



Treasured Places

a guide to exploring our surroundings



do you have a place
that is special...

...or important to you?

...or to your community,
that you want to enhance?

or perhaps you want to discuss issues around place more generally?



This exploring.place guide can help you:

- Explore how land might better serve all its users — human and non-human
- Create an action plan for land you want to manage differently
- Run a workshop, teach a class, or lead a team exercise on land use and change
- Respond proactively to nearby development proposals

The guide invites individuals or groups to explore the potential of any place — a farm or back garden, community space, school grounds, workplace, or simply a favourite walk or view.

Flexible by design, it recognises that every landscape is unique and must balance many needs in different ways — nature, recreation, livelihood, and climate resilience.



This guide will help you think about:

What values guide how your treasured place is managed?

Who belongs here, who doesn't, and who should?

How can harmony be improved for all users of place?

It also points you to how you can take practical pathways — from running workshops and turning ideas into action to finding funding and forming collaborations.

Hint

There is no right or wrong way to use this guide. We have made suggestions based on our own experience, but feel free to make the guide work for you. Make changes and use your own ideas.



*“having land
and not ruining it
is the most beautiful art
that anyone could ever want
to own”*

Andy Warhol

so what is place?



*“Place is a
meaningful location;
a space people are attached to
in one way or another”*

[source: Place: An Introduction - Tim Cresswell]

