

HEDGEROWS

LOCAL HABITAT ACTION PLAN FOR CAMBRIDGESHIRE

Final draft/date last reviewed: August 2003

1 CURRENT STATUS

1.1 Context

Cambridgeshire is dominated by intensive arable agriculture confining wildlife mainly to the hedgerows, most of which are not ancient nor species rich. The stock of hedgerows in the county has been considerably reduced by post-war agricultural improvements and much of the remainder is not in a healthy condition. Therefore in Cambridgeshire attention should be directed at all of the hedgerow stock as important habitat in contrast to the national focus on ancient and species rich hedgerow.

1.2 Biological status

The Biological Information Service of the Wildlife Trust has provided a list of key hedgerow sites in Cambs. There are 20 NHI sites (site of Natural History Interest) with principal hedgerow interest and 169 potential wildlife sites listed for hedgerow interest (1979-81 surveys).

Most are on farmland and are distributed around the County (but largely exclude fenland) thereby reflecting the county hedgerow position.

Hedgerows in England

total length, 1993: 329,000km

loss between 1984 & 1990: 21%
especially in East.

Hedgerows in Cambridgeshire

total length, 1990: 8,000km (Cambridgeshire Environment Report, 1990)

loss between 84 & 90:- (2200 km) 30% (Cambridgeshire Environment Report, 1994)

Aerial Surveys carried out in 1969 & 1988 in Cambridgeshire Suggest loss of 33% hedgerow over 19yrs.

1.3 Species

Key National Biodiversity Action Plan fauna in Cambridgeshire which use hedges and their associated banks, are Brown hare, Skylark, Grey partridge, Song thrush, Linnet, Tree sparrow, Great crested newt and Harvest mouse. This is in addition to small mammals and their predators, hedgerow birds, hibernating amphibians and beneficial invertebrates for crop protection as well as "pest" species such as rabbit, pigeon and corvids. Key flora which may utilise hedgerows are Corn cleavers, Fine-leaved fumitory, Grass poly, Narrow-fruited corn salad and Small-flowered catchfly. Hedgerows are not necessarily the central habitat of these species.

As well as providing habitats it must be remembered that hedgerows also form important wildlife corridors i.e. links between habitats.

2 CURRENT FACTORS AFFECTING HEDGEROWS IN CAMBRIDGESHIRE

In the national biodiversity action plan, it is reported that annual national losses amount to 1.7% through outright removal, and 3.5% through neglect.

Cambridgeshire losses are brought about by:-

- 1) Neglect (no cutting or laying) so that hedgerows become lines of trees.
- 2) Over management and inappropriate management eg too frequent or badly timed cutting leading to gaps & species change.
- 3) Senescence, felling and no replacement planting.
- 4) Pesticides and fertiliser around the bases of hedgerows.
- 5) Damage by livestock, especially where stocking rates are high & where 'ranching' is practised.
- 6) Removal for larger scale agriculture & development. Note however that landowners have already removed most of the hedgerows limiting agricultural efficiency; housing development can result in much larger amounts of new hedgerow, greenway and other similar habitat than was in place before development.

The 1994 Cambridgeshire County Council Hedgerow Survey included the monitoring of 60 hedgerow plots. Monitoring between 1994 and 1997 showed that :-

- 1) most hedges are below 2m in height & less than 1.5m in width.
- 2) most hedges are cut in late summer.
- 3) hedges in Cambridgeshire are not being sustainably managed.

3 CURRENT ACTION

The Cambridgeshire Biodiversity Steering Group noted the following guidelines for hedgerow management in a farming landscape in November 1997 (Cambridgeshire's Biodiversity 1997).

- To encourage appropriate management of existing hedgerows.
- To encourage hedgerow trees to be grown as standards.
- To promote the planting of new hedges using native species.

3.1 Legal protection

Hedgerow Regulations 1997 protect from removal some ancient and/or species-rich hedges but do not encourage their management.

