

The background is a textured green field. In the top left, there is a large orange flower with a pink dashed outline. A yellow and black striped bee with white wings is flying towards the right. In the top right, there are green leaves and three white raindrops falling. In the bottom right, there is another orange flower with a pink dashed outline and a yellow butterfly with a black body. In the bottom left, there are green leaves and a white dotted line.

# Pollinator Pathways Toolkit

A practical guide to creating a thriving green corridor  
in your neighbourhood



@yoli\_wiggles

# What's inside



Download  
the printable  
worksheet!

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# Welcome

Alleyways around the UK are often neglected and underused spaces, but they don't have to be that way! This guide shares what we've learned about transforming unloved alleyways at Pollinator Pathways, so you can do it too.

Pollinator Pathways is a community-led project that aims to 'clean and green' alleyways. It creates mini wildlife-friendly corridors, to help nature flourish and provide a safe space for local people to enjoy.

This project increases access to greenery, improves physical and mental health, and brings the community together. It highlights that when we work together, brilliant and beautiful things can be created.

If you're reading this, it probably means you've spotted an opportunity to transform an unloved space in your area. Everyone can make the place that they live somewhere that they love, too. Small changes and collaboration on a neighbourhood level can lead to powerful collective impact - one alley at a time. This toolkit provides practical advice on getting started.

Create your own thriving Pollinator Pathway and join the growing network of pollinator-friendly corridors.

Enjoy and good luck!

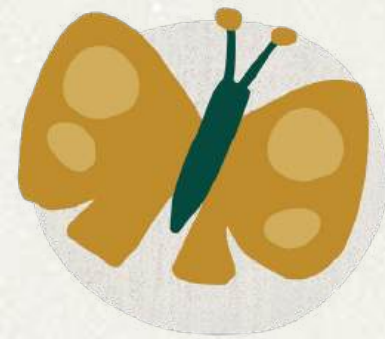
*Flora*



**Inspired by this toolkit?  
Let us know!**

Share your pathway  
📷 [@backtobristol](#)

# Our mission



**Create spaces for nature**  
transforming tarmac and concrete  
into miniature wildlife corridors



**Strengthen community connections**  
through shared activities like planting, litter  
picking, and spending time in nature



**Make our streets safer and cleaner**  
because people deserve to love where they live



The physical transformation of grey and unloved parts of our local area has been so uplifting and it gives me real **joy and pride** every time I see a bee at one of our planters. My favourite part of the project has been the **sense of community** it has brought to our street and the **collective responsibility** we have for our little bit of the world.

**Josi, local resident**

# Environmental, social and health benefits of Pollinator Pathways



Improve access and safety



Reduce flytipping and littering

Create space for nature and increase access to greenery and wildlife



Improve mental health and wellbeing

Meet your neighbours and build stronger community ties



Share and learn new skills



Brighten walls and showcase local artistic talent

@tanithgould

# How to get started

## Getting permission

The first step is to visit your local council website and contact your councillors. Share your idea, get advice on funding and include a couple of photos of your alleyway. Your council may be able to provide support, such as arranging litter picking kits, collection of fly-tipping or providing equipment.

Next, find out who owns the land by visiting the [land registry](#), this will bring up any restrictions you'll need to consider.

If you plan to add artwork to your pathway, make sure to ask for permission in advance from neighbours who own the wall space.



Email template you can use to contact your local councillor.

Dear [name of local councillor],

I'm a resident of [Street], and I'm writing to ask about support with transforming my local alleyway into a Pollinator Pathway.

The alleyway currently experiences issues such as [e.g. graffiti, fly-tipping, littering, poor lighting, and feeling unsafe or neglected], which affects how residents use and feel about the space.

I have been inspired by the Pollinator Pathways Project, which has revamped multiple underused alleys across Bristol into thriving wildlife-friendly community spaces for people and pollinators to enjoy. I'm hoping to bring neighbours together to clean and green our alleyway. This project will help create important 'wildlife corridors' for pollinators while also making the shared space more attractive, safe and enjoyable for residents.

At this stage, I'm looking for guidance on permissions and any council requirements before we begin. The idea would be to start with a clear-up day followed by improvements such as moveable planters and colourful murals, all maintained by local volunteers.

