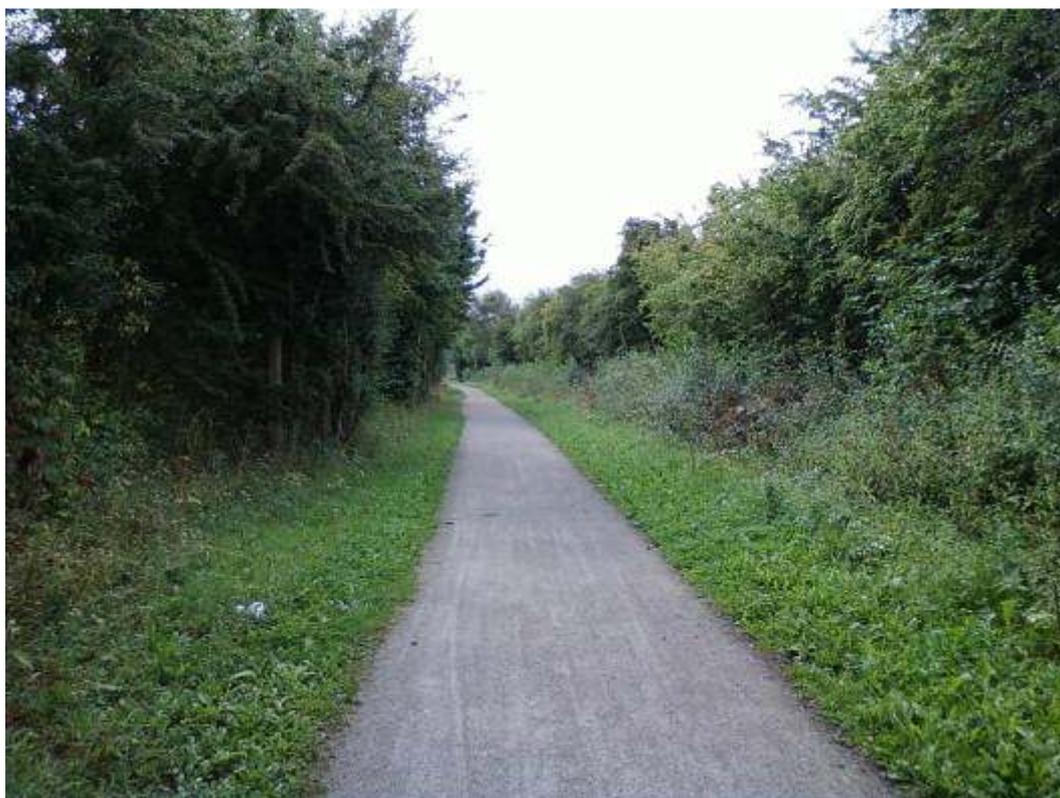


Hedge Management

Ecology Technical Information Note No. 01

October 2011



About Sustrans

Sustrans makes smarter travel choices possible, desirable and inevitable. We're a leading UK charity enabling people to travel by foot, bike or public transport for more of the journeys we make every day. We work with families, communities, policy-makers and partner organisations so that people are able to choose healthier, cleaner and cheaper journeys, with better places and spaces to move through and live in.

It's time we all began making smarter travel choices. Make your move and support Sustrans today.
www.sustrans.org.uk

Head Office
Sustrans
2 Cathedral Square
College Green
Bristol
BS1 5DD

© Sustrans October 2011
Registered Charity No. 326550 (England and Wales) SC039263 (Scotland)
VAT Registration No. 416740656

Issue level: 04
Owned by: NCN Director
Contact: hannah.roberts@sustrans.org.uk

All photos by Sustrans unless noted otherwise

Why manage hedgerows?

Hedgerows are an important habitat in the UK. They provide food and shelter for wildlife, form safe routes for animals moving through the landscape and allow the dispersal of plants along them. In the UK they are the main habitat of 13 globally threatened and declining species and 34 other species of conservation concern.

Hedgerows are therefore a priority habitat on the UK Biodiversity Action Plan but are being lost throughout the UK. Between 1984 and 1990 21% of hedgerows in England, 27% of Scottish hedgerows and 25% of hedgerows in Wales were lost due to removal and neglect. Neglect of hedgerows is becoming increasingly relevant as a reason for hedgerow loss.

Hedgerows frequently occur along Sustrans Greenways, some of which have not been managed for a number of years. These are developing or have developed into a line of trees, which are often poor quality trees with gaps between. These lines of trees have reduced value to wildlife in comparison to a hedgerow.



This guidance sheet details how to keep hedgerows trimmed with minimal disturbance to wildlife and also how and when further measures are needed to get an overgrown hedgerow back into hedge form.

Regular hedgerow management

Hedgerows that still have a typical hedgerow form (a line of shrubs less than 5 m wide) need regular management to prevent them becoming a line of leggy trees.

The best time of year for hedgerows to be trimmed is in January and February. This leaves berries on the shrubs to feed wildlife over winter and avoids the bird nesting season. No management should be conducted between March and July as this is the peak season for birds to nest in hedgerows.

Large bushy hedgerows have greater value to wildlife than thin intensely managed hedges. Some hedgerow plants produce flowers and fruits on second year growth only and some notable butterflies only lay their eggs on the new stems of plants. If these are cut off every year the wildlife value of the hedge is reduced.

