

# Habitat Action Plan: Ancient/Species-rich Hedgerows



## 1. Introduction

Ancient hedgerows tend to support the greatest diversity of plants and animals and are defined as those that were in existence before the Enclosure Acts, passed mainly between 1720 and 1840 in the UK. Species-rich hedgerows may be taken as those that contain five or more native woody species on average per 30m stretch of hedgerow. Native woody species may be represented by hawthorn, field maple, blackthorn, dogwood, wayfaring tree, buckthorn, guelder rose, hazel, spindle, dog rose, wild privet and holly.

Recently planted species-rich hedgerows are also included. Hedges may also be important for farming, landscape, cultural and archaeological as well as biodiversity reasons.



*Recently laid hedge at Roadford Lake*

They are especially important to butterflies and moths, farmland birds, bats and dormice. Over 600 plant species, 1500 insects, 65 birds and 20 mammals have been recorded at some time living or feeding on hedgerows. Hedgerows are the most significant habitat over large stretches of lowland Britain and provide an essential refuge for many woodland and farmland plants and animals. These quaint essential habitats provide wildlife corridors for the dispersal, migration and movement to and from other habitats for a range of plants and animals, such as reptiles, amphibians, birds, bats and dormice.

## 2. Current Status

### 2.1 National

In 1993 it was estimated that there was 536,000km of hedgerows remaining in the whole of the UK, with 329,000km in England alone (UK BAP). Assuming a continued net rate of loss due to removal and neglect of about 5% per annum in all four countries, this is

estimated at about 450,000km in total. There is no data available for the percentage of ancient or species-rich hedgerow alone; however, a combined estimate is in the order of 190,000km representing 35% of the UK hedgerow total.

## 2.2 Local

Devon probably has more species-rich hedges remaining than any other county in the UK, and it is estimated (1998) there may be some 53,000 km (33,000 miles) of hedge in the county. Suggestions say that 75% of hedges in the county are species-rich, indicating that there may be at least 40,000 km (26,000 miles) of species-rich hedgerows in Devon alone. Since it has been estimated that there are 190,000 km of species-rich hedge in the UK, Devon may have as much as 20% of the national resource. (Devon BAP)

In Cornwall hedges form one of the most prominent features in the landscape and the county resource of hedges is estimated at about 50,000km (approx. 30,000 miles). The Cornwall Landscape Assessment identified 77% of enclosed land in Cornwall as '*anciently enclosed land*' suggesting that around 38,000km of hedges might be ancient. (Cornwall BAP)

## 2.3 SWLT

Sites that host ancient and/or species-rich hedgerows	Designations
Roadford Lake	LNR

## 3. Legal Status

The CRoW Act 2000 (Countryside and Rights of Way) has complimented the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 for the protection of species such as bats and dormice, which are associated with ancient trees and hedgerows. Some older trees may have TPOs imposed on them and licences to fell these may be required. Some sites that host ancient and/or species-rich hedgerows may have legal protection such as LNR, NNR, SSSI and/or SAC status.

The Environment Act 1995 introduced an enabling power to protect important hedgerows in England. The Hedgerow Regulations, 1997 are designed to define and protect important hedgerows. Article 10 of the EC Habitats Directive 1992, requires member states to encourage the management of linear features. In Local Authorities, most plans have policies that directly or indirectly promote the retention of hedgerows. Under the Forestry Act 1967 (as amended 1979, 1986) a felling licence must be applied for from the Forestry Commission for felling more than 5m<sup>3</sup> per quarter.

The Highways Act (1980) places responsibility on the County Council, as Highway Authority, to ensure that occupiers trim hedges, trees or shrubs so that they do not endanger or obstruct the passage of vehicles or pedestrians, reduce visibility or block street-lighting. There are also legal requirements to remove any growth that is in a dangerous condition and may fall across the road.

