



## **Kingston WildWays 2025-6 AGM report**

***Marilyn Mason, April 2026***

In July 2025 we launched this project, working title “Kingston Green Chairs”, aimed at improving the connectivity of Kingston’s green spaces for wildlife and for people, in an open letter sent to Kingston councillors and other stakeholders, then saved on [our website](#) as a start and an incentive to build up and reorganise the sections of our website already dedicated to nature and gardening for wildlife.

Our main task since then has been exploring the landscape, finding out what already exists here and elsewhere (much more than we anticipated!) and what’s feasible and acceptable in Kingston, spreading the word, and reaching out to potential supporters. TTK was fortunate during this time to receive a very generous donation from Tiffin School, £1000 of which we allocated to Kingston WildWays, and for which we are very grateful.

Alongside all this we were trying to find a name for the project that was both catchy and self-explanatory: brainstorming with KBN, the Stanley Picker community group, TTK meetings, and occasional more focused chats – thank you to everyone who contributed. Almost any name suggested had been used already somewhere, but adding Kingston makes it ours – and we have been assured that the Council would have no objection to us using Wild Ways, which they already use. An interesting aspect of our naming workshops was finding unexpected connotations, positive and negative, in many of the suggestions that came up – we hope and believe that the final choice, Kingston WildWays, has avoided the negative ones!

This exploration phase had been both overwhelming and heartening – our idea, which we thought so innovative, especially the inclusion of private gardens, turns out to be in line with the zeitgeist, with loads of groups and similar initiatives, not just Plant Life’s No Mow May, working on similar ideas. One meeting or conversation has led to others and then to yet more others, and I’ve been encouraged by the plethora of biodiversity activities, information and ideas, and by the positive responses and helpfulness that our nascent project has met with.

For the record, Damon and/or I have met or attended meetings (IRL or on-line, individually or collectively, in some cases several times) with the following:

- Habitats & Heritage, and their Kingston Biodiversity Partnership meetings (I am now a member thanks to Elliot Newton, former RBK Biodiversity officer) and their working groups on hedgerows and badgers;

- Council officers responsible for trees, parks and green spaces, biodiversity and climate communications;
- Thames Landscape Strategy (much concerned with flooding);
- Kingston Environment Forum;
- The Stanley Picker Gallery community group;
- CPRE London front gardens campaign, which led to contacts with the Lend and Tend “Wilder Gardens - Give back to nature” project;
- Seething Wells Action Group AGM, in the hope that they might be useful allies;
- Mac Downes and Emma Humphries (RBK Events and Promotions Officer) about his exhibition at Tolworth Library in May-June, which promises to highlight Kingston WildWays;
- A 2-minute pitch at RBK’s Circular Economy event last November...

**What is already happening around Kingston?** There is growing public awareness of potential climate risks such as overheated homes and flooding and the links between the climate and nature crises; and the Council’s Climate Action Team and other departments are well aware of the value of nature-based solutions: one RBK project is installing rain gardens in flood risk areas; the Council has attracted funding for increasing the tree canopy around the borough; there has been some reduced mowing and wildflower planting around the borough and support for Tolworth Court Farm. (See [Kingston's biodiversity projects](#) and [Kingston's Biodiversity Action Plan](#).)

Because so much is happening already, we know and welcome that this has to be a collaborative project. For example, we hope that other groups will value having Kingston WildWays signage on their wilding projects (we have a few in mind already), and that highlighting wildlife connectivity where it already exists will encourage others to participate. We are also aware that not everyone likes trees, untidy long grass and “weeds” (aka wildflowers) or badgers digging up their gardens, or birds - so there will have to be a public educational/persuasive element in our project. David Attenborough’s latest BBC series, Secret Garden, focusing on wildlife in our gardens, can only help!

**What next? Phase 2:** Phase 1 was mostly research and outreach – Phase 2 will need to turn all the lovely moral support we found into practical help and action, including working parties, funding applications, collaborations and invitations to participate, and making the existing nature sections on the TTK website more orderly and navigable...

One development in its infancy is setting up working groups to meet on-line to make decisions and practical progress, share information, draft an updated Open Letter including to new councillors after local elections, decide design issues, and publicise models of good practice such as Tolworth Court Farm, the Hogsmill path, Queen’s Promenade and the Thames path, and local community gardens... Opportunities for

launching and/or publicising Phase 2 include The Climate Coalition's Big Green Week in June and RBK's Sustainable September, if it happens.

**There is much still to decide:**

- Should we just support the things that are going on anyway in Kingston and let biodiversity corridors develop as and when without much intervention from TTK?
- How does a small community group ensure longevity, manage a project that could and should go on for ever? Will we be able to hand it on?
- What is feasible for TTK? Can we provide an umbrella or "branding" to link and increase the visibility of all this public activity + wilder private gardens? And how (signage, info boards, competitions and prizes...)?
- How do we collaborate with, fit in with, what already exists? If we couldn't collaborate with initiatives in public spaces, we'd have to restrict our project to private gardens, and that so far largely untapped wildlife resource remains a possibility that could complement what happens in public parks and green spaces.
- What do we need funding for (printing a series of posters for community notice boards, signage, info-boards, window stickers, creating an interactive green map?) and how much? Colourful lectern style info-boards cost around £1000 each + installation, so even just one per ward would cost £20,000+ – probably beyond our means or capacity to deal with - but they could just about be worth considering if we could come up with some timeless text and illustrations. There are funding pots that a community group like ours could access and bring to the project, and we have had offers of help with finding them and applying.
- If we did get funding for signage or info-boards, how would we distribute and install them?
- A design for a logo, colour, heading... - that would work across a range of contexts: window stickers, signage in different shapes and sizes, documents, websites...

So there remains much to decide and do over the next few years – and we hope that lots of people will join in and help!