

Hedgerow Restoration Guidance

Coppice old thick stems

- Old unmanaged hedgerows, not in a hedge laying cycle, develop gaps where the hedgerow is dying or disappearing, often containing leggy, tall and brittle/rotten thick hedgerow trunks (resembling a derelict line of trees). With the guidance of an experienced hedge worker, regenerating the hedgerow in these cases is usually better achieved through coppicing the old stems rather than attempting to lay them. New re-growth shoots from these old stocks will provide good stems for laying in 10-15 years time. Any gap lengths can then be planted up with new whips.
- Use a chainsaw to coppice each stem 2-4 inches above the ground level with a clean straight cut surface.
- Leave some old rotten thick stems for wildlife habitat within the hedgerow fence lines.
- Some thicker brittle older stems can be 'root laid', by digging out soil from around the stem and nicking from the living root.

Below: A gappy hedge that has formed a 'hard knuckle' where continuously cut at the same height



Planting up the gaps

- Plant at 6 plants per metre in double staggered zig-zag row 40 - 50cm apart.
- A diverse species mix is recommended, to help with: disease resilience; creating an 'edible hedge' - nectar and food sources across the seasons; and providing browsing diversity for livestock.
- Recommended percentage mix: hawthorn (40%); hazel (20%); blackthorn (15%); dog rose (5%); field maple (5%); holly (3%); hornbeam (2%); plus 10% mix of: crab apple, bullace or damson (source locally), small leaved lime (lowland sites), sessile oak, rowan, spindle and wild cherry (these can be left to grow as hedgerow trees) Nb. Species mix to take account of what existing species are coppiced and/or laid.
- See separate - Hedge Planting Specification for more detailed advice and guidance.



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Protection fencing

- The majority of restored hedgerows will need to be protected with stock-proof fencing on both sides to protect against Livestock, deer and hares.
- Provide a 3 – 3.5 metre gap between the twin fences to allow access for aftercare (eg. replacing dead saplings), preventing the need to take down fence(s) for future laying, provide a valuable uncultivated margin for wildlife habitat, soil protection, slowing down water flow and future carbon credits/payments.
- On cattle only farms, with no or low deer density, fencing may consist of single or double high tensile wire often electrified.



A restored earth bank on the Solway, tall to protect the hedge roots against frequent flooding

Any Questions?

Get in touch:

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For more information
about our hedgerow work,
scan the QR code or see
our website:



Newly planted hedgerow protected between double fence with good margin.



Restoring earth banks

- Sometimes older hedgerows, especially in north and coastal Cumbria are on top of old earth banks, called 'cops' or 'kests'.
- Once the coppicing and laying has been completed, a mini-digger or tractor with bucket can re-soil the bank sides and top
- Before carrying out earth bank repairs, do check for any archaeological interests with the National Park Authorities and Local Authorities:
[HeritageGateway - Historic Environment Record Details](#) [The Historic Environment Record | Westmorland and Furness Council](#)

Remnants of an old hawthorn hedge on an earth bank or 'kest'