In order to maintain food and shelter throughout the year not all sections of hedgerow in one area should be cut simultaneously. Hedgerows on either side of the path should be cut in different years or alternate sides of a hedgerow cut in different years. Ideally hedgerow management should be conducted every three years.

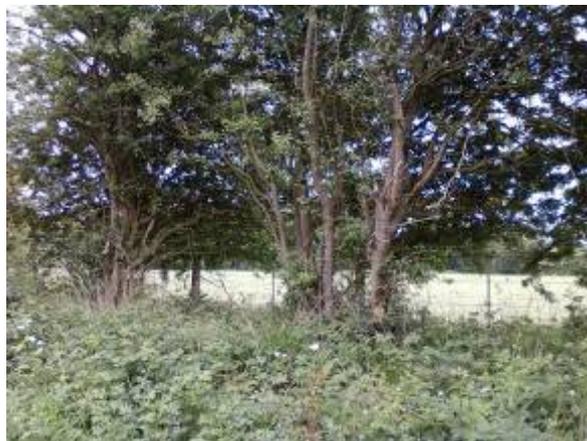
Plants in hedgerows that are continually cut at the same height can become stressed and unhealthy. As such it is good to vary the height to which they are cut.

Standard trees are also valuable in hedgerows and should be maintained. Where no standard trees are present, occasional shrubs should be selected to grow into trees and left uncut. Native tree species such as field maple or oak are preferable selections for standard trees.

Returning an overgrown hedgerow or line of trees into hedgerow management.

Hedgerows that are becoming overgrown and developing into lines of trees rather than a hedgerow may need to be renovated by more drastic means than just trimming to get back into shape.

Coppicing and hedge laying are the two main techniques for doing this and it is often appropriate to 'gap up' whilst doing this i.e. plant new shrubs into any gaps that have appeared in the hedgerow. As these do have a profound temporary impact on the hedgerow, avoid managing large continuous sections in one year.



Hedges up to approximately 4 m in height or with trunks of up to 10 cm can be layed (stems up to 15 cm could be layed but are more brittle and may break). Those thicker than this at the base may need to be coppiced to bring them back into hedgerow management. These operations require more skill than regular hedgerow management. Conservation organisations such as the Wildlife Trusts conduct work days on their own reserves to lay and coppice hedgerows and may be willing to pass these skills and techniques onto others, such as Sustrans staff and volunteers, in exchange for their labour.

Hedge laying and coppicing should be conducted between November and February, again, January and February being the best months to conduct hedgerow works. Before these more extreme management techniques are conducted, consider adjacent land use as the resultant hedge may not be immediately stock proof.

Hedge laying involves partially severing each main stem 3 – 20 cm above ground level at an angle of 30 and laying it roughly horizontally. Stumps are to be cut close to the ground and the heel of the stump removed. The resultant layed hedge is then to be staked and bound in the local manner. The stems and stumps will sprout to produce a dense and bushy hedgerow and should not be trimmed for the subsequent two years. The new growth may need protection from livestock gazing if adjacent to pasture.



Coppicing involves cutting the mature hedgerow shrubs down to ground level (standard trees should be retained) and carefully trimming the regrowth for the subsequent few years. This technique rejuvenates old plants.

Gapping up or planting new hedgerow

If hedgerows are becoming gappy and are no longer stockproof, the gaps may need to be planted up. This is also an opportunity to increase the variety of species present and therefore the value of the hedge to wildlife. Gaps in the hedgerow can be planted up between October and March. New

plants should be planted in a staggered double row with 4 – 6 plants per metre. Only native species (preferably of local provenance) should be planted. It is good to use a mixture of species; typical hedgerow species that don't have thorns include hazel, elm, oak, field maple and Guelder rose; species with thorns like hawthorn and dog rose would also be suitable where the hedgerow is not too close to the path. The plants may require some protection from stock or rabbits immediately after planting. The need for and level of protection will vary depending on the site.

This same guidance can be followed for planting new sections of hedgerow. For routes managed by Sustrans, the appropriate Area Manager should be consulted prior to any new hedgerow planting to ensure it does not conflict with other plans or priorities in that location.

Further Guidance

The following organisations provide good guidance on hedgerow management;

For further information please refer to;

Natural England (2007) Guidance: Hedge cutting: answers to 18 common questions
<http://www.hedgeline.org.uk/files/NE%20HEDGE CUTTING.pdf>

Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group Technical Information: Managing Hedges
<http://forum.fwag.org/data/document/3390.pdf>

Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group Technical Information: Renovating Hedges
http://www.fwag.org.uk/dr_media/fwag/downloads/TIS4_Renovating_hedges-E2005.pdf

Peak District National Park Authority: Guidelines for Rejuvenating Derelict Hedgerows
<http://www.peakdistrict.gov.uk/derelict-hedgerows.pdf>

Hedgeline - information on hedgerow management, lists of local hedge groups, advice on funding and grants for hedgerow management and teaching aids relating to hedgerows.
<http://www.hedgeline.org.uk/>

The English Hedgerow Trust: for suitable projects this group can provide contacts, technical expertise, labour, materials, future planning and maintenance and on-the-job training (for example hedge laying).
<http://www.pmt9991952.pwp.blueyonder.co.uk/>