



Upleatham hedgerow© Wildflower Ark

Tees Valley Biodiversity Partnership



Hedgerows Habitat Action Plan 2009-2013

Plan Lead Organisation	Wildflower Ark
Plan Coordinator	Jessica Harrison
Action Group	Rural
Associated Plans	Roadside verges
Latest version	Published February 2009

Description

A hedgerow is defined as a boundary line of trees or shrubs over 20m long and less than 5m wide at the base. This definition by the steering group of the UK BAP for hedgerows includes 'classic' shrubby hedgerows, lines of trees, shrubby hedgerows with trees and very gappy hedgerows (where each shrubby section may be less than 20m long, but the gaps are less than 20m).

Most hedges were originally planted to enclose livestock or define boundaries and some very ancient hedgerows are probably remnants of woodland that was cleared for agriculture. Ancient hedgerows, which tend to be those which support the greatest diversity of plants and animals, may be defined as those which were in existence before the Enclosure Acts, passed mainly between 1720 and 1840 in Britain and from the mid seventeenth century in Ireland. Species-rich hedgerows may be taken as those which contain 5 or more native woody species on average in a 30 metre length, or 4 or more in northern England, upland Wales and Scotland.

Hedgerows, especially those that are ancient or rich in woody species, provide valuable habitats for wildlife and are a key component of our cultural and landscape heritage in Britain. They are especially important for butterflies and moths, many species of birds, bats and dormice. Ancient hedgerows tend to support the greatest diversity of plants and animals. Some ancient hedgerows are remnants of ancient woodland and act as a refuge for woodland plants and ancient trees. Species-rich hedgerows are defined as containing an average of 5 or more native woody species in a 30 metre length, or 4 or more in northern England and upland Wales.

In 1993 it was estimated that about 329,000 km of hedgerow remained in England and 49,000 km in Wales. Since 1945 there has been a drastic loss of hedgerows through removal and neglect throughout the UK, especially in eastern counties of England, which continues even now. It has been estimated that some 42% of the remaining British hedges, or about 154,000 km, are ancient and/or species-rich. Hedgerow trees are valuable landscape features, providing food and shelter for wildlife. Many veteran trees are found in boundary hedges. These ancient trees provide a habitat to rare assemblages of invertebrate species.

Current factors causing loss and decline

- ◆ Removal for agricultural purposes due to changing field patterns and development including road widening schemes.
- ◆ Neglect which eventually leads to shrubby hedgerows becoming gappy and eventually lines of trees. This reduces their practical function.
- ◆ Application of agricultural chemicals, especially fertilisers, causes nutrient enrichment, which reduces species diversity.
- ◆ Cutting too frequently and at the wrong time of year reduces the flowering and fruiting of hedgerow shrubs which reduces food availability for song birds and small mammals.
- ◆ Loss of hedgerow trees, by lack of replanting to replace natural loss of old trees.

Conservation Status

Ancient and species rich hedgerows are a UK priority habitat in the UK BAP.

The 1997 Hedgerow Regulations gives powers to local planning authorities protect important hedgerows. Under the regulations, it is against the law to remove or destroy certain hedgerows without permission from the local planning authority. Permission is required before removing hedges that are at least 20 metres in length, over 30 years old and contain certain species of plant. The local planning authority will assess the importance of the hedgerow using criteria set out in the regulations.

The Habitat in the Tees Valley

With support from the Heritage Lottery Fund the Wildflower Ark has carried out hedgerow projects in the borough of Stockton 2005, and Redcar and Cleveland between 2005 and 2007. These have included historical research, field surveys, volunteer involvement, public events, walks and leaflets. The data shows that there are considerable hedgerows of biodiversity value, in particular in Redcar and Cleveland, where a third of the hedgerows surveyed were found to be species-rich.

Current Activity in the Tees Valley

A Hedgerow Partnership bringing together organisations involved in the management and conservation of hedgerows in the Lower Tees Valley has been set-up. This group, co-ordinated by the Wildflower Ark and the Tees Valley Biodiversity Partnership are overseeing the implementation of aspects of the HAP relating to the monitoring and management of valuable hedgerows. A survey of hedgerows along public rights of way in Hartlepool is being out in Summer 2008 by Hartlepool Borough Council in partnership with the University of Sunderland.

