

Hedgerow Heroes Phase 1

Final report

May 2022



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The
countryside
charity

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Introduction

The Hedgerow Heroes

The CPRE Hedgerow Heroes Project groups have set an impressive standard for the first phase of this project. Each local project has taken a unique approach that is bespoke to their area which has been supported by national CPRE's centralised project management. This has resulted in each group developing individual strengths and added value which they have shared with the other groups. We have now collated the experiences and learnings of each group into a toolkit which will be shared with all CPRE local groups to ensure that future projects are developed and run as efficiently and effectively as possible to maximise impact.

The first year of the project has delivered a spectacular 14.75km of hedgerow planting, and almost 5km of hedgerow restoration. Hedgerow Heroes Project groups held over 90 engagement activities supporting over 1,200 people to develop new skills as a result of attending planting and restoration training events.

Volunteering, and partnerships with local organisations, charitable organisations and landowners, have been a major focus of the activities carried out in this first year of the Hedgerow Heroes Projects. These partnerships have added many thousands of pounds of physical and also 'in-kind' contributions to the Hedgerow Heroes Project, one group estimated that their project received support equivalent to over £18,000 in terms of volunteer time commitments.

Many Hedgerow Heroes Project events have been held and the impact of these spread much further

than the attendees and those who have been directly involved. For example, people who live near or have walked past the planting sites are now aware of the value of hedgerows and the advertising of these events and associated press releases are read by thousands. People who have been on hedgelaying training courses are spreading the word and those taking part in hedgerow planting are encouraging others to do likewise.

Engagement

We have updated and redesigned CPRE's popular ['A little rough guide around the hedges'](#) booklet and this was made available on our website in January and has had nearly 1,500 downloads. 3,000 copies have been printed so far, with over 2,000 distributed via our Hedgerow Hero Project groups and wider CPRE network.

CPRE partnered with Countryside Classroom, a partnership between organisations working across the food, farming and environmental sectors developing quality assured educational resources, to develop the [Hedgerow Detective](#) lesson plans. These are comprised of engaging lesson and worksheets that are linked to the national curriculum for both key stage one and two pupils in primary schools. This learning resource has been widely disseminated by CPRE to ensure it has maximum impact. It is available to all 42 local CPRE groups to support local activities, was also made publicly available via our website in February 2022 and is available on the [Countryside Classroom website](#).



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Campaigning

As we reported in November, we have been encouraging members of the public to reach out to their local MPs to encourage them to sign up to become a [CPRE Hedgerow Hero](#) following the launch of our [Hedge fund: investing in hedgerows for climate, nature and economy](#) report. To date 55 parliamentarians, including two members of the House of Lords, have signed the pledge showing their support for our campaign.



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CPRE Oxfordshire hosted a visit by the Defra Secretary of State, George Eustice, who planted a specimen tree in the newly created hedgerow and met with volunteers and staff to discuss the project and the wider benefits of hedgerows.



Thanks to additional funding from our project partner, CPRE has been able to further develop our hedgerow programme by surveying farmer attitudes towards hedgerows. The findings from this work will be vital, as farmers and landowners are the custodians of the countryside, many of whom are passionate about protecting and nurturing the land. This survey will support CPRE to work with farmers to bring about our 2050 vision.

Outputs

Original Targets	Output Achieved
6.05km of hedgerow will be restored	4.95km
8.6km newly planted hedgerow	14.75km
100km+ of wildlife corridor reconnected	Estimated 300km +
Lesson plans delivered in 17 schools	24
Lesson plans disseminated to 40+ CPRE's groups	42
10,000 hedgerow identification guides printed for engagement purposes	3,000
One hedgelaying apprentice	0
14 public information boards	11
62 engagement days carried out	90+
48 green jobs will be supported	36 excluding CPRE staff
252 people will develop skills through training sessions	1,256
Three 18-24 year-olds will take part in hedgelaying	16
50+ 12-18 year-olds will take part in hedgelaying	39+
Children from 15+ schools will be inspired to become guardians of their local green spaces	24
600+ people will undertake engagement activities in support of their local hedgerows	1,256
600+ people will sign a 'hedge pledge' committing to value their local hedgerows	Not recorded
Children from 14 schools will take part in hedgerow classes, using specially designed lesson plans	24
CPRE's 'A little rough guide' will be provided to five local CPREs	200 copies each
One foraging course will take place	3
One folklore session will take place	3
Three volunteering groups will commit to nature conservation beyond the remit of this project	4
Eight grassroots charities will receive funding	4
20 other grassroots groups will be supported	18
A toolkit will be created to enable successful project rollout across the network	Completed
At least eight local suppliers and garden centres will gain trade	8