I'd really appreciate your advice on:

- What permission is required for this type of community greening project
- Any council teams or officers we should contact
- Whether there are local initiatives, grants, or materials available that might support the project

Please see photos attached of the current proposed site.  
Thank you for your time.

Kind regards,  
[Your Name], [Street]

## Organising a clear-up

The condition, size of your alleyway, and availability of volunteers all play a part in how much time your transformation might take. The project should be fun, so take it at your own pace!

Start with a clear-up, make sure to promote the day at least a month in advance to allow plenty of time to get prepared.

Keep interested neighbours in the loop with your plans and progress - this could be via a WhatsApp group or Facebook page.



### Top tip

Refreshments, snacks and music can go a long way in encouraging neighbours to join in.



## You will need

Heavy-duty bin bags, rubber/ gardening gloves, litter pickers, shovels and brooms.

Schedule community days not too far apart to maintain momentum and ensure your progress doesn't come undone over time. A 'transformation weekend' consisting of a 'cleaning day' and a 'greening day' is an approach we like to take to make the most of volunteer support in a short space of time.



Taking part in the project allowed me to meet and work alongside neighbours who I would never have met.

**Kari, volunteer**





## Spread the word!

Amazing things can happen when people come together. Connect with your neighbours to gather interest, ideas and form a dedicated team. There are lots of different ways you can raise awareness and encourage others to get involved:

- Knock on your neighbour's door to share your ideas
- Post flyers locally, inviting neighbours to join
- Share on existing local WhatsApp and Facebook groups, or set up your own
- Ask friends and family to spread the word

## Get chatting

Talk to your neighbours to find out what changes they would like to see. How might they like to use the space? Are there any skills or tools in your community that could be useful? Getting neighbours involved from the beginning helps to establish roles and create an important sense of ownership in the project.



Before



After

## Take photos

Documenting your alleyway before the transformation through photos can be useful when applying for funding, requesting donations, keeping neighbours updated and motivated, as well as highlighting the impact of community action.

We would love to see your photos!  
**Tag us on Instagram @backtobristol**



# Costs & fundraising

## Applying for grant funding

Small grants are available from various sources, such as local wards, charities, and international organisations, details can be found on the [House of Commons Library](#). You can also Search for 'community group planting fund' or similar to find other options.

Grant applications must showcase the need for your project, as well as who it will benefit, and who will maintain the project. Tailor your application to the specific grant. Be aware that applications can take some time to be processed, and many grant applications require a bank account in the name of your community group. If there is a local group already working in your area, partnering with them could open up opportunities for larger grants.

There are many grants available that don't require becoming a constituted community group with a bank account - our first year was funded entirely by small grants.

## Community fundraising

An alternative (or supplement) to grants is crowdfunding within your community. When people can see a direct benefit to their local area, they're often happy to chip in. Setting up a [GoFundMe page](#) is free and can help bridge funding gaps. We used this approach to raise funds to pay mural artists for one of our projects.

### Top tip

Strengthen funding applications by including evidence of your alleyway transformation. Take before/after photos and ask your community for quotes - it's a simple yet powerful way to highlight the need for a Pollinator Pathway, as well as the impact you've made.



## Savvy sourcing

You don't need to spend lots of money to get started. There are plenty of creative ways to source tools and materials, which not only save money but are better for the planet, too!

**Upcycle** - Wooden pallets and old scaffold boards can be made into wonderful upcycled planters. You can also create simple picture frames using the wooden planks from disassembled pallets. Sinks, bathtubs and tyres make great planters with existing holes for drainage. Add lining with drainage holes to any planters to prevent rot and maximise lifespan.

**Check with your neighbours** - there might already be plenty of materials that they are willing to donate! A lick of leftover outdoor paint can brighten planters, cuttings or spare seedlings can blossom into beautiful flowers, spare decorative tiles can become mosaics.

**Source donations** - reach out to local businesses and pop into your local garden centre to see if they offer any support for community projects, such as secondhand spare pots.

## Ideas for items to source

**Tools & equipment** - Paintbrushes, brooms, trowels, spades, watering can, paint trays, gloves, buckets, wheelbarrow

**Material** - Paint, planters, plants, seeds, compost, water butt, solar-powered motion-sensor lighting, bunting, mirrors, bird box, bird feeder, bug hotel, hanging baskets



# The fun begins!

## Designing your pathway

### Reimagining your space

Each Pollinator Pathway is unique, shaped and designed by its residents. Speak to your neighbours or share a survey to find out what your community might need and benefit from the most, and therefore what to prioritise. Do you need somewhere for children to play?

