



greenminds

Rewilding Network Social – how to re-wild community spaces

How can we all improve places for wildlife and people?



What's happened since the spring social?



You may remember there were 4 key themes that emerged from our spring social - this is what we've been busy supporting since then...

1) Communications & Awareness Raising:

We've continued creating a variety of nature themed posts on social media, including terrestrial and marine themes. We've also been sharing posts, including photos and videos of what's been spotted around Plymouth and highlighting the unsung heroes of the natural world. Remember to spread the word and share your sightings with us by using #GreenMindsPlymouth.

2) Rewilding Greenspaces:

This is the focus of our summer social – this document is a summary of our discussions and useful advice. We're now planning 'how to rewild' events and recourses based on your thoughts. The Data Place and University of Plymouth are continuing to work with a focus group to develop their Plymouth Rewilding Network Map, to help individuals and groups across the city support each other on their rewilding projects.

3) Take Action for Wildlife:

Devon Wildlife Trust's 'Take Action for Wildlife' programme of events are happening in greenspaces across Plymouth. [Click here](#) to see upcoming events with more practical conservation and ecological expertise coming soon.

4) Wildlife Monitoring & Citizen Science

Since Devon Wildlife Trust's [citizen science webinar](#) in April, the Green Minds Knowledge Hub has been updated with wildlife identification guides and survey resources - [click here](#) to see it, with a community toolkit coming soon.

Rewilding Community Spaces – some things to consider...



- Who owns the land?
- Who are you representing?
- Talking to your neighbours/other local groups and organisations – who else could be involved?
- Identify any challenges/conflicts of interest at an early stage
- How do you decide and design changes to the space?
- What practical conservation and other action is needed?
- Would you like to run community events and activities? And what support do you need to do this eg risk assessments, activities, public liability insurance
- How do you know you've made a difference?
- Longer term care and maintenance of the space
- What funds and other resources might you need? eg wildlife expertise



Who owns the land?

If you would like to do a rewilding project, landowner permission will be needed. In Plymouth, many public greenspaces may be owned by Plymouth City Council or housing associations like Plymouth Community Homes.

If you don't know who owns the patch of land, you can find this information by checking the Land Registry:

<https://www.gov.uk/get-information-about-property-and-land/search-the-register>

Once you know who owns the land, get in touch with them about your idea and see whether it would be possible to do a rewilding project in that space (and how the landowner would like to be involved).

Remember if your project is planned on public land, you'll need to work with the landowner to make sure everyone is aware of who is responsible for managing the site and they can keep a record of what is happening on their land.

Who are you representing?

If you are planning a rewilding project in a public place, it's important that you are representing the local community and have a good understanding of what people may want to see. If you're an individual who has an idea, see if there are any existing community groups who can help take your idea forward. If there's not an existing group, you can setup your own. You can find guidance on how to do this on many local authority websites, for example:

<https://www.plymouth.gov.uk/parksnatureandgreenspaces/volunteernatureandparks/friendsparks>



Talking to your neighbours/other local groups and organisations – who else could be involved?

It's important to consult the community, particularly those living within sight of your potential rewilding project location. Local residents need to know what may happen in their area and share their thoughts. There are several ways you can consult and it's a good idea to use several methods to include everyone - find some ideas here: <https://neighbourhoodplanning.org/toolkits-and-guidance/engaging-with-your-community-in-a-meaningful-way/>

- Have you spoken to people who aren't able to access information online?
- Have you spoken to a variety of ages and ethnicities? Have you listened to everyone's views and not just the loudest voices?
- Remember, not all people may be keen on a rewilding project or understand the term 'rewilding'. Think about how you explain your idea (eg. 'how can we make this space better for wildlife' instead of 'we want to rewild this space') and whether compromises can be made so the space can be enjoyed by everyone.

It's a good idea to create a simple survey for people to complete and share their thoughts – not only will you get a better idea of what people want, but you'll be gathering evidence toward showing whether the local community does / doesn't want the rewilding project to take place and who may want to be involved with the long term care of the site. Questions could include:

- How is the area currently used by people?
- Would you like to see more wildflowers or trees in this area? [Yes / No] Explain why you answered yes / no.
- Would you like to get involved in this project and help manage this space for wildlife?

