



Department for Environment Food & Rural Affairs

Rebecca Pow MP
Minister for Nature

Seacole Building
2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DF
T: +44 (0) 3459 335577
E: correspondence.section@defra.gov.uk
W: gov.uk/defra

Baroness Sheehan
Chair of the Environment and
Climate Change Committee
House of Lords
London
SW1A 0PW

5 March 2024

Dear Baroness Sheehan,

Thank you for your letter of 14 February on future protections for hedgerows.

We are fully agreed on the importance of hedgerows and, in response to our consultation, there was overwhelming support for action to protect them. This support was from across the board including farmers, environmental NGOs and members of the public.

We have now published the response to the consultation which I hope will provide you with sufficient further detail on our plans and next steps. For clarity, I will outline below what our plans are in relation to future protections for hedgerows in England.

As I announced in the Westminster Hall debate on 24th January, we intend to regulate to protect hedgerows on agricultural land as soon as parliamentary time allows. These regulations will broadly replicate the previous cross compliance hedgerow management rules, this includes the requirement to maintain green cover 'buffer strips' 2 metres from the centre of a hedgerow, which prohibits cultivation or the application of pesticides or fertilisers and the ban on cutting or trimming hedgerows between 1 March and 31 August inclusive.

These two key protections help to maintain the health of the hedgerow and the wildlife within and dependent on the hedgerow.

Farmers will be familiar with these rules from cross compliance and by putting them in regulation will provide reassurance that there is a consistent approach.

We know that farmers take great pride in their hedgerows and understand the wealth of environmental benefits they provide. We therefore trust them to manage hedgerows, while continuing to balance the needs of agricultural production. As such, Defra will take an advice-led approach to enforcing these new regulations when they take effect. There will be a further consultation setting out the enforcement approach as required by legislation.

Thank you again for raising this important issue, and I do hope this letter serves to alleviate the concerns of the Environment and Climate Change Committee.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Rebecca Pow', with a stylized flourish at the end.

REBECCA POW MP