

Kingston WildWays

- wilding and connecting our green spaces for wildlife and people...



Open letter 2 to Kingston Councillors, new and old, Council Officers, Kingston's green networks, green spaces stakeholders, and everyone else who cares about nature in our borough

Summary of contents:

Pages 2 – 3, Updates on Phase 1, including:

- (Re-)introducing Transition Town Kingston's biodiversity corridor project, our new name, **Kingston WildWays**, and our intention to support, encourage and complement wilding initiatives across our borough by highlighting good practice and inviting collaboration and participation in improving connectivity for wildlife
- What we learned during our Phase 1 explorations
- Improved website resources on greening and wilding
- On better ways of promoting and communicating the importance of biodiversity and connectivity
- Recognising progress so far

Pages 3 – 4, Introducing **Kingston WildWays**, Phase 2:

- Turning ideas into action
- Moving forward with pilot projects, publicity and information to encourage participation
- Defending and normalising (re-)wilding and wildlife corridors
- For the future... fund-raising, collaborating and expanding

Page 5, Appendix 1: further reading and resources, for those interested in nature to read, watch or visit

Page 6, Appendix 2: map of Kingston's green spaces

Pages 7 - 8, Appendix 3: photos of some attractive examples of wilding, feasible in private gardens, public open spaces and roadside verges, including some good examples of framing and mown pathways...

Updates on Phase 1:

In the months since launching [Greening Kingston – an Open Letter](#) in July 2025, we have been exploring and consulting, including on what to call our project. After discussion with several local community groups, we finally settled on “**Kingston WildWays**” as concise, self-explanatory and complementary to signage already used in our borough.

Our original aim of encouraging more and better biodiversity connectivity between local green spaces remains unchanged, and our exploration of what is already happening in our borough and beyond has been reassuring. We met with many helpful and encouraging responses and were pleased to find that we are not alone in wanting to see better connected and wilder local green spaces, including private gardens; there is growing general awareness of the benefits of naturalising and wilding our environment, helped no doubt by David Attenborough’s recent TV programmes on wildlife in London and in private gardens. If you read our first open letter, some of what follows will be familiar (the needs and benefits of wildlife don’t change much) but do please read on to see where we are now and what we are planning for our next steps.

Alongside exploring our aims, we have been updating and expanding Transition Town Kingston’s [website resources on biodiversity and wildlife-friendly gardening](#) that nurtures wildlife and supports the all-important pollinators and other insects vital in the natural food chain. There is also much good advice from [Kingston Council](#) and other organisations (please see the list in Appendix 1).

We hope that you will welcome this reminder of the value of nature and the importance of connecting our green spaces for nature recovery. Kingston is surrounded by huge natural spaces (Ham Lands, Richmond Park, Bushy Park just over the river, Wimbledon Common, and the Green Belt to the south, as seen on the map in Appendix 2. But the map also shows the gaps between green spaces and suggests how dependent wildlife must be on small stretches of connectivity such as private gardens, roadside and riverside verges, trees... with town centres representing a particular challenge, offering little or no cover for bees, butterflies and other bugs and wildlife.

We also hope that you will find some of the defences of wilding, trees, hedges... that we highlight below and [on our website](#) interesting and useful when people complain about untidiness, neglect and/or “weeds”.

Improving how we promote and communicate the importance of biodiversity

One useful reminder while consulting was about the importance of language, how different words resonate positively or negatively with different people, and how some of the language around similar initiatives - “bio-beds”, “biodiversity”, “pollinators” - may not mean much to non-specialists. People may well love nature and walking in green spaces, enjoy bird song, butterflies and wild flowers, and appreciate the shelter and other benefits of trees – without necessarily knowing or caring how they connect with each other, for example, how seeds and insects feed birds, and how important trees and other plants are as habitats and for absorbing CO₂ and air (and noise) pollution.

It could be more effective to start from self-interest, the language non-specialists use and the things they appreciate or need: clean air; nature, wildlife; our food supply; birdsong and butterflies; shade in increasingly hot summers; personal wellbeing... A 2022 [study, led by academics from King’s College London](#), found that everyday encounters with birds boosted the mood of people

with depression, as well as the wider population, and suggested that visits to places with a wealth of birdlife, such as parks and canals, could be prescribed by doctors to treat mental health conditions. See [Nature and mental health - Mind](#) for more ideas on how nature can benefit us.

Recognising progress



The photo above shows how wildflowers colonise unmown roadside verges and are soon found by pollinators such as bees. More photos in Appendix 3.

