

NORFOLK BIODIVERSITY ACTION PLAN

HEDGEROWS

A hedgerow is defined as any boundary line of trees or shrubs over 20m long and less than 5m wide, and where any gaps between the trees or shrub species are less than 20m wide. Any bank, wall, ditch or tree within 2m of the centre of the hedgerow is considered to be part of the hedgerow habitat, as is the herbaceous vegetation within 2m of the centre of the hedgerow. All hedgerows consisting predominantly (ie, 80 % or more cover) of at least one woody native species are covered by this habitat. Climbers such as honeysuckle and bramble are recognised as integral to many hedgerows; however, they require other woody plants to be present to form a distinct, woody boundary feature and as such are not included in the definition of woody species. The definition is limited to boundary lines of trees or shrubs, and excludes banks or walls without woody shrubs on top of them.

Ref 1/H5	Tranche 1	Habitat Action Plan 5
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Plan Leader:	Norfolk County Council	
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1. CURRENT STATUS

National Status

- The 2007 Countryside Survey found that there are 547,000km of woody linear features in England (see <http://www.countryside.gov.uk/pdf/reports2007/england2007/CS-England-Results2007-Chapter05.pdf>). Of this total, it is estimated that approximately 525,000km meet the BAP definition as given above.

Norfolk Status

- Norfolk is a particularly good area for hedges because of the rich diversity of its landscapes, both man-made and natural. It contains a wide variety of soil types, ranging from acid sands and gravels, through rich loams and alluvium, to heavy clay. It lies astride the conventional boundary between the 'planned' and the 'ancient' countryside: in the west of the county, field patterns were largely created by planned post-medieval enclosure, but in the south and east, they have much earlier origins. Moreover, although the county suffered badly from the intensification of agriculture in the second half of the twentieth century, in most districts substantial numbers of hedges still remain.
- It has been calculated that, in 1973, Norfolk had about 16,500km of hedge, roughly 4km per km² (Farmland Tree Survey, NCC).

2. CURRENT FACTORS CAUSING LOSS OR DECLINE IN NORFOLK

- The perceived increases in farm efficiencies facilitated by hedgerow removal are still a factor in hedgerow loss.

- Degradation of hedgerow flora and fauna by drifted and even deliberate applications of agri-chemicals is a major but unquantified factor.
- Ill-timed cutting affects breeding birds and winter food supplies for birds and other wildlife, and annual cutting limits flowering and fruiting, also affecting food supplies for a wide range of wildlife.
- Arable cultivation too close to hedges and more efficient field drainage are probably major factors in the declining hedgerow and hedgerow tree quality.
- Climate change.
- The difficulty of establishing new hedges on banks, in Norfolk's drought prone springs. Rabbits and deer can also create problems with hedges.
- Loss to development.
- Use of inappropriate species and genotypes.
- Elm disease and premature die-back of other tree species (particularly oak, eg, from Acute Oak Decline and Sudden Oak Death) have caused significant losses of mature trees. (Regular trimming preserves elm as a hedged species where it was previously hedge or has regenerated from suckers from failed mature trees.)

3. CURRENT ACTION IN NORFOLK

- The Hedgerows Regulations 1997 require landowners to consult District Councils prior to removing a hedge.
- Cross-compliance under the Single Payment Scheme underpins the Hedgerow Regulations and requires hedgerow cutting to be avoided between 1 March and 31 July except for roadside hedges. Farmers are also required not to cultivate or apply fertilisers, manures or pesticides within 2m of the centre of a hedgerow on fields over 2ha.
- Defra's agri-environment schemes provide incentives for hedgerow management. Funding through HLS is available for hedge planting and restoration where hedges are a feature of the landscape, while ELS offers incentives for on-going maintenance.
- Norfolk County Council provides comprehensive advice and grants, currently at 40% up to a maximum of £3,200 (total cost £8,000) for hedge planting and gapping up. This programme has been developed over the past 30 years.
- Norfolk FWAG provides comprehensive independent advice on farmland conservation, including sources of grants.
- Landowners are obliged to seek a felling licence for hedgerow trees from the Forestry Commission.
- A survey of the hedges in over 200 parishes was undertaken between 1995 and 2003, in a joint project between Norfolk County Council and the School of History at UEA.

4. ACTION PLAN OBJECTIVES AND PROPOSED TARGETS

National

- Maintain the net extent of hedgerows across the UK.
- Maintain the overall number of individual, isolated hedgerow trees and the net number of isolated veteran trees.
- Ensure that between 2005 and 2010 hedgerows remain, on average, at least as rich in native woody species.
- Achieve favourable condition of 243,000 km (35%) of hedgerows by 2010 and 348,000 km (50%) by 2015. (Target does not include Northern Ireland.)
- Reverse the unfavourable condition of over-managed hedgerows across the UK by reducing the proportion of land managers who trim most of their hedgerows annually to 60% by 2010 (applicable to England only).
- Halt further decline in the condition of herbaceous hedgerow flora in Great Britain by 2010 (and improve their condition by 2015). (Target does not include Northern Ireland.)
- Improve the condition of the hedgerow tree population by increasing numbers of young trees (1-4 years) in Great Britain to 40,000 by 2010 and 80,000 by 2015. (Target does not include Northern Ireland.)
- Achieve a net increase in the length of hedgerows of an average of 800 km per year in Great Britain to 2010 and 2015 (Target does include Northern Ireland.)