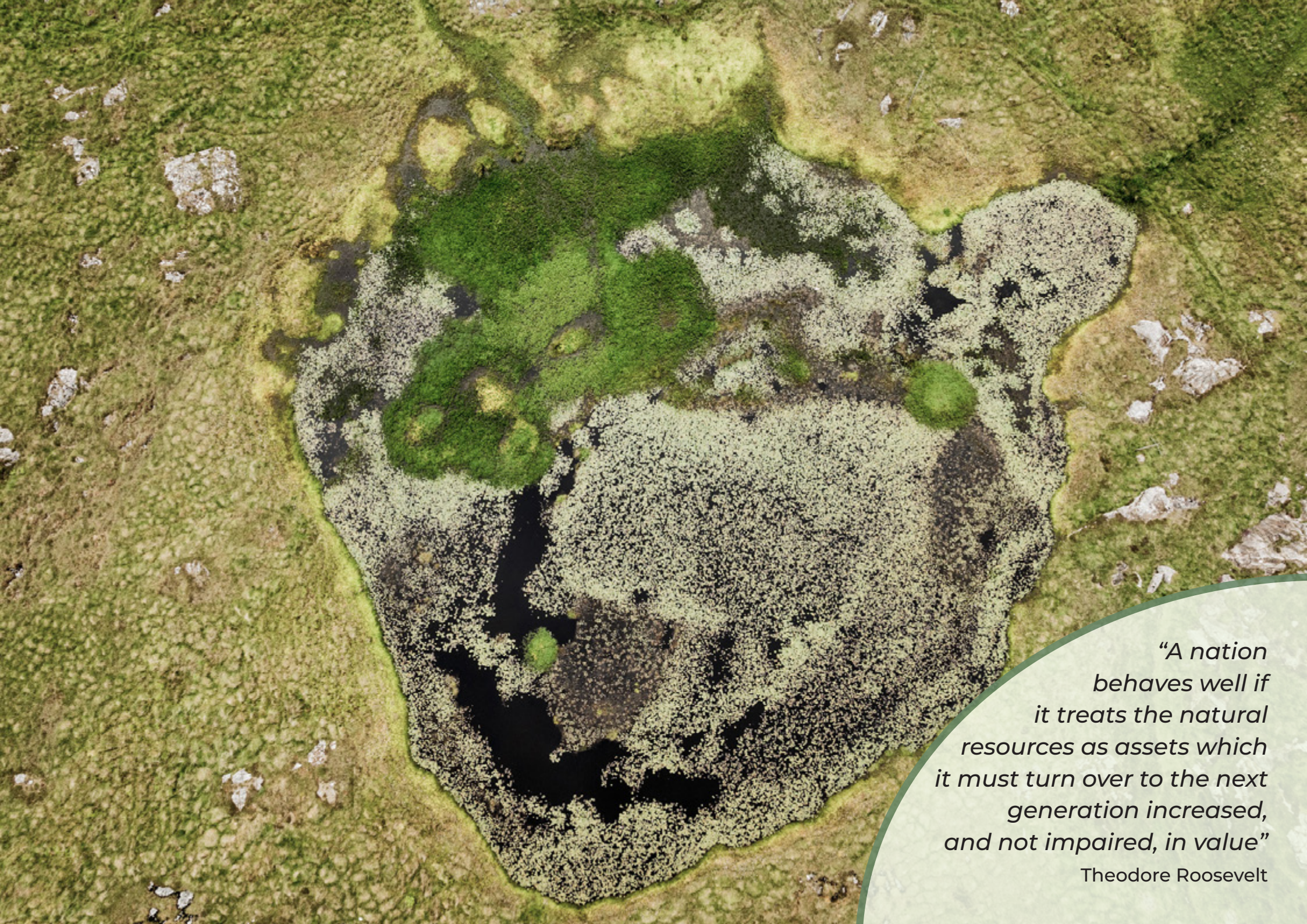


...and a 'treasured place' is

*...any local outdoor place
that is particularly special or
relevant to you. You may live or work
there, or simply enjoy spending time there.*

*Examples include your garden or farm, a woodland
glade, a river, walk or viewpoint, a community, work or
leisure space. Maybe a legally protected area. The list
is endless and uniquely personal.*

So where is yours?



*"A nation
behaves well if
it treats the natural
resources as assets which
it must turn over to the next
generation increased,
and not impaired, in value"*

Theodore Roosevelt

let's get started



game one

'my treasured place'



Before You Start

- For this game all you need is a pencil or pen (but several, in a selection of colours can help), paper to write and draw on (the bigger the better) and a desire to explore. Stickie notes may also be useful.
- You can play it alone or as a group in a workshop, a lesson in class, or a casual conversation around a table.
- You can play this game in one session or over a period of time. The main thing is to enjoy the process of discovery and potential.

Step One

First of all, working individually or in a group, agree and name your 'treasured place'

why is it special?

how does it make you feel?

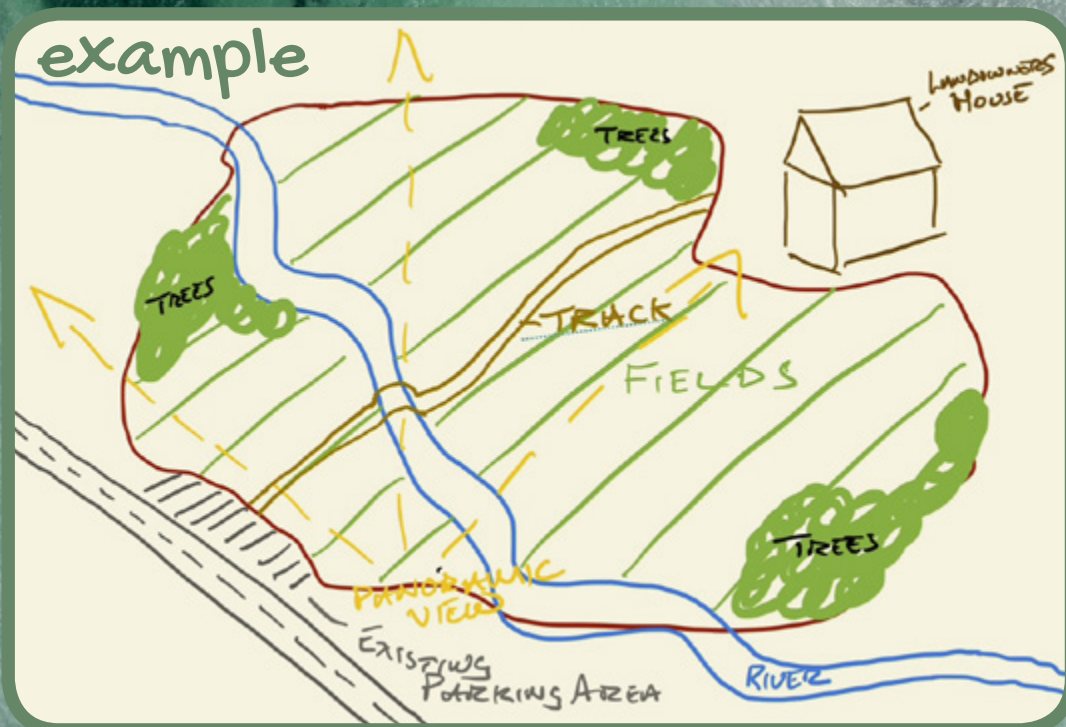
how does it sound/smell/feel? what are the boundaries?