We welcome the many improvements to Kingston's biodiversity made in recent years by the Council: more relaxed mowing regimes in some places; plans and funding for increased tree cover; roadside rain gardens; [reduced use of herbicides](#), specifically Glyphosate, since 2019; the Council's [Biodiversity Action Plan](#) and its support for [Biodiversity Projects](#), [Kingston's nature reserves](#) and "Biobeds". We also appreciate community-led projects such as the [Beeline Way](#) connecting New Malden and Raynes Park, Queen's Promenade, and the many nature-friendly community and private gardens in our borough.

We also welcome Kingston Council's [Climate Emergency Declaration in June 2019](#), its [ongoing action on climate](#) and its [initiatives on air quality](#), and note that nature, wilding and greening initiatives play significant parts in mitigating climate change and pollution, and should be extended and enhanced wherever feasible.

Kingston WildWays is intended to support, encourage and complement these initiatives across our borough by highlighting good examples and inviting collaboration and participation in developing and linking local green spaces and short stretches of biodiversity corridor.

Kingston WildWays, Phase 2: pilot projects, turning ideas into action...

We are launching Phase 2 in June with this Open Letter as a contribution to The Climate Coalition's [Great Big Green week](#). Since our first Open Letter, Transition Town Kingston has received a generous donation from Tiffin school, £1000 of which we have set aside for **Kingston WildWays**. This will enable our Phase 2 to start, probably with finalising our "branding", a poster campaign to encourage participation, and signage recognising parks, gardens, roadside verges, trees, hedgerows, yards, schools... that are already, in effect, **WildWays** contributing to biodiversity connectivity.

Recognising, encouraging and normalising participation in Kingston WildWays

As we progress, we hope to include and highlight with suitable signage more and diverse green spaces, including private front and back gardens, which could be important links in a biodiversity

network. If you know of any greenery or green spaces in your neighbourhood or ward that should be recognised in this way, please let us know.

Defending (re-)wilding

Despite growing public awareness of the importance of nature restoration, we are also aware that not everyone appreciates trees, “weeds”, long grass, brambles, birds... and we have provided [some answers to their concerns](#) on our website, highlighting the benefits of greenery, as illustrated below in the case of trees. We hope these will be useful to you.

We need trees, preferably mature well managed trees rather than the vulnerable newly planted saplings that developers sometimes offer in planning applications but don't look after. However, we welcome Kingston's plans to plant more trees and increase tree canopy in the borough, and hope that we may be able during Phase 2 to offer **Kingston WildWays** signs encouraging local communities to water and nurture new trees.



For the future

If pilot projects and take-up in Phase 2 are encouraging, Phase 3 will include fund-raising to incentivise more participation and collaboration (with signage, seeds, competitions, prizes, other rewards...) to enable **Kingston WildWays** to expand and connect across the borough. We'd welcome your suggestions and support (contact email below).

*[Marilyn Mason](#), on behalf of **Kingston WildWays** working group*

June 2026, during [Great Big Green Week](#)

Appendix 1, further reading and resources

For those interested in nature to read, watch or visit (updated and expanded since Open Letter #1 - recently added items near the top):