A place to sit and have a chat? Or simply a safe and clean alleyway? The opportunities are endless!



### Accessibility

Pollinator Pathways are intended to support both nature and the local community. This toolkit therefore focuses on alleyways that are pedestrianised (with no vehicle access) and wide enough for planters, while still allowing safe and comfortable movement for people using pushchairs, wheelchairs, or bikes.

Smaller spaces can be transformed, but make sure to prioritise accessibility, for example, by swapping on-the-ground planters for hanging baskets.



## Connecting with nature

Spending time in nature is good for our mental health and wellbeing, yet in cities, opportunities to connect with nature can be limited. Greening your alleyway is a key part of a Pollinator Pathway, transforming how the space looks, feels, and functions, while bringing important benefits for both people and wildlife.



**Benefits include**  
**Supports mental health and wellbeing**  
- contact with nature can reduce stress and promote a sense of calm.



**Supports wildlife** - pollinator-friendly plants provide nectar for bees, butterflies, moths and hoverflies.



**Help overcome habitat fragmentation**  
(thought to be the most important factor in bee declines) - creating green corridors that connect larger green spaces, where pollinators can safely travel, feed, and live.



**Reduce flood risk and heat spots**  
- plants help absorb rainwater and create shade. Both are becoming increasingly important as we get hotter summers and more unpredictable rainfall.





@aliciahaydenwildlife

“

The Pollinator Pathway near our home has made an **incredible difference**, especially to our daily school run. The alleyway we used to walk through was once **dark, dirty, and filled with rubbish**. It often upset me that my children had to pass through such an unpleasant space every day on their way to school.

Now it has been **completely transformed**. The walls are bright and colourful, covered in beautiful artwork, and surrounded by flowers and plants. It's become a **real pleasure to walk through**. It's a brilliant example of how a community coming together can create a **truly positive and lasting change**.

Linny, local resident

## Pollinator-friendly planting

Turning your alleyway into pollinator paradise buzzing with bees and butterflies is one of the most rewarding parts of the transformation, and can make a huge difference to wildlife in urban areas.

The wider the variety of plants in your space, the greater the variety of pollinators it'll attract and the more you can support. You can build a mini ecosystem through planting a mix of native (occurring naturally in Britain) vs. non-native plants (originating from regions outside Britain).

Make sure not to use any pesticides or herbicides on your new planters, as these damage the surrounding ecosystem and will keep wildlife away.

Did you know?  
We have over  
1,500 pollinating  
insect species  
in Britain!



## Choosing the best plants for your pathway

Getting to know your space will help you choose plants that'll thrive. Take a walk through your alley - where does the sun shine? Will you need plants suitable for shade? Will you need planters, or do you have borders you can use?

Opt for hardy, low-maintenance plants that add value to nature year-round and mean you can spend more time enjoying your Pollinator Pathway and less time on upkeep. With an increase in longer, hotter summers, we recommend drought-resistant plants, too. Native plants are especially good for our local wildlife, but some do struggle in our drier summers, so try a variety and see what works!

The RHS has a handy logo on their plants called 'Plants for Pollinators' - keep an eye out for this when purchasing to help provide food for native wildlife.



### Top tip

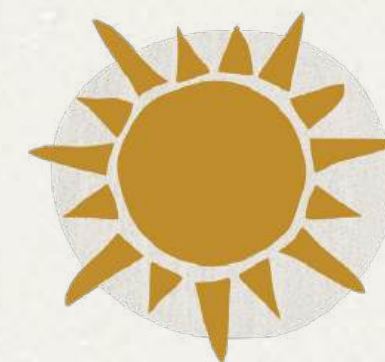
Perennials are a smart choice for community planting. Unlike annuals, they return year after year, meaning less replanting and better value for your time and budget.





