

Briefing for CPRE branches

Hedgerows

Overview

CPRE has a long history of campaigning for better protection of hedgerows and welcomed the introduction of the Hedgerows Regulations in 1997. We would like to see some improvements to the Regulations so that they protect more hedgerows. A legacy left in 2005 allowed CPRE to organise and take part in a variety of hedgerow projects which have reinvigorated our campaigning work on this issue. Branches now have a range of information and publications that they can utilise for their local hedgerow campaigns.

The Hedgerows Regulations (1997)

Many countryside hedges are protected by the Hedgerows Regulations but unlike the Tree Preservation Order system, hedges can only be given protection if they are under threat of removal. We began our campaign for hedgerow protection in the 1970s and welcomed the introduction of the Hedgerows Regulations in 1997. The new Regulations afforded the first statutory protection for important hedgerows. They require local authorities to be notified by the owner if the removal of any countryside hedgerow over 20 metres in length, or which joins another hedgerow, is proposed.

However, garden hedgerows and removals associated with built development are exempt from the Regulations, and the local authority may only refuse consent for removal if the hedgerow is classed as 'important' under a relatively limited set of nationally-determined criteria. Broadly, a hedgerow is considered important if it is over 20 metres long, at least 30 years old and meets criteria based around the number of plant or animal species it supports, historical significance and associated hedge features, such as a hedge bank, ditch or tree.

If you are contacted by a member of the public concerned about a threatened hedgerow or one that appears to have been damaged then we recommend that they contact their local authority hedgerow/tree or countryside officer for advice. If they cannot track down the right person to speak to then they could do an internet search for 'council name' and the word 'hedgerow'. That very often brings up the correct contact details. You could also send them any information from this briefing that you feel is suitable.

You can find more information about the Hedgerows Regulations and how they work in 'Hedgerows Regulations FAQs' on the CPRE website:
<http://www.cpre.org.uk/resources/countryside/hedgerows/item/1952-hedgerow-regulations-faqs>

CPRE's recent work on hedgerows

Branch hedgerow projects:

In 2008, seven CPRE groups applied for funding to run their own hedgerow projects. CPRE Cheshire set up the Cheshire Hedgerow Network, CPRE Oxfordshire and CPRE Herefordshire carried out hedgerow surveys, CPRE East Riding set up a Hedgerow Award Scheme, CPRE Northamptonshire and CPRE Cambridgeshire arranged hedgerow education/skills weekends and CPRE South Cotswolds planted over a mile of hedgerow on a farm where some of the original hedges had been removed.

Hedgerow management DVD:

CPRE worked alongside Natural England, Defra, the National Hedgelaying Society, the RSPB and The Tree Council, to produce '*A cut above the rest*', a short DVD about hedgerow management. The film investigates a variety of management techniques. It looks at the life cycle of a hedge, exploring the many different types of hedges that occur and encourages the landowner to 'read' a hedge before deciding on a course of action. You can watch clips of the DVD: <http://www.hedgelinek.org.uk/hedgerow-management.htm>

The DVD is available free from the Natural England enquiry service:
0845 600 3078 enquiries@naturalengland.org.uk

Hedgelaying Accreditation Scheme:

CPRE supported the National Hedgelaying Society to set up an accreditation scheme for hedgelayers. The scheme offers two levels of accreditation: craftsman and master craftsman, and aims to set a national standard for hedgelaying work. We produced a leaflet to promote the scheme which can be downloaded from: <http://www.hedgelaying.org.uk/accreditation.pdf>

Research about the Hedgerows Regulations:

In 2010, CPRE published '*England's hedgerows: don't cut them out!*'. This report is based on a survey of English local authorities and how they are implementing the Hedgerows Regulations.

This follows on from a similar survey that we carried out in 1998 and published in 1999 as *Hedging Your Bets*. The earlier survey took place after the Regulations had been in place for just one year. The 2010 survey draws on data over a longer timeframe, provided by each local authority depending on the information they had available.

We expanded the survey this time to find out more about the views of the people in local authorities who are applying the Regulations. We asked how the Regulations could be improved, what documentation was referred to when dealing with a request to remove a hedgerow, what other landscape features were characteristic of the area and what funding was available for hedgerow management in their area.

In total 133 local authorities responded, a response rate of almost 40%, with every English region represented. The widespread participation in our survey has enabled us to build up a detailed picture of how effective the Hedgerows Regulations are across the country. The majority of local authorities that responded (92%) supplied data about how they had used the Regulations in their areas. This information has helped to illustrate regional variation in how the Hedgerows Regulations are applied in practice.

The results of this survey give a detailed view of the relationship between a nationally determined set of criteria for a hedgerow to be deemed important and how this works in practice to protect the diversity of hedgerows across England.

Following the enactment of the Hedgerows Regulations, a review of the Regulations was announced by the incoming Labour Government in 1997, which was followed by a Government consultation about the review recommendations. In 2006, a working group of stakeholders was formed to discuss changes to how the Regulations work and a supplementary consultation followed.

Despite these consultations no improvements have been made to the Regulations.

CPRE's survey provides evidence that the Hedgerows Regulations are effective in protecting many valuable hedgerows. We continue to believe, however, that they could be strengthened so that they are simpler for local authorities to apply and give them more discretion to protect hedgerows of importance to the local landscape. We continue to lobby Defra to make these improvements, although it does not seem to be a priority for the Government at present.

'England's hedgerows: don't cut them out!' can be downloaded:
<http://www.cpre.org.uk/resources/countryside/hedgerows/item/1951-englands-hedgerows-dont-cut-them-out>

The survey data was regionalised so that variations could be illustrated. The regional data can be downloaded from:
<http://www.cpre.org.uk/resources/countryside/hedgerows>

Hedgerow pamphlet:

In July 2011 we published CPRE's new pamphlet about hedgerows '*A little rough guide around the hedges*'. This full colour pocket-sized guide is a simple introduction to hedges and why they are important. In the middle of the pamphlet there is a handy fold out hedgerow plant ID guide which is a great way to engage a wide range of people. The pamphlet has been very popular with branches so far with some arranging hedgerow walks using the pamphlet. You can download the pamphlet:

<http://www.cpre.org.uk/resources/countryside/hedgerows/item/2481-a-little-rough-guide-around-the-hedges> If you would like to order paper copies please contact Emma Marrington at national office (details below).

Contact

If you have any queries please contact Emma Marrington at national office.

Email: emmam@cpre.org.uk

Telephone: 0207 981 2840

Useful links

Particularly helpful websites are:

- www.hedgeline.org.uk a wide range of information about hedgerows
- www.naturenet.net a straightforward website about countryside law
- www.defra.gov.uk/food-farm/land-manage/landscape-features/hedgerows/ comprehensive overview of Defra's work on hedges, including the standard hedgerow survey methodology

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