



**Cheshire**  
Wildlife Trust

Now you've  
identified a  
wasted space,  
what next?

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

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# Taking over wasted space in your area!

- Have you got your eye on a patch of land in your area?
- Do you think it would be a great space to grow some vegetables or herbs for the local community?
- Do you want to turn it into a wildflower haven for bees and insects?
- Do you think it needs a bench and a bit of TLC?

You can get control and turn your wasted space into a haven for wildlife and people. Read on...

# Who owns it?

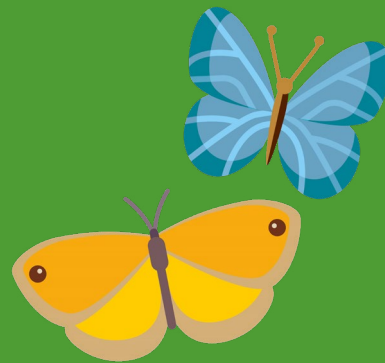
1.

Ask your Local Authority (council). Find out who your Local Authority is by clicking [this link](#) and entering your postcode. Then go to their website and send an email to their enquiries email or planning email or ring them. They might have their own deeds records or County Record Office.



2.

If the Local Authority doesn't know, then simply ask the local shops, businesses, and houses.



3.

Around 85% of the land in the UK is registered with the [Land Registry](#). It will cost £3 to do an online search. As your patch of land won't have an address, you'll need to do a map search. You can use the online map, and if you want to double-check, you can ask for an "index map search."

4.

You could also check the Land Registry records for the properties and land next to the land you're interested in, as sometimes they might say "plus the adjoining land" or similar. But note! Even if some land is not registered, it still doesn't mean that no-one owns it – so don't assume you can just take it over. Do as much research as you can.

## Index map search

This costs £4 and you need to submit form "SIM" with as much information as possible, and an Ordnance Survey map reference. Find out more here on [Gov.uk](#).

A photograph of a garden scene. In the foreground, a shovel with a black handle and a silver blade stands upright on a wooden crate. To the right, a cardboard box contains several small black pots with green tomato seedlings. In the background, a green wheelbarrow is partially visible, containing more plants, including some with pink flowers. The background is a dense green hedge.

# Do you want to buy it?...



This is unlikely but not impossible, you might get asked by the council about “Assets of Community Value.”

Every Local Authority in England keeps a list of these Assets. They are buildings or land that are “mainly in actual use for the social, well-being or social interests of the local community”. So, this can include parks and green space. If an Asset goes up for sale, then local people are allowed to come together and bid for control over it, by forming a Community Interest Group or other specified typed of group.

# Do you just want to use it?

You will need the landowner's permission. In some cases, there will also be a leaseholder who rents the land from the landowner: for example, a car parking company which rents land from the council. It took a local group two and a half years to negotiate for the use of a small strip of land alongside the carpark (an extreme example!). You'll need to talk to both the landowner and the leaseholder.

You might be asked for a risk assessment. There are examples and guidance on the [HAS website](#). They will probably want to see a plan for what you want to do, so be ready. And they could want to do a "utilities survey" first. You definitely don't want to dig through an electricity cable!

Do make sure there is a contract which states who is responsible for what, and for how long. It does not have to be complicated, but it does have to be clear. They may put restrictions in place, such as a ban on using power tools, or certain rules about how the land can be used.

Check with the planning department of your Local Authority about planning permission. Simply growing food will be "agricultural" but if there's a building on the land and you're going to be doing other activities, it may need a change of use.

You will need to consider insurance such as public liability insurance. Talk to your Local Authority.



# What's your plan?

There is more help and information in the forming a group section of the [Transforming Wasted Space guide](#). You do need some kind of plan so that you know who is responsible for doing what.

You also need to know how this project will be sustained. You can't just plant something and expect it to look after itself. What happens in winter? What happens next year? Will you need a budget? You might need funds for the insurance, or tools, or publicity. Think about fundraising – we have documents and advice about that.

Finally, you'll need a crisis plan or list of things to do in an emergency. What if something happens to the land that you're responsible for? A fire, perhaps? Or someone critical to the project becomes ill or moves away. Come up with all the possibilities, and what you can do to stop them happening, or what you'd do if they did happen.



## Need to know more? Follow these links







- The government is trying to make it easier for you to grow food in your community.
- The Royal Horticultural Society has useful information about community gardening.
- Social Farms and Gardens has information for city farms and community gardens. They are also funded to support projects in Wales, but they have advice for all four nations.
- The Open Spaces Society has very clear information about Assets of Community Value and find out how to bid on Assets through My Community.
- This document from My Community tells you more about Community Assets, bidding for ownership, and other ways to reclaim land.
- The government has advice on reclaiming land.

Have you been inspired to do something for nature? Inspire others by sharing your story on social media and add it to our interactive map of local people like you taking action to bring wildlife back.

For more free guides, videos and activity packs, please visit our website.

*Guidance for England only. Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland have different advice.*



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