HEDGEROWS

1. INTRODUCTION

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Hedgerows are boundary features, dominated by tree and shrub species and used to enclose fields, woods and property. Hedges provide a home for many forms of wildlife. Their wildlife value is frequently complemented by an adjacent bank, ditch, field margin, verge or some other type of semi-habitat. Hedgerows are typically linked together to create a network of wildlife corridors, often through intensively-farmed landscapes and help link other important habitats such as woods, ponds, grasslands and wetlands.

Hedgerows can support hundreds of species of plants and animals, including small mammals and they form valuable nesting sites for a variety of birds including song thrush, tree sparrow and yellowhammer, as well as being an important winter food source. The sheltered herb rich hedge margins can support many butterflies and other invertebrates, including the nationally notable leaf beetle species *Cryptocephalus frontalis* and the species which feed on them and their larvae.

Ancient hedgerows, which tend to be those which support the greatest diversity of plants and animals, are those which were in existence before the Parliamentary Enclosure Acts, passed mainly between 1720 and 1840. Ancient hedgerows are often associated with banks and ditches and are particularly common in the Arden area of the sub-region. They tend to support more woody species than more recent hedgerows and may support ancient woodland herbs such as bluebell and wood anemone at their base. Species-rich hedgerows are those which on average support 5 or more woody species in a 30m length.

The species-poor, straight hedgerows surrounding the large regular fields in the east and south of the sub-region mostly originate from the Parliamentary Enclosure Acts and tend to be dominated by hawthorn, blackthorn, elm and elder, with a less interesting flora at their bases compared to ancient species-rich hedges. However, in what can be a very intensively farmed landscape, they still provide valuable blossoms, berries and shelter.

Many mature and veteran trees can be found within hedgerows. Unfortunately as traditional management techniques have declined, the age structure of hedgerows trees has become biased towards mature trees as very few young trees are planted or allowed to grow on. Dutch Elm Disease has also substantially reduced the total number of hedgerow trees since the mid 1970's as our sub-region was one of the worst affected (due to a predominance of English elm).

Since the middle of the last century there has been a huge loss of hedgerows within the UK, although the rate of loss has been substantially reduced in recent years and the new hedges are being planted.

2. OUR OBJECTIVES & TARGETS	Target
A. Promote the maintenance of extent and maintenance of / improvement of condition of species-rich hedgerows to retain their quality and integrity	**2005**
B. Seek to complete the survey of hedgerows throughout the sub-region to enable the development and maintenance of a central database of information	**2015**
C. Maintain overall numbers of hedgerow trees at least at current levels by encouraging new planting and natural regeneration	**2004-2015**
D. Encourage new planting of 10km native species rich hedges annually	**2004-2015**
E. Halt the net loss of ancient and species rich hedgerow.	**by 2005**
F. Increase awareness of the Hedgerow Regulations 1997 and the need for Felling Licence in relation to hedgerow trees	**by 2004**

ASSOCIATED HABITAT PLANS	ASSOCIATED SPECIES PLANS
• **Field Margins** • **Woodlands** • **Lowland Grassland(all types)** • **Roadside Verges**	• **Bats** • **Farmland Birds** • **Song Thrush**

3. NATIONAL BAP OBJECTIVES & TARGETS

- *Halt the net loss of species-rich hedgerows through neglect and removal by the year 2000.*
- *Halt all loss of hedgerows which are both ancient and species-rich by 2005.*
- *Achieve favourable condition for 25% (c.47500 km) of species-rich and ancient hedges by 2000.*
- *Achieve favourable condition for 50% (c.95000 km) of species-rich and ancient hedges by 2005*
- *Maintain the overall national number of individual hedgerow trees (estimated by CS2000 to be 1.8 million in Great Britain in 1998), by maintaining the number of such trees within each county or district, through ensuring a balanced age structure.*

4. CURRENT STATUS

In the 20th Century there was a huge net loss of hedgerows in the UK. Between 1984 and 1990 121000km of hedgerows were lost (DoE report). Currently, the UK hedgerow resource is estimated to be about 450000km. In 2001 there was estimated to be 9586km of hedgerows in Warwickshire, 174km in Coventry and 509km in Solihull (source HBA). (These figures underestimate the length of urban hedgerows.)

The majority of rural hedges are managed by flailing although many are neglected. Traditional hedge-laying, which had become uncommon, has had a recent resurgence in popularity.

Within the Countryside Stewardship scheme, up to and including 2002, there were 43km of hedgerow in Warwickshire which are being actively managed through coppicing, new planting and laying.

4.1 Legal and Policy Status

The Hedgerows Regulations 1997 makes it unlawful to remove a rural hedgerow without obtaining permission from the local planning authority (through submitting a hedgerow removal notice). Mature trees within hedgerows can be protected by Tree Preservation Orders and may require a felling licence.

