

Hedgerows

Estimates for the hedgerow extent in Greater Manchester is 3293 km, representing 0.6% of the total for England



Ecology

Hedgerows are an intrinsic part of the farmed landscape and provide shelter and food for many species of farmland birds, insects and mammals and also provide important corridors for wildlife movement across the landscape. The particular mix of shrub and tree species in a hedgerow, which reflects both the age of the hedgerow and local management customs, contributes to local landscape character distinctiveness.

Priority Habitat Description

Some hedgerows are protected under The Hedgerow Regulations 1997, some are Priority Habitats under the UK Biodiversity Action Plan and others are considered to be species rich. As a result of this there are several terms to describe different hedgerows and the different terminology

used can be confusing. To try to alleviate this problem the following definitions are provided:

Important Hedgerows

Under the Hedgerow Regulations 1997 (<http://www.opsi.gov.uk/si/si1997/19971160.htm>) hedgerows are protected if they are classed as 'Important'. The legislation has several criteria for determining whether or not a hedgerow is Important. This includes the age of the hedge - if a hedgerow is over 30 years old it is classified as important.

Important hedgerows can also be classified in terms of their historical or archaeological merits, and also because of their wildlife value. This is related to the number of 'woody' species found in a hedge and other assemblages of mammals, plants, birds and invertebrate it supports. For example, a

hedgerow with 7 woody species would be classed as important, as would a hedgerow with 5 woody species and other features, such as, a ditch running along it, standard trees, gaps of less than 10% of the hedge length and a parallel hedge within 15m. Hedgerows supporting species, which are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 are also classed as Important. For more detailed information on the criteria the legislation should be consulted.

Priority Habitat and Favourable Condition

Under the UK Biodiversity Action Plan for Hedgerows

(<http://www.ukbap.org.uk/library/UKBAPPriorityHabitatDescriptionsfinalAllhabitats20081022.pdf>), it describes this habitat as any boundary line of trees and shrubs over 20m long and less than 5m wide, where gaps are less than 20m wide. All hedgerows consisting predominantly (at least 80%) of woody species native to the UK, for example, hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*), holly (*Ilex aquifolium*), hazel (*Corylus avellana*) and dog rose (*Rosa canina* agg), are included within the priority habitat.

However within the Action Plan there are targets to gain or retain favourable condition of hedgerows. Favourable condition is measured by assessing 5 key attributes which are: the dimension of the hedge, the

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continuity, the height of the canopy base, the width of undisturbed ground cover at the base of the hedge and the presence or absence of introduced species.

Species Rich Hedgerows

Hedgerows are defined as species rich when the structural species making up a 30m segment include at least 5 (4 in Northern England) native woody species (Hedgerow Survey Handbook, DEFRA, 2007 <http://www.defra.gov.uk/farm/environment/landscape/documents/hedgerow-survey-handbook.pdf>). Climbing plants such as honeysuckle and brambles do not count towards this total, and currently there are no national criteria for incorporating the basal ground flora within this definition.

The Greater Manchester Hedgerows Action Plan has adopted the UK priority habitat description differing only in that they should consist of at least 80% cover of locally native species.

Key species include:

Tree Sparrow	<i>Passer montanus</i>
Grey Partridge	<i>Perdix perdix</i>
Barn Owl	<i>Tyto alba</i>
Song Thrush	<i>Turdus philomelos</i>
Yellow Hammer	<i>Emberiza citrinella</i>
Linnet	<i>Carduelis cannabina</i>
Great Crested Newt	<i>Triturus cristatus</i>
Brown Hare	<i>Lepus europaeus</i>
Bats	
Small mammals	

Current status and distribution

National

The 2007 UKBAP review has changed the name and expanded the scope of the priority habitat definition. The Ancient and/or species rich hedgerows BAP has been renamed *Hedgerows* and now covers all hedgerows that have 80% or more cover of any native trees or shrubs.

The Countryside Survey 2007 estimates that the extent of hedgerows in England is 402,000 km. It is estimated that 84% of agricultural hedgerows now qualify as a UK priority habitat.

Uptake statistics from the first 2 years of Environmental Stewardship across England show there are over 25,000 agreements, which include options for management of Hedgerows covering length of almost 200,000 km (figures based on options lists provided in Annex 1)

Local

The latest estimate for hedgerow extent in Greater Manchester is **3,293 km** this represents approximately 0.6% of the England total and 6.4% of the estimated extent for the North West region.

