

Richmond upon Thames Habitat Action Plan Hedgerows



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"Love thy Neighbour; yet don't pull down your Hedge."
(Benjamin Franklin, *Poor Richard's Almanack*, 1754)

1. Aims

- To conserve and enhance hedgerows within the London Borough of Richmond upon Thames using an appropriate management system that will benefit the wildlife and local residents.
- Raise public awareness and appreciation of the habitats ecological value.
- Distinguish which hedgerows can be deemed to be ancient or species-rich habitats, if any.
- Identify more of the habitats flagship species of flora and fauna

2. Introduction

Hedgerows are man-made structures of immense biodiversity that form part of our national historic, cultural and landscape heritage. They have been known to be used since Roman times and beyond and though at the moment there are roughly 450,000kms of hedgerows within Britain; before modern farming techniques, the increase of housing and transport links, hedgerows would have seemed to have connected the whole of the United Kingdom together.

They are defined as a row of shrubs or bushes that can have trees within, that mark out an area of land, pathways, roads or embankments. The UK BAP defines two types of significant hedgerows that need protection. These are Ancient hedgerows that were in existence before the Enclosures Acts passed between 1720 and 1840, giving landowners the option to add large areas of common land to their estates and species-rich hedgerows containing 5 or more native flora species along a 30 metre stretch. Those that are found within or surrounding a residence garden or house, are not included within this Habitat Action Plan. (HAP)

The myriad of species that thrive on the hedges unique ecosystem consist of evergreen and deciduous flora like holly and hawthorn, common garden and wild flowers, insects, arachnids, birds and mammals these include beetles, butterflies, moths, song thrushes, blue tits, hedgehogs, bats, shrews and foxes. This diversity of flora and fauna means that hedgerows are in the unique



position of containing 47 species that are of environmental concern within the UK, 13 of which are also globally threatened species.

In addition hedgerows can be seen, like streams and rivers as natural corridors for species of flora and fauna to disperse between different areas of ecological significance; an important factor within residential and industrial areas linking parklands, woodlands, grasslands and commons together.

Another plus side is that hedges act as natural barriers from wind, pollution, noise and intruding human activities that can damage what habitat is beyond i.e. a riverbank. Also hedgerows prevent soil erosion and water run off; bring wildlife and idyllic greenery to urban areas and cover up to the human eye areas of dilapidation i.e. graffiti-stained walls and wasteland.

3. Current Status

Since 1945 they have been a sharp decline of the amount of hedgerows throughout the UK at a net loss of 5% per annual, due to their removal and neglect.

A systematic survey is yet to be carried out to define the amount and total length of hedgerows within the LB Richmond as well as which are worthy of being called an ancient or species-rich hedgerows. It is also important to note that the speculation about what species are to be found within hedgerows in LB Richmond can be made, however a more extensive survey is needed to be carried out.

Areas that have hedgerows within the borough include churches, cemeteries, allotments, TRP, railway and road embankments, golf courses, parks and commons

4. Specific Factors Affecting the Habitat

4.1 Lack of Knowledge

The significant diversity that is held within these ecosystems has to be looked at and shared between groups and individuals in the borough leading to the centralisation of information like the total amount of ancient and species-rich hedgerows, hedgerows that are also of significance but do not fit under those two descriptions, length of and condition of, As well as a more detailed list of the Variety of flagship species that can be found will direct the protection of hedgerows throughout LB Richmond.

4.2 Poor Management Techniques

4.2.1. Hedgerows have been part of the British environment for hundreds of years, so the removal of rows to replace them with types of fences or walls destroys many ancient hedgerows and is a procedure that had increased since the 1940s, fragmenting sections of hedgerows, leading to less diverse habitats.

The removal of dead wood is also an issue as they are areas in which wildlife, plants especial fungi prosper upon.

4.2.2. Neglect of hedgerows also is of concern. The build up of litter and pollution can be an eye sore as well as a decomposing nightmare and affect the local wildlife through entanglement, the build up of bacteria and diseases, not to mention the threat of an increase in vermin. In addition the dumping of grass cuttings or material chippings can effect the growth of flowers and other plants that thrive at the base of a hedgerow.

