



## Hedgerow Management

by Cormac Kelly

As a farmer, one of the best ways to increase the biodiversity on your farm is by managing your hedgerows well for nature.

Healthy hedgerows are much more than just field boundaries. Agriculturally, they provide huge value as shelter and shade for livestock, prevent soil erosion, reduce potential runoff from spreading slurry/fertiliser and also offer medicinal value for stock who may forage in the foliage at different times of year.



WELL MANAGED, FULLY FLOWERING HEDGEROW.  
Source: Neal Jeuken

From an environmental perspective, well managed hedgerows with a mix of native species offer immense value. For wildlife, they act as a crucial food source throughout the year providing a lifeline for pollinators when flowering in spring and similarly for birds and other small mammals provide berries, a key food source throughout the autumn and winter. Further up the chain, barn owls and bats are known to hunt, almost exclusively, along hedgerows and treelines.

In the days before farming became more mechanised, many species moved with greater ease through a less intensively farmed landscape. In today's world hedgerows now act as crucial corridors for wildlife, especially in more intensively farmed areas. Connecting up remaining habitats such as areas of scrub and woodland through new and rejuvenated hedgerows is now regarded as a key action for addressing biodiversity loss in the wider landscape.

### Management Tips

**Less is more:** For a lot of farms, the first step will be to do nothing for a while! Refraining from cutting for a few years will allow the hedgerow to grow taller and to thicken up.

***“Have a conversation with the contractor before they cut your hedges. Consider whether the hedge should receive an A shape cut or just a side trim and ask to avoid cutting too tightly.”***

**Tailor management to suit the hedgerow:** Taller hedges with trees throughout are better suited to side trimming as shown below. Hedges without trees throughout are best cut in an 'A-shape'.

**Avoid tight cutting and box-shaping:** Cutting a hedge too low prevents it from properly producing flowers and fruits. This dramatically reduces its wildlife value.

**Cutting rotation:** Best practice is to cut only about a third of your hedgerows in any given year. This will allow uncut sections to fully flower and fruit.

***“Save your hard earned cash. Allowing a few more years between cuttings might save you significant expense on diesel or contractor fees.”***

**Delay cutting:** Now is the time of year when the flail mower comes out for many but cutting in-field hedges this early removes the valuable berry crop much needed in autumn and winter by wildlife. Consider delaying until January/February as ground conditions allow.

**Fencing to protect:** If you have gappy hedges where livestock may be damaging the undergrowth of the hedge, erecting a fence along the hedge may be the best option to allow it to naturally rethicken and recover.

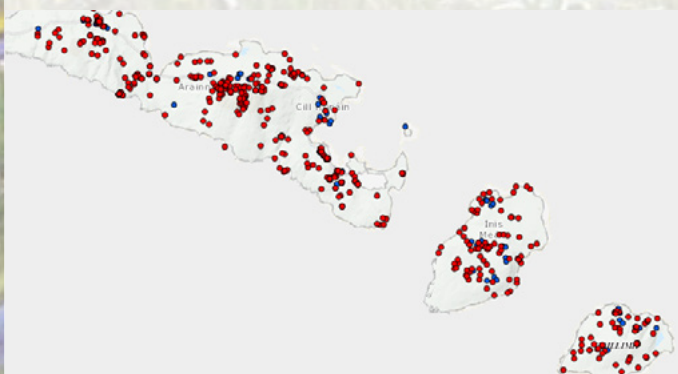
## Is There A Historic Monument On Your Land?

by *Patrick McGurn*

Under ACRES there is provision for payment for historic monuments under the Conservation of Cultural Heritage Sites on Grassland NPI. The aim of this option is to protect cultural heritage sites, including archaeological sites, from damage associated with scrub growth, erosion, and poaching. Eligible sites must be marked on maps on the National Monuments Service website ([heritagedata.maps.arcgis.com](http://heritagedata.maps.arcgis.com)) which is a record of all archaeological monuments recorded by the Archaeological Survey of Ireland.

**Priority will be for monuments requiring active management for their long-term conservation.**

The Aran Islands and Burren region have a particular high density of monuments. The Neolithic or New Stone Age evidence surviving includes numerous small Megalithic Tombs. Examples include Eochail Wedge Tomb, c. 2500 BC, on the Aran Islands and the Glinisheen Wedge tomb in the Burren. By 2,400BC the use of metal had spread to Ireland, together with a range of new monuments. Many monuments from this period are still standing, these include, Standing Stones, Settlement Mounds (Mútaí) and



MAP SHOWING COVERAGE OF HISTORIC MONUMENTS ON THE ARAN ISLANDS. Source: NMS Website

Fulachta Fiadha and field walls, some of which are still being used today. By the Late Bronze Age and Early Iron Age, we see the building of a series of stone forts the best known of which is Dun Aenghus on the Aran Islands and Cahercommaun fort in the Burren.

By the 5th Century Christianity had arrived and its legacy is visual through monastic sites and holy wells dotted across the islands and the Burren. Clocháns are numerous ancient monuments in the islands, drystone sub circular or oblong, corbel-roofed buildings dating from the Early Christian period. They were used by both the secular and religious groups, and some have continued in use into the modern times functioning as both outhouses and farm sheds.



A CLOCHÁN IN A FIELD ON INIS MÓR.

Source: Patrick McGurn

The payment under this NPI is €133.71 per monument with a possibility of payment on 10 monuments if your farm is particularly archaeologically rich (max €1337.10). Work associated include controlling any scrub by hand cutting and temporarily removing grazing livestock during wet periods if poaching is an issue.

Contact the CP team or your farm planner if this is an NPI that is of interest, they can help identify the monuments recorded on your farm.

**News:** During August the team were out and about re-scoring commonages. If you would like to chat about your commonage scores, our staff in our offices will be happy to discuss with you.

September sees the return of Advisor training on NPIs. We will also hold Farmer Information Meetings across the North Clare and South Galway from 7-8.30pm on the dates below. Reminder texts will be sent!

**Gort Mart, Monday 30th September**

**Ballyvaughan Hall, Wednesday 2nd October**

**The Ritz Lisdoonvarna, Tuesday 8th October**

**Tubber Hall, Wednesday 9th October**

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