



Municipal District Climate Innovation Funding Hedgerow Restoration Project (2021/2)

(A short guide regarding organising a publicly funded, community led, hedgerow project and the possible challenges that may arise based on the first Kildare MD Climate Innovation pilot project)

Hedgerows constitute about 6% of the incredible low 12% tree cover in Ireland and as such, the right kind of hedges and hedgerows attribute to a most significant high proportion of CO₂ sequestration while at the same time produce life-giving O₂, increase biodiversity making associated flora and fauna more resilient to any climate changes, create vital local micro-climates, balance local hydrological regimes, provide security and shade and shelter, provide food, medicine and sustainable jobs – in all, the right kind of hedgerows supply a minimum of well over 60 other benefits to our environment and our lives.

Every hedgerow is as different as its setting and therefore each hedgerow must be looked at individually to its overall state, health and potential rejuvenation.

The following is a short, general guide on the process involved of hedgerow restoration/laying based on the experience by the first pilot project (Leixlip Celbridge municipal district) for

community groups when applying and receiving public funding to restore, re-plant, or lay a hedgerow under the Municipal District Climate Innovation Fund, or any similar ones.

Not all of the following points may apply as restoration/laying depends on the individual hedgerow in question.

1 Identify a local hedgerow that would be in need in either laying, planting, or restoring – identify as many issues as possible why it would be necessary to rejuvenate this particular hedgerow, i.e., severely neglected, gappy, diseased, partly or wholly destroyed, invasive species, hedgerow trees/bushes surpassed by singular trees (such as elder trees)

2 Seek professional advice from associations, and similar, such as the Hedge Laying Association Ireland, Teagasc, etc., to ascertain if a hedgerow project is doable and feasible

3 Work out an approximate time line for when work is to be carried out – for hedgerows usually between end October to mid-March, and what tasks can be done a) during the summer time and b) then during the autumn/winter period

4 Conduct a biodiversity survey for flora and fauna, especially bats, mammals, bird species and birds' nests (only observe, do not disturb), insect species, tree species, their quantity and the overall health of them, flora species, quantity and rare ones – is the area biodiversity poor, can it be improved, is there an overriding fauna or flora specie, etc.

Any hydrological observation such a flooding may be relevant

Is the existing hedgerow on an embankment – important hydrological and historical reason

Is the existing hedgerow beside a ditch – hydrological and historical reasons

Is there any street or security lighting within, or adjacent to the hedgerow - important for biodiversity (the less light the better for fauna and flora)

Are there rabbits - is a rabbit-proof fencing required

Is there a fence/wall on any side of the hedgerow

Is this hedgerow a part of a wider green corridor

Between the hedgerow and road is there a ditch that one would have to cross (H&S issue)

Is there access to the whole length of the hedgerow considered for a project, or are there obstacles at some stage

Where can vehicles be parked

Is there a security gate to the hedgerow (does one need a key), or this an open and generally accessible hedgerow

5 Evaluate the hedgerow setting in its wider context within the surrounding area, i.e., is it within suburban, rural, industrial, agricultural or roads vicinities

Check the historic OSI maps, and other local maps that maybe in the libraries to establish approximation of age of hedgerow and historic value such a town, parish, county boundary (to keep restoration of hedgerow in keeping with local tradition and historic setting)

Does the hedgerow form part of an existing boundary – if so, where is the boundary (across or lengthways) – would an owner of the other part of the hedgerow have to be consulted; if so, can the owner be enthused to participate

Does the hedgerow under consideration constitute the whole length, or is only a section of said hedgerow that might need to be restored, replanted, laid

Is the hedgerow part of a green corridor – if not, is it possible to establish this hedgerow to become a part of a connecting green corridor or of a wider ecological setting

6 If there is no group or committee already in existence, form one (chair person, secretary, treasurer needed) and establish a constitution

Set up a bank account

Register with Revenue

Recruit members/volunteers

Apply for insurance (project, members, volunteers, guest speakers, tools, etc.)

7 Apply for grant funding – paying particular attention to the specific required details

8 If funding is received between spring and summer, the following could/should be organised before the actual autumnal physical restoration part of the hedgerow project :

- Source hedgerow plants, or ask for donation of hedgerow plants from perhaps local biodiversity groups, garden centres, tree growing organisations, etc., – paying specific attention to locally sourced trees as much as possible – no non-native species

Hedgerows consist mainly of hawthorn. Additional whips, bushes should be in line with local historical and ecological diversity, such as hazel, holly, blackthorn, guelder rose, spindle, dog rose, honeysuckle, etc.

When hedge laying/restoring, and trees are considered to be planted in between the main hawthorn whips, select existing straight tree stems, to be left to grow on for height, and plant approximately 12 metres apart.

Trees **not** recommended for hedgerow are, Beech, Sycamore, Horse Chestnut and Conifers. Ash, due to ash-die-back, are currently not available for planting

- Should there be space available near the hedgerow, tree planting may be an additional option

If site allows plant native trees on the Northern or Eastern side of the hedge. Choose trees with light thin canopy type, to reduce shading over hedge to a minimum. (do not plant trees on the south or western edge as it would shade the hedgerow)

Trees suitable for Northern and Eastern planting: Cherry, Rowan, Birch, Alder and Oak

Space planted trees a minimum of 12 metres apart and a minimum of 2 metres from Hedgerow.

