

SETTING THE BOUNDARIES NATURALLY

Conserving Bromley's hedgerows together



THE LONDON BOROUGH
www.bromley.gov.uk

Our Natural Boundaries



A hedgerow is a narrow belt of closely spaced woody shrubs, retained or managed to form a more or less continuous barrier. Hedgerows typically link with each other and with other semi-natural habitats such as woodlands and ponds. The plants that thrive at their base also form part of the hedgerow habitat.

These natural boundaries provide a colourful addition to our rural views and act as 'corridors' for the movement of wildlife. Over 300km of hedgerows grow in Bromley's Green Belt countryside and others lie within our urban areas too in gardens, parks and along highways.

Britain experienced a significant loss of hedgerows between the 1940's and 1990's as a result of removal and neglect. Locally, losses of hedgerows from Dutch elm disease, urbanisation, intensification of agriculture and loss of traditional skills have taken their toll. However, Britain remains the most important country in Europe for this habitat. Locally, the network of diverse hedgerows throughout the downland landscape remains strong and roadside hedgerows and lines of pollarded trees continue to embellish the rural landscape around Orpington, St. Mary Cray and Chelsfield.





Ancient Hedgerows

Ancient hedgerows (those which predate the period of the Enclosure Acts 1720-1840) and other species-rich hedgerows are the most highly valued.

They are our links with the people of the past and how they shaped the landscape we enjoy today. They reveal to us how fields came to be created through clearance of woodland or managed through traditional practices such as coppicing and hedgelaying. Their practical function in dividing parcels of land for management, defining landownership and securing stock continues in many places today. They have added benefits such as limiting erosion of soil and providing shelter too.

These hedges support the greatest number of tree and shrub species, as many as ten per thirty-metre stretch, and climbing plants, such as blackberry and honeysuckle. Together with the flower-rich banks, verges and ditches, many animals can thrive along these green ribbons including butterflies, birds, reptiles, amphibians, small mammals and bats. More recently planted hedgerows help to strengthen the habitat network and enrich our local area.



Helping Hedgerows Together

Here are ways you can help hedgerows in the London Borough of Bromley.

Protect

- Take account of hedgerows as part of planning development proposals or home improvements.
- Abide by the Hedgerows Regulations 1997 which apply to 30+ year old hedgerows and prevent the removal of most countryside hedgerows without first submitting a hedgerow removal notice to the Planning Division.
- Follow DEFRA cross-compliance in relation to hedgerows.
- Protect hedgerows from heavy browsing by stock.
- Protect hedgerows from root damage from soil compaction, excessive soil disturbance or storage of materials.
- Get advice if you see any hedgerows which appear to be suffering damage.

Manage

- Manage hedgerows in the winter to prevent disturbance to nesting birds and invertebrates and to allow trees and shrubs to recover well once the growing season recommences.
- Aim to avoid trimming all hedgerows annually except where this is essential (such as roadsides) to ensure hedgerow flowers and berries are available as a food source for our local wildlife.
- Continue the practice of hedgelaying and coppicing of hedgerows where appropriate and traditionally undertaken.
- Manage hedgerow trees, especially ancient trees, sensitively, making balanced judgements on their pruning maintenance.

Plant

- Plant tree and shrub species local to the area so that they provide the most benefit to local wildlife and complement other hedgerows in the landscape.
- Aim to use planting stock of local provenance to conserve and support local varieties of species.
- Plant hedgerows in the right place so that they complement the landscape and do not adversely impact species or habitats of existing value.
- Plant-up gaps in hedgerows to improve their appearance and ensure connections for wildlife.
- Take care to transport, store and handle planting stock carefully to increase chances of planting success.
- Plant bare-root stock or 'whips' between the end of October and the end of March to allow plants to establish over Spring, planting as double-staggered rows at around six per metre.
- Protect newly-planted trees with fencing or guards where vulnerable to damage by grazing stock or wildlife and keep them clear of 'weeds' in their early years.
- Aim to establish and maintain some standard trees as part of the hedgerow.

Survey

- Survey hedgerows to record their value and to identify any management needs.
- Record sightings of wildlife species making use of hedgerows.
- Share data with recording networks such as the Bromley Biodiversity Partnership and Greenspace Information for Greater London (GIGL).

Hedgerows in *Darwin's Countryside*

When he first came to the area Charles Darwin wrote ' The country is extraordinarily rural & quiet with narrow lanes & high hedges & hardly any ruts - It is really surprising to think London is only 16 miles off.'