Hint

Write down your thoughts and findings. Once chosen, maybe take a walk around it to familiarise yourself, or yourselves, with its main features. Spending time in any place is the best way to learn.

Step Two

Sketch a map of your treasured place, identifying its main features



Hints

- If working in a team, try doing this individually briefly first, then combine your thoughts onto one map.
- The bigger the piece of paper for the final map the better!
- Add everyone's thoughts, stories and memories as well as the physical features.
- Accuracy is not important. Just have fun!

Step Three

Now take it in turns to ask yourselves...
“who and what has an interest
in our treasured place?”

landowners... animals... local people... plants...
commercial... visitors... society... climate...

Hints

- You will quickly realise that a lot of entities, both human and non human, have an interest in almost any place. Include them all for now, and be ready to get more paper if you need to!
- To get the most ideas, try individually writing your thoughts down first and then combining answers as a group.

Step Four

Now ask yourself... *Who or what is disadvantaged by the way your treasured place is currently managed?*

If working in a group there will be lots of different ideas and you may not agree with all of them. 'There is no such thing as a bad idea'.

Just write them all down for now.

Hints

- Again, work individually first if it helps before sharing in turn to the group.
- List all answers on a piece of paper, leaving plenty of space around each one.
- Make sure all voices are heard.

Step Five

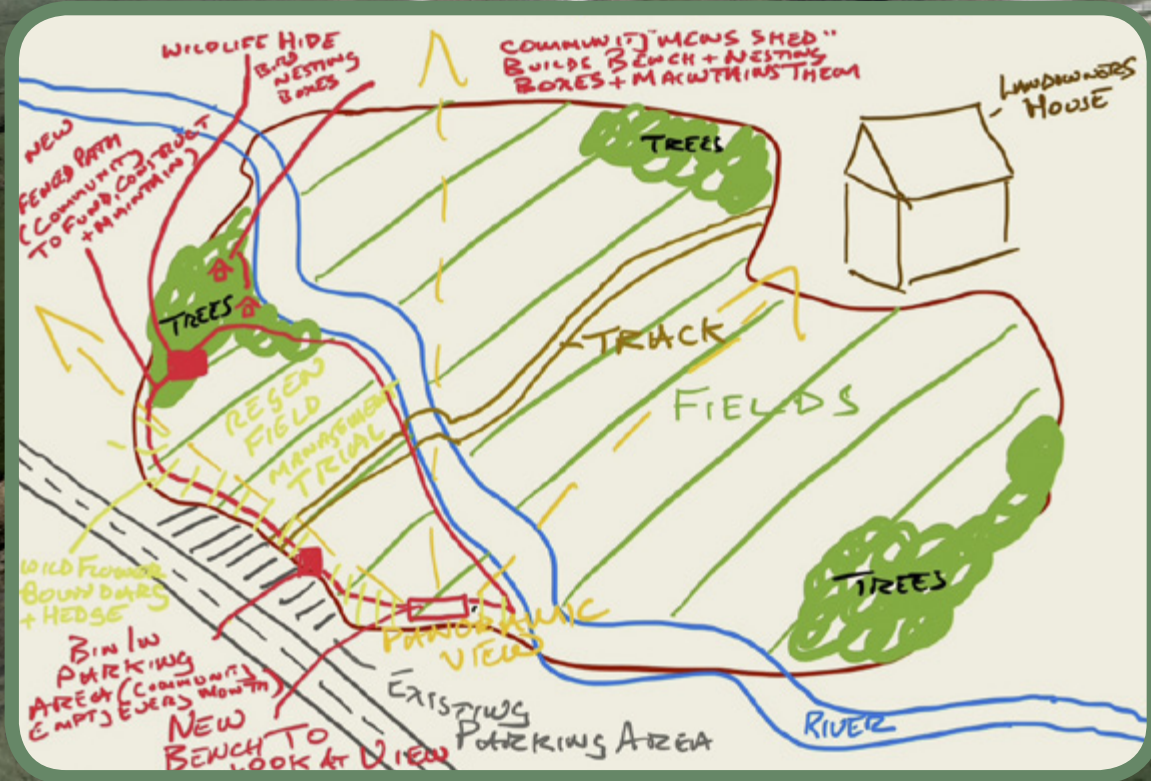
Fantastic. For each previous answer, ask yourself...
How could changes in stewardship improve your treasured place for current and potential users?

