

Illustrated guide to hedgerow network restoration

Hedgerows are important historic and cultural features that underpin many of our rich and varied rural landscapes. Most are hundreds of years old and some even prehistoric. They are a vital resource for wildlife, providing food and breeding sites for a host of creatures including birds, butterflies and small mammals. Good management is critical to the wildlife and landscape value of hedges as well as to their ability to conserve soil, protect crop pollinators and predators of crop pests and to regulate water supply and flow.

Notes

All hedges require management to survive in the long term. In particular, they need rejuvenating from time to time by laying or coppicing. Cutting or trimming helps to create dense hedges and prolongs the interval before they next need rejuvenating.

In general taller and wider hedges are more valuable for wildlife. However, a variety of hedge types, heights and widths will provide suitable conditions for the largest range of species.

Trimming hedges every year drastically reduces the production of flowers, nuts and berries. If possible trim only once every three years or more. Even reducing the frequency of trimming to every other year will produce significant benefits. Avoid cutting all the hedges on the farm in the same year.

Hedgerow trees, especially old ones, act as feeding stations for birds and bats as well as providing additional nesting and roosting sites. They are also very valuable for wildlife and landscape. Even dead ones (where it is safe) should be retained as they support many species, including threatened insects and fungi. New hedgerow trees should be encouraged to stop the rapid loss of hedgerow trees that is occurring across England.



Use the hedge laying technique traditional to your area

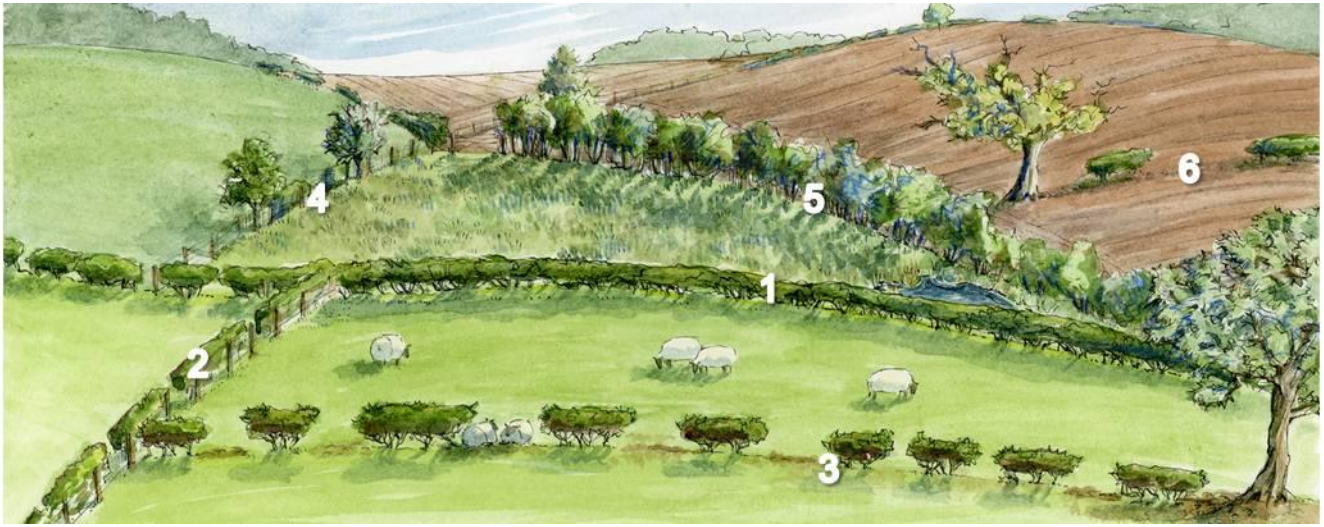
Well connected hedgerow networks support much more wildlife, enhance the landscape and preserve historical integrity far better than isolated hedges.

Replacing lost hedges and planting new ones is highly desirable, provided they are in keeping with the local landscape character and there is no risk to archaeological sites (see below for further information).

Illustrated guide to hedgerow network restoration

Before restoration

1. This hedge has become gappy at the base.
2. This hedge is starting to become thin and gappy along its length.
3. A remnant hedge with just scattered closely cut and grazed bushes remaining.
4. A remnant hedge with only a few bushes and mature shrubs left.
5. This tall hedge has numerous stems that have not been cut for many years.
6. A stag-headed oak with land cultivated to the base of its trunk and damaging its roots.



After restoration

1. The hedge is left to grow untrimmed. It will be laid in due course.
2. The hedge is allowed to become gradually wider and higher by careful trimming.
3. The hedge has been coppiced, gaps planted up and fences erected on either side.
4. The mature shrubs have been retained for their flowers and berries and the gaps planted with native hedge species.
5. This hedge has been laid.
6. The stag-headed oak has been protected by grass margins and a replacement oak has been planted..





Rose hips

New hedge planting

Planting a new hedge is generally very desirable. However, particular care should be taken. For example:

- They must not be sited on archaeological sites.
- They should not be introduced where walls form traditional field boundaries or into typically open landscapes, where they may also be a threat to some species.
- They should be in keeping with the landscape character, reflect historic patterns and be planted with native species found locally.

Further information

Natural England publications are available to download from the Natural England website at www.naturalengland.org.uk. In particular see:

- Leaflet NE36: *Hedge cutting: answers to 18 common questions*
- Leaflet NE69: *Hedgerow trees: answers to 18 common questions*

- Leaflet NE70: *Hedgerow planting: answers to 18 common questions*
- TIN078 *Illustrated guide to trees, woodland and scrub*

The following are available to download from the Hedgeline website at www.hedgeline.org.uk, hard copies can be requested from the Natural England Helpline (see below).

- DVD HLNK01: *A cut above the rest*
- Leaflet HLNK03: *The hedgerow management cycle*

For enquiries please contact the Natural England Helpline on 0300 060 0863 or email enquiries@naturalengland.org.uk

This guidance has been developed to support Environmental Stewardship agreements. It does not replace an agreement and you must continue to follow the prescriptions and specifications.

The outcomes shown may not be appropriate or suitable for all sites. Please consult scheme handbooks or your Natural England adviser for further information.

This note was originally published by RDS as illustrated guidance note ESG020. Illustrations by Jackie Hunt. Editor Susie Smith.

You may reproduce as many individual copies of this note as you like, provided such copies stipulate that copyright remains with Natural England, 1 East Parade, Sheffield, S1 2ET.

© Natural England 2010