

Introduction

Welcome to the City Speaks. These banners tell the stories of local action by ordinary people responding to the climate emergency and other environmental issues in their everyday lives.

Together these stories are a celebration of courage, determination and ingenuity. They show what's possible when people shift from thinking and talking to taking action. They include action at all scales, from individual households and businesses to community action. In many of the cases, those who acted weren't told to do so. They didn't wait for others, they just took the initiative.

We hope you enjoy reading about other Bristolians' inspiration and grit. We would love to hear more about your own stories or possible ideas for future actions. If you have any feedback, please fill out a feedback form.

Further City Speaks stories are available as films online and in the MShed as part of the summer 2022 Think Global: Act Bristol exhibition. City Speaks is a Praxis production supported by The Cabot Institute for the Environment.

Watch the accompanying films by scanning the QR code below:

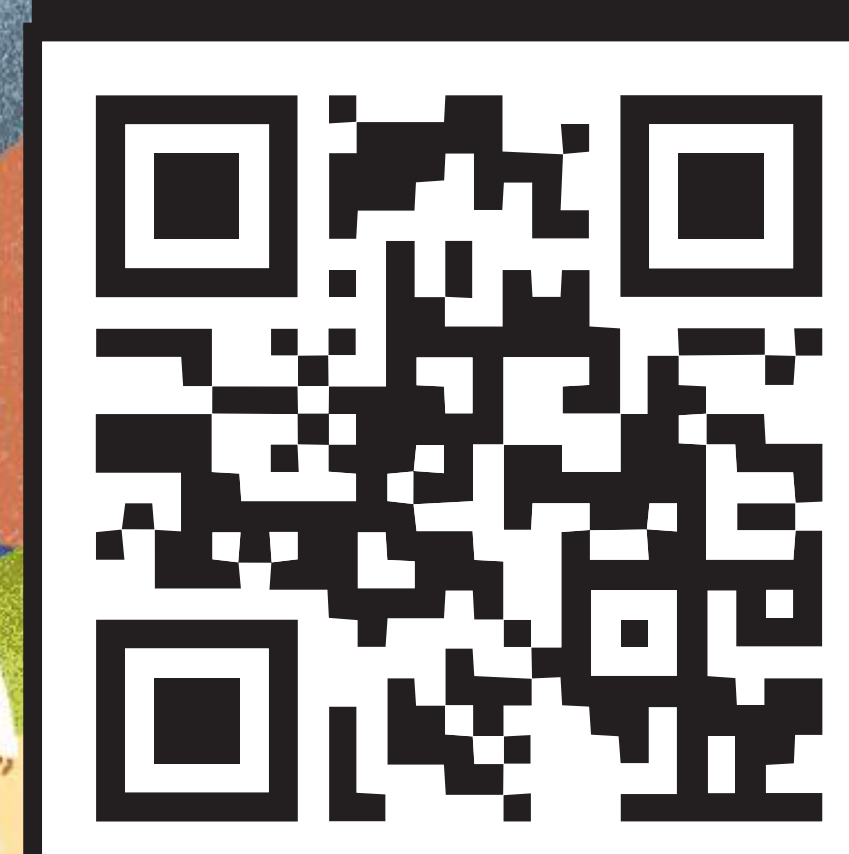
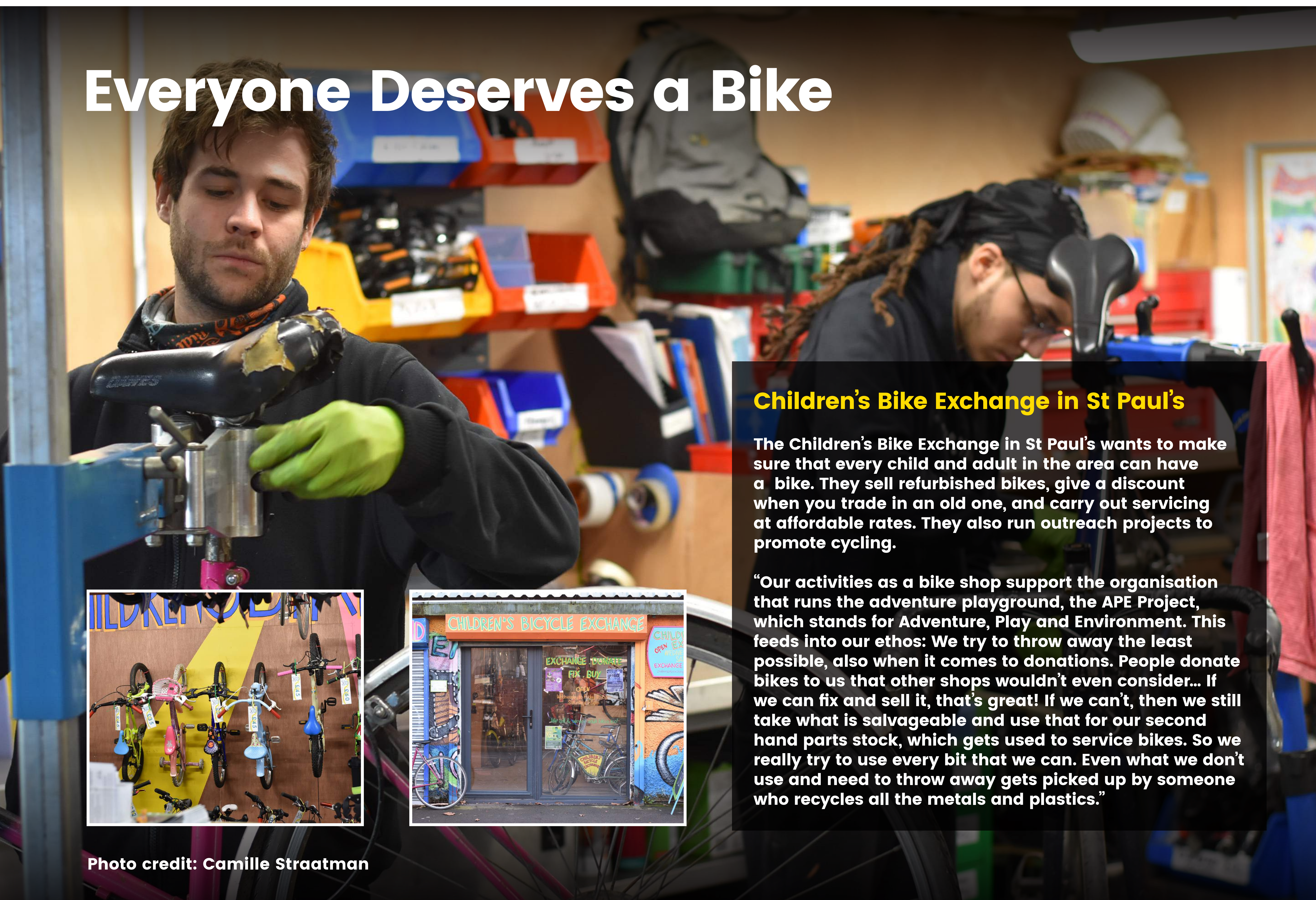


