

Cheshire  
Wildlife Trust



# Wasted Spaces



[cheshirewildlifetrust.org.uk](http://cheshirewildlifetrust.org.uk)

# What is a wasted space?

## What are we looking for?

We are looking for people to find wasted spaces in their local area and work together to make these places better. We'd love to help you connect with others to bring wildlife back to the local area

## In this guide...

<b>Form a community group .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Work with your council.....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Contact your councillor .....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Explore your space.....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Transforming your space.....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Useful resources .....</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Where to go from here.....</b>	<b>14</b>

A wasted space is an unused space that has the potential to be improved to benefit both wildlife and the local community. It could be a bland patch of grass, an alleyway, or just any disused piece of land.

# Form a community group



## How do I form a community group?

Starting a group is a fantastic way to bring people together. You'll be more likely to get support for your project if you can show that lots of people are interested.

Speak to friends and neighbours and see if they would like to get involved.

Post a flyer through your neighbours' door asking if they'd like to join.

Use social media or websites such as [Nextdoor.co.uk](http://Nextdoor.co.uk) to gain interest within your local community.

## Some useful resources:

Resource Centre is a great website where you can find all sorts of information and answers to frequently asked questions about community groups: [resourcecentre.org.uk](http://resourcecentre.org.uk)

The Social Change Agency are experts in community organising. They offer consulting, programme design and delivery, training, workshops and more: [thesocialchangeagency.org](http://thesocialchangeagency.org)



## Choose a name for the group

This should be a fun task! Choose a name that makes it clear where you are and what you do.

## Make plans and gather ideas

Start small with small more manageable ideas and expand on your successes later.

## Choose some organisers

This will probably happen naturally, but you might want to choose some leaders to run key aspects of the group. A chair and secretary would be a good start. You might also need a treasurer if you start dealing with money.

## Get promoting your group

Help your neighbours and community find out about what you're doing. Use your local networks and knowledge of the area to tell people about what you're doing. You could even set up a Facebook page and post updates on your progress.

## Keeping your group going

Momentum and passion are key, but this needs to carry on.

Start with easy ideas first so your members can see quick changes. This helps people stay motivated. Smaller ideas also require less time from people.

Get to know your members and make everyone feel welcome. See what they think and listen to their ideas so they feel included.

Be positive! If you're energetic and passionate, your members will follow.



## How to fund a project

You can find plants, tools and equipment for free on the website [freecycle.org](https://www.freecycle.org). But if you are wanting to get the most out of the space it might be a good idea to try and find some funding for your project. Here are some ways you can do this:

- Contact your council for information about local community-based funding.

- Look to your local supermarket such as Tesco or the Coop who offer small grants to local community groups:

[Tesco Community Grants](#)

[Co-op \(coop.co.uk\)](https://www.coop.co.uk)

- Get information and advice on writing funding bids here:

[Advice for applying for funding - Writing a funding application | Resource Centre](#)

- You can apply for free trees from the woodland trust - [Free Trees for Schools and Communities - Woodland Trust](#)



# Work with your council



You should find out who the landowner is so you can ask permission to transform the space. The best thing to do is get in touch with your council and see if they own it.

## What if my space isn't owned by the council?

If you have contacted the council and they don't own the space, they might be able to help you contact the person that does. If they can't help, you might have to do some detective work! Knock on doors and ask if anyone knows the owner. Local knowledge can be surprisingly helpful.

Once you have found the landowner, ask the business or individual for their permission to adopt the space.

## What if we don't get permissions to transform our Wasted Space!

Unfortunately, there may be reasons why you can't adopt a space. However, it is always worth asking the council if they can help you identify other suitable spaces nearby.

## What else can councils help with?

Councils often have funding available to community groups, you can always ask what funding or resources are available and how you can apply.



# Contact your councillor

Councillors are your local representatives and often have networks of contacts that can help you. Their influence may come in handy for your project so involving them from the start is a good idea.

