

# Hedgerows



## Description

Ancient Hedgerows are those which were in existence before the Enclosure Acts (1720 to 1840). They contain many Ancient and Veteran Trees and associated deadwood. Species-rich Hedgerows in northern England contain four or more native woody species on average in a 30m length. Hedges which contain a rich basal flora of herbaceous plants are also included. The thin straight Hawthorn hedges of the later Parliamentary Enclosures, and hedges of Beech, Privet, Yew or non-native trees, are excluded. Recently planted Species-rich Hedges are included.

Hedges are important not just for biodiversity, but also for farming, landscape, cultural and archaeological reasons. Hedgerows are important habitats in their own right. They are a primary habitat for at least 47 extant species of conservation concern in the UK, including 13 globally-threatened or rapidly declining ones, more than for most other key habitats. They are especially important for Butterflies and Moths, farmland Birds, Bats, Dormice, Reptiles and Amphibians.

They also act as wildlife corridors for many species, allowing movement between other habitats. In the Barnsley area, the habitat is particularly important for Badger, Song Thrush, Corn Bunting, Linnet and White-letter Hairstreak.

## National Status

In 1993, it was estimated that about 329,000km of Hedgerow remained in England, but with a continued overall net rate of loss due to removal and neglect of about 5% per annum. The proportion of this which is ancient and/or species-rich is estimated at 42%. Hedgerows adjacent to roads, green lanes, tracks and wooded ground tend to be particularly species-rich. Since 1945, there has been a drastic loss of Hedgerows through removal and neglect throughout the UK, which continues even now. Between 1984 and 1990, the net loss of Hedgerow length in England was estimated at 21%. Since 1990, loss through neglect has become increasingly important.

## Local Status

Hedgerow neglect is a bigger problem in Barnsley than outright loss which, for agricultural purposes, has not been significant. The number of applications under the new Hedgerow Regulations is nine after three years. Loss of Hedgerows to development is undoubtedly more significant although there are no precise records. A number of important Hedgerows were listed in the 1980 Phase I Habitat Survey of the borough; 13 species-rich old lanes, six species-rich Hedgerows and two Hedgerow banks. These are widely distributed. Records exist for 21 Hedgerows although only one – Black Lane, Tankersley – is listed in the Natural Heritage Site (NHS) register.

## Legal Status

The Hedgerow Regulations 1997 introduced powers to protect important Hedgerows in Britain. Landowners and managers are required to consult Local Authorities before Hedgerows can be removed. Article 10 of the EC Habitats Directive requires member states to encourage the management of hedges (and other linear features) in their land use planning and development policies and, in particular, with a view to improving ecological coherence of the Natura 2000 network. The Conservation (Natural Habitats, etc.) Regulations, 1994 recognise that such linear features are essential for the migration, dispersal and genetic exchange of wild species. Planning Policy Guidance Note (PPG 9 – Nature Conservation, 1994) further encourages the development of policies for the management of Hedgerows.

## Links with other Action Plans

SAP1	Hedgehog	SAP10	Barn Owl
SAP2	Bats	SAP12	Tree Sparrow
SAP5	Grey Partridge	SAP14	Great Crested Newt
SAP7	Kestrel	SAP20	Bluebell

### **Current Factors Causing Loss or Decline**

- Neglect (no cutting or laying) leading to hedgerows changing into lines of trees and the development of gaps. This reflects modern high labour costs and loss of traditional skills.
- Too frequent and badly-timed cutting leading to poor habitat conditions, development of gaps and probable species changes.
- Loss of Hedgerow trees through senescence and felling, without encouraging replacements.
- Use of herbicides, pesticides and fertilisers right up to the bases of Hedgerows, leading to nutrient enrichment and a decline in species diversity.
- Increased stocking rates, particularly of sheep, leading to Hedgerow damage and the need to fence fields. The presence of fences

reduces the agricultural necessity for hedge maintenance and so hastens their decline. The modern practice of ‘ranching’ (placing netting around several fields to form a grazing block) also contributes to the deterioration of internal hedges.

- Removal for agricultural and development purposes.

### **Current Local Action**

- Advocacy on good Hedgerow management eg. by FWAG; advocacy and support for same via agri-environmental grant awarding agencies eg. DEFRA.
- Administration by Barnsley MBC of Hedgerow Regulations.
- Survey of significant ancient Hedgerows in Barnsley.

### **Proposed Local Action**

- Survey and complete a register of all Ancient and Veteran Trees.
- Survey and monitor all known White-letter Hairstreak sites and potential new locations and undertake appropriate management.
- Secure favourable management practice for all ancient and species-rich Hedgerows identified from the recent Hedgerow Survey.
- Encourage participation among farmers in Environmental Stewardship and Countryside Stewardship Schemes.
- Encourage landowners to leave deadwood within Hedgerows where appropriate.
- South Yorkshire Badger Group to continue to survey, record and monitor Badger setts.
- Extract information from the *Barnsley Bird Study Group Breeding Bird Survey* to provide populations and mapping of breeding Cuckoo, Song Thrush, Dunnock, Bullfinch, Linnet, Yellowhammer, and Corn Bunting.

### **BMBC Planning Policy Actions**

- Ensure that appropriate Hedgerows are protected through the Hedgerow Regulations.
- Encourage the creation of new habitat through the requirement made under Planning Policy Statement (PPS) 9, to incorporate biodiversity enhancements into development wherever possible.
- Maximise the opportunities offered by Unitary Development Plan (UDP) policies for protection, enhancement and management of Hedgerows not covered by Hedgerow regulations; develop policies for Hedgerow protection and management.
- Seek the inclusion of policies within the Local Development Framework (LDF) that ensure new development does not have an adverse effect on the nature conservation value of ancient and/or species-rich Hedgerows.
- Ensure that development plans identify sites of nature conservation importance with respect to ancient and/or species-rich Hedgerows.
- Ensure that suitable hedgerows are identified as Natural Heritage Sites (NHS).
- Use Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs) to protect threatened Hedgerow trees.