Illustration credit: Dawn Cooper

Everyone Deserves a Bike



Children's Bike Exchange in St Paul's

The Children's Bike Exchange in St Paul's wants to make sure that every child and adult in the area can have a bike. They sell refurbished bikes, give a discount when you trade in an old one, and carry out servicing at affordable rates. They also run outreach projects to promote cycling.

"Our activities as a bike shop support the organisation that runs the adventure playground, the APE Project, which stands for Adventure, Play and Environment. This feeds into our ethos: We try to throw away the least possible, also when it comes to donations. People donate bikes to us that other shops wouldn't even consider... If we can fix and sell it, that's great! If we can't, then we still take what is salvageable and use that for our second hand parts stock, which gets used to service bikes. So we really try to use every bit that we can. Even what we don't use and need to throw away gets picked up by someone who recycles all the metals and plastics."



Photo credit: Camille Straatman

Replacing the Canopy

Liz and Simon's tree planting project

Simon dreamt of planting trees from his early childhood, when he saw trees that he loved blown down by the great storm of 1987. Now with his partner Liz, he has managed to make his dream come true. The couple have planted over 10,000 trees in the last 10 years, on their land between Bristol and Bath.

Their two children (7 and 8 years old) get involved with the planting every winter, and learn all about planting and growing. Liz and Simon's woodland is also contributing to biodiversity and resilience, as they are careful to choose a diverse mix of trees. That means that if a future tree disease wipes out one species, there will be others that do well.

Buying the land was a challenge. It involved saving up by not flying abroad for holidays (which also saved carbon), and years of looking and bidding for land until they finally found the right plot. This first project has been so successful that they are now looking for their next plot of land!



Photo credit: Liz and Simon's tree planting project

Wildly Different



Imayla urban-rural connections

Since it started in 2001, Imayla has become a trusted organisation working in East Bristol. Their aim is to foster urban-rural creative connections. Working with Imayla, young people who spend much of their time in the city have become confident going out into the countryside, playing in the sea, and feeling safe and at home in their local park.

The 'Wildly Different' programme starts with a taster day in the city, then going out for a day trip to somewhere with water, and finally a whole weekend away camping. Young people are supported to face their fears, whether of dogs in city parks or the wildness of the sea or being out on a lake. Once the group of young people has got to know each other, their families are invited to join in. Away from the city, everyone is on an equal standing. Imayla provides a tent and you put it up, share, cook, and get on with it.

Imayla means 'well done/thank you' in Igbo, a language spoken in southern Nigeria and other parts of west Africa. This warmth and welcome runs through everything they do.



Photo credit: Imayla urban-rural connections

Guerilla gardening for food Justice

Edible Bristol

The volunteers of Edible Bristol have built over 40 edible gardens in Bristol's parks, street corners, and station platforms with the belief that no space is too small (or too large!) to cultivate crops.

Their guerilla gardening tactics to access land are popular: "Nobody likes derelict, unkept and unloved spaces. I'm yet to meet a person who doesn't love beautiful plants and everybody needs food!"

Sara Venn the founder explained: "We wanted to start a conversation and practical dialogue in public space, and to make people aware that being in a city shouldn't limit people from connecting with food growing and connecting to the land. We've learned over the years that a lot of people want to learn more about food growing but haven't got the skills and the opportunities, or don't know where to start."

Edible Bristol have worked in collaboration with local communities and organisations, building bridges and solidarity. Food justice has become increasingly important for the group, who link food poverty and climate emergency. "One of the reasons why we enjoy such a broad base of community support is because we tend to bring a solution to a problem."

