



## National Nature Service Case Study: Cumbria

### **Introduction**

The [National Nature Service](#) is a jobs programme that will enable unemployed people to find paid work and training in nature conservation at the same time as putting more resource into meaningfully improving the UK's depleted natural landscapes. The idea is based on the most successful work programme enacted by Franklin D. Roosevelt following the Great Depression. There is an opportunity to deploy a hedge planting programme, as part of the National Nature Service, in Cumbria.

The Cumbria Ranger Service would be jobs programme in which unemployed young people are trained as rangers for 12 months as a steppingstone towards a career in sustainable land management, through planting new hedgerows.

### **The opportunity**

Since the second world war, the UK has lost over half its hedgerows, the equivalent to 250,000 miles. Many that still remain are in poor condition. Each year nearly 6000 miles of hedge are uprooted, with only 1200 new hedges planted.

Julia Aglionby, Executive Director of the Foundation for Common Land and Chair of the Uplands Alliance: 'Hedges are great, they provide food for birds and insects, they are refuges for wildflowers and contain multiple species of trees and shrubs. They reduce flooding by slowing run off, store carbon and act as corridors for wildlife across more intensively managed farmland. From a farming perspective they are good too, providing sheltered boundaries which as a farmer I know are invaluable in stormy weather'.

Cumbria is well placed to be at the forefront of efforts to boost hedgerow planting. The Lake District Foundation currently project hosts the 'Real Hedge Fund' [project](#), in partnership with the Cumbria Wildlife Trust and others. The project supports farmers, landowners and communities to reinstate and improve their hedgerows

This current project could be scaled up through a Cumbria Ranger Service, snowballing the length and quality of hedgerows throughout Cumbria. NNS rangers could be employed for 12 months planting new hedges – £500,000 in NNS funding could ten rangers and two supervisors to plant 20 km of new hedgerow.

### **Benefits**

- 12 new jobs created in 2021
- At end of the 12 months, qualified Rangers would have the skills to offer commercial sustainable land management services, leading to lasting employment. These services, including planting new hedges, will be in high demand as the Environmental Land Management system of farm subsidy falls into place over the coming years.
- 20 km of new hedgerows would:

- Reduce the amount of pesticides, fertilisers and eroded topsoil from reaching watercourses on farmland.
- Reduce flooding by slowing water flows and increasing infiltration rates.
- Act as windbreaks; protecting crops, and providing shade and shelter for animals.
- Boost crop production through sustaining key pollinators and natural predators of crop pests.
- Increase farm's resilience to extreme weather.
- Provide wood-fuel and food.

### Relevant case studies

- The 'Hands on Hedges' project
  - £47, 400 grant from Heritage Lottery Fund to the Hedge Laying Association of Ireland
  - Managed and organised by the Hedge Laying Association
  - Workshops and training courses accompanied by some candidates undertaking a training programme that gives them an accredited qualification in hedge laying.
- Hidden Hedgerows project
  - Managed by The Rusland Horizons Trust (a community-led Heritage Lottery Landscape Partnership Schemes) and Cumbria Wildlife Trust
  - Trained up a combination of volunteers and apprentices
  - The scheme area is now one of the best mapped areas for hedgerow in the country
- Long Forest Hedgerow Project
  - Funded by the Long Forest Hedgerow project – partner project of Keep Wales Tidy and The Woodland Trust (supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund)
  - Worked with landowners and community groups