This can be done in-person or you could create an online form for people to do in their own time (eg. if you have a google account you could create a google form survey).



Example of community consultation: Delamere Road, Eggbuckland

In 2019, Community Life and Wildlife ([CLAW](#)) received [MHCLG Pocket Parks](#) funding to transform a patch of amenity grassland into an area for wildlife and people. This involved working with the local school and doing a survey with local residents (for example, by going door to door) and explaining the ideas for the project, before asking the following questions:

Eggbuckland Greenspace for Wildlife

We'd like to improve this greenspace for wildlife and the local community.

1. Would you like to see wildflowers planting on this greenspace?
Yes / No
2. Would you like to see a small number of fruit trees and bushes planted on this greenspace? Yes / No
3. If – yes, are there any particular varieties you'd like to be planted?
Yes [which varieties?] / No
4. Would you like seating on this greenspace? Yes / No
5. Would you like to get involved in planting and helping care for this greenspace? Yes / No



Identify any challenges/conflicts of interest at an early stage

To increase the chance of your rewilding project going ahead and being successful, the community needs to be supportive of the idea. This will help ensure the rewilded space is cared for in the long term by local residents (and the management of the site isn't abandoned) and reduce the likelihood of problems like anti-social behaviour or conflicts in opinions.

Think about the practicalities of doing a rewilding project – are there any environmental factors that may affect your idea (eg. underground cables, soil type, topography), social factors (eg. is the area used for recreation, are there existing issues with vandalism) or other potential challenges (eg. funding the project, long term care of the site)?

When you're consulting with the local community, you may find that not everyone is keen on the idea of a rewilding project. Is it possible to compromise? For example, if the area is well used by dog walkers / children, is it possible to have some areas cut so there's space for recreation as well as wildlife?

You may find a small scale project (eg. a little corner of wildflowers / longer grass) is better to start with and you can build on this over time, rather than making one major change quickly that could be a shock for some of the community!

By doing a survey as part of community consultation, you will have a record of the number of people who do / don't want the project to happen, evidencing the community needs – this can help justify decisions made regarding your rewilding project.

If you continue to have problems with conflict, maybe even within your community group, it may be worth looking into conflict resolution training or ask other organisations for advice, for example

<https://www.plymouthoctopus.org/> or

<https://beta.ncvo.org.uk/help-and-guidance/involving-volunteers/>



How do you decide and design changes to the space?

What have people said about what they would like to see in the space? Does your design take into account environmental factors that may affect what you can plant or how it's managed? As a community group (or by working with experts), you can come up with a design idea – once you have this, you can see if the community is happy or if any changes need to be made before the rewilding project starts. If you're not sure what to do, ask around Plymouth Rewilding Network as there'll be people with experience in designing landscapes: <https://greenmindsplymouth.com/rewilding-network>

We've also found getting local schoolchildren or young people (eg. scouts, after school clubs, youth centres) involved in the design process is a great way to inspire them to care for the space and spread the word about rewilding!

What practical conservation and other action is needed?

Regardless of whether you're leaving a patch of land to grow wild, watering trees, sowing wildflowers or planting plugs, it's likely your rewilding project will need some sort of management (in both the short and long term). Keep an eye on our 'Take Action for Wildlife' events and our knowledge hub page, which will help give you ecological expertise and practical conservation skills: <https://greenmindsplymouth.com/events> & <https://greenmindsplymouth.com/knowledge-hub>

There are also resources online, including practical guides from other rewilding projects that have happened around Devon: <https://www.devon.gov.uk/environment/wildlife/managing-verges-for-wildlife>

<https://moormeadows.org.uk/information/>



Would you like to run community events and activities?

Whether you're running community events as part of your consultation process or running conservation days to help manage your rewilding project, there are some important documents to have in place to cover your community group. These include risk assessments and public liability insurance, and you may also wish to consider first aid and safeguarding. You can find out how to do this here: <https://www.plymouth.gov.uk/parksnatureandgreenspaces/volunteernatureandparks/friendsparks>

How do you know you've made a difference?

To help spread the rewilding message even further, it's a good idea to monitor the changes you're making through your rewilding project and its impact on wildlife and people. For example, you could do a plant and insect survey before your project starts, then repeat it each year and see whether more species are being found. It's also a good idea to talk to people about how the rewilding project has affected their health and wellbeing.