Hint

- Avoiding words like 'no' and 'but' can help to keep responses positive, reflecting a 'can do' attitude.

Step Six

Now add your ideas to your map



Step Seven

Now wander around your treasured place again... imagine the new potential... and start turning your dreams into reality

Maybe write an action plan to help consolidate your ideas. Include in your thinking

- what is our aim?
- what actions will deliver our aim?
- who will be responsible for delivery?
- when will it be delivered?
- how will it be funded?
- who needs to be involved e.g. the landowner, the community, your neighbour?

Don't rush the process, and try to prioritise your ideas for both ease of delivery and importance.

How will the implementation of your ideas affect the various users of your treasured place?

example

	before	after
landowner	8	8
nature	5	7
locals/community	3	5
commercial	7	6
climate	5	6
visitors	3	4
society	4	7
other	-	-
TOTAL	35	43



game two 'habitat highways'



1. Draw a map of your treasured place, as in game one.
2. Imagine you are a hedgehog trying to get from one side of your treasured place to the other. Is it possible?
3. Draw a potential 'highway' on your map that would allow you to pass more easily from one side to the other.
4. Write down the changes that would be needed to make your highway a reality.

You can play this game entirely separately from, or as part of, game one.

A close-up, black and white photograph of a dandelion seed head, showing the intricate structure of the seeds and the stem. The image is slightly out of focus, with the foreground seed head being sharper than the background ones.

as in game one, ask yourself

*...what actions could be taken to make
our habitat highway a reality?*

...who do we need to involve?

...how will the highway be funded?

*...what neighbours could I speak to about
extending the highway beyond my
treasured place to create a wildlife corridor?*

*...could my highway link to
existing areas of wildlife and
habitat abundance?*

Hints

- Habitat highways can be narrow, or as wide as a field and more...
- Hedgehogs love wide (3-5m), vehicle free hedgerows with plenty of insects.
- Could you create a path for people through your highway for recreation and education?
- If you don't know an answer (e.g. about funding), note an action point to find out.



further thoughts



a bit more about treasured places

Treasured places are everywhere.
We all have our own. You, as an individual, group,
school, organisation or landowner can explore any
'treasured place' that is of interest to you.