Some species associated with hedges (nesting birds, badgers, bats and great crested newts receive legal protection under the Wildlife & Countryside At 1981 (as amended).

The County Structure Plan and local development plans contain policies that protect hedges and other landscape features.

4.2 Current Factors Affecting The Habitat

Hedgerows are being adversely affected by both destruction and lack of appropriate management, however at the same time new hedges are being planted and more are receiving sympathetic management through schemes such as Countryside Stewardship.

- **Physical removal**, because of agricultural intensification leading to the creation of larger fields and urban development e.g. housing, roads.
- **Neglect**, such as a decline in the practice of in hedge laying, resulting in gaps and loss of structure.
- **Poorly timed or over zealous cutting** can cause severe damage leading to a decline in wildlife and landscape value.
- **The introduction or natural colonisation of non-native and invasive species** such as Sycamore.
- **The loss of mature trees within hedgerows** was acute following the major Dutch Elm Disease epidemic of the 1970s and continues as oak and ash succumb belatedly to the drought summers of the 1990s and semi-mature elm succumbs to re-infestation. Little attempt is being made to replace such mature trees.

- **Fragmentation i.e. the increasing separation of hedgerows from other semi-natural habitats** such as woodlands, water bodies and flower rich grasslands. This reduces the capacity of hedgerows to support high biodiversity and act as wildlife corridors. Hedges are most valuable when they exist alongside other habitats and act as links between other habitats.
- **Pesticide and herbicide spray** can also affect hedgerow wildlife.
- **Damage** through the creation of desire lines, bank and ditch erosion and fly tipping especially in urban areas.

5. CURRENT LOCAL ACTION

- Warwickshire Wildlife Trust in association with the CPRE, have been co-ordinating hedgerow survey work by volunteers. This information has been fed into the Habitat Biodiversity Audit. This survey is being supported by the local authorities is some parts of the county.

- The Habitat Biodiversity Audit maintains a GIS database which includes rural hedges and some urban ones in the sub-region. This information has been gathered recently commencing 1997, but only records presence or absence of a hedge. More detailed information is currently being added regarding hedgerow structure from the WWT/CPRE surveys.

- The Warwickshire Biological Records Centre maintains an extensive database of sites, habitats and species in the sub-region. This also includes considerable hedgerow data, the data has been added to in recent years as the result of surveys in relation to the assessment of Important Hedgerows under the Hedgerow Regulations 1997.

- Staff from Warwickshire and Coventry Museum have been carrying out entomological surveys of hedgerows as part of a wider survey effort.

- Local planning authorities administer the Hedgerow Regulations 1997, and qualitative hedgerow surveying takes place in response to hedgerow removal notices but such surveys only cover a small proportion of the total.

- New hedges are created periodically by landowners, farmers and developers, and some of these are designed to be semi-natural in character by using native species.

- Agri-environment schemes offer payment towards the cost of hedge restoration, management and planting. DEFRA, FWAG and others provide advice about them.

- FWAG runs practical hedgerow training courses in response to demand from their members.

- A study in 2001 identified that 36% of hedges in the area had been removed between 1950 and 2000 (Julie Nixon, WWT).

6. PROPOSED LOCAL ACTIONS (some dates amended – Core Steering Group – Feb 2008)

ACTION	Lead	Partners	By	Meets objective
Policy & Legislation				
PL1. Ensure that all relevant habitat policy is included in Local Planning Documents (see ODPM Planning Policy Statement PPS9).	NBBC	WM LAs BC WWT NE RSPB	2004-2015	A,C,D,E
PL2. Lobby Government to improve the current Hedgerows Regulations, to provide greater protection to hedgerows where species protected by Wildlife & Countryside Act occur.	WWT	RSPB BC WMBC	2004	A,E
PL3. Encourage the use of planning conditions/ obligations to create new, and enhance existing, hedgerows.	NBBC	WM BC WWT LAs	2004-2015	A,D,E
PL4. Review and select all qualifying hedgerows as SINCs and enter onto database.	WSP	LAs	2004-2015	A,E
PL5. Lobby the Government for increased availability of grant aid for the management of hedgerows and their environs.	WWT	RSPB FWAG BC	2005	A,C,D,E
Site / Species Safeguard & Management				
SM1. Make effective use of the Hedgerows Regulations in securing the protection of important hedgerows.	NBBC	WM LAs	2004-2015	A,E
SM2. Use new hedgerows to link habitats of existing biodiversity value where opportunities arise.	NBBC	WWT NE FWAG LAs	2004-2015	D
SM3. Where appropriate, ensure important hedgerow trees are protected by Tree Protection Orders.	NBBC	WWT FWAG EN WM TOs	2004-2015	C
SM4. Produce a list of key hedgerow indicator species found in the sub-region with notes on their management e.g. guelder rose, small leaved lime and wild service tree.	WM	WWT	2004	A