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Summary reports from local groups

Shropshire

CPRE Shropshire has connected with many people through the Hedgerow Heroes Project, some quite profoundly, this is a consequence of the varied hedge related activities that the group has hosted. With nearly 1,000 people involved in the many events, Shropshire's local project has achieved a fantastic level of success, raising awareness of the importance of hedgerows locally and the profile of CPRE over the course of the project.

Project outputs:

- Planted 2.37km of hedgerow over a series of sites in Shropshire
- Distributed 1,600 additional whips among site owners (including a primary school) for planting
- Restored 450 metres of hedgerow
- Held a stall at Ludlow Green Fair with 50 people signing up to be kept informed about the project
- Ran eight hedgelaying workshops in total, one of these for people aged 14-18
- Created 22 Hedge Kitbags which have been given to local Forest Schools
- Ran a programme of eight online talks throughout winter 2021 and Spring 2022
- Organised five hedge walks including Hedgerow Foraging and Folklore walks
- The partnerships developed through this project include Shropshire Hills AONB, Really Rural (Hedgelayer), Stepping Stones Project (National Trust), Trees for Shropshire, Severn Trees, Rob Rowe (Independent Ecologist) and Bucknell nursery.

“One of the great spin offs is that CPRE Shropshire is more widely known of and now included in local meetings for environmental groups.”

Sarah Jameson, CPRE Shropshire



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“I didn't realise then the impact these two days would have on my life and the community where I live. I do now.”

David Booker, Hedgelaying volunteer

More information is available on [CPRE Shropshire's website](#).



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Hampshire

CPRE Hampshire began their Hedgerow Heroes Project with the primary focus of restoring and planting hedgerows on the Meyrick Estate, using contractors. Their secondary aims of involving volunteers, school children and college students have exceeded their expectations. They began the Hedgerow Heroes Project with extensive hedgerow surveys, undertaken voluntarily, including bat, bird, bee and butterfly surveys as well as soil surveys.

Project outputs:

- Planted 1.7km of hedgerow and restored 1.3km through hedgelaying and gapping up
- Undertook 26 days of volunteer planting, many more than the anticipated 20 days
- Engaged Bransgore primary school and Highcliffe secondary school through visiting hedgerows and planting workshops, which has enabled them to learn about the many benefits of hedgerows. The Secondary school event attracted support from the local MP, Sir Christopher Chope
- Created a bespoke lesson plan for the primary school
- Ran a training course on how to survey a hedgerow
- 85 volunteers have been involved with planting hedges
- A local young farmers group was trained in the art of hedgelaying
- Hosted an online talk on hedgerows with the Peoples Trust for Endangered Species
- Worked in partnership with Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust, Peoples Trust for Endangered Species, Meyrick Estate, Bransgore primary school, Highcliffe secondary school, Brockenhurst Young Farmers Club and Sparsholt College

It was anticipated that four information boards would be erected to explain the importance of the hedgelaying and restoration works, this is being achieved through a combination of display boards and smaller boards with QR codes.

In late spring there are plans to have a celebratory walk through the Meyrick Estate to promote the work achieved and encourage new supporters. In February 2022 the group applied for and received a ‘Queens Green Canopy’ plaque in recognition of the hedge planting, this will be installed in May 2022.

