



A Beginners' Guide to Hedgerows

As spring gives way to summer, one of the joys of our countryside is seeing the hedgerows burst into life. But what, exactly, defines a hedgerow, and why are they so important?

Put simply, a hedgerow is a closely-grown mass of woody vegetation that grows in a line, interspersed with features such as banks, trees, walls, fences, and gates. In the UK, we have 95,000 miles of hedgerows, but many thousands of miles of them have been destroyed since 1900.

We may think that most are recent additions to the countryside following the Enclosure Acts between 1750 and 1850, but 40% or more of our hedgerows are ancient and contain a staggering number of different species of wildlife. The oldest known surviving hedgerow in England is

here in Cambridgeshire - Judith's Hedge, near Monks Wood, is over 900 years old.

So, what do hedgerows do for us?

Hedgerows have many benefits:

The Climate Change Committee recommends an increase of 40% in the extent of hedgerows as part of measures against the climate emergency. We hear a lot about planting trees for carbon storage, but hedgerows do this and more: they are easier to slot into the landscape than woodland, they are important for the management of water, pollutants and soil, and for flood reduction.

Hedgerows are vitally important for nature. Over 2,100 plant, insect, bird and mammal species use UK hedgerows, including 130 species identified as being a priority for

conservation. A loss of hedgerows, or a decline in their quality, would have a disastrous effect on all these species' populations. With intensive farming they're more important than ever, often acting as the last safe place many declining species can live or utilise.

The networks of hedgerows that cover so much of our countryside link us to our landscape's past, giving a sense of continuity and connection to our heritage. They keep our local areas looking distinctive and give us a sense of place.

Threats to Hedgerows

Many countryside hedgerows are protected by law. The Hedgerows Regulations (1997) were the first official rules protecting 'important' hedgerows, and the government has recently announced new hedgerow regulations to protect wildlife. However, local authorities can only say no to a hedgerow being removed if it falls into this 'important' category, which means that we're still losing far too many of them.

Hedgerows and CPRE

CPRE has long campaigned for hedgerow protection. We're calling on the next government to make further legislative changes, and we are actively planting and restoring hedgerows country-wide as part of our Hedgerow Heroes project.



Chris Gardiner. Ancient hedgerow near Monks Wood

Find out more at <https://www.cprecambs.org.uk/campaigns-countryside/2022/02/21/hedgerows/> and <https://www.cpre.org.uk/explainer/an-insiders-guide-to-hedgerows/>

If you fancy getting even closer to your local hedgerows and really help them to thrive, you can participate in the People's Trust for Endangered Species' *Great British Hedgerow Survey*:

<https://hedgerowsurvey.ptes.org/about-our-hedge-surveys>

Why we are saying "No" to land development between Peakirk and Glington

The Peterborough Local Plan is currently under review and an application has been submitted in the 'Call for Sites' part of the process to develop land between the villages of Glinton and Peakirk. This would result in over 200 houses plus associated infrastructure in an area of open countryside. We oppose this development because it would not conform to policies in either the adopted Peakirk Neighbourhood Plan 2017–2030, or the adopted Glinton Neighbourhood Plan 2016–2036, now part of Peterborough City Council's (PCC) Local Development Framework. PPC's Local Plan 2016–2036 also rejects this size of development. More details about the policies this proposed development contravenes can be found on <https://www.cprecambs.org.uk/>.

Other important objections to this application include:

Agricultural land and food production

The soil in this area is some of the UK's most productive. The reclassification of this land - which will be needed to allow the scheme to go ahead - will allow developers easier access to valuable agricultural land for housing developments.



📷 Nicholas Jackson

We are concerned about the drainage of land that will no longer be maintained by farmers. The heavy rains caused by climate change will only increase surface water and run off, leading to an even greater risk of flooding. There are many suitable brownfield sites around Peterborough.

Threat to wildlife

The development threatens this area's diverse ecosystem. Barn Owls hunt there, and hedgerows and trees will be destroyed – disrupting wildlife habitats for numerous mammals, birds, reptiles, and insects.

Other effects

The development would also have a detrimental impact on employment, with the loss of farming and its supporting industries; increased traffic will damage local roads, disrupt quality of life and increase pollution and noise; and extra strain will be put on local schools, doctors' surgeries and other essential services.

BT's move to digital voice technology and the effect on rural dwellers

We've been concerned for some time about the move by BT and other providers to replace the existing copper wire telephone system with digital voice technology (also known as Voice over Internet Protocol – VoIP). BT originally planned for the transition to be completed by December 2025. However, national concern and campaigning, particularly regarding the negative impacts of the switch-over on the elderly and vulnerable, has seen this deadline re-set to end-January 2027. Age UK provides detailed information about the changes – see <https://www.ageuk.org.uk/information-advice/money-legal/consumer-issues/changes-to-landline-telephones/>.



Saying goodbye to the old . . .

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Our concerns include the following, most of which will increase risks to people in rural areas where there is no or only variable mobile signal:

- no planning for when broadband servers – on which the new technology is reliant – go down, possibly for several days;
- the fact that during power cuts a digital phone, which is powered by electricity, will only work if it has a battery back-up. Batteries may not be available, or could run out in the event of a prolonged power cut;
- the impact on telecare device and alarm users;
- the increased risk of fire and explosion from rechargeable batteries.