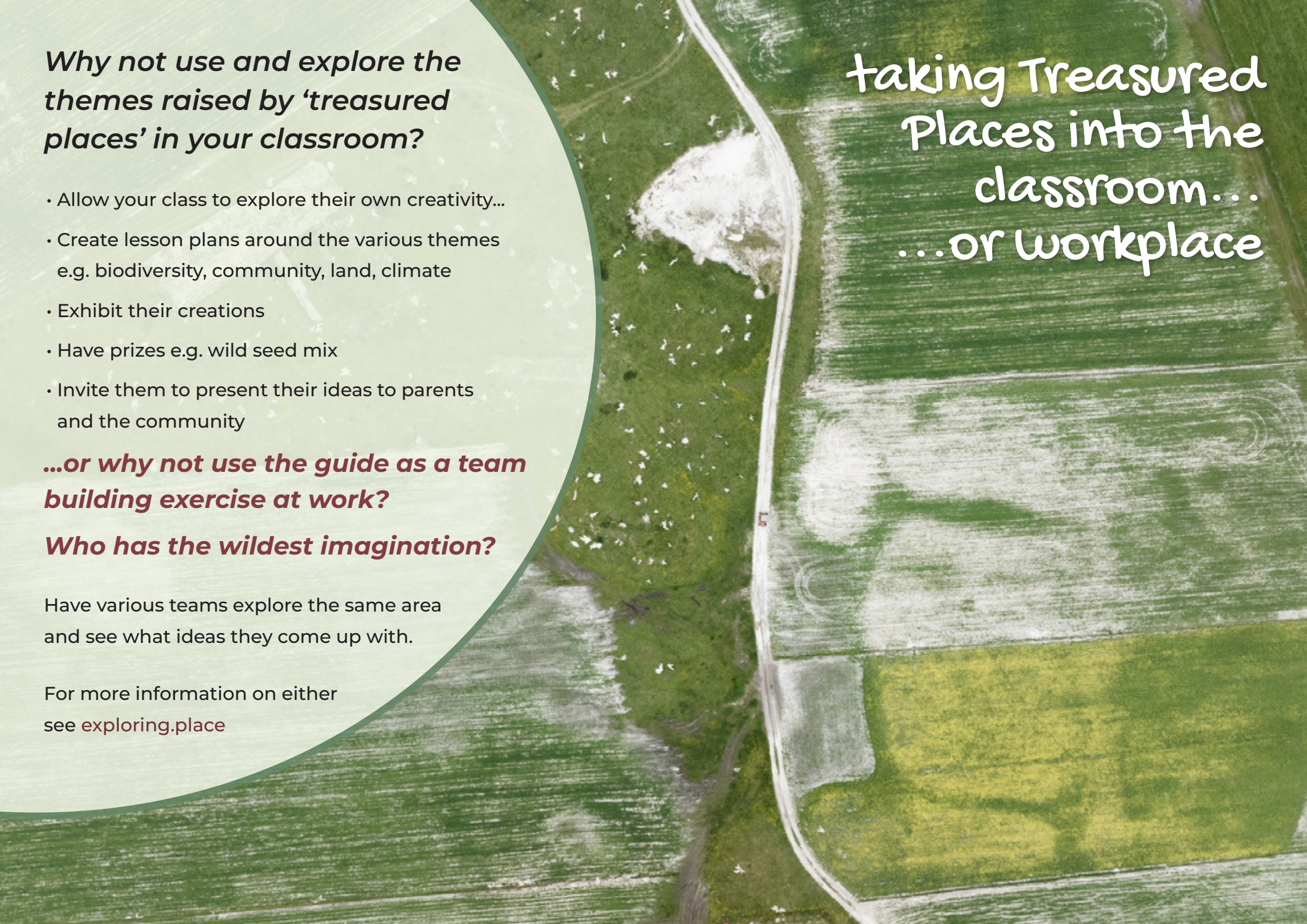
It could be an any area of land, a river, hill, path, or riverbank. Maybe
it's your farm, back garden, a community space, woodland,
or the area around your office. Even a whole river catchment!

Whether exploring individually or in a group, what you should be asking
yourself is who has 'interests' in the place you chose, and then explore
measures that could be taken to increase the harmony between the
various different users (including nature, community, climate, society,
landowner and commercial) into the future. You may be able to get your
ideas taken up by the 'powers that be'. For example, in Scotland,
community councils.

The only things to consider are:

1. HAVE FUN.
2. there is no such thing as a bad idea!
3. in groups, be respectful and allow every voice to be heard.

If you are interested to learn more, including how
treasured places can link to local planning policy,
visit exploring.place

An aerial photograph of a rural landscape. A light-colored road or path runs vertically through the center. To the left of the road is a green field with many small white flowers. To the right is a large green field with some lighter patches, possibly a field of crops or a meadow. The overall scene is bright and green.

Why not use and explore the themes raised by 'treasured places' in your classroom?