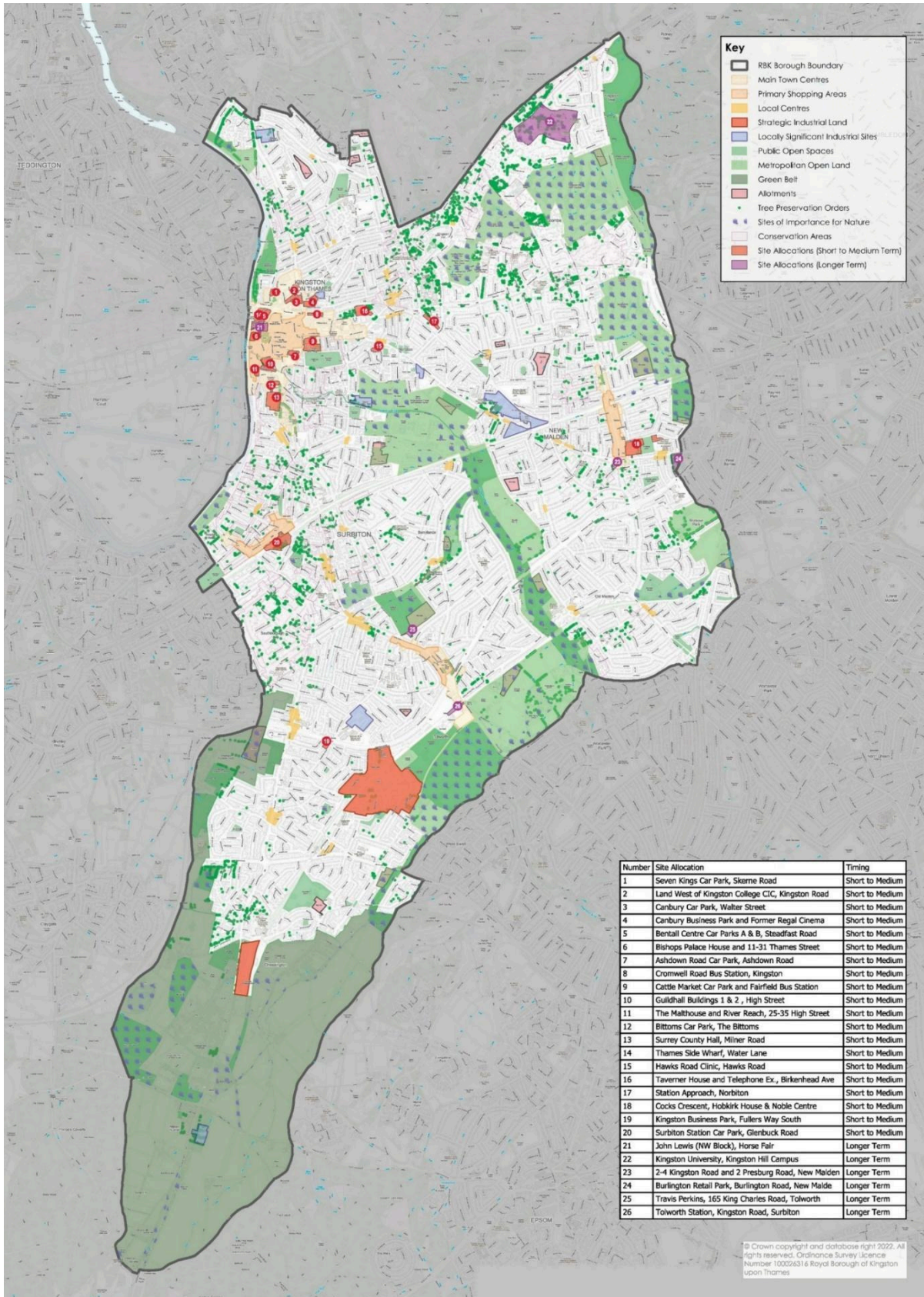
- [Kingston WildWays](#) - Transition Town Kingston's biodiversity corridor project, including [Growing tips for green gardeners](#), ideas and advice on sustainable and wildlife-friendly gardening, food-growing, community gardening and "[weeds](#)"..., TTK's 2025^t [Open Letter on Greening Kingston](#), and [TTK AGM report on Kingston WildWays](#), July 2025 – April 2026
- [Why wildflowers are moving from meadows to the city - BBC Future](#)
- David Attenborough's [Secret Garden series on BBC i-Player](#)
- David Attenborough's [Wild London on BBC i-Player](#)
- How wildlife-friendly is your garden? [Take your pledge to Give Back to Nature](#), observe and record what supports wildlife in your garden and receive a free Wilder Gardens Garden Biodiversity Certificate, along with advice on what more you can do.
- Roadside Verges - [BBC R4 Open Country](#) on this sometimes overlooked habitat
- [RHS on Wildlife gardening](#) and on [Plants for pollinators](#)
- [Kingston Council on Biodiversity](#), its Biodiversity Action Plan, and its [Climate Emergency Declaration in June 2019](#), something all Council departments and contractors should take into account, ensuring that their actions and decisions do not worsen the climate and nature crises, but instead help to improve the local natural environment and mitigate climate change.
- [The World Health Organisation](#) on our dependence on natural eco-systems and the benefits of biodiversity
- [Nature Towns & Cities](#) - a coalition of organisations committed to bringing the benefits nature and green space to everyone in the UK
- [Nature and mental health - Mind](#)
- [Championing nature | Grow Wild | Kew](#)
- [B-Lines](#), Buglife's unique solution
- [CPRE London on: the London Tree Ring project; London's More Natural Capital Coalition](#), supported by the London Friends of Green Spaces Network and promoting 10 Environment Pledges for London; new guidance on [Residential streets: 12 design elements](#); [How a fresh look at front gardens could help save the planet](#)
- [National Park City London](#)
- [Wilder Gardens](#)
- [London Wildlife Trust](#) nature reserves, championing nature's recovery in London
- Good examples – places to visit: Kew Gardens; Richmond Park; Riverside, Queen's Parade and North Kingston to Teddington; [Tolworth Court Farm](#); local Open Garden days, Royal Horticultural Society at Wisley, [Kingston's Beeline Way](#), [Hackney Buzzline](#)...



