



# TECHNICAL NOTE ON HEDGES FOR SITE DEVELOPERS IN CORNWALL

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*Definitions / general / boundary hedges / repair of retained hedges / removal and reinstatement / planting on the hedgebank / finishing*

**A specification for the retention and/or reinstatement of Cornish hedges (stone-faced earth banks), stone hedges and turf hedges on greenfield and other sites which are being developed for industrial, housing or other non-agricultural uses. It provides opportunities for the incorporation of beneficial biodiversity and geological features within the design of development (Planning Policy Statement 9). The environmental characteristics of the existing Cornish hedges may be assessed using the Hedge (& Wall) Importance Test ([www.cornishhedges.com](http://www.cornishhedges.com)).**

## DEFINITIONS

Stone-clad hedges with an earth core are Cornish hedges. A stone-clad hedge with a rubble stone core is termed a stone hedge. A bank with no stone is called a turf hedge (sometimes named a "Devon bank"). A hedgerow without a bank is referred to as a hedgerow or thorn hedge. Some hedges contain several courses of stone in the lower half, then turfed to the top. For repair and reinstatement, the stone component of the hedge is treated as for a Cornish hedge and the turf component as for a turf hedge. The Code of Good Practice for Cornish Hedges is published by the Guild of Cornish Hedges and is available at [www.cornishhedges.com](http://www.cornishhedges.com).

## GENERAL

All hedges existing on site will, irrespective of their state of repair, be retained and put into good order, or, with the prior written consent of the appropriate authority, be removed and rebuilt at a different location within the same site as agreed with that authority. Special regard will be had to roadside boundaries, consulting the local highways authority before any works are undertaken. All hedges will be fenced off from site operations.

## BOUNDARY HEDGES

The ownership of boundary hedges will be established. Hedgerows, devoid of a hedgebank, traditionally have no legal width, but Cornish hedges (ie with a hedgebank) may be wholly owned by one side or the other, and here an easement exists for the hedge owner to go on to his neighbour's land to repair and maintain the hedge. He may or may not have an obligation to repair both sides, depending on the history of ownership, and is likely also to have the right to dig turf from his neighbour's land to repair the hedge. Where the whole of a hedge is owned by the neighbour, he

also owns the land under the whole of the hedge, and he must not be denied his right of access to maintain both sides. Where the ownership boundary is along the centre of the hedge, each side has the obligation to support the other half.

Where the boundary lies along the centre of the hedge, the whole hedge must be retained and the owned side put into good repair. Where the site boundary lies outside the hedge, the hedge will be retained (excepting where permanent access is required) and both sides put into good repair. In cases where temporary access is needed, the relevant section of hedge will be taken down and rebuilt as described below.

## REPAIR OF RETAINED HEDGES

Cornish Hedges. Growth on the side of the hedge will be trimmed to leave not less than 300mm thickness. The side-spread of trees and bushes on the top of the hedge may be cut back to a distance of not less than 2m from the centre line of the hedge. The tree preservation officer of the local planning authority will be consulted as to the possible application of tree preservation orders before felling any trees. The stone structure of the hedge will be examined by a competent hedger (preferably qualified as a craftsman with the Guild of Cornish Hedgers) for stones which have moved from their proper place in the courses. In each instance the hedge will be taken down to the course below each displaced stone, and rebuilt as described below. Rabbit and other holes in the hedge will be filled and repaired in similar manner. Finally soil that has accumulated at the foot of the hedge will be "cast up", ie dug out and placed on the top of the hedge by hand or machine so that the base of the hedge becomes level with the adjoining land; excepting that existing ditches will be reinstated to their proper dimensions as advised by the hedger. The hedge will be left with its base as wide as the hedge is high, and with the width of its top measuring half of the height of the hedge. Ditches will be reinstated to their proper dimensions.

Stone Hedges. Stone hedges will be repaired or restored to their original style using original or matching stone.

Turf Hedges. Growth on the side of the hedge will be trimmed to leave 150-300mm thickness. The side-spread of trees, bushes and other growth on the top of the hedge may be cut back to a distance of not less than 2m from the centre line of the hedge. The tree preservation officer of the local planning authority will be consulted as to the possible application of tree preservation orders before felling any trees. Places in the hedge where the hedge structure has deteriorated with a reduction in height will be rebuilt by digging out the affected part of the hedge and building up to correct contours with turf laid in courses, filled behind with soil, as described below. Soil that has accumulated at the foot of the hedge will be "cast up", ie dug out and placed on the top of the hedge by hand or machine so that the land becomes level to the base of the hedge. The hedge will be left with its base as wide as the hedge is high, and with the width of its top measuring half of the height of the hedge. Ditches will be reinstated to their proper dimensions.

## REMOVAL AND REINSTATEMENT

Firstly all tree growths are severed at about 0.5m above ground level, removed from the immediate vicinity of the hedge and disposed of. Conservation of wildlife requires that the soil from demolished hedges is reused in the reinstated hedges.

Cornish Hedges. Working carefully from each side, all stones, including foundation stones below ground level, are removed, sorted to be free of earth and plant material, and stored in the vicinity of the hedge. Each course of stone will be stored separately in sequence.

Working carefully from each side, all earth and plant material are removed and stored, separate from the stones, in the vicinity of the hedge. Store the inner earth core and all plant

material separately.

Any infilling of depressions must be properly consolidated so as to provide a stable foundation for the rebuilt hedge. The hedge is rebuilt to the Code of Good Practice for Cornish Hedges, coursing the stones in exactly the original pattern and using the original materials in the same courses, special care being taken where it rejoins the existing hedge, so that upon inspection there is no interruption of the original pattern. Additional matching stone will be procured where there is an inadequacy. A layer of rabbit-proof plastic-covered wire netting will be laid on the fill across the hedge top under the top course of stone as recommended in the Code. The wire must not protrude from the hedge face.

## PLANTING ON THE HEDGEBANK.

Where a bushy-topped Cornish or turf hedge is required or being re-built, the hedgerow bushes or trees on top will be replaced with species traditional to the locality. Where broad-leaved trees are to be planted the width of the hedge is increased by 1 metre and the trees planted 5 - 10 metres apart in a single row. Stock will be sourced in Cornwall, well grown and not less than 0.5m in height. Thorns will be planted 400mm apart in a single row along the centre line of the hedge top then pruned to 200mm to improve drought-resistance and protected with rabbit guards. The turf topping of the hedge will be laid upside down to help retain dampness while the plants settle.

## FINISHING

The site is cleared and restored to its original profile, with surplus vegetative and woody material being disposed of. Note that no seeding or planting of the hedge will be done, other than specified above.

The rebuilt section of hedge is fenced with sheep netting and two strands of plain wire, the fence being erected 1m from the hedge, with the posts 2m apart, rejoining the hedge 2m distant from the rebuilt section.

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Caring for Hedges in Cornwall	Mosses, Lichens, Fungi and Ferns in Cornish Hedges
Check-list for Inspecting New or Restored Hedges in Cornwall	Post-Mediæval Hedges in Cornwall (1550 - 1840)
Check-list of Types of Cornish Hedge Flora	Prehistoric Hedges in Cornwall (5,000BC - 450AD)
Code of Good Practice for Cornish Hedges	Repairing Cornish, Stone and Turf Hedges
Code of Good Practice for Stone Hedges	Risk Assessment Guidance - Building and Repairing Cornish Hedges
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