- Allow your class to explore their own creativity...
- Create lesson plans around the various themes e.g. biodiversity, community, land, climate
- Exhibit their creations
- Have prizes e.g. wild seed mix
- Invite them to present their ideas to parents and the community

...or why not use the guide as a team building exercise at work?

Who has the wildest imagination?

Have various teams explore the same area and see what ideas they come up with.

For more information on either see exploring.place

taking Treasured Places into the classroom... ...or workplace

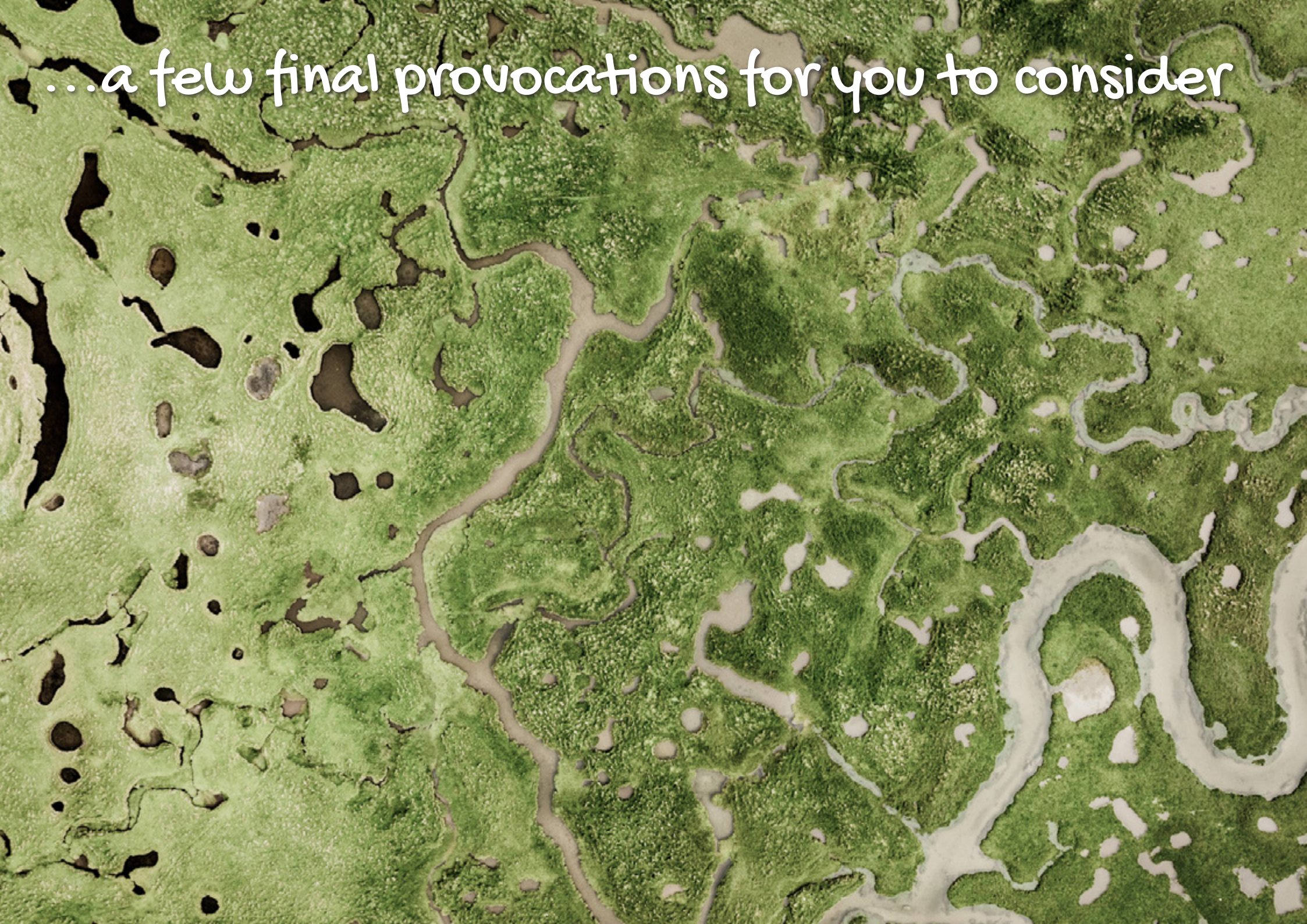
thinking of running a workshop?



