in light of results in 2025.

**4.3 Bank between the Top Bench & the Roadside Hedge**

This area was cleared of Stinging Nettles and Brambles in the winter of 2023/24. It includes stumps of three of the felled Ash trees, which have since re-sprouted. It also contains some very large tree trunks, which were not removed following the felling. These are too big for the BVG to remove and are now home to several different fungal species. The Elm trees have suckered into this area and Blackthorn has also self-generated here.

**Long-term Objective:**

To turn the area into scrub, with some additional interest from a few standard trees and some dog roses.

**Management Requirements:**

Short-term:

- i) Support the naturally regenerating species in this area.
- ii) Protect & water the added trees and shrubs, removing reappearing nettles, etc, until they are well established

Long-term

- i) Remove tree guards and re-use or recycle.
- ii) Consider a coppicing cycle to keep area at mid-height, into the future.

**4.4 The Ramp**

This is an access ramp for vehicles, should we need machinery to enter the Reserve for maintenance work in the future. It is composed of rubble, covered with a thin layer of gravel and topsoil recovered from works carried out at St Peter's church in early 2023. In the summer of 2023, a good number of new species to the Bumpy grew from this "seed bank", but fewer returned in 2024.

The surviving mature Elm trees are at the bottom of the Ramp, close to the Seaman's Farm border.

**Long-term Objective:**

No intervention. See what develops

**Management Requirements:**

None. No mowing, no further planting, for at least two years.

**4.5 The Bank below the Meadow**

This area has received no attention to date. In the summer, it is covered with nettles, thistles and other herbaceous plants.

**Long-term Objective:**

The bank is south-facing, but the soil is very nutrient rich, so it will be left as a scrubby area.

**Management Requirements:**

None.

**4.6 The Hollow**

This area was planted with native tree species in 2020 & late 2021.

**Long-term Objective:**

Facilitate establishment of existing planting. No further planting required.

**Management Requirements:**

Short-term:

- i) Protect saplings with tree guards until they are robust enough to withstand browsing by Muntjac
- ii) Remove pernicious weeds from proximity of saplings, as required, until well established.

Long-term:

- i) Remove tree guards and re-use or recycle.
- ii) Consider a coppicing cycle for some specimens.

#### **4.7 Copse 1:**

This area was cleared and planted with native woodland species in early 2021. Rather than using individual tree guards, the whole copse is surrounded by a fence to protect the trees from Muntjac.

##### **Long-term Objective:**

To establish a mid-height coppice/scrub area.

##### **Management Requirements:**

Short-term:

- i) No action needed.

Long-term:

- ii) Agree a suitable coppicing cycle.

#### **4.8 Perimeter with Seaman's Farm**

An old, leggy hedge exists along the perimeter, containing early-flowering Prunus that is popular with emerging bees. There are also Field Maples and other local species. Bird boxes have been sited in a number of these.

##### **Long-term Objective:**

As Planning Permission has been granted for the construction of a new dwelling at Seaman's Farm, shielding The Bumpy from any disturbance from this is a priority. The perimeter hedge needs thickening up to produce a more significant barrier between the properties, to shield wildlife from noise, light and disturbance. A double row of new hedging was planted in 2022. This has been slow to establish, due to shading and a lack of moisture.

##### **Management Requirements:**

Short-term:

- i) Continue to protect the hedging plants, removing pernicious weeds as required, until they are well established
- ii) Replace failed plants, as needed.

Long-term:

- i) Remove tree guards and re-use or recycle.
- ii) Trim back when plants reach c. 2m high, to encourage branching and bushy growth.
- iii) Trim back on an approximate 5 year rotation.
- iv) Consider laying, as the hedge matures.

#### **4.9 Copse 2**

This is a copse of Hazels, planted in late 2021 on ground cleared the previous winter/spring.

##### **Long-term Objective:**

To establish a hazel copse.

##### **Management Requirements:**

Short-term:

- i) Continue to remove pernicious weeds as required, until they are well established

Long-term:

- i) Remove tree guards and re-use or recycle.
- ii) Agree a suitable coppicing regime.

#### **4.10 Central Area:**

In this area, one or more badger setts have been dug. It was used by a breeding pair in the winter/spring of 2024. During the summer, the whole area is covered by rampant Stinging Nettles. Several trees have been planted around the periphery of the area and a dry hedge was constructed in January 2025 on 2.5 sides.

##### **Long-term Objective:**

Badgers are protected from disturbance under the Wildlife & Environment Protection Act. We will keep well away from the setts that are in use and give the badgers their privacy.

##### **Management Requirements:**

Ensure the badgers are not disturbed.

#### **4.11 The Hollow below St Peter's Church**

A number of large tree trunks were left in this hollow after they were felled back in 2019/20. They are too big to move, and have become home to fungi, insect larvae, etc. They will be left here to rot away naturally. The remaining very tall, mature Ash trees are to be found at the northern end of this area. These house a boisterous rookery during the breeding season.

##### **Long-term Objective:**

There are no plans to enhance this area in any way. Nature will be left to take its own course.

#### **4.12 Bank below Churchside**

Another badger sett is located here. It was prepared by a female badger as a nest burrow in the late winter of 2024, but seems to have been abandoned soon after. It does not appear to have been used since. It is a steep, east-facing bank, overgrown with extensive brambles and Old Man's Beard. There is a small copse of Elm trees at the north end, next to the church. A path has been instated at the foot of the bank, descending from road-level via a series of steps which have been hand-dug into the bank. The brambles offer shelter and nesting sites to a variety of small bird species.

##### **Long-term Objective:**

There will be no activity in this area. Badgers are protected from disturbance under the Wildlife & Environment Protection Act. We will keep well away from the setts that are in use and give the badgers their privacy.

#### **4.13 Damp Area**

The area in the far south-west corner of the reserve is the dampest. By late winter, it may contain running water, which drains from the adjoining arable field. However, it usually dries out completely in the summer, and so is not suitable for developing into a pond without a great deal of work and on-going maintenance. Brambles and nettles were cleared away during early 2023, but the area was completely overgrown again by mid-summer.

In the winter of 2024/5, a dam was constructed across the feeder stream to form a pool of water above it. Birds and small mammals now regularly drink from this feature, and several mammal species are using it to cross the muddy area.

##### **Long-term Objective:**

Review the situation at the end of 2025, once the dam has been in place throughout a summer period.

**Management Requirements:**

Short-term:

- i) A few local native species of bog plants, such as Water Mint and Ragged Robin, will be added to the damp area, as an experiment.
- ii) Access path to be widened to approx. 1.5m.

**4.14 Perimeter with Arable Field (Audley End Estates)**

This area is a continuation of 4.8. Deer fencing has been erected between Churchside and Seaman's Farm. Bird boxes are sited in some of its trees. The badgers are known to be entering and exiting the reserve under this fence (rather than using the badger gates installed in them).

An active badger sett was identified in the bank below the perimeter fence in January 2025.

**Long-term Objective:**

Monitor the number and size of holes under the perimeter fence – if these become so large that young fallow deer can get into the Bumpy, then action to reduce their size may be necessary.

Consider installation of a small, unobtrusive deer-viewing area, with steps to access this.

**Management Requirements:**

Short-term:

- i) Give the badgers a wide berth (the deer-viewing development is thus on-hold until the end of 2025, at least).
- ii) No further work to be undertaken whilst the sett is actively in use.

*Bumpy Volunteer Group, February 2025.*