

Hedgerow Management

Why are hedgerows important?

Hedgerows were historically used as a form of on farm stock control, aiding farm management across Wales. With the introduction of barbed wire, the hedgerow features within our landscape experienced less and less management, leading to dereliction. Over a quarter of Welsh hedgerows were lost by 1990 due to neglect: the equivalent to half of the total length of roads in Wales.

These habitats are however highly valued when managed and are some of the most important lowland habitats in Britain (HMSO 1995).

Benefits of managed hedgerows;

- Hedgerows are vital for Welsh Biodiversity within the Agricultural landscape, supporting an array of **birds, mammals and insects** which are all vital to the **optimal functioning of our environment**.
- **Helping our landscape adapt to changes**, e.g. diseases and climate change.
- **The linear features act as ‘motorways’ for flora and fauna**. This fosters resilience within our ecosystems in the face of disturbances such as climate change and disease. Plants and animals can migrate via these ‘motorways’ to more hospitable environments if need be (e.g. if their current environment becomes unsuitable for any reason). Isolation of a population makes it vulnerable because its chances of adapting is significantly reduced by e.g. through lack of suitable habitat for migration and reduced mixing of genes. This



isolation of populations occurs in a variety of ways including: urbanisation, use of pesticides, and lack of food, habitat and shelter from predators. Providing a means to link different ecosystems in the landscape across harsher or unsuitable land use types will support countless species. This is not only beneficial to wildlife but also rural businesses e.g. farms, orchard and vineyards. **Promoting and facilitating the**



movement of wildlife e.g. pollinators across the landscape will make their populations more likely to survive disturbances, extreme events, climate change and disease.

- Hedgerows are increasingly valued for their ability to **reduce soil erosion** by water run-off (link to soil and water) and wind (link to shelterbelt), as well as improve **river water quality, reduce atmospheric and water pollution** and help **mitigate flooding**.
- The addition of trees to hedgerows adds another dimension to the feature which in turn allows the hedgerow to support even more wildlife through the provision of dead wood, bark, another layer of canopy and tree longevity.
- If structured well, a treed hedgerow may provide the **added benefit of crop and stock shelter** over a larger area than the hedgerow alone, possibly making **significant savings to farm finances**. (link to shelterbelts).

Managing a hedgerow

Within the landscape hedgerows may be required for a variety of purposes, including: shelter, farm biosecurity, farm management, enhance biodiversity and increasing aesthetic value. Management of any hedgerow/linear feature is required in order to deliver the full benefits.

- Please see our guide on shelterbelts for advice on how to establish/manage a shelterbelt hedge which can deliver shelter, biosecurity, biodiversity and cost saving benefits.
- For further advice on hedgerows please see a comprehensive guide by [Hedgelinek UK](http://hedgelinek.org.uk/index.php) (<http://hedgelinek.org.uk/index.php>).

Contact Coed Cymru for further advice and information
(www.coed.cymru)