### Shade/partial-shade

Pulmonaria, Primula vulgaris, Geranium 'Rozanne', Bistorta, Anemone, Hellebore, Ajuga



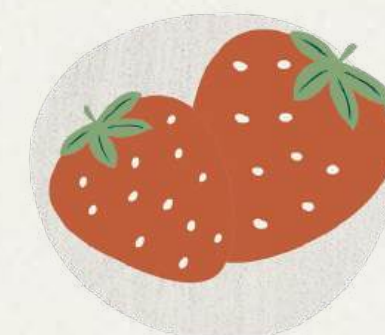
### Sun-loving

Achillea, Geum, Agastache, Campanula, Astrantia, Aquilegia, Alstromeria, Echinops, Salvia, Eryngium, Silene



### Low maintenance, year-round interest

Erigeron, Prostrate Rosemary, Sarcococca, Hebe



### Grow your own fruit, veg & herbs to share

Strawberries, Lettuce, Courgette, Thyme



## Planting guides

Adapt to the size of your planters and your budget to create the ultimate pollinator-friendly planter.

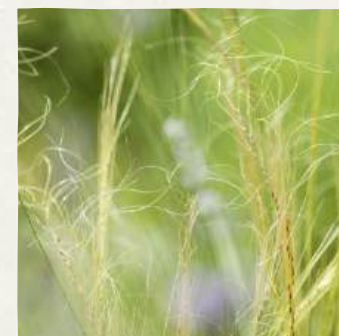
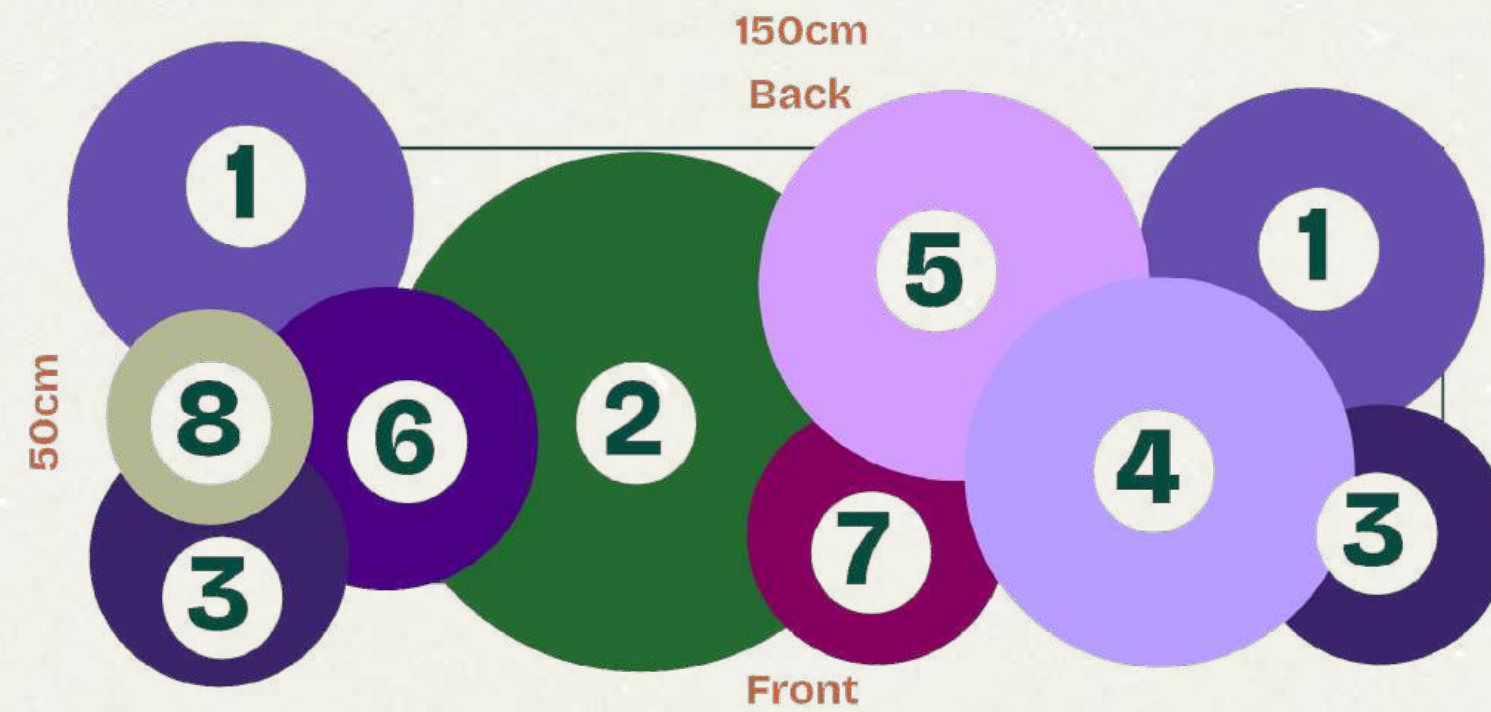
### Top tip