Invading plants like brambles, weeds or non-native species of plants mostly spreading from gardens, could thrive within the hedgerow habitat if neglected. Some of these may add to the diversity of hedgerows within Britain, but disease could spread though these non-native plants until native species suffer.



4.2.3. The art of felling and coppicing trees and hedges may bring about rejuvenated growth with an increase in fruit, berries and nuts but if these activities are done at the wrong time of year (spring and summer) food needed for hibernation will not appear during the autumn months affecting the ecology of a hedgerow habitat.

Other environmental management is the use of leaf-blowers that disturb the underlying leaf litter and habitat, as well as the use of pesticides, herbicides and fertilisers predominantly upon farmland or in parkland. Farmers and, or groundskeepers realise that pests and weeds are more likely to spread from hedgerows, meaning that they get sprayed the most, affecting its natural flora and fauna.

4.3 Urbanisation

4.3.1. The increase of housing and businesses leads to the removal and fragmentation of lengthy hedgerows that could possibly have been noted down as being ancient or being rich in species. Plus these hedgerows could have connected two areas of ecological significance together resulting in disrupting the distribution of species throughout LB Richmond and other LB's.

4.3.2. For public safety or for the ease of congestion the widening of pathways or roads means additional concrete that can affect the hedgerow above ground and cut of the root systems below, making drainage an issue which could lead to stagnant water putrefying the roots. The laying or maintenance of cables and pipes also causes similar problems.

4.4 Household proposals

Household owners sometimes apply to the removal or the felling of certain hedges and trees due to them shading their dwelling or blocking out a desired view; it is safe to say however that not all of them succeed with this kind of application.

5. Current Action

5.1. Legal Status

The Wildlife and Countryside Act of 1981 declared that the removal of hedgerows that contained nesting birds is illegal, in 1990 the Town and Country Planning Act gave protection to trees found within hedgerows. Although it was not until the 1995 Environment Act introduced the control and protection of hedgerows that were deemed to be important historically or from being species-rich that hedgerows started to be protected, making land owners having to seek permission from their LA for the removal of a hedgerow.

This was followed by Hedgerow Regulations in England and Wales in 1997 which stated that hedgerows over 20 meters in the countryside, on common land, on protected land, being used for agriculture, forestry or the breeding of animals should not be removed; within Richmond LB this includes many areas like Kew Gardens, Richmond and Bushy Royal Park, Barnes Common and Ham Lands.

5.2. Mechanisms Targeting the Habitat

These current actions are ongoing. They need to be supported and continued in addition to the new action listed under Section 7.

The introduction of the Environment Act 1995 has brought about the protection of important hedgerows in Britain, so far however no hedgerows in Richmond LB have been deemed as important, though many have gained status for protection as of being in areas of importance. Richmond Park is a SSSI as well as a SAC, Barnes common and Ham lands are two of many LNR's in the borough and they also fit under the conservation status as SMI's. Other conservation status found within the borough include SBI's and SLI's

Volunteer work on the coppicing, planting and trimming of hedgerows is a common occurrence during the winter months, mostly implemented by -Richmond BTCV.



6. Flagship Species

These special plants and animals are characteristic of hedgerows in LB Richmond.

