



Campaign to Protect
Rural England

Policy Position Statement

Hedgerows

Hedgerows, hedge banks and dry stone walls lend beauty and character to rural landscapes and are valuable habitats for wildlife. It has been found that people value hedgerows most highly as a vital part of the landscape, England's history and their national identity.

Hedges provide signs of the changing seasons, a strong sense of continuity and a sense of mystery and intimacy, and contribute to local distinctiveness and a sense of place.

CPRE is committed to protecting these important landscape features, and their local distinctiveness.

What are the issues for the countryside?

England has lost more than half of its hedgerows since 1947 – over 330,000 km – due to hedgerow removal and lack of management.

Similarly, over 7,000km of dry stone walls were lost between 1947 and 1985, and 96% of those left are in need of restoration. This loss and neglect has had a considerable impact on the beauty, diversity and habitats of the much-cherished English landscape.

CPRE's approach

CPRE has long campaigned for the better protection of hedgerows. Our campaigning

contributed to the introduction of the Hedgerow Regulations 1997, the first statutory protection for hedgerows. We continue to campaign for improvements to the Regulations. We are presently awaiting a Government consultation on the revision to the Regulations.

The Regulations currently apply just to 'important' hedgerows on farmland. A hedgerow is considered important if it is over 20m long, at least 30 years old and meets criteria based around the number of species, historical significance and associated hedge features, such as a hedge bank, ditch or tree.

A land manager wishing to remove a hedgerow has to notify the local planning authority. If the hedgerow is considered important, the planning authority will protect it. The authority must also consult the local parish council. But if the land manager doesn't receive a response within 42 days, the hedgerow can be removed. Under the Regulations, planning authorities are required to keep a public register of applications to remove hedgerows.

If an 'important' hedgerow is removed

For further information
about CPRE's
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of other policy position
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without permission it is a criminal offence. If the landowner is found guilty by a magistrates' court, they could be fined up to £5,000. If tried in a Crown Court, the fine is unlimited. The landowner may also be told to plant another hedgerow and the local authority have legal powers to ensure this happens. The replacement hedge is automatically 'important' for 30 years after it has been planted.

We have three main concerns with the current Regulations and we are lobbying the Government to make changes. Firstly, they are not a sufficient means of assessing and protecting hedgerows. The landscape value of hedgerows is not adequately addressed. Locally distinctive hedgerows with significance in the landscape – such as the holly hedges of Arden, the beech hedges of Exmoor and the damson hedges of the Lyth Valley – do not necessarily meet the protection criteria set out in the Regulations.

Secondly, the definition of a hedgerow under the Regulations does not currently include features known locally as hedges, such as Cornish hedge-banks. These features are therefore excluded from protection, despite being vital to local distinctiveness and important to local people and wildlife.

Thirdly, other landscape features, such as dry stone walls and ponds, have no protection under the current Regulations.

Under the new Entry Level Environmental Stewardship Scheme new funds have been made available to allow all farmers and land managers to manage their hedges with greater sensitivity to landscape and wildlife. Together with the new Higher Level Stewardship Scheme funding is provided to

help farmers practice environmentally friendly farming methods. These schemes should be made more responsive to local landscape character. CPRE is campaigning to make this happen.

In the long term, we need to move towards a planning-based approach to strengthen the Hedgerow Regulations. This approach would use Landscape Character Assessments, which help describe what makes a place distinctive and to identify locally important hedgerows. The use of these Assessments would give more flexibility to the hedgerow protection process and could allow local people a greater voice in protecting hedgerows.

What you can do

You can make a real difference and support CPRE's work on hedgerows and other landscape features in a number of ways:

- > if you are worried about the loss of local hedgerows, familiarise yourself with the current regulations in place to protect them. *The Hedgerow Regulations: Your Questions Answered*, a leaflet which is available from most local planning authorities, gives a good overview;
- > contact your local planning authority regularly to find out if any local hedgerows are threatened by removal. Planning authorities must keep a register of applications for hedgerow removal;
- > carry out a simple survey of threatened hedgerows, using CPRE's *Hedgerow Action Pack*, to find out if the hedgerows meet the Hedgerow Regulations' criteria;

- > if you have a more general interest in local hedgerows, use the *Hedgerow Survey Handbook*. This is a standard procedure for local surveys in the UK. Carry out a detailed survey of local hedgerows to identify their number, condition, landscape value and biodiversity value. This method allows hedgerows to be recorded in a consistent way and the results can be placed on a standard database to build up a national picture of local hedgerows. To order your copy of the survey, write to DEFRA, Conservation Management Division, Area 4-D, Ergon House, 17 Smith Square, London SW1P 3JR or email farmland.conservaion@defra.gsi.gov.uk.
- > make the results of your survey available to your local planning authority. In return, ask it to inform you of any application to remove hedgerows in your area and check that your local CPRE group is being similarly informed. See www.cpre.org.uk/contact-us/index.htm for local contact details. That way, you can ensure that those hedgerows under threat are surveyed to find out whether they fulfil criteria for protection set out in the Regulations;
- > inform local influential organisations – like employers, schools and amenity societies – about local hedgerows;
- > support CPRE's work on hedgerows and landscape features by joining us. Membership of CPRE does not oblige you to take part in our work – it is your support we need. Phone us on 020 7981 2800 or visit www.cpre.org.uk .

Further reading

Hedgerow Action Pack, CPRE, 1998.
Available from CPRE Publications

Hedgerow Survey Handbook: a standard procedure for local surveys in the UK, Countryside Council for Wales, 2002.
Available from DEFRA's Conservation Management Division (020 7238 5662)

Hedges, Hooper, M, Moore, NW and Pollard, E, Collins, 1974

Hedging your Bets: is hedgerow legislation gambling with our heritage?, CPRE, 1999. Available from CPRE Publications

The Hedgerow Regulations: Your Questions Answered, DETR, 1997

The History of the Countryside, Rackham, O, J M Dent Ltd, 1986