Norfolk

- Reduce the loss of hedgerows through removal to a negligible proportion of the resource.
- In parts of the county where trees in the hedgerow are a charismatic and traditional feature, ensure the establishment of replacement hedgerow trees.
- Re-create 100 new hedgerow pollards per year, from young trees where these are a characteristic or traditional feature of the landscape.
- Ensure all roadside hedgerows associated with Roadside Nature Reserves (RNRs) are in favourable management by 2012.
- Establish 60km of new hedgerows per annum from 2009-2014.
- Plant 1km per year of new Scots pine hedges in the Brecks.
- Ensure willow pollards are maintained with no net loss on the roads and the broads and fens where they are a characteristic feature.

Hedgerows - Norfolk Action Plan

NATIONAL ACTION		NORFOLK ACTION	LEAD	PARTNERS
5.1	Policy and Legislation			
5.1.1	Ensure that grants for hedgerow management, restoration and establishment are available to farmers. Consider standardising payments across land management schemes.	Encourage farmers to put forward sufficient number of quality applications to agri-environment schemes.	FWAG, LAs, NE	Landowners
5.1.2	Ensure that development plans contain policies to promote the protection and management of hedges and seek to minimise adverse effects on hedges from planning proposals.	Ensure that new Local Development Frameworks contain policies to promote the protection and management of hedges.	LAs	
5.2	Site Safeguard and Management			
5.2.1	Encourage the retention and favourable management of hedgerows	Identify and encourage the positive management of Norfolk hedgerows that are part of, link or enhance Natura 2000 sites, SSSIs or County Wildlife Sites.	NE	LAs
5.2.2	Encourage favourable management of ASR roadside hedges.	Identify roadside hedgerows, particularly those associated with RNRs, and encourage favourable management.	NCC	Farmers
5.3	Advisory			
5.3.1	Promote the use of practices that can protect hedges from fertilisers and pesticides.	Prepare and distribute a leaflet highlighting the impacts of agri-chemicals on hedgerows and the hedge bottom environment, and ways of mitigating these.	FWAG	NCC, NE
5.3.2	Consider the development of hedge management skills through training, especially for contractors.	Establish a directory of hedge trimming contractors.	NCC	FWAG, NE
		Organise one training event a year.	NCC	FWAG, NE

Hedgerows - Norfolk Action Plan

NATIONAL ACTION		NORFOLK ACTION	LEAD	PARTNERS
		<p>Suggest that educational institutions teaching agriculture-related subjects include hedges and their management in appropriate courses.</p> <p>Undertake guided farm walks to introduce the concept of hedgerows, and promote favourable management.</p>	<p>Easton College</p> <p>FWAG, NCC, NE</p>	
5.4	Future Research and Monitoring			
5.4.1	Carry out sample surveys at 10 year intervals throughout UK to determine regional trends in status of hedges.	<p>Produce GIS layer of Norfolk hedge survey and make this widely available to LAs and other interested parties.</p> <p>Continue survey work as required.</p>	<p>UEA, NCC</p> <p>UEA, NCC</p>	
5.5	Communications and Publicity			
5.5.1	Continue to promote an awareness among the public and land managers of the importance of hedgerows and their associated features for wildlife, of the continuing loss of hedgerows, and of the need for management to maintain biodiversity.	<p>Undertake guided walks and hold events.</p> <p>Produce guidance material.</p>	<p>NCC, NE, FWAG</p> <p>NCC, UEA</p>	
5.6	Links with other Action Plans			
5.6.1	None given.	<p>Hedgerows are associated with a wide range of BAP habitats, including woodland habitats such as orchards, wood-pasture and deciduous mixed woodlands. Many BAP species are also associated with hedgerows, including soprano pipistrelle, barbastelle and a variety of birds such as tree sparrow.</p>	<p>Farmland BAP Topic Group, Woodland BAP Topic Group</p>	

Abbreviations

FWAG	Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group
LA	Local authority
NCC	Norfolk County Council
NE	Natural England
UEA	University of East Anglia

NORFOLK DISTRIBUTION

MANAGEMENT GUIDANCE

(This guidance is a general summary; for more detailed information or advice, please consult the references or contacts below.)

Appropriate tree planting, by area

Claylands

- If it is on an existing line, and that line is straight:

Mainly hawthorn, with ash, blackthorn and occasional field maple. Other species only in ones or twos. Oak and ash as trees.

- If on a curving/irregular line, but not on a parish boundary/roadside:

Hawthorn with blackthorn for bulk of hedge. Include large amounts of dogwood, hazel, field maple, ash, crab apple and holly.

- If on a roadside/parish boundary:

A high percentage of hazel, dogwood, field maple - with a smaller proportion of hawthorn/blackthorn and a scattering of ash, crab apple, holly, hornbeam, spindle, purging buckthorn and goat willow as required.

Breckland

- If in an area where pine rows dominate:

Scots pine.

- Elsewhere, but not on a parish boundary/roadside:

Mostly hawthorn, with some ash and blackthorn.

- If on a roadside or parish boundary:

Mostly hawthorn, with ash, blackthorn and occasional field maple, privet, crab apple and very occasional hazel.

North-West Norfolk

- Most, especially all the dead straight ones:

Hawthorn, with some blackthorn and ash.

- If curving or on a roadside or parish boundary:

Hawthorn, with some blackthorn and ash with occasional field maple, dogwood and hazel.

North-East Norfolk

- If on an existing line, and that line is straight:

Mostly hawthorn, with blackthorn, field maple.

- If curving or on a roadside or parish boundary:

Hawthorn, with blackthorn, field maple and occasional crab apple, hazel, spindle, ash and holly.

Fens

- Willow hedges might be a possibility, but advice should be sought.

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REFERENCES

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