

# Hedgerow Assessments (Hedge REGS)

Ecology Guidance Note: 2014

## SERVICES:

- Hedgerow survey and assessment
- Protected species surveys
- Hedgerow mapping
- Habitat connectivity review

## Why survey?

Hedgerows are very much a human modification of trees and shrubs, creating boundaries to manage livestock or identify land ownership. Although hedgerows have been created throughout the history of the British countryside, key periods of hedge planting have happened, particularly during 1700s and 1800s.

With the dramatic removal of thousands of miles of hedgerows during the late 20<sup>th</sup> Century as agriculture industrialised and intensified, there was a move to protect hedgerows. The Hedgerow Regulations which came into force in 1997 made provision to protect important hedgerows in England and Wales from removal or damage, protecting both their landscape value and wildlife.

## Methodology

Field surveys follow an assessment of sections of a hedgerow, recording trees, shrub species, ground flora and original construction such as banks and ditches. This enables an estimated age to be determined and a review of its ecological value, including its connectivity to other hedgerows and habitats. Hedgerow surveys are based on the standard survey methodology in the Hedgerow Survey Handbook (2<sup>nd</sup> edition) (DEFRA, 2007). This identifies whether a hedgerow is deemed 'important' under the Hedgerow Regulations.

## Mitigation

Mitigation functions are primarily for protected species which may utilise the hedgerow, particularly birds during their breeding season. However, mitigation may require planting of replacement hedges or enhancing existing hedgerows. Measures include planting up gaps or employing traditional management techniques. The latter should be considered as part of the overall ecological enhancement of a site.

