



Chris Heaton-Harris
Member of Parliament for Daventry
House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA
Tel: 020 7219 7048

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Dear Constituent,

Thank you for contacting me about hedgerows.

Hedgerows are one of the most important ecological building blocks in our farmed landscape. They maintain the distinctive character of our countryside and provide crucial habitats and food for wildlife.

Hedgerows in England and Wales are protected by the Hedgerows Regulations 1997. These regulations prohibit the removal of most countryside hedgerows (or parts of them) without first seeking approval from the local planning authority. It determines whether a hedgerow is 'important' because of its wildlife, landscape, historical or archaeological value and should not be removed.

A local authority also has the power to impose enforceable planning conditions on a developer to protect hedges or trees assessed as being worthy of retention, which might otherwise be harmed by construction or the new land-use. Land managers in receipt of Basic Payment Scheme payments are also required to protect hedgerows on their land. Further, agri-environment schemes such as Countryside Stewardship fund the management and planting of hedgerows to deliver recognised benefits for wildlife, landscape, and the historic environment. I am aware that hedgerow management is one of the most popular options within Countryside Stewardship.

The new Sustainable Farming Incentive will support the Government's delivery of the UK's environmental and climate goals. The scheme will start with three standards, focusing on arable and improved grasslands soils. I understand that in future years, more standards will be made available. This may include hedgerows, where farmers would be paid to plant more hedgerows, leave them uncut or raise the cutting height.

Finally, the Environment Act 2021 sets a legally binding target to halt the decline in species abundance by 2020. Ministers are working to create more and better joined up habitats, which will include hedgerows.

Thank you again for taking the time to contact me.

Yours faithfully,

CHRIS HEATON-HARRIS MP
MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT FOR DAVENTRY

Website: www.heatonharris.com