“The project didn’t just enhanced the hedgerows but also supported local jobs and offered great opportunities for the local community to connect, understand and enjoy the landscape around them”

Boyd McCleary, Project lead



More information is available on [CPRE Hampshire's website](#).



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Gloucestershire

The initial setbacks encountered by the Gloucestershire project, as outlined in the Hedgerow Heroes mid-term review, have been more than compensated for by CPRE Gloucestershire’s partnership with their local Farming & Wildlife Advisory Group (FWAG) and the resulting successes of the ‘Hedgerow Heroes Filling the Gap project’. The CPRE funding enabled FWAG to unlock further funds from the Defra Farming in Protected Landscapes programme. This combination of funding led to some great achievements, with extensive hedgerows planted by both volunteers and farmers.

Project outputs:

- A total of 4.4km of hedgerows were planted in the Cotswolds National Landscape (AONB) and other parts of Gloucestershire
- 23 farms were involved in the planting, all of whom have agreed to maintain the hedges
- Over 500 trees were planted amongst the hedgerows to add diversity
- In early 2022, five Volunteer days were held for planting, attracting 75 people
- Volunteer in kind contribution to the project has been valued at £18,750
- The partnerships on this project included FWAG, Cotswolds National Landscapes (AONB), Friends of the Cotswolds, Gloucestershire Vale Conservation Volunteers, a donation of 100 trees from Cirencester Soroptimists

“Our volunteer days really struck a note with people who wanted to get outdoors post the pandemic crisis and make the most of the last winter days; they came from near and far to help”

Joanne Leigh, FWAG.



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More information is available on [CPRE Gloucestershire’s website.](#)



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Oxfordshire

The purpose of CPRE Oxfordshire’s Hedgerow Heroes Project was to create healthier and better-connected hedges across the three projects areas of Watlington, Kidlington and Eynsham. These would reinforce the landscape, boost resilience to climate change and support Oxfordshire’s Biodiversity Action Plan. Working with their project partner Wild Oxfordshire they achieved a varied output of hedgerow planting and restoration, events and activities.

Project outputs:

- 1.7km of newly planted hedge
- 480m of restored hedgerow comprising of 320m of coppiced and gapped up hedge plus 160m hedge laid
- 16 hedgerow trees were planted
- Hosted a visit by the Defra Secretary of State, George Eustice, who planted a specimen tree in the newly created hedgerow, met with volunteers and staff and saw the launch of the Oxfordshire Hedgerow Heroes film
- Four evening online presentations on aspects of hedgerows such as surveying, wildlife, laws and lifecycle
- In addition to hedgerow planting days there were several events organised:
 - Hedgerow management training day
 - Three days of hedgelaying training workshops
 - Hedgerow education day with local parish councils
 - Attendance at Kidlington Autumn Eco festival

- 175 people attended the practical events with around 550 people having gained a greater appreciation of hedgerows through the activities, including local MP Layla Moran, and the Secretary of State, George Eustice
- A film was produced about the CPRE Oxfordshire Hedgerow Heroes project
- This project has developed partnerships between CPRE Oxfordshire and Watlington Climate Action Group, Watlington Environment Group, Kidlington Parish Council, Eynsham Nature Recovery Network and Wychwood Forest Trust

“ Many thanks for organising the hedgelaying on Saturday. It was lovely to meet new people and to learn a valuable new skill – I’ve been dying to learn how to lay hedges properly for ages. ”

Volunteer hedgelaying trainee



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“ There is a sense of pride about what has been achieved with such positive landscape and community environmental work. ”

Helen Marshall, CPRE Oxfordshire Director

More information is available on [CPRE Oxfordshire’s website.](#)



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Suffolk

The primary focus of the project developed and delivered by Suffolk Preservation Society (representing CPRE Suffolk) was working in partnership with the Stour Valley Farm Cluster to plant and restore hedgerows. This has been achieved admirably, using mainly contracted workforce, with several additional benefits as outlined below:

