

Hedgehog Highways Action Plan



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Review of Strategy

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The Hedgehog – Basic facts

One of Britain's most iconic native mammals, the hedgehog, is under threat and in decline across the country. It can be found across Britain but is best established in urban habitats, surviving well in cities where they make use of gardens, cemeteries, wasteland and parks. The steepest decline in hedgehog numbers is in rural areas. Hedgehogs are nocturnal and under normal circumstances should not be out in daylight.

The decline in hedgehog numbers is due to several factors including but not limited to

- loss and fragmentation of their habitat,
- overly manicured gardens with impermeable fencing,
- pesticide use (including slug pellets)
- netting
- garden ponds and swimming pools with no exit ramp
- unchecked bonfires
- litter
- road mortality.

The hedgehog is carnivorous, its diet is comprised of beetles, worms, caterpillars and other insects. They are known to take eggs from ground nesting birds and will eat some small mammals. Additional feeding of cat and dog food from humans can be a welcome addition, especially in dry weather when foraging for insects is difficult in hard ground but is not essential. A supply of water is essential.

Hedgehogs are normally solitary only coming together to breed. They have a large range for a small animal and can travel up to 2 – 3km a night, visiting a number of gardens in one night. They aren't particularly territorial, up to 10 hedgehogs may visit one garden over a series of nights if conditions are favourable.

Hedgehogs hibernate anytime between October and April (depending on temperature and weather patterns). They will make nests in existing features such as compost heaps, log piles, under garden sheds, or create their own from dead leaves and twigs.

Hedgehogs and the Law

Hedgehogs are currently protected by the following legislation -

- Schedule 6 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), which makes it illegal to kill or capture them.
- Wild Mammal Protection Act 1996 prohibits against cruelty and mistreatment.
- Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006, updated by the Environment Act 2021, species of principle importance.
- National Planning Policy Framework 2012 sets out the mitigation hierarchy (avoid impacts, mitigate against impacts, compensate when mitigation is not possible) and promotes the provision of enhancement.

Protected Species and the Biodiversity Action Plan

In July 2023, South Ribble Borough Council adopted its first Biodiversity Action Plan. Within this document there is an existing commitment to undertake work to benefit protected species and their habitat via positive habitat management.

The following table of actions are intended to expand upon the existing commitment, solely in reference to the hedgehog, though work to benefit hedgehogs will also benefit other mammals, birds and invertebrates.

Hedgehog Highways Action Plan

	Outcomes	Measure and Rationale	Timescales	Partners
	Positive habitat management to create viable habitat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Encourage SRBC operational staff to Think Hedgehog! while they go about their duties. ● Encourage Friends Groups, residents, schools and community groups to create resting and nesting sites. ● Encourage the creation of natural and artificial resting and nesting sites, using designs such as - https://www.hedgehogstreet.org/help-hedgehogs/hedgehog-homes/ 	Annual / ongoing	Neighbourhoods Comms Friends Groups Residents Schools Community Groups
	Sensitive maintenance regimes and timings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Keep hedges dense by cutting once every three years and on rotation so that no more than one third of hedges are cut in any one year. ● Encourage growth at the base of hedges. ● 'Gap-up' hedges with additional planting and laying. ● Allow small areas of undisturbed scrub such as bramble to establish. ● Provide a means of ramped escape from steep sided features (ditches and ponds) and replace broken drain covers. ● Minimise the use of pesticides, including slug pellets 	Annual / ongoing	Neighbourhoods Contractors Developers
	Improving ecological connectivity via the creation of corridors to allow populations to expand naturally	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Promoting Hedgehog Street – hedgehog highways on our own land and across the borough ● Encouraging schemes to remove barriers to the movement of species. 	Annual / ongoing	All
	To ensure that emerging Local Plan sets strong ambitious targets for improving biodiversity through development.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Discuss with Preston and Chorley council's whether provisions facilitating the recovery of hedgehogs could be included in an ecology/biodiversity policy within the emerging Central Lancashire Plan. Once adopted, the plan will replace the local plans of the 3 districts. ● Create an additional section within the SRBC website to cover Biodiversity Net Gain, the mitigation hierarchy and options for developers, that will include Hedgehog Highways and other habitat enhancement and mitigation options such as <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Limit scrub clearance (such as bramble patches) in hibernation season 	By Local Plan date 2025	Planning Climate

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hedgehog aware when carrying out ground clearance works – checking piles of deadwood or leaves and dense vegetation, clear areas on rotation, leaving nesting cover or mitigating by creating brash piles in an out of the way place. • Ensure connectivity is built into the design – permeable fencing, hedgehog highways and sloped escape routes wherever there are ground level changes, replacing fences with hedges, and plant native tree and shrub species to increase invertebrate numbers, leaving areas of wild scrub. • Including in management contracts for landscaping companies that take over the management of the site post development so that connectivity and habitat are maintained 		
	Think Hedgehog! Comms campaign	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Citizen science survey opportunities shared with schools, residents, volunteers and community groups using the Hedgehog Street sightings map and Hedgehog Hole recorder. • Work with our local hedgehog rescue centre to share the right message at the right time. • Add a Hedgehog section to the 'What Can I Do?' biodiversity pages of the SRBC website to include ways residents can help hedgehogs by <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • allowing leaves and dead wood to form a pile in an undisturbed sheltered area and installing a hedgehog nest box. • creating hedgehog holes in impermeable fences • avoiding chemicals and slug pellets • covering open drains and gullies and providing a means of escape from garden ponds • gardening to encourage a range of invertebrates. • only building bonfires on clear ground away from leaf litter and only on the day of lighting – checking the bonfire before it is lit. • providing a feeding station and a source of water. 	Annual / ongoing	Comms Climate Team