



September 2021

Dear Constituent,

Thank you for contacting me about hedgerows.

Hedgerows and field boundaries are the very essence of our British countryside. They provide vital resources for mammals, birds and insect species. As well as being an important habitat in their own right, they act as wildlife corridors allowing dispersal between isolated habitats. Many are also important historical and cultural landscape features.

Now we have left the EU and the Transition Period is over, the Government is able to reward farmers for the work they do to sustainably manage every metre of hedgerow on their land in a way that is right for their area. The sustainable farming incentive, one of the three component parts of the UK's future agricultural policy, will pay farmers for management of their land in a more environmentally sustainable way. Part of this scheme is the hedgerow standard, under which ministers will pay farmers to plant more hedgerows, leave them uncut or raise the cutting height. To provide habitat for wildlife, farmers and land managers will be incentivised to maintain and plant more hedgerow trees. I know that simple actions like planting trees within the footprint of existing hedges can make a big difference.

Legal protection for hedgerows is provided by the Hedgerows Regulations 1997 which prohibit the removal of countryside hedgerows without first seeking approval from the local planning authority. The authority is required to decide whether a hedgerow is 'important' according to the criteria in the Regulations and should not be removed. Although there is local variation, research has indicated that, nationally, over 70% of hedgerows in England and Wales are 'important'. The Regulations therefore play a valuable role in providing statutory protection for a large proportion of hedgerows in the countryside. When granting planning permission, a local authority has the power to impose enforceable planning conditions on a developer in order to protect hedges or trees assessed as being worthy of retention, which might otherwise be harmed by construction or the new land-use.

Thank you again for taking the time to contact me.

Yours faithfully,

CHRIS HEATON-HARRIS MP
MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT FOR DAVENTRY