In Greater Manchester few hedgerows qualified as UK priority habitats under the ancient/species rich definition, two are known

in Stockport and some in Trafford. However, even species-poor hedgerows provide important feeding, breeding and resting sites for a variety of birds, mammals and invertebrates.

Uptake statistics from the first 2 years of Environmental Stewardship in Greater Manchester show there are approximately 70 agreements, which include options for management of Hedgerows covering length of almost 247 km

Policy and legislation

Hedgerows are protected by the *Hedgerows Regulations 1997*. Under the regulations, it is against the law to remove or destroy certain hedgerows without permission from the local planning authority. However, very few hedgerows in Greater Manchester are protected under this.

EC Habitats and Species Directive require member states to encourage the management of hedges in their land use planning and development policies.

Under the Food and Environment Protection Act 1985 it is illegal to spray pesticides into hedge bases, unless there is a specific label recommendation, and illegal to use certain pesticides within 6m of watercourses and/or uncropped habitats.

The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) affords protection to some plant and animal species including birds. It is an offence to damage or destroy wild birds, their nests or egg. This is particularly relevant to field boundaries with regards to timing of cultivation, cutting or other management.

Under the Standards of Good Farming Practice land managers must not remove or destroy any hedges and must not trim hedgerows between 01 March and 31 July.

Factors affecting the habitat

- ◆ Reduction in length of hedgerow through removal of field boundaries to create larger fields more suited to mechanised and intensive agriculture, and replacement of hedges by fences.
- ◆ Poor hedgerow management either through neglect or excessively frequent or badly timed cutting. Hedgerows can sometimes be colonised by unsuitable species, which can lead to difficulties in management, resulting in the hedgerow becoming neglected.
- ◆ Loss of hedgerow trees through senescence and felling, without encouraging replacements.
- ◆ Ploughing/cultivation right up to the base of the field boundary.
- ◆ Increased use and incorrect timing of the application of fertilisers, and the resulting run-off.
- ◆ Spraying out hedge bases with herbicides and the increase use of herbicides and pesticides in general.
- ◆ High stocking rates, which damage hedgerows.
- ◆ Lack of understanding amongst general public and some land managers of appropriate management and concern over keeping field boundaries appearing 'tidy'.

Current actions

National

Under the Single Payment Scheme land managers are asked to demonstrate that they are maintaining their land in good agricultural and environmental condition. This is achieved through Cross Compliance, which provides a series of standards for environmental management on farms. There are two main elements, **Statutory Management Requirements (SMRs)** and **Good agricultural and environmental condition (GAEC)** standards.

Environmental Stewardship Higher Level Stewardship (HLS), Entry Level and Organic Entry Level Stewardship (ELS/OELS) include hedgerow management options.

In 2002 the UKBAP steering group published **The Hedgerow Survey Handbook**, a standard procedure for local surveys in the UK, a second edition was published in 2007.

The **Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group** offer advice regarding hedgerow maintenance. Advice for maintaining hedgerows for bird species is available on the **Farm Hedges** and their Management section of the RSPB website.

Local

Within Greater Manchester £25,000 was awarded from SITA for hedgerow surveys and management within Oldham. As part of this project 48 hedgerows were surveyed in

2006, 20 of which were considered species rich under the UK BAP criteria for the North, and 10 qualified as important under the 1997 Hedgerow Regulations. Approximately 400 metres were managed by under planting or coppicing as appropriate.

An extensive survey of Bolton's hedgerows was carried out in 2001, which highlighted important hedgerows, future priorities and management. The report can be viewed here - [Bolton Hedgerow Survey 2001](#)

Objectives and targets

Objective	Target	Quantity	Target Date
Maintain extent	Maintain current extent of hedgerows. This relates to all hedgerows consisting predominately of at least one native species.	2766 km	2015
	Maintain individual, isolated hedgerow trees. Identify isolated hedgerow trees and use appropriate management to protect them.	9637 trees	2015

Achieve favourable condition	Ensure that new hedgerow planting achieves the national average species richness. Increase the quality of the existing resource in terms of woody species-richness, where appropriate.	3.75 native woody species per 30m	2015
	Improve hedgerows that are in poor condition and bring them into favourable condition by restoring the structure and species diversity.	1,647 km	2015
	Establish the proportion of land managers that trim their hedgerows annually and aim to reduce this number. Reduce the number of hedgerows that are cut frequently.	Reduce by 40%, that are cut annually	2015
	Halt further decline in the condition of herbaceous hedgerow flora, and improve their condition. Maintain condition of the basal flora of hedgerows at or above the national average.	9.89 species	2015
Expansion	Increase the number of young trees by encouraging planting of specific hedgerow trees or identify saplings that can be left to grow into trees.	9900 trees	2015
	Increase the length of hedgerows.	20km	2015

