

HABITAT ACTION PLAN : Hedgerows

Associated Species Action Plans	1 Current Status
Badgers	<p>A hedgerow is a row of shrubs or bushes, which form a boundary, with or without trees or pollards. This barrier is primarily for stock control but also provides shelter for livestock, crops and wildlife. Hedgerows can act as a barrier to erosion and as a reservoir for predators of pests. Hedgerows also provide a visual amenity, a link to the past and a transit route for wildlife. Hedgerows are rich wildlife-rich habitats and support a number of species of concern within the U.K. Some of these are globally threatened species.</p> <p>The hedgerows of Birmingham and the Black Country range in date from mediaeval assarts to nineteenth century enclosures. Hedgerows were used to divide agricultural land between landowners and occasionally formed boundaries between parishes, often resembling woodland edge and scrub habitats.</p> <p>Hedgerows can be deliberately planted or represent the remnants of previously wooded areas. In association with the woody plant species there can be a number of associated earth works, consisting of a bank and usually one or two ditches along the line of the hedge. These may be of archaeological importance. Following the line of the hedge there is sometimes a headland of uncut grasses and herbaceous plant species.</p>
Bats	
Bluebell	
Brown hare	
Song thrush	
Tree sparrow	

Associated Habitat Action Plans	<p>Many new species rich hedgerows have been planted in recent years, as new hedge lines, or along the lines of previous hedgerows which had been lost. There are also many hedges associated with gardens which are not dealt with within this B.A.P.</p>
Arable fields	<p>In addition to the hedgerows being rich in species, the associated banks, ditches and un-mown margins can also be rich in species and form an important reservoir for wildlife in conjunction with the hedgerow.</p>
Arable field margins & beetle banks	
Deadwood	<p>Hedgerows are important as a visual amenity as well as being valuable reservoirs and transit routes for wildlife. Hedgerows contribute significantly to the rural landscape and are an integral part of the urban landscape providing a visual and long lasting link between the two.</p>
Gardens, allotments, parks and open space	<p>Older hedgerows usually contain a large amount of dead wood and plant litter within the structure of the hedge. Most of this dead wood is generated from the management practice of hedge laying, where the laid stems die off as the new shoots' grow. This dead wood can provide a valuable habitat for some invertebrates and cover for small mammals.</p>
Lowland grasslands	
Woodland	

Many mature and old trees can be found within hedge lines, unfortunately, as traditional management techniques have declined, the age structure of hedgerow trees has become biased towards mature trees as very few young trees are being planted. Hedgerows are a source of elm, which, since Dutch elm disease has become rare as a mature tree, with many elm trees living on as suckers.

Hedgerows can be found throughout the Birmingham and Black Country conurbation. The main concentrations of hedgerows on land currently in agricultural use are in Walsall, Sutton Coldfield, Dudley and the surrounding green belt. In the urban area hedgerows can be found as remnants of historic landscapes within the built environment and in many of the open spaces throughout the conurbation. Many can be found on roadside verges and beside canals.

Birmingham and the Black Country's hedgerows, as well as providing a local network of corridors and wildlife refuges, also provide links into the wider countryside. The strongest links are with rural Worcestershire, Warwickshire and Staffordshire.

Until the middle part of this century hedgerows were intensively managed by periodically laying the hedge. With the advent of mechanisation this practice has declined, although recently hedgelaying has seen a resurgence of popularity. Hedge laying styles vary from region to region. The style used within the Birmingham and Black Country region is the 'Midland Bullock'; this style is also found throughout the country.

Since the middle of this century there has been a large net loss of hedgerows within the U.K. Between 1984 and 1990 121,000 Km of hedgerows were lost (Department of the Environment Report).

Currently, the U.K. hedgerow total, assuming a continual net rate loss through neglect or removal of about 5% per annum, is estimated to be about 450,000 Km.

In the Birmingham and Black Country area over 2,000 hedgerows have been recorded. Of this total, there is 522Km of continuous hedge and 60Km of defunct hedge recorded

2. Current factors affecting habitat

Hedges should be divided into two broad categories in assessing factors affecting them and their wildlife value:

- i) Hedgerows found in the built environment,
- ii) agricultural hedgerows bordering land still farmed.

There are a number of general factors that affect hedgerows to a greater or lesser degree in both categories:

- A reduction in traditional management practices leading to a change of structure in hedgerows.

- Inappropriate management practices and unsuitable mechanised management of hedgerows i.e. flailing, leading to a decline in value for wildlife.
- A lack of general management i.e. restocking, replacement of lost timber trees and poor maintenance of associated banks and ditches.
- The removal of hedgerows and their replacement with post and wire or other forms of fencing.