Longer term care and maintenance of the space

Before you start your rewilding project, you need to know the area will be looked after in the future and the community is able to take responsibility for managing the area appropriately. If it's taking place on public land, make sure the landowner knows your plans so they don't manage it in a different way. For example, keeping paths clear, cutting wildflowers back or watering trees. You can ask people if they're interested in getting involved at the consultation stage, your community group could take on the space or you could work with local school or youth groups to encourage the next generation to continue the fantastic work you're already doing!



What funds and other resources might you need?

Wildlife expertise:

Keep an eye on our 'Take Action for Wildlife' events and our knowledge hub page, which will help give you ecological expertise and practical conservation skills: <https://greenmindsplymouth.com/events> & <https://greenmindsplymouth.com/knowledge-hub>

You can meet other ecology experts through Plymouth Rewilding Network and Devon Rewilding Network. You can also find useful guidance online, for example: <https://www.wildlifewatch.org.uk/activities> or <https://www.buglife.org.uk/>

Local conservation organisations – volunteer with Plymouth Environmental Action to gain practical conservation skills: <http://www.pea-volunteering.co.uk/>

Funds:

If you would like to see trees, wildflowers or need equipment / materials for events, it's likely you'll need to raise funds to make your rewilding project happen. There are several ways you could fundraise, for example:

- Meet with Plymouth Octopus Project, who can suggest any funding opportunities you could potentially apply for: <https://www.plymouthoctopus.org/>
- Get in touch with your local councillor and ask if they would be interested in contributing with their local community grant.
- Hold community fundraising events or online campaigns.
- Get freebies! For example, The Woodland Trust give away tree whips to schools and community groups every year: <https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/plant-trees/schools-and-communities/>



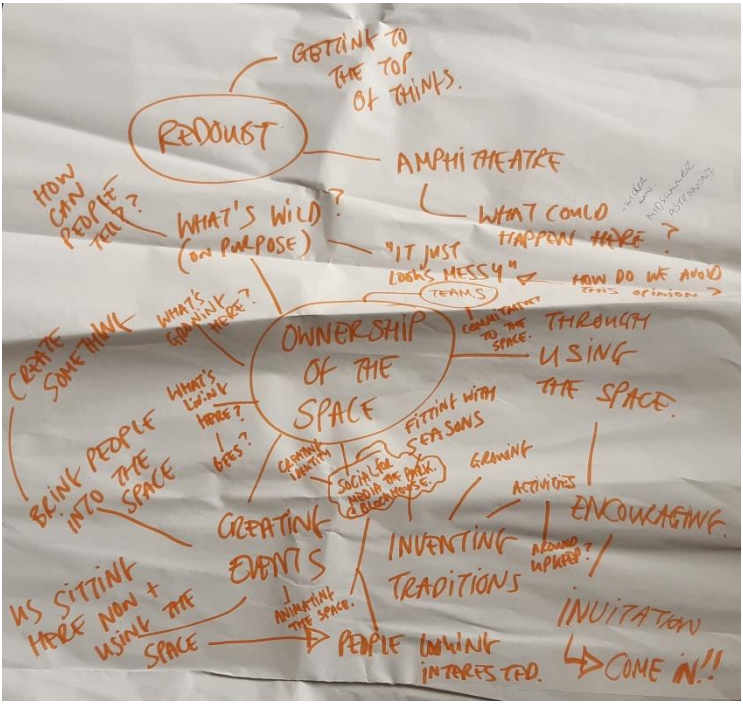
Rewilding Community Space – over to you!

What's worked well?

Any key topics missing from the list?

What would be the most useful online sessions to cover in more depth?

What could you help with?



Conversations included...

- How to show something is wild on purpose.
- Holding events or having something to attract people into new spaces.
- How to create and encourage community ownership of the space, especially children and young adults.
- Workshops to raise awareness and gain ecological and practical skills.
- Collaboration between academics and the community.
- Including the history of sites in plans as well as ecology.
- How to bring people with you on the rewilding journey.