SM5. Produce benchmark new hedgerows species mixtures, based on what is found locally (using the WWC Landscape guidelines) with notes on which fauna each species benefits and why local provenance is important. Distribute through FWAG.	WBRC	FWAG WCC WWT	2005	D
SM6. Actively recommend measures to increase the extent of connectivity and maintain options to expand area of habitat.	LBAPSG	WCC LAS WWT NE	2008-2015	D
Advisory				
A1. Promote Best Management Practice for hedgerow biodiversity.	FWAG	BC BTCV CLA HBA CPRE NE FC LA LA21 LBAPSG NFU WI RSPB TO WBRC WMBC WWT	2004-2015	A
A2. Create a comprehensive library of existing information and advice on hedgerow management for wildlife, including hedgerow trees. Make it available to local landowners and managers, e.g. via FWAG web-site, and where possible make it specific to the sub-region.	FWAG	BC BTCV CLA HBA CPRE NE FC LA LA21 LBAPSG NFU WI RSPB TO WBRC WMBC WWT	by 2004	A
A3. Raise awareness of landowners of current management incentives such as agri-environ -ment schemes and encourage them to apply.	FWAG	WWT RSPB NE	2004	A,C,D
A4. Provide practical demonstrations on hedgerow planting and management to both rural and urban audiences - at least 2 per year across the sub-region.	BTCV	LAs LA21 WWT FWAG	2004-2015	A,D

Research & Monitoring				
RM1. Update the information on the WBRC and HBA to include quality information on hedgerow structure and/or species.	HBA	BC BTCV CLA CPRE NE FC FWAG LA LA21 LBAPSG NFU RSPB TO WBRC WI WMBC WWT	2004-2015	B
RM2. Produce maps of the sub-region showing hedgerow quality and frequency to enable targeting of conservation work.	HBA	NE FWAG WWT	2004-2015	A,B
RM3. Complete programme of hedgerow surveys to enable mapping of species rich hedgerows, and hedgerows supporting uncommon plants and animals, e.g. wild service tree, nesting tree sparrow, scarce insects.	HBA	CPRE LAs WWT	2004-2015	B
RM4. Establish procedures for the monitoring of loss and gain of hedgerows.	HBA	LAs WWT	by 2005	E
Communication, Education & Publicity				
CP1. Promote wildlife value of hedgerows and their benefits in relation to natural pest control and wildlife conservation (including Game Conservancy research).	FWAG	BC BTCV CLA HBA CPRE NE FC LA LA21 LBAPSG NFU WI RSPB TO WBRC WMBC WWT	2004-2015	A
CP2. Publicise the Hedgerow Regulations and Felling Licence requirements to landowners/managers.	NBBC	FWAG NFU LAs CLA FC	2004	F
CP3. Encourage local hedgerow surveys by schools and community groups e.g. local history groups, conservation groups, parish councils etc. Use existing WWT/CPRE survey.	WWT	CPRE LAs LA21	2004-2015	B

CP4. Put together a slide pack and list of speakers – distribute to local groups e.g. Parish Councils, WI, local history groups.	WBRC	WWT FWAG	2004	A,F
CP5. Encourage planting of hedgerows in urban areas.	LBAPSG	LA21 LAs	2004-2015	D

Abbreviations: BC – Butterfly Conservation, BTCV – British Trust for Conservation Volunteers, CLA – Country Landowners' Association, CPRE – Campaign for the Protection of Rural England, NE – Naturral England, FC – Forestry Commission, FWAG – Farming & Wildlife Advisory Group, HBA – Habitat Biodiversity Audit, LA – Local Authority, LA21 – Local Agenda 21officer, LBAPSG – Local Biodiversity Action Plan Steering Group, NBBC – Nuneaton & Bedworth Borough Council, NFU – National Farmers' Union, RSPB – Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, TO – Tree Offcers, WCC – Warwickshire County Council, WM – Warwickshire Museum, WBRC – Warwickshire Biological Records Centre, WI – Womens' Institutes, WMBC – West Midlands Bird Club, WWT – Warwickshire Wildlife Trust.

7. REFERENCES

8. FURTHER INFORMATION (see separate **Links** web page for links to web sites)

UK Hedgerows Biodiversity Action Plan no.7
Flora Locale – the Knowledge Zone

Game Conservancy Trust: '*Restoring wild grey partridge to farms*' . 5 free fact sheets, also an on-farm advisory service. Tel. 01425 652381.

Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group, FWAG - information on the new Environmental Stewardship agri-environment scheme. Also advice on hedgerow management for wildlife. Tel.01926 318280 or email: warwickshire@fwag.org.uk

Campaign for the Preservation of Rural England (CPRE), Hedgerow Survey Campaign and Training Days. Contact John Wharam on 01926 494597 or email: hedgesrwickshire.org.uk

Buglife (2004) Information on the habitat-management requirements of key invertebrates . CD-Rom £34.99 from Beverley Doyle by email at: beverley.doyle@buglife.org.uk

9. CONTACT