We have created a template below to help you get in touch. Remember, passion and enthusiasm is key in getting their attention.

Some councillors might not reply but don't be disheartened and try another councillor.

**IMPORTANT** Make sure to add your personal touch to the letter, by describing the site, your ambitions for the space or why you think your community needs it.

Dear **[Councillor name(s)]**,

I am a local resident/We are [community group] and I am/ we are taking part in Cheshire Wildlife Trust's Wasted Space project. We've found an unloved space in our neighborhood that we'd like to transform but we need your help to find out who owns it.

The space is ...  
**[describe where it is and include a map if you can]** .

At the moment, it ...  
**[describe what it is like now]**.

This space could be made better for people and wildlife by  
**[explain what you'd like to do with the space]**.

Please could you help me/us find out who owns it so I/we can get in touch with them?

Kind regards,

**[Name(s)]**  
**[Contact details]**  
**[Postcode]**



## TOP TIPS:

### Meet your councillor

One way to encourage your councillor to support you is to have a face-to-face meeting where you can show them the site, describe your next steps and your overall vision.

### During the meeting

- Show them the space and describe why you think it is currently not working for people or wildlife.
- Describe what you'd like to do to make it better.

■ Explain how you'll look after the space once it's been transformed.

■ Take a photo! Councillors love to show they are involved with community groups. Post it on social media and tag them and Cheshire Wildlife Trust.

### After the meeting

Email your councillor thanking them for their time and, if the councillor committed to doing something, confirm this with them. You might also want to check in with them and give them an update every so often.



# Explore your space



It's very important that you explore your waste of space before drawing up plans for transformation. Survey the area to see what habitats and wildlife may already be there. By taking a closer look, you just might find some rare and important species living in the area that you'd like to protect. Many councils have in-house ecologists. These ecologists may be able to help provide advice about the best way to transform your space. They may be interested in your project and want to become involved.



# Transforming your space

## What is already there?

Scruffy looking patches of land are often great for wildlife like newts, frogs and even hedgehogs. If you've found a rare species, ask your council's ecology team what you can do to protect it – sometimes it might be nothing at all!

## What will your community enjoy?

Good green spaces benefit both wildlife and the community. It could be that a simple mini wildflower meadow

would make people smile as they walk by, or you might want to install a bench or a picnic table to encourage people to use the space in new ways.

## What wildlife would you like to attract?

You will attract wildlife to your space by planting native trees, bushes, and flowers, but you can go one step further; from hedgehog homes to bee houses to bird feeding stations you can make sure all wildlife is welcome.



## How to transform the space?

If the space is paved, the easiest option would be to make use of lots of pots and planters.

If there are walls, you could make use of mounted planters, trellises and hanging baskets.

Sunny spaces will let you grow different plants to a shady space.

Wet and boggy areas will require different types of plants to a space that's relatively dry.

If you want to get really technical, do a soil test and see what plants will grow best there.

Check out our useful resources page for inspiration on how to transform your space!

# Useful resources

## Wild gardening guides

[Actions | Cheshire Wildlife Trust](#)

## Plants for wildlife

[Attract Birds & More](#)

## Wildflower toolkit

[Go wild for wildflowers](#)

## Designing your wildflower garden

[Getting creative with your space](#)

## Wildlife gardening's big questions answered

[Wildlife gardening webinar](#)

## Tree planting

[How to plant a tree](#)



# Where to go from here...

It'll take time for wildlife to settle in. Over the next few years, you'll hopefully start to see some big changes. Any trees that you've planted will grow, changing the feel of the space. Meadows will provide dashes of colour in the summer months. Take the time to enjoy the growing process and notice how the wildlife changes throughout the seasons.



Keep us updated on how your space is doing by sending your photos and stories to **wilderengagement@cheshirewt.org.uk** and using **#CWTwastedspace** on social media.

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