*"Imagine trying to travel around the UK without our road and rail network. Or imagine if nine out of every ten miles of road just didn't exist – life would be impossible! That is the situation faced by our vital pollinators and other bugs.
[B-Lines](#) is Buglife's unique solution."*

of

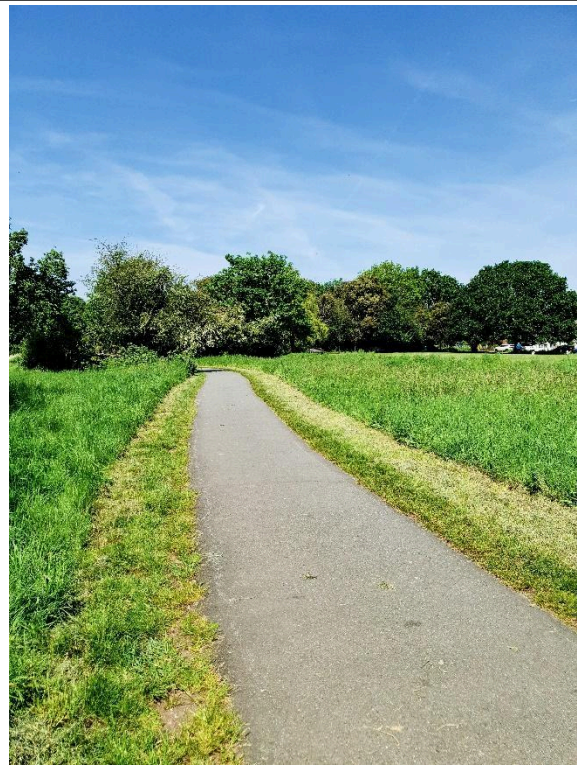
Appendix 2 – Kingston’s green spaces (and the gaps between them) – see also [GoParksLondon](#) map of Kingston’s green spaces



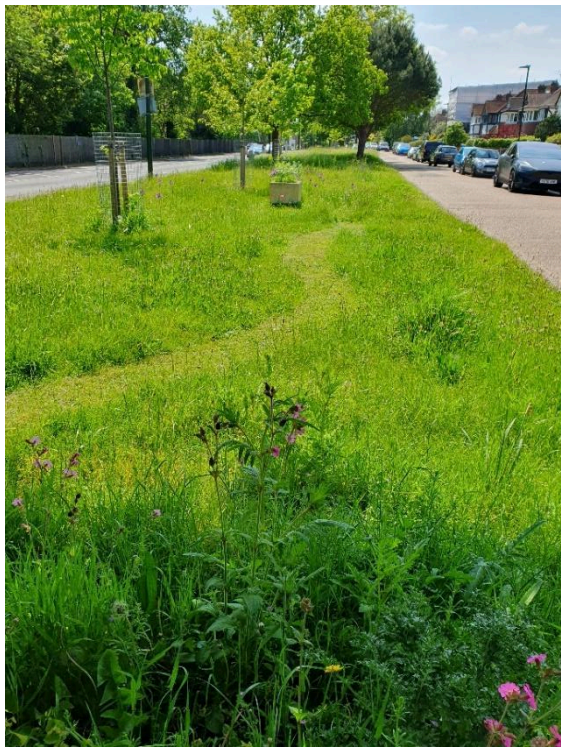
Appendix 3 - some attractive examples of wilding, feasible in private gardens, public open spaces and roadsides...