Further Information

Steering Group of the UK Biodiversity Action Plan for Hedgerows. (2007). Hedgerow Survey Handbook- A standard procedure for local surveys in the UK. Defra.

Tree Council (2008). Hedgerow Trees: Answers to 18 Common Questions. Natural England.

Steering Group of the UK Biodiversity Action Plan for Hedgerows (2007). Hedge Cutting: Answers to 18 Common Questions. Natural England.

Steering Group of the UK Biodiversity Action Plan for Hedgerows (2008) Hedgerow Planting: Answers to 18 Common Questions Natural England 2008.

Defra. (1997). The Hedgerows Regulations 1997: A Guide to the Law and Good Practice. DEFRA.

Allen, M., Harrison, J. and Herring, H (2005) Ancient Hedgerows of Stockton

Allen, M., Harrison, J. and Herring, (2008) Ancient Hedgerows of Redcar and Cleveland

Websites

<http://www.hedgeline.org.uk>

Vision Statement

To increase the proportion of hedgerows in favourable ecological condition and to protect and manage hedgerows to maximize their value for wildlife. To ensure sensitive management of veteran ancient trees and ensure that new hedgerow trees are planted and encroached.

Targets

- H.T1 Complete information on the extent and character of hedgerows and hedgerow trees
Goal: A GIS database holding data on the extent and character of hedgerows and hedgerow trees covering Hartlepool, Middlesbrough, Redcar and Cleveland and Stockton-on -Tees (2009)
- H.T2 Maintain the existing network of hedgerows, and increase the proportion of hedgerows in favourable ecological condition.
- H.T3 Extend the existing network of hedgerows in keeping with local character.



Oxto Lane hedgerow-Moorsholm © Wildflower Ark

Actions

Code	Action	Organisational lead	Action contact	Partners	End date
H.A1	Complete baseline surveys of hedgerows in the boroughs of Middlesbrough and Hartlepool.	Tees Valley Hedgerow Partnership	Jessica Harrison	Hartlepool BC, Middlesbrough BC	Dec 2011
H.A2	Produce guidance notes on the importance of hedgerows, and the Hedgerow Regulations, for local planners, tree officers etc.	Tees Valley Hedgerow Partnership	Jessica Harrison	Hartlepool BC, Middlesbrough BC, Redcar & Cleveland BC, Stockton BC	Dec 2009
H.A3	Define favourable ecological condition for the Lower Tees Valley.	Tees Valley Hedgerow Partnership	Jessica Harrison	Hartlepool BC, Middlesbrough BC, Redcar & Cleveland BC, Stockton BC, FWAG	Dec 2009
H.A4	Run three hedgerow awareness events for landowners and land managers, including information on local character, hedgerow management and favourable condition.	TVWT	Sue Antrobus	Hartlepool BC, Middlesbrough BC, Redcar & Cleveland BC, Stockton BC, FWAG	Dec 2010
H.A5	Research possibility of running a grant to fund hedgerow management.	Tees Valley Hedgerow Partnership	Jessica Harrison	FWAG	Dec 2009
H.A6	Encourage management through agri-environment schemes that will bring hedgerows into favourable ecological condition.	FWAG	Jennie Stafford	Hartlepool BC, Middlesbrough BC, Redcar & Cleveland BC, Stockton BC,	Ongoing
H.A7	Encourage the planting of new hedgerows in keeping with local character (including hedgerow trees), through agri-environment schemes, particularly along historic boundaries that were once hedged.	FWAG	Jennie Stafford	Tees Valley Hedgerow Partnership	Ongoing
H.A8	Promote/instigate tree-tagging schemes where hedgerow trees are part of the local character of hedgerows.	Tees Valley Hedgerow Partnership	Sue Antrobus	FWAG	Ongoing
H.A9	Provide information and advice on veteran tree recording and management to rural landowners.	Tees Valley Hedgerow Partnership	Sue Antrobus	Woodland Trust	Ongoing