In developing this guide we have run various workshops to explore the themes being raised. It can be very rewarding in many ways.

If you are thinking of running a workshop based around 'treasured places' we offer more detailed facilitator notes on our website. Everything from timings to how much cake will be required!

Simply visit exploring.place



...a few final provocations for you to consider

if place mirrors who we are, what does it reflect?





“There has been a 73% decline in the average size of monitored wildlife populations over the past 50 years”


World Wildlife Fund

Why?
...and is that okay?

whose problem is that?



“Half the gases leading to climate change have been emitted since 1990”



"Fewer than 500 people own over half of Scotland's private land. That's not just an economic issue — it's a democratic one."

[source: Andy Wightman]

why?
...and is that okay?

An aerial photograph of a coastal urban area. On the left, a cluster of modern, multi-story apartment buildings with white and grey facades sits on a green lawn. To the right of the buildings is a large, flat, brownish-yellow area of undeveloped land, possibly a former industrial site or wetland. In the foreground, a green artificial turf soccer field with white and yellow markings is visible. The background shows a wide body of water, a distant island, and a cloudy sky. The text "who should have rights to live, grow, and pass through any place?" is overlaid in the top left corner.

who should have rights to live, grow,
and pass through any place?

what rights should they have?

how will they be delivered?



Discussions can get very philosophical! This 'Charter of Rights', for example, forms an artist's consolidation of comments and ideas voiced at two workshops exploring the themes presented on the previous page.

What will your ideas look like?



The ideas on the previous page were then developed into a more coherent presentation format.

Where will your explorations take you?



now you are an expert, maybe ask yourself...

...who is place?

...and whose?

a final comment

Your treasured place will be unique and no guide can supply all the answers. Our aim is to provide you with a self help, open source framework from which you develop your own thinking. How you move forward is for you to decide, be it a project, a campaign, a philosophical discussion or maybe a collaboration.

Use your imaginations and passion, but search engines can help identify case study projects and information that might help developing your ideas and give practical solutions to problems and hurdles you may face. Search engine prompts could include

- How do go I go about forming a community interest group?
- What is a community/sociocracy/cooperative governance model?
- What funding is available for...
- What rights do I have...
- What projects explore...
- I am looking for a guide to collaborating

Why Treasured Places?

An aerial photograph of a Scottish landscape. In the center, a small, white, square stone building with a crenellated roof, likely a castle ruin, sits on a green hill. A dirt road winds through the landscape, passing the ruin. The terrain is a mix of green fields, brown patches of heath, and distant hills under a soft sky.

Land is in a continuous state of change and we are losing contact with the spaces that surround us.

‘Treasured Places’ seeks to help reconnect people of all ages with place, so they may better understand the links and interactions between humans and the natural world, for the benefit of all it’s users, including future generations. It is an interdisciplinary collaboration that draws on many wisdoms, recognising that every place and person are unique, and helping anyone interested to progress their own journey of discovery.

This guide has been produced as part of an immersive project exploring land use across Scotland, the rapidly changing management practices that result in generational change, and the multiple competing interests for place. We hope, however, it can be used by anyone with a desire to explore, imagine, and share...

exploring.place

Ted Leeming

A photographer exploring the tensions and imbalances between place, people and nature

The Participants

Over 80 people who, through workshops, comments and interactions, have contributed to the development of this guide

Steve Connelly

Researcher and land use consultant specialising in stakeholder engagement, research training, research and writing support

Morag Paterson

For her vision in helping develop and facilitate the concept & workshops

Creative Scotland,

Culture for Climate Scotland,

The Stove Network, the GSA Biosphere, and many others who have all contributed thought, funds and passion to the delivery of this guide

Tim Jones

Graphic designer at Webmill

Maia Thomas

For her illustrative genius