

# HEDGEROWS

*"I have more than once gone on purpose during a gale to watch the Bryony growing in an exposed hedge" Charles Darwin.*

A hedgerow is defined as a line or narrow belt of closely spaced woody shrubs, retained or managed to form a more or less continuous barrier. Hedges make a significant contribution to the Borough's landscape. Many of Bromley's hedgerows, particularly next to roadsides, are rich in species and help provide links with other semi-natural habitats. Assessing the wildlife value of hedgerows poses problems because of the wide variety of hedge types and the relative importance of features, which are thought to contribute to the overall wildlife value.

**VISION:** Hedges shape the pattern of Bromley's countryside reflecting our agricultural heritage, forming a network of corridors for wildlife; we must protect and manage them.

## **AIMS:**

- To protect and enhance existing hedgerows
- To plant new hedgerows, especially where they can provide important links
- To survey and monitor the ecological quality of Bromley's hedgerows

## **Factors affecting the habitat:**

- a) Lack of management.
- b) Too frequent and badly timed cutting of hedges.
- c) Overstocking leading to over-browsing of hedgerows or hedgerow ground flora.
- d) Landowners are reluctant to gap up existing hedgerows or create new hedgerows due to cost of plants and protective shelters/fencing.
- e) Increased use of rural lanes by vehicles has led to the undercutting and erosion of roadside hedgebanks.
- f) The use of pesticides (herbicides & insecticides) and fertilisers at the base of hedgerows.
- g) The cost of management favouring a mechanical approach.
- h) An increase in interest in the traditional skill of hedge laying.
- i) Road widening and dumping of plantings on to hedgerow banks.
- j) Loss of hedgerow trees through senescence and felling, without replacements being made.
- k) Loss of hedgerows through development and landscaping works, including around gardens.

## **Flagship Species:**

*Flora:* Butchers broom, ancient standard trees, spindle, mature elm, bluebell, wood anemone, hazel, field maple, dog's mercury, primrose, and greater stitchwort, wood sorrel, goldilocks.

*Fauna:* dormouse, dunnoek, yellowhammer, linnets, bats, small mammals, song thrush, linnets, yellowhammer, whitethroat, lesser whitethroat, grey partridge, robin, bullfinch.

## **Negative indicators:**

Aggressive arable weed species (cleavers, knotweed, docks, and nettle); gaps in hedgerows; dead shrubs and trees; tarmac; litter.

## **Retrievables:**

Whole hedges, white letter hairstreak.