

## Habitat Action Plan: Hedgerows

### Current status and Importance

- Since 1945 there has been a drastic loss of hedgerows throughout the UK. This loss was the result of a combination of outright removal (1.7% per annum) and neglect (3.5% pa). The loss continues with neglect becoming increasingly important and removal less so.
- All hedgerows are now included in the UK BAP for this habitat and not just species-rich or ancient hedgerows.
- Hedgerows are the most significant wildlife habitat over large stretches of lowland UK and are essential refuge for a great many woodland and farmland plants and animals.
- It is recognised that hedges are important not just for biodiversity, but also for farming, landscape, cultural and archaeological reasons. The Environment Act 1995 introduced an enabling power to protect important hedgerows in Britain.
- Agri-environment funding is available to bring hedgerows into favourable conservation management. Most hedgerows within Kirklees occur in the east of the district.



*A structurally diverse hedgerow in Kirklees*

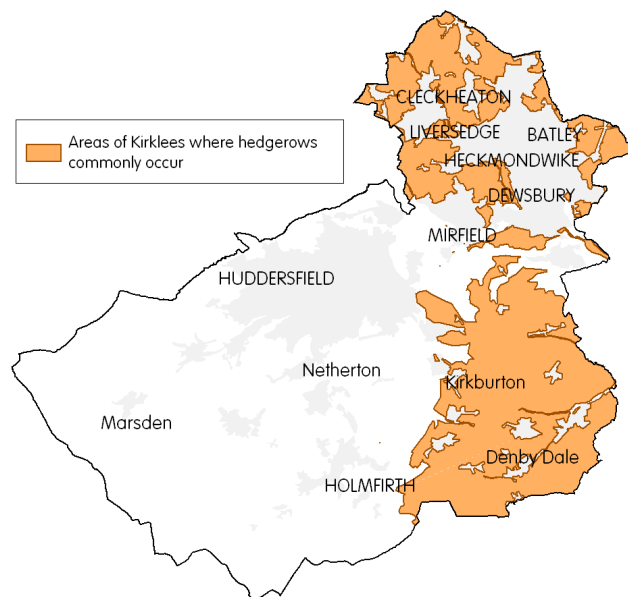
### Species use

- Hedgerows are a primary habitat for at least 47 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 and bats.
- Ancient hedgerows, which tend to be the most species-rich, may be defined as those that were in existence before 1720. They can contain a rich basal flora of herbaceous plants and often those associated with ancient woodland.
- For northern England, species-rich hedgerows contain 4 or more native woody species on average in a 30 metre length. Tree and shrub species are as varied (perhaps more so) than those within woodlands.

### Conservation Issues

- 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, the development of gaps and probable species changes.
- Loss of hedgerow trees through senescence and felling, without encouraging replacements (indiscriminate cutting is a particular problem).
- Use of herbicides, pesticides and fertilisers right up to the bases of hedgerows leading to nutrient enrichment and a decline in basal plant species diversity and consequential impacts on other species.

- 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.
- Removal for agricultural and development purposes.



## Objectives

- Halt the net loss of hedgerows through neglect and removal.
- Achieve the favourable management of all hedgerows but especially species-rich and ancient hedges where opportunities arise.
- The above should at least maintain overall numbers of hedgerow trees at least at current levels, and develop a balanced age structure for trees in all hedges.
- Replant hedgerows where opportunities arise, especially where these will enhance ecological networks and complement other habitats.
- Continue to survey those areas where hedgerows are a dominant habitat feature of the landscape.
- Establish the potential role of hedgerows to contribute to carbon storage and wood fuel supply.

In the main, objectives will be met through agri-environment schemes.

## Target areas for habitat management and creation

- The habitat is primarily found within the Pennine Foothills where it contributes to an ecological network of woodlands and farmland habitats.
- For further information, please see the Biodiversity Opportunity Zones Map at [www.kirklees.gov.uk/biodiversity](http://www.kirklees.gov.uk/biodiversity)

## Targets

- To be decided.

## Key Links and Organisations

- Site protection: Kirklees Council, Forestry Commission.

- Management through Environmental Stewardship in Kirklees: Natural England, Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group.
- Management and restoration: Major land owning estates within Kirklees, including Kirklees Council, Denby Dale Parish Environment Trust, Burton Environment Group, the Kirklees BAP: Guidance for the management of Hedgerows: Kirklees Council Environment Unit and Forestry Commission/FWAG information on good hedge management practices.
- Surveys: Kirklees Council Environment Unit, West Yorkshire Ecology.

### See Also

- [UK BAP Cereal Field Margins Habitat Action Plan](#)
- [UK BAP Hedgerows Habitat Action Plan](#)
- [Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group \(FWAG\)](#)
- [The Forestry Commission](#)
- Guidance for the management of Hedgerows: Kirklees Council Environment Unit. (available at [www.kirklees.gov.uk/biodiversity](http://www.kirklees.gov.uk/biodiversity))