## 4. Current Factors Affecting the Habitat

- The net loss of hedgerow length in England between 1984 and 1990 was estimated at 21% mainly from removal and neglect

- Neglect leading to successional change into tree lines, loss of traditional countryside skills
- Loss of hedgerows through disease. Storms, senescence and felling, without the establishment of replacements
- Use of fertilisers and herbicides on adjacent fields leading to nutrient enrichment and loss of biodiversity
- Loss through development, road building schemes and implementation/maintenance of utility services due to poor working practises
- Increased stocking rates, particularly sheep, leading to hedge damage

## 5. SWLT action plan objectives and targets

### Objectives

- Record and maintain the extent of ancient and/or species-rich hedgerows of all sites and work towards national and regional objectives
- Increase hedgerow diversity by additional selective planting to achieve species-rich status ensuring stock is of local provenance
- Maintain and where appropriate increase the overall number of hedgerow trees creating a diverse and varied structure and diversity
- Increase hedgerow connectivity to woodland habitats ensuring diversity of woodland corridors
- Halt degradation of biodiversity value due to spread of invasive alien species

### Targets

- Initiate restoration management at Roadford Lake and other site where appropriate
- Achieve favourable or recovering condition on significant sites by 2012 by encouraging appropriate management regimes
- Wherever possible extend or link existing isolated woodland by creating species-rich hedgerow wildlife corridors
- Create new species-rich hedgerows using native stock where appropriate by 2012

### Current action

- Roadford Lake in 10 year Countryside Stewardship agreement which focuses on hedgerow and Culm grassland management

## 6. SWLT action plan

Action	Potential Partners	Target Date
<b>Policy &amp; Legislation</b>		
1. Adopt national framework for management		On-going
2. Adhere to hedgerow regulations		On-going
3. Seek funding for hedges within local and national grant schemes such as Countryside Stewardship and Higher Level Stewardship		On-going
<b>Site Safeguard &amp; Management</b>		
1. Survey and record the extent of ancient and/or species rich hedgerows to in order to implement the correct management regimes on all appropriate SWLT sites		2012

2. Initiate the restoration of ancient and/or species-rich hedgerows on all SWLT sites where appropriate and bring into favourable or recovering condition		2009 – on-going
3. Implement management regimes to control detrimental invasive species		2010
4. Create new species-rich hedgerows linking connectivity to woodland habitats via wildlife corridors		2012
5. Ensure all material for restoration or creation of hedgerows uses local provenance tree, shrubs, plants and seeds		2010
<b>Advisory</b>		
1. Offer advice and promote best practise where appropriate		On-going
2. Promote hedge maintenance, traditional countryside management skills and legislation through courses available to the public		On-going
<b>Future Research &amp; Monitoring</b>		
3. Obtain quantitative data on the extent of ancient and/or species-rich hedgerow condition and assessment of all known sites and work towards setting relevant targets to national and regional objectives		2012
4. Survey all hedgerows on SWLT land for flora and fauna paying attention to BAP species		2015
5. Implement a restoration/creation programme based on the above survey results		2016 - 2020
6. Where priority species are identified ensure that appropriate management and monitoring is undertaken		On-going
<b>Communications &amp; Publicity</b>		
1. Produce educational material on ancient and/or species-rich hedgerows		2009
Raise awareness of the risks to biodiversity from invasive alien species and problems caused by fly-tipping waste	EA, NE	2012

## 7. Links with other Action Plans

- Pipistrelle bat
- Brown hare
- Bullfinch
- Skylark
- Song thrush
- Linnet
- Hazel dormouse
- Tree sparrow
- Spotted flycatcher
- Lesser horseshoe bat
- Primrose

## 8. Useful Links

UK Biodiversity Action Plan for Wet Woodland [www.ukbap.org.uk/UKPlans.aspx?ID=7](http://www.ukbap.org.uk/UKPlans.aspx?ID=7)

Regional, District, National Park & Local BAP's [www.biodiversitysouthwest.org.uk/](http://www.biodiversitysouthwest.org.uk/)

The Hedgerows Regulations 1997 [www.opsi.gov.uk/si/si1997/19971160.htm](http://www.opsi.gov.uk/si/si1997/19971160.htm)

Status of Species and Habitat Report for Ancient and/or species rich-hedgerows [www.ukbap.org.uk/library/Reporting\\_pdfs/UKlistID7\\_2002.pdf](http://www.ukbap.org.uk/library/Reporting_pdfs/UKlistID7_2002.pdf)