You can read our article in full at

<https://www.cprecambs.org.uk/downloads/voip%20phones%20-%20May%2024.pdf>

The General Election and Levelling Up

In the run up to the 4th July General Election we plan to publish a weekly press release for the duration of the campaign, urging voters to ask candidates searching questions on a variety of issues. In the first, ‘Cambridge: Already on the Level’, we say that we need a levelling-up agenda that actually delivers on its promises. The Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023 requires a government minister to “prepare, and lay before each House of Parliament, a statement of levelling-up missions”. The preceding Levelling-Up White Paper stated clearly a core objective is to “boost productivity, pay, jobs, and living standards by growing the private sector, especially in those places where they are lagging.”

In our view this this makes nonsense of plans to build up to 150,000 homes in and around Cambridge. Cambridge is definitely not lagging behind!

Read more at

<https://www.cprecambs.org.uk/downloads/Levelling%20Up.pdf> and
<https://www.cambsnews.co.uk/news/opinion-there-are-places-that-merit-levelling-up-investment-cambridge-is-already-on-the-level/26086/>

Our Reservations about a Reservoir

You may be aware of proposals by Anglian Water and Cambridge Water to build a new five square kilometres reservoir in the Fens to help meet the pressures on regional water supply. The site lies between Chatteris and March, near to Doddington, Wimblington and Manea. A second consultation has begun, with community events up to 13th July, plus an online webinar on 16th July.

We all know what a disaster HS2 has been for our countryside. This is a similarly huge infrastructure project with massive negative implications for many communities, and we oppose it for the following reasons, and more:

- disruption to affected communities from construction will last from c.2029 until c.2036; and uncertainty over compulsory purchase of land that has already begun;
- construction will include the reservoir itself plus a new Water Treatment plant, multiple river intake structures and pumping stations near Bluntisham; additional service reservoirs and connections to local supply networks;
- underground infrastructure pipelines will be built cross-country between Madingley and Bexwell beyond Downham Market and between Bluntisham and the reservoir;

- vast areas of valuable agricultural land will be lost to construction, environmental ‘mitigation’ and ‘enhancement’;
- hugely sensitive drainage systems could be compromised;
- countless homes and businesses would be permanently lost, including farms on highly productive land, and business operations disrupted across a vast area;
- the Ouse Fen Nature Reserve and Berry Fen SSSI will be adversely impacted, as will the wider ecosystem with enormous impacts on biodiversity;
- the River Great Ouse, from which water will be abstracted near Bluntisham, plays a vital part in the lifecycle of critically endangered European eels arriving after travelling 3,000km from the Sargasso Sea.

Please take a look at the proposals on <https://fensreservoir.co.uk/> and participate in the consultation before 9th August:

<https://fensreservoir.co.uk/consultation/have-your-say/overview/>

Check out Lizzie's CPRE blog

CPRE Cambridgeshire and Peterborough volunteer Lizzie Bannister writes a blog for our website. An avid horse rider, Lizzie has lived in the Fenland countryside for half her life, including on a smallholding with animals, surrounded by a sea of arable land. She has a Master's Degree in Conservation Management and is passionate about ensuring the health of both people and the countryside, love and relationships and can be read here <https://www.cprecambs.org.uk/cpre-blog/>

Ramsey Rural Museum joins the CPRE Members' Guide

Ramsey Rural Museum has joined CPRE's Members' Guide, which gives CPRE members discounted entry to almost 100 attractions, gardens, houses and museums. It is a fascinating independent museum set in a peaceful rural location on the edge of the market town of Ramsey in Cambridgeshire, and well worth a visit <https://ramseyruralmuseum.co.uk/>.

To find out more about joining CPRE and receiving discounted entry to attractions across England go to <https://www.cprecambs.org.uk/join-cpre.html>. To find your day out at any of the attractions in the Members' Guide see the map <https://www.cpre.org.uk/find-your-day-out/>

Village and Parish Council Magazines

We're keen to spread the word about CPRE Cambridgeshire and the work we do, and we've been asking the editors of village and Parish Council magazines to include an article about us. If you have a local publication, please consider asking them if we could contribute a piece – or just drop a line to Tracey Hipson at administrator2@cprecambs.org.uk. Thank you!

Join our team

We're looking for people with planning experience who can work with our friendly (but hard-pushed) team on a volunteer basis, and a Chair and Treasurer to join our trustee committee. Jo McGowan at office@cprecambs.org.uk can provide more information about these roles, or see our website <https://www.cprecambs.org.uk/volunteer.html>

Support Us

As a small, local charity we really value your support. and any donation is extremely welcome. You can donate directly to us using a simple online form <https://cafdonate.cafonline.org/10599#!/DonationDetails>. Alternatively, use easyfundraising, a free fundraising platform. When you shop online at over 7,400 brands, they donate - a great way for you to support us without it costing you a penny. Sign up for free at <https://www.easyfundraising.org.uk/causes/cprecambbridgeshire/> There are other ways to support us, so do check out our website - <https://www.cprecambs.org.uk/how-to-help/> or contact us at office@cprecambs.org.uk.