

Aiming High for Hedgerows

Targeting hedgerow action in England

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Background

In 2023 the UK government announced a goal to create or restore 30,000 miles (48,280 km) of hedgerow by 2037 and 45,000 miles (72,420 km) by 2050. The Countryside Charity commissioned the Organic Research Centre to identify regions across England that could be prioritised for hedgerow creation and restoration, as well as quantifying the resources and effort required to meet these goals.

Prioritisation and Targets

England was analysed by the 159 National Character Areas¹. Three qualities were scored for each NCA: historical precedence for hedgerows (Figure 1), existing hedgerow condition, and local policy support for hedgerows. In addition, habitat analysis provided the area of each NCA which would be suitable for planting hedgerows on. These aspects fed into the calculation of target lengths of hedgerow to be created and restored in order to reach the 2037 goals (Figure 2).

Additional Context & Case Studies

Further qualities of each NCA were also identified, such as road density, agriculture type, and existing hedgerow cover (Table 1). In addition six case studies of hedgerow schemes were conducted across the UK to understand the practical challenges of achieving the targets (Figure 3).

NCA Name	Exmoor
Area (km ²)	1304
Historic Hedgerow Cover	2
Existing Hedgerow Cover	2
Policy Support	3
Hedgerow Management	1
Hedgerow Priority Score	2
Hedgerow Target (km)	352.44
Plantable Area (km ²)	640.596
Plantable Area (%)	48.656
Existing Hedgerow (km/km ²)	4.289
Road Density (km/km ²)	2.1
Average Farm Size (Ha)	100<
Dominant Agriculture	Pasture
Disturbed Land (%)	11
Undisturbed Land (%)	87
Urban Land (%)	1
Ecosystem Services	Timber Provision, Water Flow, Biodiversity

Table 1. Example of data produced for each NCA.

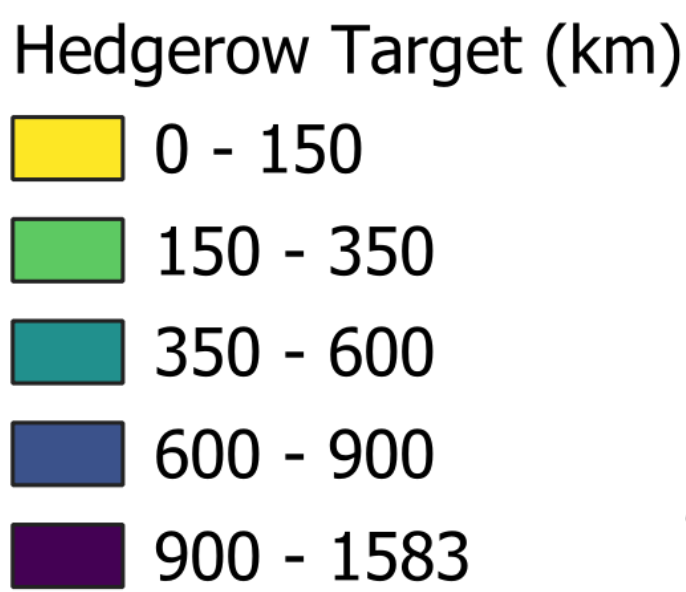


Figure 2. Hedgerow required to reach 2037 target.