We recommend using both topsoil and compost to fill your planters, avoid using 100% compost, as the nutrients will run out quickly. Topsoil or enriched topsoil is an affordable way to bulk up and fill large planters or holes. Top this with good quality compost, which is where the magic happens and where your plants will get their nutrients. Choose peat-free compost - this is made from organic materials, protecting precious peatlands and wildlife from harmful peat-bog extraction.



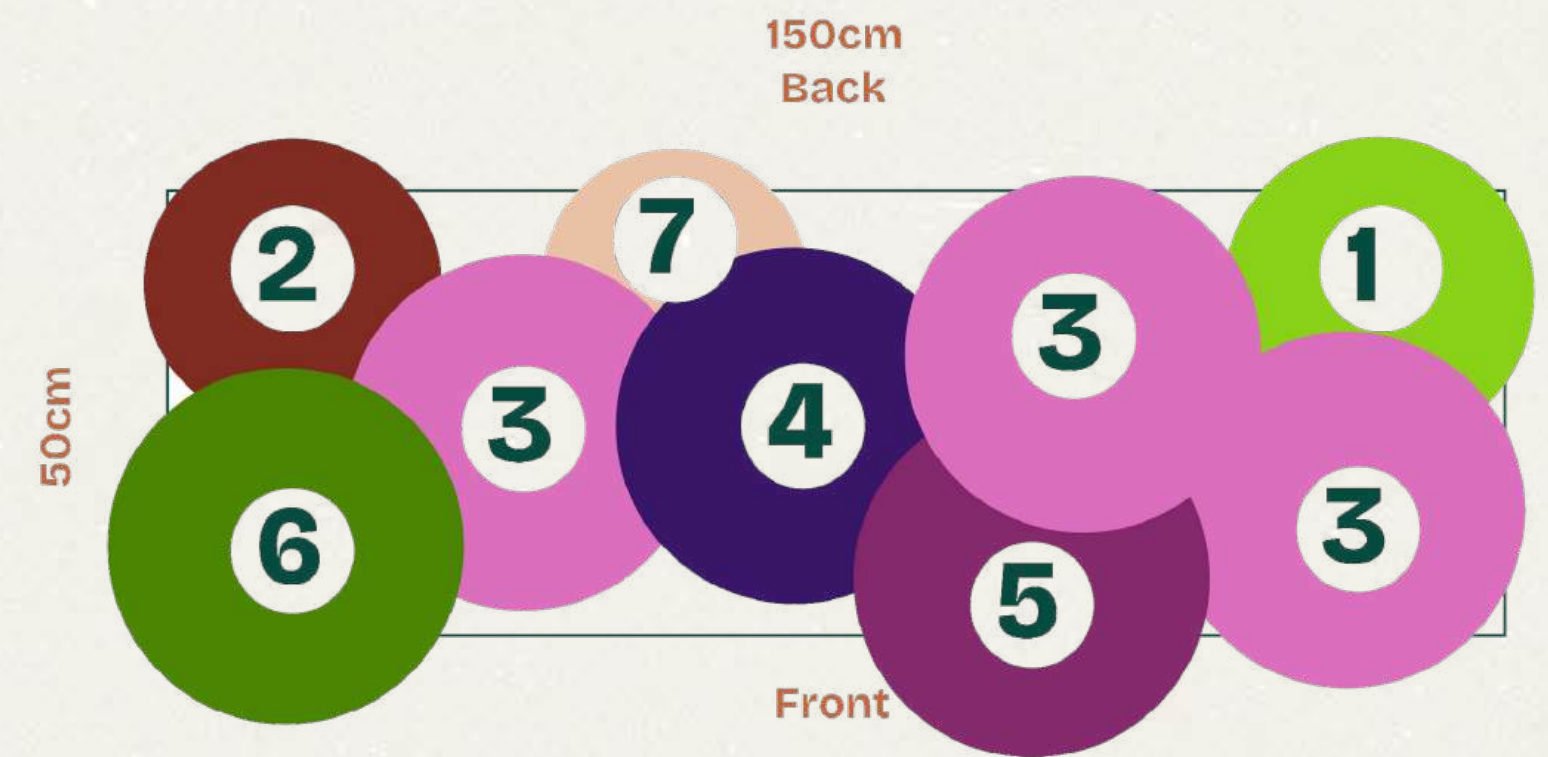
## Sunny trough planting example

1. Lavandula angustifolia 'Hidcote' /2
2. Salvia rosmarinus 'Prostratus'/1
3. Thymus serpyllum/ 2
4. Nepeta x faassenii /1
- 5 Echinacea purpurea /1
6. Salvia nemorosa 'Caradonna' /1
7. Sedum spurium /1
8. Stipa tenuissima /1



## Shady trough planting example

1. Skimmia japonica 'Kew Green'
2. Huechera 'Lime Marmalade' or 'Caramel')/1
3. Aстранtia major 'Roma' /3
4. Geranium phaeum /1
5. Ajuga reptans 'Burgundy Glow' /1
6. Creeping Jenny 'Aurea' /1
7. Digitalis x mertonensis /1





## Adding artwork

Painting murals or making upcycled frames is a simple, fun way to bring the community together and brighten your space. Murals bring a welcome burst of colour and personality, showcase local talent, and help alleyways feel welcoming and safe. They're especially mood-boosting in winter, when plants are dormant and the weather is grey.

In a city like Bristol, known for its incredible street art, murals have been a natural way to celebrate and bring the theme of nature to life, whilst showcasing wonderful local talent.



## How to paint a mural

Start by preparing the wall with a base coat of white masonry paint - this helps the colours to pop! Once dry, you can begin adding your design, whether that's a simple pattern, nature-inspired shapes or something else. The design of our murals has been inspired by the themes of nature and the community, but what you create is up to you and your neighbours!

You might choose to invite a local artist to collaborate and bring their expertise to the project - they may be happy to contribute in exchange for materials being fully covered. For big pieces, it's important to acknowledge the hard work and, if possible, secure funding to support artists for their time, creativity, and skill.



## Painting on a budget

Search for preloved paint instead of buying new, it's more affordable and sustainable. There may be a community project in your area that supplies secondhand paint, and some recycling centres sell paint extremely cheap. Nationwide projects like [Community RePaint](#) collect and resell unfinished paints from trade at a fraction of the cost. Facebook Marketplace is another great place to find a bargain.

