

Hedgerows

Current UK status and trends

Estimated resource is 814,000km, but has been historic decline (e.g. 21% loss between 1984 and 1998)

Estimated current Northamptonshire resource

In the region of 13000km (1982 survey)

Progress towards BAP targets 2008–2015

5269m of hedgerow of high environmental value brought into management under HLS. Much of the county's remaining hedgerow resource is managed under ELS agreements.

Lead partner

Natural England

Target areas



Habitat description

A hedgerow is defined as any boundary line of trees or shrubs over 20m long and less than 5m wide, and where any gaps between the trees or shrub species are less than 20m wide. All hedgerows consisting predominantly (i.e. $\geq 80\%$ cover) of at least one woody UK native species are covered by this priority habitat. Overall about 84% of hedgerows are covered by this definition.

Up to 33% of all hedgerows can be described as ancient and/or species rich. Many of these are the remnants of ancient woodlands that have been left to enclose fields. To meet the definition of ancient and/or species rich, hedgerows must meet one of the following criteria:

- Five or more woody species per 30m section
- Fewer woody species but a rich basal flora,
- Predate the Enclosure Acts (1720–1870).

Ancient hedgerows are often found along parish boundaries, streams and ancient roads and tracks. Enclosure hedgerows are found on early enclosures starting in the 13th century. Hedgerows can include ancient and veteran trees, which are important links to the past. Some may have Tree Preservation Orders. Most will be remnants of ancient woodland or will date back to when the site was enclosed.



Main issues and threats

- New development and associated infrastructure, with large lengths being removed for new housing development
- Inappropriate management (e.g. over cutting, grazing, and spray drift)

- Lack of suitable management (e.g. laying, coppicing, cutting)
- Removal of hedges to increase field size

General strategy

- Focus efforts across the county with emphasis on the Nene Valley, Rockingham Forest and Yardley-Whittlewood Ridge
- Implement sympathetic management through Countryside Stewardship
- Plant new hedgerows and restore existing hedgerows funded primarily through Countryside Stewardship

Additional information

Achieving condition (hedgerow trees): Management must be in place such that for every 100m of hedgerow two trees reach a diameter of ≥ 15 cm. Through their Hedge Tree Campaign the Tree Council is highlighting the importance of hedgerow trees and are running a tree tagging campaign. Agri-environment schemes will also be able to encourage tagging and new planting where appropriate.

Expansion: Hedgerows must contain entirely native species including a number of tree-forming species such as oak. Appropriate management must be put in place.

Targets

1. Maintain the current extent of hedgerows (no net loss)
2. Restore appropriate management to 50% of hedgerows not currently under agri-environment schemes by 2020
3. Increase the number of new young hedgerow trees by 800 by 2025 (equal to rejuvenating or planting 40km of hedgerow)
4. Increase the extent of species-rich hedgerows by 40km by 2025. New hedgerows to include hedgerow trees

Actions

A.	Through Section 106 agreements/new developments ensure that existing species-rich hedgerows are maintained and new ones created	Developers Local authorities Wildlife Trust
B.	Provide maintenance and enhancement advice to landowners of hedgerows which are currently over-managed or in poor condition in the target areas of the Nene Valley, Rockingham Forest and Yardley-Whittlewood Ridge	Natural England Woodland Trust Wildlife Trust
C.	Restore hedgerows through the inclusion of appropriate prescriptions in Countryside Stewardship agreements	Natural England
D.	Plant new hedgerows and hedgerow tree species, appropriate to the locality. The priority should be for reinstating landscape boundary features.	Woodland Trust NCC

Flagship species



- Dormouse
- Eurasian tree sparrow
- Grey partridge
- White letter hairstreak
- Yellowhammer

Further information and management advice

- ▶ [Further habitat information from the Wildlife Trust](#)
- ▶ [Further habitat and management information from the RSPB](#)
- ▶ [Hedgelinek](#)
- ▶ [English Hedgerow Trust](#)
- ▶ [UK hedgerow regulations and management](#)
- ▶ [Flora Locale's restoration library](#)
- ▶ [Hedgerow management, dormice and biodiversity](#) (from Natural England)
- ▶ [Management advice for invertebrates](#) (from Buglife)