There are a number of specific factors affecting agricultural hedges:

- Spray drift and the use of herbicides, pesticides and fertilisers up to the base of the hedgerow, resulting in damage to the structure of the hedgerow and associated species.
- Overstocking with livestock, including horses, resulting in browsing damage (also occurs in the urban area).
- The removal of field boundary hedges to enlarge field systems.
- Ploughing encroaching upon the base of the hedge and resulting in the loss of earth work features, marginal habitats and damage to the hedgerow.

Urban hedges also have a number of specific factors that affect them:

- The erosion of hedgerows by: removal through development, encroachment by urban artifacts, e.g. street furniture (pavements, concrete, lighting columns), fly tipping and the piecemeal removal of hedgerow trees and shrubs.
- Desire lines, passing through hedgerows, damaging both trees and shrubs and eroding bank and ditch features.
- Uncertainty of ownership and management obligations.
- Poor public image.

3. Current action

3.1 Legal status

The Hedgerow Regulations 1997 are designed to protect exceptionally species rich hedgerows and those of landscape, archaeological and historic importance. Unfortunately, many agricultural and urban hedgerows do not meet the Hedgerow Regulations criteria but are nevertheless important habitats that need preserving. I.T.E. estimate that only 18% of hedgerows would be protected by the Hedgerows Regulations. The Regulations are currently under review and it is hoped that this will result in amendments giving more comprehensive protection. The Environment Act of 1995 was the enabling legislation underpinning the Hedgerows Regulations.

Some hedgerow species are protected by the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.

Hedgerow trees can be protected by Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs) through the Town and Country Planning Act 1990. TPOs are made and enforced by Local Authorities and there is provision for trees that are removed to be replaced. The tree preservation legislation specifically excludes hedgerows from protection by TPOs. The distinction between a hedge and an overgrown hedge which has become a line of trees capable of protection by a TPO is not always an easy one to make.

Under Article 10 of the EC Habitats Directive, member states are required to encourage the management of hedges and other linear features in their land use and development policies, with a view to improving their ecological coherence. This requirement has been incorporated into UK legislation through the Conservation (Natural Habitats etc.) Regulations 1994.

The accompanying boundary features, e.g. banks and ditches of historic hedges, can be archaeological features and can gain a measure of protection through incorporation in the Sites and Monuments Record, but this is applicable to few hedgerows.

Many hedgerows in the Birmingham and Black Country area are located on Local Authority land, with many falling within designated wildlife sites or recreational sites, thus receiving some protection.

3.2 Management, research and guidance

The inclusion of conservation headlands in field margin management can enhance the wildlife value of agricultural hedges. Advice on management regimes for conservation headlands is obtainable from FWAG and FRCA and is covered in more depth by the Arable Field Margins Biodiversity Action Plan.

Grants are available to landowners under the Countryside Stewardship Scheme, for the management of hedgerows. Preference may be given to those landowners who enter whole farm schemes for consideration.

A number of groups are conducting ongoing research with reference to hedgerows, these include The Agro Ecology Group at Long Ashton Research Station, The Game Conservancy Trust and The British Trust for Ornithology.

EcoRecord holds data on the distribution of hedgerows. This data was compiled from a number of surveys, the bulk of which originate from The West Midlands Nature Conservation Strategy (1984). The information held includes the hedgerow location, the type of hedgerow e.g. intact or defunct and may also include some species information.

A great deal of information is available about managing hedgerows for wildlife. The CPRE can provide hedgerow packs, which include information on surveying and hedgerow management. Advice is also available through FWAG, the Game Conservancy Trust, MAFF, FRCA, the National Hedge Laying Society, BTCV and the Wildlife Trust for Birmingham and the Black Country. Guidance for the establishment of trees in hedgerows is available from The Forestry Commission.

Hedgerows **Biodiversity Action Plan**

Best practice hedgerow management practises include:

- Modifying flail cut regimes;
- Hand trimming hedges;
- Retaining and encouraging hedgerow trees;
- Discouraging herbicide use;
- Retaining hedgerow leaf-litter, cut timber and the back of laid hedges;
- Ensuring a local diversity of hedgerow age structures;
- Altering hedgerow base cutting regimes to provide a varying age structure.

4. Action plan objectives and targets
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Objective	Target
1. To increase the recording and surveying of existing hedgerows and field boundaries and to pool other relevant records e.g. sites and monuments records, to ensure a comprehensive recording system.	Ongoing.
2. To increase awareness through education about the importance of hedgerows and their environs.	Ongoing.
3. To halt the loss of hedgerows in both urban and rural areas.	By 2005.
4. To protect and record the archaeological and historical aspects of Birmingham and Black Country hedgerows.	Ongoing.
5. To encourage the correct management of hedgerows.	Ongoing.
6. To encourage the restocking of hedgerow trees, where appropriate, with the aim of obtaining a balanced age structure.	Ongoing.
7. To encourage the planting of new hedgerows with appropriate species and the adoption of best practice management for existing hedgerows and field boundaries.	Ongoing.