- 4.65km of hedgerow planted
- 2.72km of hedgerow restored by gapping up, coppicing or hedgelaying
- 28km of hedgerows surveyed by volunteers to assess the quality and needs of hedgerows in this area, this led to prioritisation of works on hedgerow restoration
- Development of an app to facilitate the surveying of hedgerows, which won an award. This will be shared with other phase 1 and phase 2 Hedgerow Heroes Project groups
- Information boards in the form of QR codes fixed to fence posts and linking to a website are much less obtrusive and also flexible, allowing information to be updated regularly.
- A celebration event of the project's achievements was held in April
- Key partners in the project included Suffolk Preservation Society (representing CPRE in Suffolk), Stour Valley Farm Cluster, Dedham Vale AONB volunteers

Through this project volunteers have got to work with farmers which has led to improved local relationships. Additionally several volunteers have stayed on to remove tree guards from historically planted hedgerows and continue surveying with the farmers. People using the footpaths have commented positively on the hedgerow work.

“It’s been a great project to work on and has been well managed at CPRE national level. This has made a significant contribution to practical and achievable delivery at county level. Thank you.”

Project lead, Fiona Wells, Stour Valley Farm Cluster



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More information is available on [Suffolk Preservation Society's website](#).

Summary of final evaluation

Kevin Davey,
Independent Evaluator

During 2021/22, working together in the Hedgerow Heroes Project, national CPRE and five counties developed strong, appropriate and effective partnerships. CPRE came together with landowners, local communities and schools to plant and restore more than 19km of hedges, and considerably raised awareness of the benefits which hedgerows bring to the countryside and its residents.

There was significantly more new planting of hedges (14.75km exceeding the 8.19km planned), surpassing the target by 80%. There was slightly less restoration than planned (4.95km of 6.4km planned) achieving 71% of the target.

All five local groups successfully scheduled and delivered well-attended volunteer hedge creation and restoration sessions despite the challenges they encountered including:

- late start to planting season due to extended warm autumn;
- increase in price of whips and hedgerow plants;
- supply chain shortages and;
- coronavirus lockdown constraints.

The project also delivered and exceeded most of the project's secondary targets, securing much higher levels of engagement with the public than expected, connecting with a much larger number of schools and young people and trebling the length of wildlife corridor it was expected to create. There were shortfalls on some of the secondary targets including capturing hedgerow pledges and the creation of a hedge layer apprenticeship.

There have been good examples of mutual support between the five local projects, for example the sharing of landowner agreements, signposting of community nurseries to improve biodiversity, sharing of information about educational resources, and detailed discussion around best practice at the steering committee meetings.

The project recommendations include corrective actions for future iterations of the project, including securing clearer evidence of delivery, providing increased peer learning between the local groups, particularly in the early stages of the project, and the early development of risk assessments.



Next steps

The learnings from all the groups in phase one of the Hedgerow Heroes Project as well as CPRE national office have been incorporated into a toolkit document which will be used to support groups taking part in phase two and beyond. There have been some really valuable experiences from this phase of the project which will help to make future local projects more efficient and effective and maximise the impact that they can have.

Thanks to our funders continued support seven more local planting and restoration projects will take place in the next twelve months, meaning the project extends across a further four areas.

The local CPREs taking part in phase two are:

- CPRE Avon & Bristol
- CPRE East Midlands
- CPRE Hampshire (took part in phase one)
- CPRE Lancashire, Liverpool City Region & Greater Manchester
- CPRE Northamptonshire
- CPRE Shropshire (took part in phase one)
- CPRE Suffolk (took part in phase one)

Phase two will begin in earnest in late May 2022 and we look forward to providing you with a mid-year review of the project in November 2022.

“Without funders, we would not be able to achieve what we do so we thank you once again for your hugely generous gift and for being a part of our movement. Together we can work to promote, enhance and protect our beautiful and thriving countryside, valued and enjoyed by everyone, long into the future.”

Crispin Truman, Chief Executive,
CPRE The Countryside Charity



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