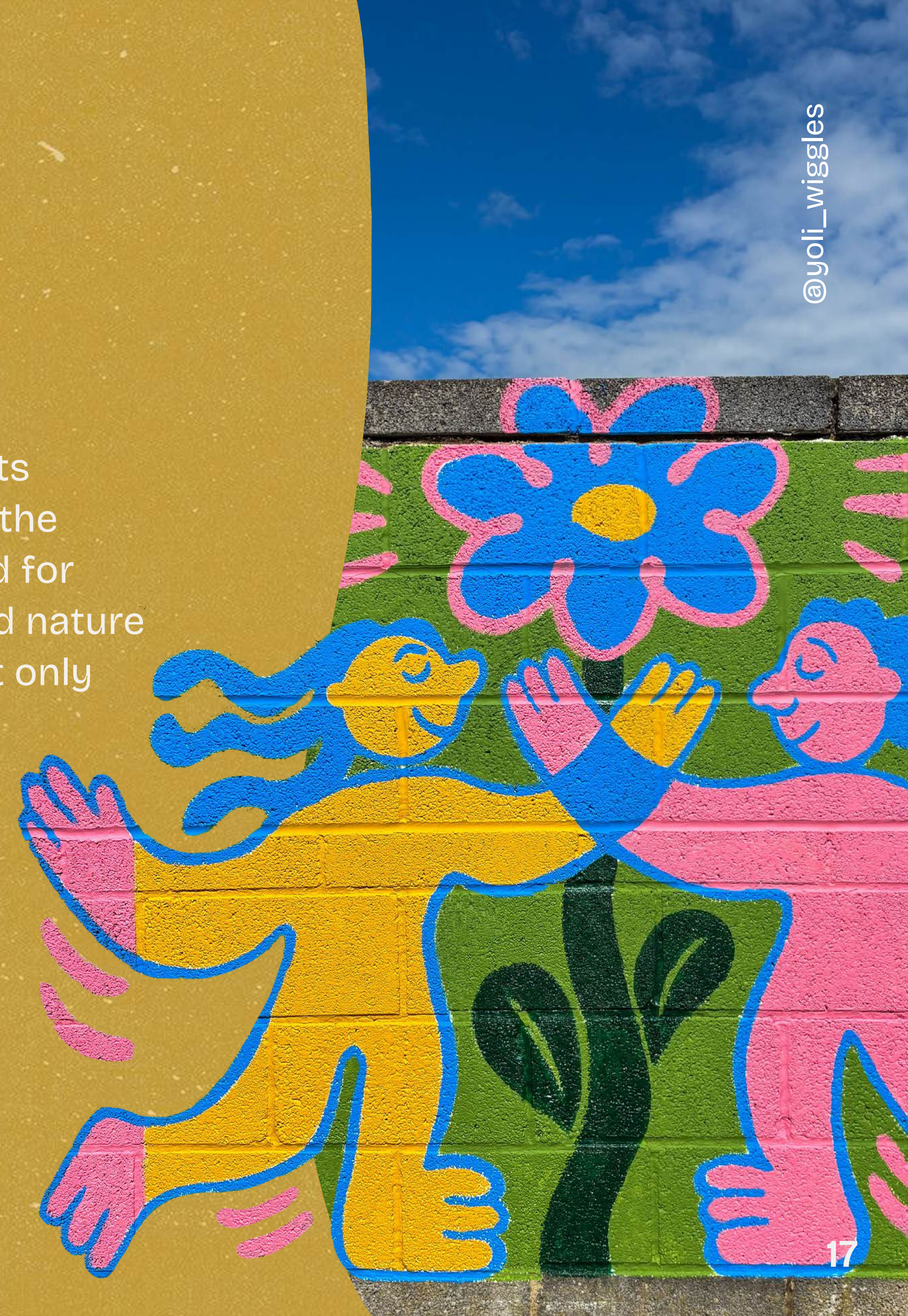
## Painting permissions

Walls along alleyways tend to be owned by the houses situated next to them. Always seek permission from the homeowner before painting their wall, and keep them involved throughout the process. Most people are quite happy to have a mural added to their wall, as it tends to reduce the risk of graffiti and could even increase house value.

“

It was so wonderful to chat to residents when painting the murals and hear all the **enthusiasm and excitement** they had for the project. The combination of art and nature I think is also very important - as it not only creates a space that **looks good but it's also doing good**. This project shows that life and joy can be given back to even the most unloved spaces and those living there can **feel empowered** at the same time.

**Yoli Wiggles, mural artist**



# Looking for more ideas?

The sky is the limit! Why not try these creative ways to take your transformation up a notch:

- Communal library
- Bee hotel
- Solar-powered lighting
- Herb garden
- Floor-painted games e.g. hopscotch

We teamed up with Great Western Air Ambulance Charity to install a lifesaving defibrillator.

What if your Pollinator Pathway could save a life?



## Don't forget to celebrate

Mark your hard work and achievements with a launch party! Bring the community together to build local pride, encourage use of the space and enjoy the Pollinator Pathway you've created together.

# Maintenance & long-term care



Aftercare is just as important as the initial alleyway transformation. Without it, planters become their own form of fly-tipping, and alleyways become overgrown again, attracting rubbish and undoing your hard work.

While maintenance is usually minimal, it's important you have a plan or rota in place to ensure the space is regularly cared for and reduce individual workload. In our experience, littering reduces once an area has been cleaned up and transformed, but there will always be little bits here and there.

Maintenance offers the rewarding chance to learn and master the basics of gardening through the seasons - cutting back plants at the end of winter, pruning as they grow.

There are some clever ways you can make gardening maintenance easier, such as having a communal water butt, or using Ollas, sunken terracotta pots that store water and release it slowly into the surrounding soil, reducing the amount of watering needed over summer (needs to be kept topped up to work).



## Top tip

Watering is essential - our increasingly dry summers mean daily watering might be needed during the hottest part of the year. Plants within planters rely on regular watering to stay alive, so in one of our alleyways, houses 'adopt' a planter to look after. In another, there's a rota for watering. Do whatever works for you, but make sure there is something in place.



