



The
countryside
charity

Research brief for CPRE, the countryside charity

Aiming high for hedgerows in England – how and where to deliver government’s hedgerow target July 2023

Overview

CPRE, the countryside charity, invites quotes from suitably experienced consultancies to undertake research on how and where to deliver hedgerow planting and restoration. Consultants will be required to carry out this research during July – November 2023.

In January 2023, government announced a target to ‘create or restore 30,000 miles of hedgerows by 2037, and 45,000 miles of hedgerows by 2050’ under the refreshed 25-Year Environmental Improvement Plan (EIP). But there are significant questions about how this will be delivered.

There is already much research exploring the benefits of hedgerows, including for biodiversity, carbon sequestration and their value in the farmed landscape. But there are aspects that have not been explored in such detail, such as how and where the extent of hedgerows can be increased. Various national policies will also play a key role in both protecting existing hedgerows and increasing coverage around the country.

We want to commission research that does just this – building evidence to show how government can deliver the hedgerow target while also improving the future for existing hedgerows. CPRE will use the research to inform strategic recommendations for government on how policy and practice can be improved, creating a stronger future for hedgerows.

For further information, please contact Emma Marrington: emmam@cpre.org.uk

Anyone wishing to submit a tender should do so by **midday on Thursday 3 August 2023**. The invited quote and any supporting material should be sent by email to Emma with ‘Tender – Hedgerows research’ in the subject header.

The commissioning organisation

CPRE is the countryside charity that campaigns to promote, enhance and protect the countryside for everyone’s benefit, wherever they live. With a local CPRE in almost every county, we work with communities, businesses and government to find positive and lasting ways to help the countryside thrive - today and for generations to come.

In December 2022, CPRE launched a report ‘Farming and hedgerows: stretching the boundaries’ which revealed that more than 1,100 farmers strongly support our call for the government to increase our hedgerow networks, and properly fund the target of 40% more hedgerows by 2050. We are using this report to influence the design of the new Environmental Land Management schemes (ELMs). For example, in January 2023, government committed to a near doubling in the payment rates for farmers to plant new hedges (up from £11.60 to £22.97/metre) and for planting up gaps in existing hedgerows (from £9.50/m to £17.52/m). Defra also announced new hedgerow actions which we expect will be open for applications from summer 2023. We continue to campaign to ensure that healthy hedgerows are central to ELMs.

CPRE research 'The countryside next door' (May 2022) explored evidence on how the countryside around our largest towns and cities is being maintained through existing farming policies due to be replaced by ELMs, such as agri-environment schemes. We called for a significant proportion of hedgerow planting and restoration to be on Green Belt and other countryside around towns, and current levels of funding for hedgerow management in these areas should be doubled to help achieve this. Much new hedgerow planting could also include replacing lost historic hedges in historic parks and gardens, where it fits with landscape character.

Since 2020, CPRE has been working with our local groups across England to run hedgerow planting and restoration projects in their areas, along with partners including farmers and landowners. In phases one and two of the 'Hedgerow Hero' projects, 33.4km of hedgerow has been planted and 13.3km has been restored. A third phase will run 2023-24, with nine of our local groups.

Background

Hedgerows are an iconic feature across much of the English countryside. Not only are they beautiful, with shifting seasonal colours, but they also provide homes and corridors for wildlife. And all the while they help tackle the climate emergency by capturing carbon from the air.

There are various national policy initiatives that will influence the future of England's hedgerows.

The Climate Change Committee (CCC) recommended in its 2019 report that the hedgerow network should be increased by 40% to support the UK government's legally binding target of net-zero carbon emissions by 2050. The most recent Countryside Survey in 2007 (CS2007) recorded around 300,000 miles of 'managed' hedgerows in Britain. This means we would need to create at least 120,000 miles of new and restored hedges to achieve a 40% increase in their extent – which is around half the length of our national road network.

In England, we estimated that a 40% increase would be around 100,000 miles of new and restored hedgerows. While CPRE welcomed the first ever hedgerow target in the EIP, the government target is under half recommended by the CCC.

An earlier (2020) report for Natural England recommended a still more ambitious target for planting and restoration so that hedgerows could attain Favourable Conservation Status. The report gives a broad indication of where particularly high concentrations of hedgerows are distributed by national (landscape) character area, and concludes that 'at a national scale, the favourable future range for hedgerows remains broadly the same as the current distribution'.

The Centre for Ecology and Hydrology (CEH) run the Countryside Survey and have recently been commissioned by Natural England to update the hedgerow element of the survey. It will explore what agri-environment schemes have achieved for hedgerows and give national estimates of hedgerow extent and condition. We understand that fieldwork is currently underway and that the update is expected in 2024.

Another novel initiative to map opportunities to plant and restore hedgerows is a current research project by the University of Hull called 'Mapping the Gaps'. The project, expected to report towards the end of 2023, aims to identify the location and size of hedgerow gaps within East Yorkshire, which will establish a baseline value of the potential space for planting hedges. Specifically, it will utilise freely available geospatial mapping products to accurately map the spatial characteristics of hedgerows and their gaps across the East Yorkshire region.

Hedgerows enhance the character of many of England's landscapes. There are 159 National Character Area (NCA) profiles, developed by Natural England, that include key facts and data about an area. Many of the NCA profiles will describe where hedgerows are a dominant landscape feature and where there is an opportunity to enhance them. A database of the NCAs is available to CPRE, which lists the 'Statements of Environmental Opportunity' that include where hedgerows could be improved.

The Environment Act 2021 introduced a mandatory Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) requirement for new development along with Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRS) to target the best places for nature recovery and wider environmental benefits. LNRS are starting to be rolled out and aim to identify areas to create, enhance and restore habitat and deliver environmental benefits, which will include opportunities for hedgerow planting and restoration. Once developed, a LNRS will also better equip local planning authorities to incorporate nature recovery objectives into local plans and development decisions.

