

Hedgerow videos project 'A View over the Hedge' 'Hedging Carbon'

Melanie McQuade

Heritage Officer

Westmeath County Council



An Chomhairle Oidhreachta
The Heritage Council



Project background

Why?

- Heritage Forum – concern about inappropriate management of hedgerows

What?

- Awareness Raising video

How?

- Heritage Council funding approval



Progressing the Project

Who?

- Farmer & Hedge laying Association of Ireland
- NPWS Ranger
- Teagasc

When?

- Summer flowers & Autumn berries

Where?

- On farm & hedge laying competition



Hedgerows - Cultural features



- 'Man-made structures' in landscape
- Field boundaries planted in response to Enclosure Acts in L17th /18th C – Hawthorn
- Historic townland boundaries

Hedgerows - Biodiversity

- Food source – flowers/ berries/ nuts
- Habitat
 - Insects
 - Birds
 - Mammals
- Wildlife corridors /networks connecting habitats



Hedgerow habitat

- Native tree species



Hedgerow habitat

- Creepers
- Stone/earthen bank
- Wildflowers
- Dead wood
- Leaf litter



Ecosystem services



Flood alleviation & Shelter



- Roots absorb surface water to help combat flooding
- *'There's not much shelter in an electric fence'*
- Shelter provided by hedge can extend for 15-30 x height of hedge

Legislation and Regulations

- Under Section 40 Wildlife Act illegal to cut or destroy a hedge during Bird Nesting Season 1st March – 30th Aug
- EIA Agri Regs 2011 – EIA required for removal of 500m+ of hedgerows / creating field >5ha
- Planning Permissions – replacement planting
- Exemptions – H&S Roadside



Are hedgerows overlooked in discussions on Climate Action/Adaptation?



'Farm Carbon' research project calculating carbon sequestration capability of hedgerows funded by Teagasc & EPA

Hedgerow Management

- Hedges cut annually
less biomass
- Bigger hedge better for
Biodiversity & carbon
sequestration
- IF appropriately
managed hedgerows
can take CO₂ from the
atmosphere





Hedge laying

- Plashing – making a cut into stem and ‘laying’ it over; stem is still living and will encourage new growth - a win for Biodiversity and a win for carbon calculating
- Coppicing – cutting and removing stem to encourage new shoots

Hedgerows – some stats



300,000km / 680,000 km
hedgerows in Ireland = 5 -10%
of landcover

It takes a hedgerow 20-50
years to reach carbon and
Biodiversity goals

Hedgerow potential to absorb
0.66 – 3.3t CO₂/ha/ year

Hedgerows – Key messages



Value of hedgerows for Biodiversity & Climate Adaptation are linked

Takes years to establish hedgerow
– manage existing hedgerows for future

Nature Based Solutions

- Flood alleviation
- Shelter –
- Carbon sequestration



A view over the hedge:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BtETp9Giu0E>

Hedging Carbon:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EoJwqX_-ek8



Sources & further information

General:

- <https://hedgerowsireland.org/>
- <https://hedgelaying.ie/>
- <https://www.teagasc.ie/environment/biodiversity--countryside/farmland-habitats/hedgerows/hedgerow-week-/>
- <https://www.farmingfornature.ie/resources/best-practice-guides/hedgerow-management/>
- <https://ptes.org/hedgerow/what-have-hedgerows-ever-done-for-us/>
- **How Hedges can help Climate Action:**
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TEiF4d8ULIc>