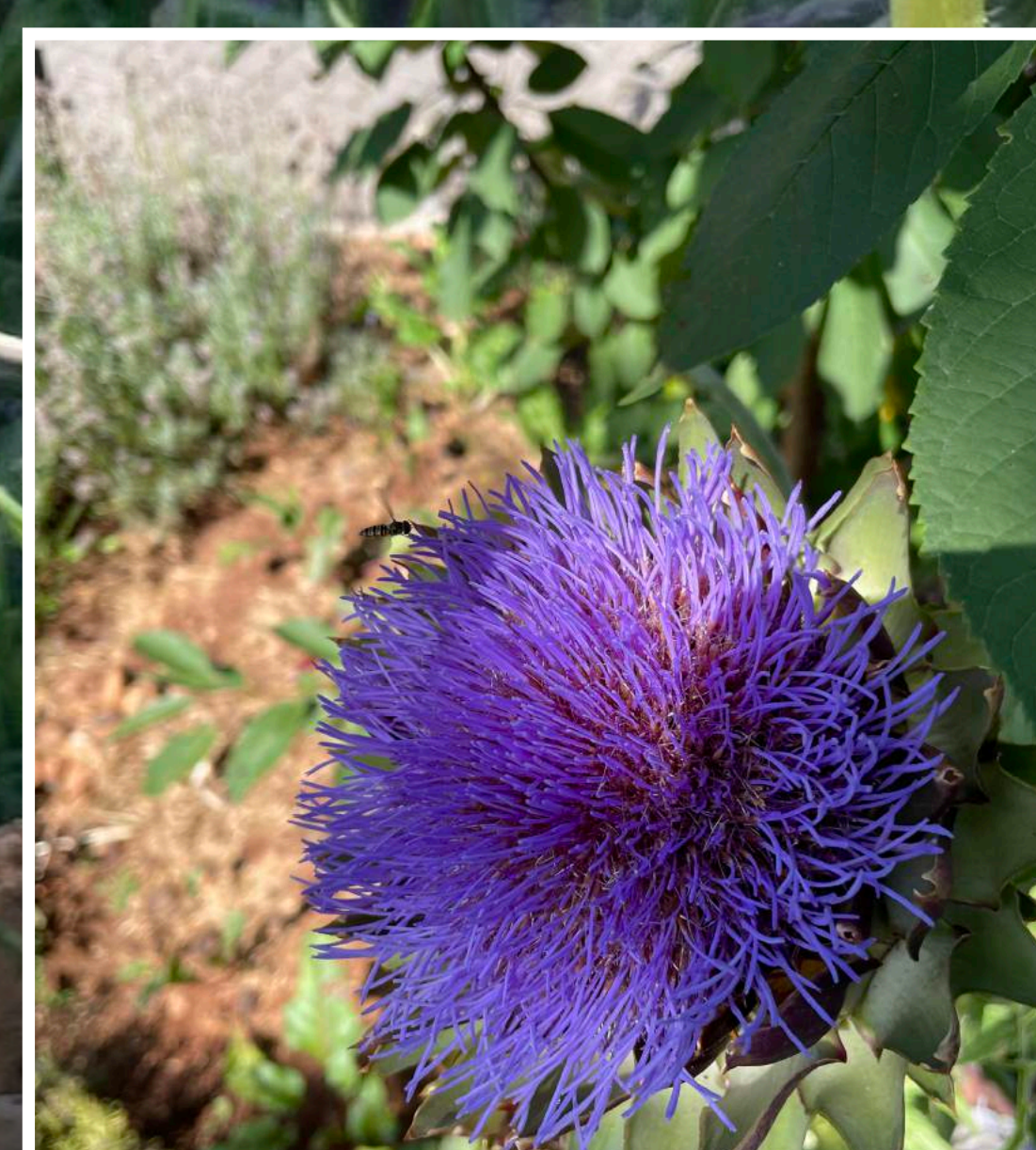


Photo credit: Jack Nicholls

Pedal Powered Plumbing in Bristol



Plumber Benedict Sansam

Benedict is Bristol's first pedal-powered plumber, who goes the extra mile to replace taps, fix toilets, and install heaters in Bristolian homes, all by bike. We asked them why they chose to cycle their tools around this hilly city:

"It is a no brainer, really. Cycling is good for the environment, for health, for your personal health but also other people's... it is non-polluting and it's also good for my mental health."

"People love cycling plumbers. They perceive me to be more trustworthy because I care about the environment. The only negative comments I've had are from other tradespeople, but some find it very cool. I think there is a fear of standing out in the trades and people are often very attached to their vehicles, although I do know a cycling electrician and a cycling painter and decorator. It would be interesting to see what happens in the future, and what will happen with electric bicycles and the legislation around that. Are people going to be supported with cycling efforts?"