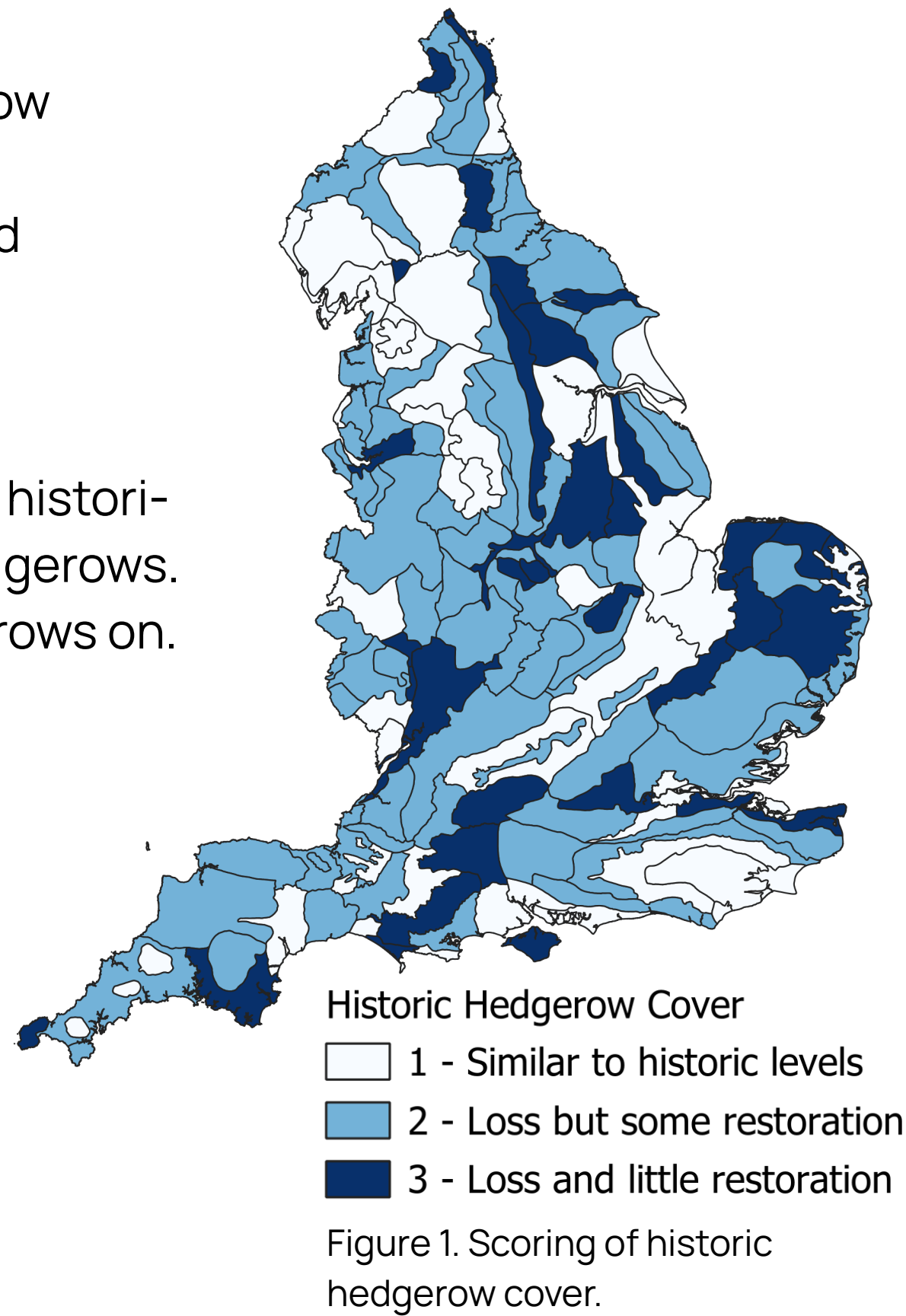


Figure 3. A selection of pictures from the case studies².

Table 2. Resources required to reach 2037 target for 3 example NCAs.

NCA	Priority Score	2037 Hedgerow Target (km)	Total person days	Number of trees	Total costs (£)	Payments from schemes (£)
Marshwood and Powerstock Vales	1	28	532	89,604	196,472	425,693
Trent Valley Washlands	2	212	4,497	681,600	1,529,740	3,237,742
South Norfolk and High Suffolk Claylands	3	1070	21,230	3,423,996	7,263,899	16,264,639

Resource Requirements

For 3 NCAs the resources required to achieved the hedgerow targets were calculated (Table 2). When these calculations are scaled up across England, the total subsidy payments are £735 million.

Recommendations

- Use this indicative target setting approach to initiate discussion with local stakeholders on local ambition for hedgerows.
- Develop a system for monitoring progress towards the hedgerow targets, encompassing the quality as well as quantity of delivery.
- Facilitate aggregated approaches (for example through farm clusters) that reduce the administrative overheads of hedgerow action.
- Continue to raise awareness of the many values of hedgerows to both urban and rural populations.

1. Natural England. (2016). National Character Areas (England). 2. Photos used with permission from the Arden Free Tree Scheme.

An interactive map presenting the data and the full report is available at <https://orgrescent.github.io/NCA-map>

