

A call came into our Woods under Threat team to say that a digger had been spotted pulling out a hedgerow in Sheffield. A local gentleman had noticed that a portion of ancient hedge had been lost along the boundary of a development, which should not have been removed. He was unsure of what to do, but knew someone should be informed.

We researched the location of the site and telephoned the local council to check if they were aware of the activity in this area, and asked if they knew whether the removal of this hedge was part of the planning permission for the development.

We received a call back from an enforcement officer who confirmed the council was not aware and then asked if they could arrange to meet someone on site. We got back in touch with the original caller and asked if he would be happy to arrange to meet the officer the next morning. When we called him back, the gentleman was unsure why he should meet the officer until we explained how useful it would be for the council officer to talk to someone locally and that it would help the officer realise how much had already been lost. The gentleman accepted this and agreed to contact the officer to arrange a time to meet.

A few days later we received a follow-up call to let us know that the removal of the hedgerow had not been in the plans; that the contractor had been stopped immediately from removing the rest of the hedge and that further action against the developer could be taken on this illegal activity.

**Thanks to the swift action of a local resident and the proper attention of the local council, the majority of this ancient hedgerow has been saved!**



#### Protecting hedgerows

The [Hedgerows Regulations](#) protect any hedge in England and Wales, more than 20m long, growing 'in, or adjacent to, any common land, protected land, or land used for agriculture, forestry, or the breeding or keeping of horses, ponies or donkeys', particularly those of wildlife, archaeological, and landscape importance. Hedges are not so protected in Northern Ireland and Scotland. Removal of hedges is generally prohibited, although in certain circumstances local authorities may issue a 'removal notice'.

**Be a WoodWatcher !**

[Help protect the woods and trees in your neighbourhood.](#)

#### Hedgerows

Use of hedges as boundary markers has a long history; some may even be Wildwood remnants kept when early fields were created.

Important wildlife habitats in their own right, hedges may be an abundant source of food for wildlife, particularly in autumn and early winter. They are primary habitat for at least 47 species of conservation concern in the UK, including 13 which are globally threatened or rapidly declining.

Hedges are particularly important for mobile species included in the UK Biodiversity Action Plan and specifically protected in UK and EU law, such as butterflies, moths, birds, bats and other small mammals.

Where hedges are ancient or remnants of ancient woodland, they may act as refuges for characteristic woodland plants and ancient trees.

Hedgerows in areas covered by a Historic Landscape Characterisation are often protected on the basis of historic importance and their wildlife value.

[Further information](#) about hedgerows and hedgerow trees can be downloaded here (pdf).