Song Thrush	<i>Turdus philomelos</i>	Found throughout the UK it is one of the smallest species of thrush of around 20-23cms and due to establishing breeding territories within late winter, they are one of the first birds to herald in the spring.
Stag Beetle	<i>Lucanus cervus</i>	Britain's largest terrestrial beetle thrives upon dead wood as part of its lifecycle. The larva will spend nearly seven years in the wood growing in size. Surprisingly London is national significant for its stag beetle numbers.
House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>	Has spread itself around the world, but has declined in numbers within the British isles. The House Sparrow can be spotted all year round and lives within loose colonies of 10-20 pairs.
Bat Species	<i>Chiroptera</i>	They are 6 known bat species within Richmond LB the Pipistrelle (common and soprano) the Noctule, Brown long-eared and Daubenton. Hedgerows can give all these species areas to roost and feed.
Hedgehog	<i>Erinaceus europaeus</i>	Hedgerows provide these spiny mammals with shelter and help them to scourge for food. They can cover about 2 miles a day or more with the help of linked hedgerows.
Blackthorn	<i>Prunus spinosa</i>	Is a deciduous shrub that grows up to 5m tall with it having spiny branches and cream coloured petals before the leaves in spring. This shrub is most commonly found as part of ancient hedgerows.

7. Objectives, Actions and Targets

Please note that the partners identified in the tables are those that have been invited to be involved in the process of forming the plan. It is not an exclusive list and new partners are both welcome and needed. The leads identified are responsible for coordinating the actions- but are not necessarily implementers.

Objective 1: To increase knowledge of the existing hedgerows within Richmond LB, mapping they distribution as well as noting there significance, condition as well as their flora and fauna.

Target: To input relevant data on to a Geographical Information System (GIS) by 20__

Action	Target	Lead	Other Partners
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	Date		
1.1 Survey and map the existing amount of hedgerows within Richmond LB	20		
1.2 Survey the condition, significance and the flora and fauna of hedgerows within Richmond LB	20		
1.3 To collate and record all survey data	20		

Objective 2: To secure appropriate management for hedgerows ensuring their protection and enhancement.

Target: To ensure that hedgerows have significant protection so as not to be lost to development.

Action	Target Date	Lead	Other Partners
2.1 Establish who are managers and owners of hedgerows within the borough	20		
2.2 Send out advice to managers and owners on appropriate management	20		
2.3 Expand legislative protection of significant hedgerows through local planning and other legislations	20		

Objective 3: Raise the profile of the ecological value of hedgerows to the general public, increasing their awareness and appreciation.

Target: Have the public know what hedgerows are significant and what flora and fauna is expected within hedgerows around Richmond LB.

Action	Target Date	Lead	Other Partners
3.1 Produce a factsheet, giving information on the importance of hedgerows	20		
3.2 Develop a web site link that has information on hedgerows within Richmond LB	20		

Objective 4: Ensure no further loss and increase the amount of hedgerows within the borough.

Target: To create a network of hedgerows throughout the borough linking green spaces and adjacent boroughs together.

Action	Target Date	Lead	Other Partners
4.1 Survey and map hedgerows that can be increased in size and linked together	20		
4.2 Aim to create ?????? METERS of new hedgerow per year	20		
4.3 Work in conjunction with relevant local authorities			, Other relevant



to create ????? METERS of cross-borough hedgerows	20		local authorities
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Relevant Action Plans

Local Plans

Ancient parkland & veteran trees, Acid grassland, Broad-leaved woodland, Private gardens, Stag beetle, Bats, Song thrush

London Plans

Grasslands, Churchyards & cemeteries, Heathland, Parks & urban green spaces, Private gardens, Wasteland, Woodland, House sparrow

National Plans

Grasslands, Heathland, woodland, parkland, Built up areas and gardens, Urban, Stag beetle, Song Thrush

Key References and Sources of Further Information

Muir, Richard & Nina. *Hedgerows: Their History and Wildlife*. 1987. Michael Joseph Ltd. London

UK Biodiversity Action Plan. *Action Plan for Ancient and/or Species Rich Hedgerows*. See their website

<http://www.ukbap.org.uk/UKPlans.aspx?ID=7>

Abbreviations

BAP – Biodiversity Action Plan
 BTCV – British Trust for Conservation Volunteers
 HAP – Habitat Action Plan
 LB – London Borough
 LA – Local Authority
 SAC – Special Area of Conservation

SBI – Site of Borough Importance
 SLI – Site of Local Importance
 SMI – Site of Metropolitan Importance
 SSSI – Site of Special Scientific Interest
 TRP – The Royal Parks

Contact