Proposed actions

Site Safeguard

- ◆ Seek to protect existing hedgerows through the Hedgerow Regulations and Cross Compliance (Medium Priority) LA's, NE. 2015
- ◆ Consider designating important field boundary features as non-statutory

wildlife sites (SBI). (Medium Priority) GMEU, LA's. 2015

Land Management

- ◆ Encourage increased take-up of Environmental Stewardship options for management of hedgerows. (High Priority) NE, FWAG, GCT. Ongoing

- ◆ Promote and encourage the planting and management of hedgerows where appropriate in ecological and landscape terms. (High Priority) [NE](#), [LA's](#). [Ongoing](#)

Advice

- ◆ Promote favourable management of hedgerows by providing advice to landowners (High Priority) [NE](#), [FWAG](#), [GCT](#), [EA](#), [RSPB](#). [Ongoing](#)

Future Research and Monitoring

- ◆ Survey and map existing hedgerows and maintain information on GIS database. (High Priority) [LA's](#), [2015](#)
- ◆ Develop coordinated system for reporting on delivery through Environmental Stewardship (High Priority) [NE](#), [LBM](#). [2015](#)
- ◆ Develop coordinated feedback from Local Planning Authorities enforcing the Hedgerow Regulations. (Medium Priority) [GMEU](#), [LA's](#), [LBM](#). [2010](#)

Communications and Publicity

- ◆ Raise awareness amongst landowners and the public of the importance of field boundaries for wildlife. (Medium Priority) [NE](#), [EA](#), [LA's](#). [2010](#)

Resource Implications

The value under Environmental Stewardship of all options relevant to this plan is provided in Annex 1.

LEAD PARTNERS

EA	Environment Agency
FWAG	Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group
GCT	Game Conservancy Trust
GMEU	Greater Manchester Ecology Unit
LA's	Local Authorities
LBM	Local Biodiversity Manager
NE	Natural England

Best practice guidelines

Further information about hedgerow management can be found on the links below.

- ◆ [The Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group](#)
- ◆ [Farm Hedges and Management \(RSPB\)](#)
- ◆ [Natural England Guidance: Hedgerow Trees: answers to 18 common questions](#)
- ◆ [Natural England Guidance: Hedge Cutting: answers to 18 common questions](#)

- ◆ Natural England Guidance: Hedgerow planting: answers to 18 common questions
- ◆ Hedgeline – provides information about hedgerows, management and wildlife.
- ◆ BTCV Hedging Handbook

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Links to relevant BAP's

Farmland Birds

Great Crested Newt

Hares

References

Countryside Survey 2007

Hedgerow Survey Handbook 2nd Edition 2007FWAG Technical Information Sheets:
Hedgerow Management 2005

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Annex 1 – Environmental Stewardship Options relevant to Hedgerows in Greater Manchester (Extracted from Entry Level Stewardship Handbook, Organic Entry Level Stewardship Handbook and Higher Level Stewardship Handbook, Defra 2005)

Under ELS and OELS the landowner has to achieve a total of 30 points per ha for land entered into the agreement for which payment is made of £30 per ha per year. Thus one point equates to £1 per year. HLS payments are shown in pounds.

Entry Level and Organic Entry Level Stewardship Options

Code		Option	Units	Points	
ELS	OELS			ELS	OELS
EB1	OB1	Hedgerow management (on both sides of hedge)	100m	22	22
EB2	OB2	Hedgerow management (on one side of hedge)	100m	11	11
EB3	OB3	Enhanced hedgerow management	100m	42	42
EB8	OB8	Combined hedge and ditch management (incorporating OB1/EB1 hedge management)	100m	38	38
EB9	OB9	Combined hedge and ditch management (incorporating OB2/EB2 hedge management)	100m	26	26
EB10	OB10	Combined hedge and ditch management (incorporating OB3/EB3 hedge management)	100m	56	56

Higher Level Stewardship Options

Code	Option	Units	Payment
HB12	Maintenance of hedgerows of very high environmental value	100m	£27
HR	Hedgerow restoration including laying, coppicing and gapping up	m	£5
PH	Hedgerow planting – new hedges	m	£5