



Hedgerows



This plan is in need of review since the mechanism of farm stewardship payments has changed since the plan was written in 2002. The following text is for information only.

In 2007 the BAP hedgerow definition changed from only including species rich hedgerows to including all hedgerows.

Hedgerows are linear features composed of trees and shrubs. Some are rich in species, have well-spaced hedgerow trees and no gaps. Others are low, narrow and species poor with frequent gaps. All hedgerows are important habitats for wildlife, but ancient, species-rich hedgerows are generally the most important.

An integral part of the biodiversity value of hedgerows is the vegetation of adjacent banks, ditches, verges and field margins. In areas of intensive agriculture, these associated features tend to be influenced by herbicides and nutrient enrichment and therefore dominated by nutrient demanding grasses. In less intensively farmed areas, road verges and banks are more diverse and provide an important refuge for species associated with grassland and open woodland.

Many birds rely on hedgerows and associated vegetation for nesting and feeding. Bats travel and feed alongside hedges and several species roost in large hedgerow trees. Mammals such as voles and dormice use mature hedges as pathways for migration and dispersal, and the trees, shrubs and flowering plants of hedgerows attract a great variety of invertebrates.

1 Objectives and Targets

1.1 Objectives

- A. Ensure no further net loss of hedgerows and their associated features
- B. Increase the extent of hedgerows through new planting or re-planting
- C. Enhance the habitat value of hedgerows and their associated features through good management practices
- D. Improve knowledge of hedgerows in Shropshire through survey, research and monitoring
- E. Increase awareness of the importance of hedgerows

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1.2 Targets

- Maintain the overall number of hedgerow trees to ensure no net loss from 2002.
- Increase the net amount of hedgerows by 10% through new hedgerow planting or replanting of former hedgerows by 2007.
- Achieve favourable management of 20% of all hedgerows by 2002.

2 Current Status

2.1 Importance

The hedgerows of Shropshire can be very species rich. Ancient hedges along old lanes and parish boundaries are generally the most diverse and in lowland areas contain woody species such as spindle and small-leaved lime.

Networks of hedgerows have survived despite the intensification of grassland and increase in arable land. In the intensively managed farmland areas of east Shropshire, hedgerows have high ecological importance as they often provide one of the few refuges left for wildlife.

2.2 Trends

In 1993 it was estimated that there was 329,000 km of hedgerows in England and that 42% (154,000 km) was ancient in origin. The net loss of hedgerows between 1984 and 1990 has been estimated at 21%. This loss is the result of combined outright removal (1.7% per annum) and neglect (3.5% per annum). Although there are no figures for hedgerow loss in Shropshire, it can be assumed that the rate of loss has roughly followed national trends.

In addition to outright loss, observations suggest that hedges in Shropshire are also threatened by inappropriate management in the lowland areas, and lack of management or neglect in the marginal and upland areas.

2.3 Area / Extent

There is currently no data on the length of hedgerows in Shropshire.

2.4 Distribution

The distribution of hedgerows largely reflects the type of field patterns encountered in different parts of the county. Irregular patterns of small fields surround hamlets and villages throughout Shropshire and tend to support large numbers of species rich hedges. Fewer hedges exist where land is more intensively farmed, for example to the east of Shropshire where arable cultivation predominates.

3 Current Factors Affecting the Habitat

- Lack of management resulting in deterioration of hedges.
- Damage to hedge structure from cutting too frequently or at the wrong time of year.
- Lack of knowledge amongst land managers regarding appropriate management and restoration techniques.
- Close cultivation near the hedge base, resulting in root damage and loss of hedge banks and associated flora.
- Pesticide and fertiliser drift causing loss of species diversity.

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- High stocking rates (particularly sheep and horses) resulting in loss of hedge bottom flora and damage from browsing.
- Loss and damage to hedgerow trees.
- Lack of protection for hedgerows that are not deemed to be 'important' by the Local Planning Authority (LPA) – also see first bullet point in 4.1 below – and therefore not covered by the Hedgerow Regulations.
- Destruction of hedgerows without prior notification to the LPA.
- Lack of detailed information on species composition and distribution of hedges in Shropshire.

4 Current Action

4.1 Policy and Protection

- The Hedgerow Regulations 1997 make it illegal to remove or destroy most countryside hedges without notifying and obtaining permission from the Local Planning Authority. The LPA must assess the importance of hedgerows against a set of historical and wildlife criteria, and the Regulations do not cover hedges under 30 years old.
- Hedgerows included in SSSI notifications require liaison between Natural England and landowners before cutting is allowed.
- Some hedgerows are included within the designated area of Wildlife Sites and are taken into account in the planning process.

4.2 Management, Research and Survey

- Grant-aid is available to restore neglected hedgerows in the Environmentally Sensitive Areas (ESA's) of the Clun and Shropshire Hills.
- Outside the ESA's, the Countryside Stewardship Scheme offers grant-aid for restoration and planting of new hedgerows, and a requirement for favourable management of all other hedgerows on the holding.

5 Benefits of Conserving Hedgerows

- Provide windbreaks for crops, stock-proof barriers and shelter for livestock.
- Provide a refuge for many beneficial invertebrates including crop pest predators and pollinators.
- Provide a refuge for flora and fauna suffering from disappearance of original grassland and woodland habitats.
- Help to control soil erosion by wind and water.
- Valuable assets for improving the visual appearance of the landscape.
- Act as wildlife corridors between fragmented habitats.
- Important archaeological and historical assets.
- Provide nest sites for a variety of farmland and garden bird species.

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6 Key Species

Mammals bats, hedgehog, dormice, shrews, voles

Birds reed bunting, corn bunting, linnet, tree sparrow, bullfinch, song thrush, yellowhammer, grey partridge

Invertebrates bumble bees; butterflies such as white letter hairstreak, holly blue, commas, orange tip

Plants alder buckthorn, barren strawberry, bluebell, buckthorn, Midland hawthorn, primrose, upright hedge bedstraw, violets, white bryony, wild strawberry, wood sorrel, wood anemone, wood melick, vetch, meadow foxtail, umbellifers

7 Complementary Plans

UK Hedgerows HAP

Shropshire Field Margins HAP

Shropshire Woodland HAP

Shropshire Dormouse SAP

Shropshire Farmland Birds SAP

Shropshire Song Thrush SAP

Shropshire Wood White SAP

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| Habitat / Species | Action category code | Action text | Location of action | Start date | End date | Lead | Assisting |
|-------------------|----------------------|--|--------------------------------|------------|----------|------|-----------|
| Hedgerow | SHR SRH CP 02 | Increase awareness of the importance of hedgerows through the promotion of projects and schemes | Shropshire | 2002 | - | SC | SWT |
| Hedgerow | SHR SRH HC 01 | Create 80m of new species rich hedgerow as part of the Devils' Dingle restoration project at Ironbridge Power Station by 2010. | Ironbridge Gorge Power Station | 2008 | 2010 | E.ON | |
| Hedgerow | SHR SRH HS 02 | Appropriately manage existing 1.5km of hedgerows at Ironbridge Power Station and plant up gaps to increase length by 2015. | Ironbridge Gorge Power Station | 2008 | 2015 | E.ON | |
| Hedgerow | SHR SRH SP 01 | Ensure that hedges are protected through the local planning process. | Shropshire | 2002 | - | SC | T&W, SWT |

Key to Organisations

SC Shropshire Council
 SWT Shropshire Wildlife Trust
 E.ON E.ON UK Plc
 T&W Telford & Wrekin Council

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