Objectives

Amongst policy makers, and in particular central government officials, and other key external stakeholders:

- Build understanding of the challenges and opportunities of delivering the government's target to plant and restore 30,000 miles of hedgerows by 2037 and a total of 45,000 miles of hedgerows by 2050.
- Make a strong evidence-based case for where, in terms of landscape character areas, new hedgerows can be planted and restored, enhancing landscape character and providing local environmental services, and the resources needed to do this.
- Increase profile of CPRE as a leading voice on hedgerows and our credibility in terms of a sensible campaigning voice in the midst of a climate and nature emergency, and an economic recession.

The research we want to commission

We want to build evidence to show how and where government can deliver the hedgerow target while also improving the future for existing hedgerows. CPRE will use the research to inform strategic recommendations to improve national and local delivery of hedgerow enhancement. We would like the researcher to explore the challenges and solutions to achieving the hedgerow target, as well as where additional hedgerow planting and restoration could be focused.

It is anticipated that the research would primarily be based on:

- Desk research, to undertake a literature review of relevant research papers and carry out data analysis eg of NCA data and hedgerows. An initial reading list is provided below. We welcome applications from consultants with directly relevant research experience;
- Strategic information on landscape character;
- In depth development and analysis of up to 12 case studies, involving site visits to gather data and photos/rich content, and scrutiny of relevant local factors that influence outcomes for hedgerows;
- Gathering qualitative data from national stakeholders and relevant stakeholders in the case study areas to identify barriers and potential solutions to delivering the hedgerow target.

The consultants will need to discuss and agree the research plan at an online meeting with CPRE before commencing work.

Examples of the questions this research should explore:

1. What policy change, monitoring and resources are needed to achieve the EIP hedgerow target of planting and restoring 30,000 miles of hedgerow by 2037 and 45,000 in total by 2050?
2. What are the challenges nationally and locally to deliver the hedgerow target?
3. How can these challenges be addressed if the EIP hedgerow target is to be achieved?
4. How can strategic information on landscape character be used to identify where hedgerow planting and restoration could be focused?
5. How do different geographical contexts influence hedgerows ranging from deep rural to urban fringe, protected and unprotected landscapes, northern and southern regions, and areas of low existing hedgerow density compared to high?
6. Which areas have existing hedgerows in the worst condition and which the best? A case study approach could identify two areas to compare and set out how other areas could improve the condition of hedgerows.

Outputs

The consultant will be required to undertake the research and produce:

- 1) A detailed written report setting out the evidence gathered during the research. It should also make recommendations for how and where the EIP hedgerow target could be delivered
- 2) Good quality photos of case studies and the use of GIS mapping and infographics

CPRE will want an opportunity to comment on the initial draft of the research report and mapping platform and communication methods and for the consultants to provide further input based on our comments (see timescales below).

This research will inform a CPRE summary report to be launched in 2024.

Budget

The budget for this research is within the range £20,000-£25,000 inclusive of expenses and VAT. We anticipate that the bulk of the funding will be spent on undertaking the research, including communication tools such as mapping, and completing the draft report. The consultant would be expected to maintain regular contact with the project manager by email and telephone and to participate in two meetings with CPRE, one at the start of the project and one to discuss the draft report. The budget will also include reasonable travel expenses for development and recording of case studies. We may also decide to convene a policy seminar to discuss the research and if so, we would include provision for the consultant's participation.

Proposals

We are looking for short proposals which provide a fixed price for completing this work, brief details of previous relevant experience for the staff involved and confirmation that the work could be completed to the timescales set out below. It should also include details of how the consultants propose to undertake the work.

Costs and other information supplied in tender documents should include the following details:

- The number, roles and experience of staff involved
- The daily rate for each person
- Estimated number of days for each person

A completed and signed Pricing Schedule must be submitted with the tender document.

Timelines

Our indicative timeline is as follows:

Week commencing 3 July - project brief issued

Thursday 3 August - deadline for submissions of tenders

w/c 14 August - successful consultant appointed

w/c 21 August - inception meeting

w/c 20 November - consultants submit draft report

w/c 4 December - peer review seminar

Friday 15 December - consultant submits final report to CPRE

Contract and confidentiality

Tenderers shall not issue any form of publicity or advertisement regarding this process without the prior written consent of CPRE.

The appointed consultant will be required to sign and adhere to the contents of a Letter of Understanding in accordance with CPRE's standard terms and conditions, and which will outline the obligations of both CPRE and the consultant.

Previous relevant reports by CPRE:

- [Farming and hedgerows: stretching the boundaries](#) (2022)
- [The countryside next door Why we need to invest in greener, healthier Green Belts](#) (2022)
- [Hedge Fund: investing in hedgerows for climate, nature and the economy](#) (2021) and [technical appendices](#).
- [England's hedgerows: don't cut them out!](#) (2010)

Examples of other relevant publications:

- Environmental Improvement Plan 2023 [launch press release](#) (January 2023)
- [Environmental Improvement Plan 2023](#) HM Government (NB the hedgerow target in PDF is incorrect)
- ['Improving and expanding hedgerows - Recommendations for a semi-natural habitat in agricultural landscapes'](#) Joanna Staley, Robert Wolton and Lisa Norton (February 2023)

- [‘Hedgerows: mapping the gaps’](#) research project, University of Hull (began 2021)
- [Definition of Favourable Conservation Status for Hedgerows](#), Natural England (2020)
- [‘Net Zero – The UK’s contribution to stopping global warming’](#) Climate Change Committee (2019)
- A range of resources are available in the Hedgelink [‘Hedge Hub’](#)