## Breaking the Broken Windows effect

The Broken Windows theory suggests that visible signs of neglect, such as graffiti, littering, fly-tipping and damage can make an area feel uncared for. When these issues aren't addressed, they continue to build up and contribute to local people feeling less safe and connected to the space.

The Pollinator Pathways Project helps break this cycle by reclaiming and improving overlooked spaces. Planting, cleaning and greening create a sense of local pride and shared responsibility, helping people to feel more connected and part of something bigger in their community. Regular pathway maintenance is essential for making sure the positive impact of the improvements lasts over time, keeping the space safe and welcoming.

“

Littering has dropped drastically and is now rare. There is no graffiti! People take **more pride in the space**, and it has encouraged all of us - including me - to pick up the odd bit of rubbish when we see it.

**James, volunteer**



# Join the network

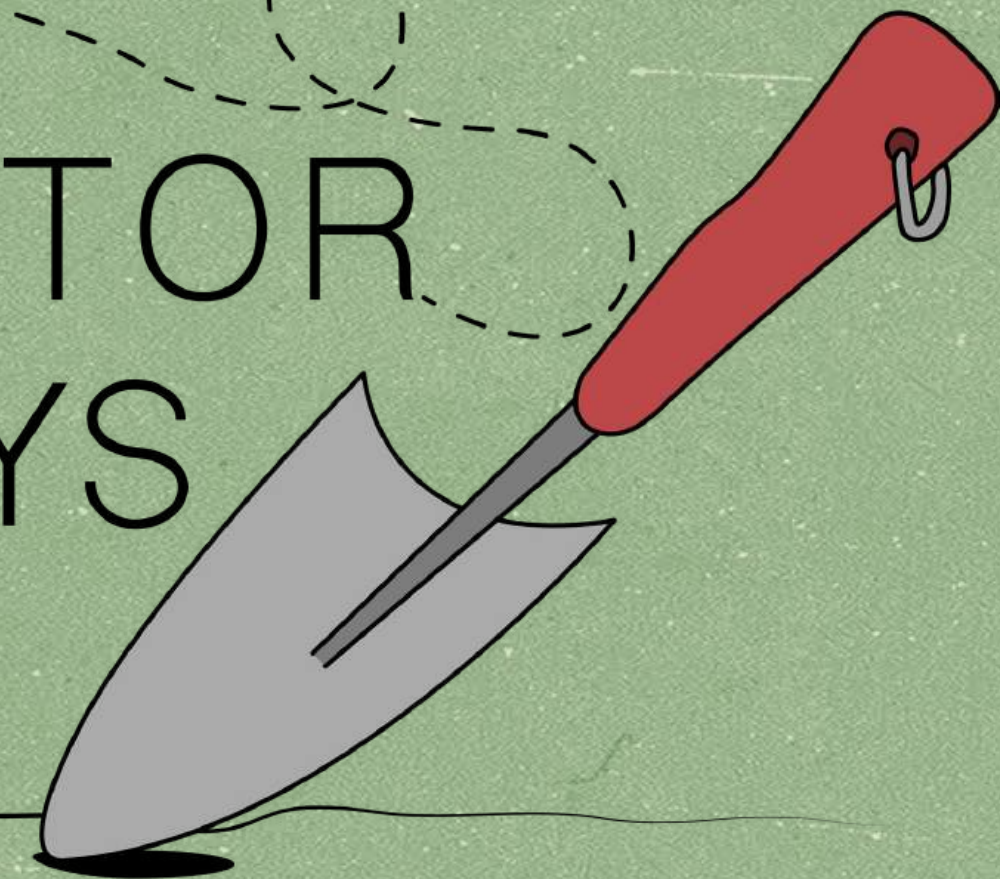
This toolkit has been created to inspire new Pollinator Pathways, growing a buzzing network of pollinator-friendly green corridors crisscrossing the UK. If you would like to be part of the Pollinator Pathway Network, **email us about your project** to be added to the network map.

[pollinatorpathwaysbristol@gmail.com](mailto:pollinatorpathwaysbristol@gmail.com)





# POLLINATOR PATHWAYS PROJECT



[Download  
the printable  
worksheet!](#)