# Concerns raised over alleged hedgerow destruction in St Agnes



Residents of Wheal Friendly Lane in St Agnes, Cornwall, have raised concerns over allegations of "environmental vandalism" involving the destruction of an ancient hedgerow, which occurred on 1 April. This incident has sparked significant controversy, particularly given the site's location within a UNESCO World Heritage Mining Landscape and in proximity to both an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).

Local residents reported that a team, purportedly from Kingsley Developments (SW) Ltd, along with heavy machinery including a JCB digger, entered the area and removed a hedgerow estimated at eight metres wide, three metres thick, and two metres high. According to a spokesperson for the community, the foreman on site justified the actions by stating that the structure in question was not a legally protected Cornish stone wall, thereby arguing that its removal did not require planning consent. Under the Hedgerows Regulations 1997, significant hedgerows are afforded protection due to their historical, cultural, and ecological significance.

Residents also expressed their alarm over timing, noting that the removal took place during bird nesting season, which lasts from 1 March to the end of September. They asserted that many local bird species depend on such hedgerows as vital habitats during breeding periods. They lamented the absence of required checks from Cornwall Council, Natural England, and the Cornwall Wildlife Trust prior to the removal.

In their statement, residents emphasised the area's ecological value, citing its use as a habitat for various wildlife, including foxes, badgers, and birds of prey. They also critiqued the planning process, stating that Cornwall Council had declined to share pre-application documents linked to the prospective development, citing "corporate sensitivity" on behalf of the developer.

Abe Simpson, managing director of Kingsley Developments, responded to the accusations, stating, "We did not destroy an 'ancient hedgerow', rather we removed some brambles which were blocking an historic access to our land." He asserted that lawful removal of brambles does not require planning permission and mentioned that these had been inspected to ensure no wildlife was residing there at the time.

Simpson refuted claims that the destruction of the hedgerow contravened local planning guidelines, arguing that the site is not within an AONB, a conservation area, or an SSSI. He further contended that the residents' objections stemmed from a misunderstanding, stating, "It may have escaped the residents, but this document [the Neighbourhood Development Plan] is out of date, and the development boundaries, accordingly, no longer apply."

The ongoing dispute drew the attention of Cornwall Council, which confirmed that it had received a complaint regarding the incident and that its Planning Enforcement Team would initiate an investigation to determine whether there had been a breach of planning control. The council's spokesperson indicated that appropriate action would be considered based on the findings.

As the situation unfolds, the community's concerns remain palpable, reflecting deep-rooted anxieties regarding development and its impact on their cherished landscape. Meanwhile, the developer maintains robust justification for their actions and intentions, proposing a development aimed at addressing the housing needs in the St Agnes area, which they assert is confirmed by the local planning authority.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://treecouncil.org.uk/its-not-just-about-netting-hedges-mismanagement-is-making-our-hedgerows-slowly-disappear-completely/> - This article highlights the broader context of hedgerow removal and mismanagement in the UK, mirroring concerns about the destruction of hedgerows in significant ecological and cultural areas. It emphasizes the critical role of proper management and protection under the Wildlife and Countryside Act.
* <https://www.naturalengland.org.uk/> - Natural England’s website would generally provide information on protected sites and their regulations, aligning with concerns about the removal of hedgerows near Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).
* <https://www.cornwall.gov.uk/environment-and-planning/planning-enforcement/> - Cornwall Council's Planning Enforcement page explains the council's role in investigating breaches of planning control, which is relevant to the ongoing investigation into the removal of the hedgerow in question.
* <https://www.unesco.org/new/en/uk/where-we-work/europe-and-north-america/united-kingdom/world-heritage/> - This UNESCO page explains the significance of World Heritage sites in the UK, which includes areas like the Mining Landscape in Cornwall. It supports the local community's concerns about environmental vandalism near such sites.
* <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/hedgerows-regulations-1997> - The Hedgerows Regulations 1997 offer legal protection to significant hedgerows based on their historical, cultural, and ecological importance. This is crucial to understanding the legal context surrounding the disputed removal in Cornwall.