5. Proposed action with partners to meet objectives

ACTION	POTENTIAL DELIVERERS		YEAR							Meets objective number
	Lead	Partner	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2011	
5.1 Policy and legislation										
Make effective use of the Hedgerows Regulations in securing the protection of hedgerows.	LA's	All	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	3, 4
Lobby government to improve the current Hedgerow Regulations, to provide greater protection to hedgerows. To protect hedgerows where species protected by the W&CA occur.	WT	All	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	3, 4
Seek the inclusion of effective measures for the protection, management and creation of hedgerows in the preparation of Unitary Development Plans and other policy documents.	LA's	All	As UDPs and other policy documents are prepared.							3, 4, 5, 6, 7
Encourage the use of planning conditions and/ or planning obligations in order to create new hedgerows and/ or enhance existing hedgerows and ensure their correct management.	LA's	WT		•						3, 6, 7
Lobby for increased grant aid for the management of hedgerows and their environs.	WT	RSPB FWAG	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	3

ACTION	POTENTIAL DELIVERERS		YEAR							Meets objective number
	Lead	Partner	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2011	
Focus on areas of high biodiversity to increase and link together existing hedgerows in these areas.	LA's	WT RSPB FWAG	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	7
Increase the wildlife value of low biodiversity hedgerows by linking them to existing wildlife reservoirs, e.g. existing hedges and woods, where possible using native species.	LA's	WT RSPB FWAG	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	6, 7
5.2 Habitat safeguard and management										
Encourage best practice management for biodiversity	LA's WT	All	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	5
Increase the uptake of Countryside Stewardship Scheme in the Birmingham and Black Country area for the management of hedgerows.	FWAG	All	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	3, 5, 6, 7
Encourage the planting up of gaps / missing hedgerows, where there will not be any adverse effects on archaeology.	LA's WT LCG	All	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	6, 7
Encourage traditional management of hedgerows in the local style.	BTCV	All	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	5, 7

ACTION	POTENTIAL DELIVERERS		YEAR							Meets objective number
	Lead	Partner	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2011	
Encourage the planting of new hedgerows in urban and rural areas using native species in keeping with the character of the local hedgerows.	LA's LCG	WT	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	7
5.3 Advice										
Promote the use of, and advise land-owners / farmers about, schemes available for hedgerow management.	FWAG WT	All	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	3, 4, 5
Provide information / training on conservation management techniques with the aim of improving hedgerow biodiversity.	BTCV WT	LA's	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	2, 5
Provide visual examples of best practice management both traditional and mechanical, in conjunction with practical demonstrations and workshops.	BTCV WT	LA's						•		5
Promote awareness and appreciation of urban / agricultural hedgerows as havens for wildlife and as important pieces of local history, negating loss through ignorance.	LA's WT LCG	All	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	3, 5

ACTION	POTENTIAL DELIVERERS		YEAR							Meets objective number
	Lead	Partner	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2011	
5.4 Future research and monitoring										
Amalgamate existing hedgerow records with Eco Record to produce a comprehensive database for future research. These amalgamated records should include archaeological features.	LA's WT	All						•		1
Develop a layered survey / monitoring system, to increase records and status of recorded and unrecorded hedgerows and their associated species.	LA's WT	All	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	1
Make use of published information from all sources and consult with specialised groups e.g. Hedge-layers Society, to provide information on best practice techniques.	WT BTCV	All						•		5
Produce an 'At Risk' list of hedgerows which are species rich as per the Hedgerow Protection Act specifications; contain species which are nationally/locally scarce; are in areas of low occurrence or quality. Ensure that these hedgerows receive prompt monitoring and management.	LA's WT	All		•						1, 3, 5

ACTION	POTENTIAL DELIVERERS		YEAR							Meets objective number
	Lead	Partner	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2011	
5.5 Publicity										
Use events and media to promote the importance of hedgerows for biodiversity, amenity value, landscape appearance and historical value at local and regional levels.	LA's WT LCG	All	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	2
Use target species to promote hedgerow management techniques.	WT	LA's	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	5
Highlight the importance of hedgerows through survey cards and packs distributed to schools, local conservation groups, local history groups and the general public.	LA's WT LCG	All						•		2
5.6 Links to other action plans.										
Arable fields, Arable field margins & beetle banks, Deadwood, Gardens, allotments, parks and open space, Lowland grasslands, Woodland										

6. Co-ordination and review

This Biodiversity Action Plan will be implemented over 10 years with a first review after 5 years. A group will be set up to co-ordinate implementation and to report to the Biodiversity Steering Group. This group will meet at a minimum on a yearly basis.

Review will be carried out in conjunction with related Habitat and Species Action Plans as appropriate.

Review will consist of measuring achievement of targets. The group will, with the support of the Steering Group, develop and implement appropriate monitoring methods which will inform the review process.

The Action Plan will be revised and updated in the light of review results and any relevant changes in circumstances and/or additional information which becomes available during the review period.

In line with national guidance, the Steering Group will report to the UK Steering Group.