Rewild Spaces

- rewilding vs restoration
- workshops for awareness
- categorisation & more measurable sites/outcomes
- collaboration between academics, students, community
- projects for schools
 - work from Ys 7-10 & could focus on each section & repeat
 - autonomy & responsibility for their own land

Desiree Warren, 2017

wild nature	wildness
wild experience	wild place

Workshops to attend

- learn skills
- Experience gained in another area in outdoor space.

Resources

- people
- funding
- materials
- expertise

- Planning with local schools eg St Kevin Park of planting trees and several years later pruning.
- Get children and young people involved in the community
- Space to be in nature ownership a little spot for looked after children and their families. A space to chat.

Quick wins

Communication

bringing people/kids with you

information

historic use of sites

stories

Colour

events

celebration

seasons

traditions



Other useful resources:

Rewilding Britain:

Advice on how to do a rewilding project: <https://www.rewildingbritain.org.uk/start-rewilding/12-steps-to-rewilding>

Advice on how to rewild at home:

<https://www.rewildingbritain.org.uk/explore-rewilding/rewilding-the-land/15-ways-to-a-wilder-garden>

Devon Rewilding Network:

Join the Devon Rewilding Network, ask for advice and get in touch with rewilding experts & ecologists:

<https://devon-rewilding-network.mn.co/feed>

The Conservation Volunteers (TCV):

Sign up as a member to receive practical hints and tips, conservation and community resources. If your group is a TCV member, you can also get discount on public liability insurance: <https://www.tcv.org.uk/>

NCVO:

Find useful resources for running community groups, including how to manage volunteers, finances and admin:

<https://www.ncvo.org.uk/> & <https://knowhow.ncvo.org.uk/>

Plymouth Rewilding Network Map:

<https://greenmindsplymouth.com/rewilding-network>



Other useful resources:

Plantlife – meadow / verge management: <https://plantlife.love-wildflowers.org.uk/roadvergecampaign/management-guidelines/>

& <https://plantlife.love-wildflowers.org.uk/roadvergecampaign>

& [https://plantlife.love-wildflowers.org.uk/wildflower_garden/how to grow a wildflower meadow/](https://plantlife.love-wildflowers.org.uk/wildflower_garden/how_to_grow_a_wildflower_meadow/)

Devon County Council – Life on the Verge advice and useful resources:

<https://www.devon.gov.uk/environment/wildlife/managing-verges-for-wildlife>

Centre for Ecology and Hydrology – Habitat creation and management for pollinators:

<https://www.ceh.ac.uk/sites/default/files/Habitat%20Management%20and%20Creation%20For%20Pollinators.pdf>

Newcastle City Council – Creating and managing urban meadows:

https://www.newcastle.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2019-01/wildlife_creating_managing_urban_meadows_0.pdf

Example of community consultation using a google form:

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSd6UUuAtKpuzAmQRcl0pwzH4FgYdENQ8IzWlvp0CR3SGIo2NA/viewform>

Green Minds Knowledge Hub – Wildlife monitoring and citizen science resources:

<https://greenmindsplymouth.com/knowledge-hub/monitoring-and-citizen-science-resources>

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Time for networking and arranging inspiring site visits!

While networking, feel free to arrange site visits with others across the city to help support rewilding action. Some groups have already been in touch and are happy to host site visits:

- Friends of Ham Woods, PL2 2HE
- Community Life and Wildlife (CLAW), Eggbuckland, PL6 5XG
- Nash & Co Solicitors, Beaumont Park, PL4 9BD
- St Edward's Church, Eggbuckland, PL6
- Radford Woods, Park and Arboretum, PL9 9GA
- Trefusis Community Group, Trefusis Park, PL3 6BB
- The Village Hub, Blockhouse Park, PL2

Find more groups and contact details at <https://greenmindsplymouth.com/rewilding-network>

Thank you to Karen from The Village Hub for hosting us this evening at Blockhouse Park and sharing your experience of running a rewilding project. To find out more, visit <https://thevillagehub.org.uk/> & <https://realideas.org/about-us/our-work/green-minds/>

Next steps – we hope you will find this extended presentation (with links to resources) useful in moving your project forward. We will continue planning more events and resources based on your ideas this evening, hold more networking events and keep you updated on how you can get involved with the Plymouth Rewilding Network Map.



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