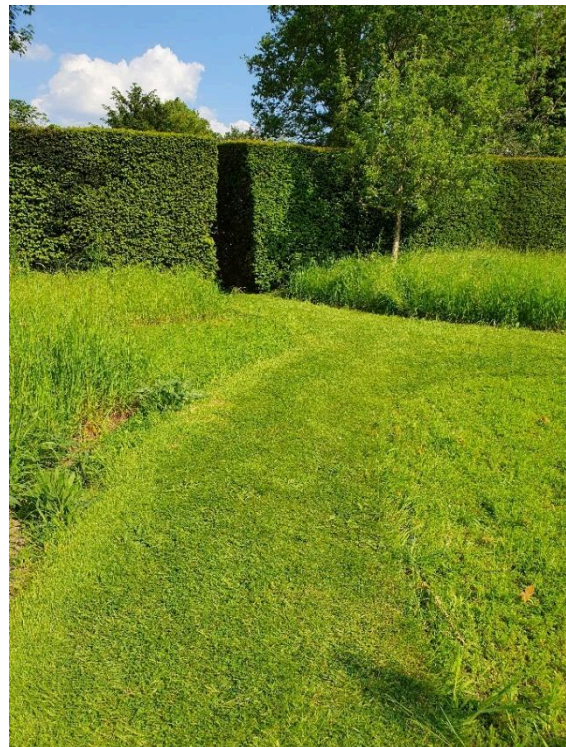
A front garden wildflower bed



A mown path-side strip looks tidy while leaving plenty of space for nature



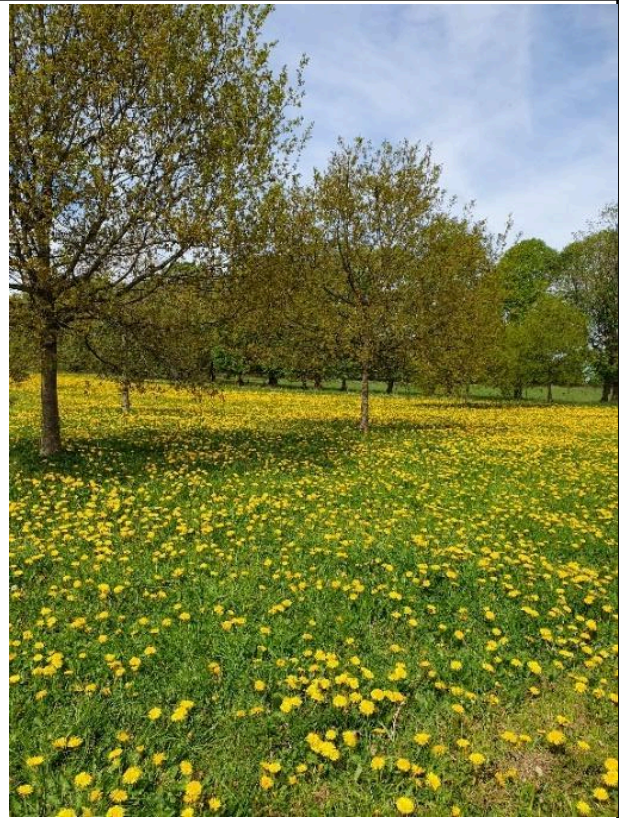
An attractive serpentine mown path on a wilded verge beside Richmond Road



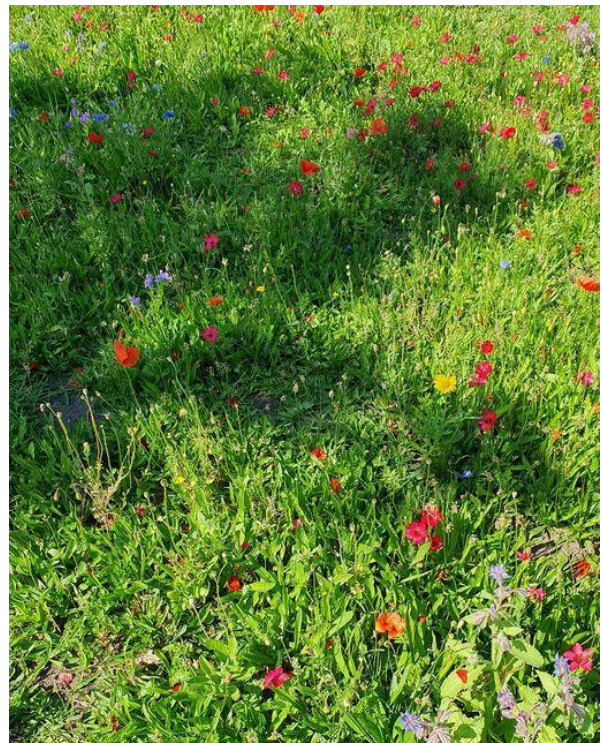
A green path in a large private garden



A bed of clover in a back garden framed by a mown lawn



A field of dandelions providing spring foraging for pollinators



Wildflowers allowed to grow in Tolworth and in Ham, Richmond