3.2 Financial assistance

- The Countryside Stewardship Scheme (CSS) organised for MAFF by Farming & Rural Conservation Agency (FRCA), pays for an agreed programme of hedge management and planting. Uptake in Cambridgeshire has been useful, although many farmers are put off by the lengthy process and the administration required to complete an application as well as the very competitive nature of the current Schemes. Under these conditions the CSS payments are widely regarded as insufficient.
- Between 1998 and 2001 the Arable Stewardship Scheme is being trialled in South Cambridgeshire. This MAFF/ FRCA scheme is primarily aimed at promoting how arable farming methods can be modified to contribute to wildlife welfare. There are however, provisions in this scheme for funding wildlife strips and conservation headlands, both of which could significantly decrease possible problems with pesticides and fertiliser affecting hedgerows. Hedge management options are included, but tend to transfer to CSS.
- Cambridgeshire County Council Huntingdonshire District Council and South Cambridgeshire District Council offer tree and hedgerow packs partially funded by the landowner. In 1997/8 Cambridgeshire Council's Department of Environment and Transport grant aided the planting of 24km of hedgerow throughout the county including Peterborough & Huntingdon. Under the same scheme, the extended Ouse valley project, covering 20 Huntingdon District parishes, funded the planting of 1.8km of hedgerow in the 1997/8 season. Rates of hedgerow planting by County Farms tenants since 1990 average at 2.5km per annum.

4 OBJECTIVES AND LONG TERM TARGETS

4.1 Objectives

- Halt the loss of species rich hedgerows
- Achieve favourable management of species rich hedgerows within the county

- Plant new hedgerows within the county

4.2 5 Year Targets for 2005

- Halt the loss of species rich hedgerows through neglect and removal and aim to halt all loss of hedgerows which are both ancient and species rich by 2005.
- Achieve the favourable management of 25% of hedges by the year 2000 and of 50% by 2005.
- Encourage at least 120Km new hedgerows by 2005.

4.3 10 Year Targets for 2010

- Establish at least 220 km new hedgerows by 2010.

5 PROPOSED ACTION WITH TARGETS

Action for the next three years is detailed in the attached programme.

5.1 Policy and Legislation

- Produce species action plans for short medium & long list species.
- Review current grant schemes with a view to improving hedgerow options, benefits and payments.
- Ensure that development plans contain policies to promote the protection and management of hedges and seek to minimise adverse effects of hedges from planning proposals.

5.2 Site safeguard and management

- Encourage the protection of new and existing hedgerows.
- Implement the Hedgerow Regulations 1997 fully.
- Encourage tenants in good practice in hedgerow management on County Farms land.

5.3 Advisory

- Develop training courses in hedgerow management including management of standard trees and pollards for landowners/occupiers, farm staff and contractors.
- Review and update advice on current management practices for hedgerows in Cambridgeshire.
- Encourage the favourable management of existing hedgerows and the planting of new hedgerows through advisory farm visits.
- Promote good practice in hedgerow management with the use of demonstration hedges and farm visits.

5.4 Future research and monitoring

- Plan the mapping, measurement and periodic review of the hedgerow resource, integrating this work with the activities of the proposed Biological Records Centre.
- Collate all information on important hedgerows in the county.

5.5 Communications and publicity

- Raise awareness among the public of the importance of hedgerows and their associated features for wildlife.
- Target landowners & developers and highlight recent legislation pertaining to hedgerows.

6 LINKS TO OTHER PLANS

There will be links to other Farmland Action Plans.

7 REVIEW OF ACTION PLAN

Arrange monitoring and review of these targets annually and reset targets and responsibilities for the following 3 years.

8 REFERENCES

Countryside Survey DoE 1990 (...undertaken by ITE)

Discovering Cambridgeshire Hedgerows Cambridgeshire County Council 1993 (...booklet containing a re-analysis by ITE of DoE Countryside Survey data relevant to Cambridgeshire).

Cambridgeshire's Hedgerows: Their Future In Your Hands FWAG/Cambridgeshire County Council 1993 (...leaflet targeted at farmers describing appropriate management).