- Source a site where whips (trees) can be 'heeled in' (dug in) if these are received ahead of planting

Organise someone who will look after these whips (watering, weeding around them) until planting will take place

- Request any official logos from authorities and other bodies for posters, etc.
- Time-line of tasks depending on necessary work to be carried out (see below)
- Meeting place for all involved at site – if a building available at or near site, is it free or can it be rented by the hour. If not, can a meeting place be established, such as a marquee and where to place it – thermos flasks for hot water for tea/coffee, milk, spoons, etc.

Watch out for storms with marquees – they can get damaged, or blown away

- Seatings and tables for meeting place if not already available
- Tea/coffee, lunch or similar when big tasks with many volunteers are organised
- First Aid kits
- Tools (shovels, rakes, spades, loppers, gloves, high-viz vests, secateurs, clippers, etc. – either on loan, or share, or buy)
- Contact numbers of volunteers and record keeping as to who attended when – important for insurance purposes, as well as acknowledgments of volunteers, and organisation of tasks on the day
- Keep in contact with person(s)/association that were consulted for advice, to provide update
- Establish who to target for community sharing of project
 - Media – Face Book page set-up if not already in existence

- Contact newspaper organisation regarding project
- Source someone to make a video or filming of tasks, processes, events, interviews, etc.
- If posters for project and related events are an option get perhaps schools or youth groups involved to do these
- Organising any events, such as talks, that contribute to the hedgerow project and its overall multi-faceted benefits

Other tasks that need to be considered depending on the hedgerow project:

- If an existing embankment needs to be taken out or re-worked organise a contractor who owns and operates a JCB – this is difficult to organise in the summer ahead of time when the actual carrying out of any JCB task is set for the autumn/winter time. Most likely will get someone willing to do this at a weekend at short notice in the autumn rather than pre-booked in the summer time

Consider if an embankment or a ditch may have to be re-instated

Maybe in need of a shredder for suitable vegetation (to reduce waste and waste space to cater for, and/or to use shredded vegetation for other community benefits)

- Is there a need for a professional, registered chain-saw operator
- Source and buy rabbit-proof fencing material and organise a storage place
- Find a suitable place where
 - to put any vegetation that would be removed by the JCB/shredder
 - any large-scale rocks, boulders, tree trunks that surface during excavation
 - any rubbish that is accumulating
 - how/when to remove these to authorised landfills/green waste and recycling places
- Prepare time-line for tasks in the autumn depending on volunteers available, such as cutting back branches, collecting litter, shredding vegetation, digging soil, weeding, rabbit-proof fencing, planting, after-care weeding, etc.
- Rabbit-proof fencing: how many stakes and length of mesh are needed, who puts in the stakes (i.e., by volunteers or JCB), trench digging for mesh by volunteers (time needed), fixing mesh onto stakes (time needed according to length of hedgerow)
- Have an appointed organiser at each day when tasks are carried out and nominate a second one if the designated person cannot be on site

- Have an after-care plan for hedgerow ready for when project is finished in line with consultation/discussion according to the professional body giving original advice (weeding, cutting back hawthorn in autumn, etc.)
- There may be interested people/groups for a follow-on project – organise meetings/discussions for future projects of same or similar type
- Plan an event when project is finished in acknowledgement of all the participants' work input and engagements with the project
- Report writing – there may be helpful templates available from the funding body for the intermediate and final project reports

Challenges: these can arise when, for instance, it is impossible to secure a JCB for the heavy tasks, or even to secure one for a specific date – this means that the prepared time table needs to be adjusted

Unpredictable autumn/winter weather and Covid, or other community infectious diseases, can have adverse effects regarding the time table as well, and work schedules again need to be put back

Hedgerow project start delayed due to migratory, seasonal fauna species (e.g., bats) still using the hedgerow as weather is still beneficial for specie's daily activities

Ensure that all volunteers involved wear high-viz vests and, importantly, gloves! - and if needed eye-protection glasses. Always have a First Aid kit at hand, and a record book for any accidents that may occur. If possible, ensure that water & soap for washing hands is available, even if just using a thermos flask or Kelly Kettle for hot water. Do wash gloves after every use.

Project leader may get sick – thus time delay in tasks to be carried out as it may be difficult to appoint someone else to fill in

Boundary issues can arise, if, for instance, an adjoining site, which owns the other half of the boundary, needs to carry out work, or put up a new fence, or similar and, again, the task time-table needs to be adjusted until adjacent site has finished their work, and hedge laying tasks need to be put on hold for a while

Newspapers may not be interested in the project

How to get young people involved is especially challenging

Schools that would like to participate have rules and regulations, especially regarding GDPR, that need to be taken into account

Committee or specific group members (e.g., who does the media platform) may leave (i.e., move away) and need to be replaced

Social media platform difficulties may arise, i.e., such as Face Book

If a marquee was set up, this can be damaged, blown away in a storm despite best efforts to secure it

If project takes more time than envisaged, people may lose interest

Groups, organisation that originally agreed to participate suddenly pull out, or are not contactable any longer

Registered people for events do not show up

Overall, the organisation process of a hedgerow project is quite straight forward and the challenges are mainly due to time-delay caused by outside forces such as weather, community transmissible illnesses, or similar. Only a few of the challenges may not be able to be addressed. In the main, however, the positive experiences of organising this kind of project outweigh any challenges that arise and it is a most worthwhile undertaking for all involved on a community, association or individual level.

(Celbridge Heritage and River Catchment Association, May 2022)