A survey of around 200 hedgerows, amounting to 30km, within 'Darwin's Landscape Laboratory' has revealed that most hedgerows are well connected with one or two others, and the majority dense with few gaps – all signs of good hedgerow health! Most only incorporate native, woody species typical of the landscape and a quarter incorporate examples of ancient trees. Ancient trees have stood the test of time and their age means they support a mix of slow-growing plants such as lichens and more unusual invertebrates and so are particularly special. More than 150 species of ground flora were found growing at the bottom of the whole hedgerow network, including species Darwin observed,

such as ground ivy and violets. Many climbers Darwin is known to have studied, such as white bryony and woody nightshade, were found to clamber across them too. The hedgerows of the area are of some age - most of those surveyed were existence in Darwin's time and so we can be sure we are witnessing features he is known to have enjoyed and studied.

To see a summary of the survey report visit
www.darwinslandscape.co.uk

The survey was part-funded by DEFRA as part of the UK Biodiversity Action Plan.



Further Information

Bromley Biodiversity Action Plan

The BBAP is a plan of action which aims to involve those living and working in the Borough play a part in helping wildlife for the benefit of people and the natural environment.

Hedgerows are an important feature of the Borough's landscape and therefore their



conservation is a key target in the BBAP. The plan aims to: protect and enhance existing hedgerows; plant new hedgerows, especially where they can provide important links; survey and monitor the ecological quality of Bromley's hedgerows. For further guidance and information about hedgerows in the Borough and the Bromley Biodiversity Partnership

visit www.bromleybiodiversity.co.uk 'Action for Habitats' and 'Contacts'.

Bromley Countryside Service

The team implements hedgerow conservation on some Council-owned sites; provides advice on the wildlife value, management and planting of hedgerows on non-Council-owned land particularly in the Green Belt countryside, including assistance with grant applications; provides land managers with practical help with the conservation of hedgerows through the involvement of conservation volunteers or contractors; provides hedge survey, hedge-laying and hedge-planting training to the public and community groups; holds public or community group talks and walks on hedgerows .

Bromley Countryside Service,
London Borough of Bromley
High Elms Country Park Office,
Shire Lane, Farnborough BR6 7RJ
Tel: 01689 862815
Email: countryside&parks@bromley.gov.uk



Darwin's Landscape Laboratory

The World Heritage Team leads the Government bid for World Heritage Property status and directs implementation of the management plan of the nominated 'Darwin's Landscape Laboratory', an area explored by Charles Darwin as part of his scientific work in relation to natural processes and evolution. Implementation includes networking of organisations and community groups, addressing land management and planning issues, transport and access improvements, promotion of interpretation and education, securing of funding for monitoring and enhancement of the area.

Planning Strategy & Heritage
London Borough of Bromley
Planning Division, Civic Centre,
Stockwell Close, Bromley BR1 3UH

Tel: 020 8461 7808

Fax: 020 8313 0095

Email: conservation@bromley.gov.uk

Website: www.darwinslandscape.co.uk

Planning Strategy & Heritage

This team deals with the protection of hedgerows as outlined in the Hedgerow Regulations 1997, hedgerows and trees in Conservation Areas, Tree Preservation Orders, issues in relation to High Hedges, planning policy and planning applications in relation to hedgerows.

Contact details as for Darwin's Landscape Laboratory.

Hedgelink

Hedgelink is a partnership of organisations and individuals leading and supporting the conservation of the UK's hedgerows within the farming, wildlife, landscape, historical and cultural context with particular responsibility for delivery of the UK Biodiversity Action Plan for hedgerows. The group identifies priorities, influences policy and expenditure, provides advice and raises awareness and interest in hedgerows.

Tel: 0845 600 3078

Email: enquiries@hedgelink.org.uk

Website: www.hedgelink.org.uk

Natural England

Natural England works for people, places and nature to conserve and enhance biodiversity, landscapes and wildlife in rural, urban, coastal and marine areas.

It provides information about landscape priorities for London, wildlife protection, hedge publications and advice in relation to Entry and Higher Level Stewardship Schemes.

Tel: 0300 060 2634 (London Office)

Email: london@naturalengland.org.uk

Website: www.naturalengland.org.uk

Department of Environment, Food & Rural Affairs

DEFRA deals with environmental risks and makes the most of opportunity to secure a sustainable society and a healthy environment as part of a low carbon, resource efficient economy. It leads UK action for hedgerow conservation.

Tel: 08459 33 55 77 (National Office Helpline)

Email: helpline@defra.gsi.gov.uk

Website: www.defra.gov.uk