Cambridgeshire's Biodiversity Steering Group (1997). Cambridgeshire's Biodiversity: a framework for action. Cambridgeshire County Council

9 LIST OF INDIVIDUALS AND ORGANISATIONS CONSULTED

ADAS
Anglian Water Services Ltd
Biodiversity Partnership Co-ordinator
Bugle Ecological Services
Cambridge City Council
Cambridge Green Belt Project
Cambridgeshire County Council
Country Landowners Association
East Cambridgeshire District Council
English Nature
Environment Agency
Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group
Fenland District Council
FRCA
FWAG
Huntingdonshire District Council
Landscape 2000
National Farmers Union
Peterborough City Council
RSPB – East Anglia
South Cambridgeshire District Council
The Wildlife Trust

CAMBRIDGESHIRE LHAP: HEDGEROWS
3-YEAR PROGRAMME: 1999-2001
LAST UPDATED: AUGUST 2003

Target	Action	Responsible	3-5 Years	6-10 Years
1) Halt the loss of species rich hedgerows through neglect and removal by 2005.				
2) Achieve the favourable management of 25% of hedges by the year 2000 and 50% by 2005.				
3) Establish at least 300km of new species-rich hedgerows using tree stock of native provenance by 2010.				
	A) Review current grant schemes with a view to improving hedgerow options, benefits and payments (CCC tree and hedge pack & DEFRA Countryside Stewardship)	CCC DEFRA	Completed 2005	
	B) Ensure that development plans contain to policies to promote the protection and management of hedges and seek to minimise adverse effects of hedges from planning proposals	LA (in conjunction with developers)	Ongoing	
	C) LA tree officers to use TPOs more often to protect important trees within hedgerows. Tree officers to re-convene their regular meetings Completed and include discussion and actions related to implementation of the BAP	LA (Tree Officers)	2005	
	D) Review the Countryside Tree and Hedge Pack so that clear biodiversity gain is a target.	CCC	Completed	
	E) Implement the Hedgerow Regulations	LA's DEFRA	2005	

	1997 fully			
	F) Ensure that hedgerows owned and managed by the public authorities and conservation bodies are in favourable condition	LA's, WiT, WoT, NT, RSPB Local conservation societies	2005	
	G) Encourage tenants in good practice in hedgerow management on Country Farms land. Include hedge protection and management clauses in tenant contracts where not already used	CCC (County Farms)	Ongoing	
	H) Continue the elm recovery project to promote the reestablishment of this locally distinctive tree as a landscape feature and component of local woods	HDC CCC (Countryside Services)	Ongoing	
	I) Promote the protection and management of hedgerows through the PEAPs initiative	CCC (Countryside Services) PCs Las		2010
	J) Encourage the favourable management of existing hedgerows and the planting of new hedgerows through advisory farm visits, farm walks and, demonstration sites	FWAG WiT	Ongoing	
	K) Develop training courses in hedgerow management (include management of standard trees and pollards) for landowners/occupiers, farm staff and contractors. Hold at least 2 training courses per year	FWAG WiT	Ongoing	
	L) Repeat the survey of Landscape Change to provide an assessment of the number of hedgerows present in the county.	CCC (Countryside Services)	2005	
	M) Collate all information on important hedgerows in the county filling in the	BRC (proposed) CCC		2007

	gaps through a series of targeted surveys	(Countryside Services)		
	N) Undertake a targeted survey of the hedgerows in the SE Cambridgeshire priority woodland creation area to assess the proportion that are ancient and/ or speciesrich and to identify opportunities for hedgerow creation. (this is related to the woodland creation action)	CCC (Countryside Services), LA's, WiT		2007
	O) Identify good leaflets on hedgerow management and ensure that all organisations working with the public farmers, landowners have access to these to aid promotion and adoption of best practice	Biodiversity Partnership		2007

Abbreviations

BSG	Cambridgeshire Biodiversity Steering Group
CBAPTG	Cambridgeshire Biodiversity Action Process Technical Group
EN	English Nature, Local Team
FWAG	Farming & Wildlife Advisory Group
GBP	Cambridge Green Belt Project
LAs	Local planning authorities
RSPB	Royal Society for the Protection of Birds
WiT	Wildlife Trust for Beds, Cambs, Northants and Peterborough