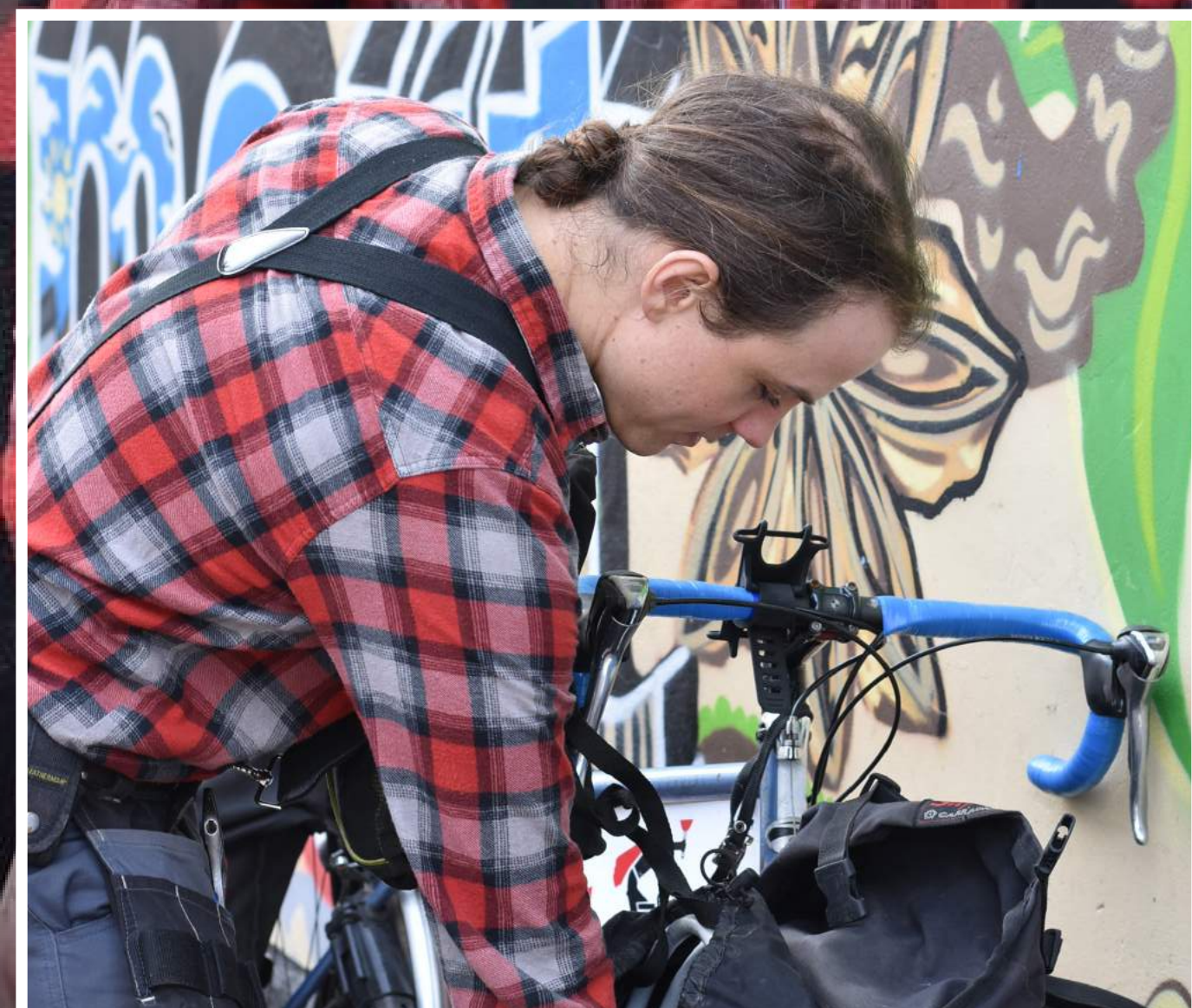


Photo credit: Camille Straatman

Healthy Veg for and by the Community



The Green Melon

The Green Melon shop was set up after the lockdowns to provide people in St Paul's with affordable, healthy, low-waste, locally available vegetables. It started with a veg box scheme run from St Paul's Learning Centre so people wouldn't have to travel to big supermarkets for their food shop during lockdown. After the lockdowns ended, people in St Paul's still needed affordable healthy veg, so the Green Melon shop was founded.

It is a family business run by Tara and John. They explained that St Paul's has a lot of takeaways and corner shops but needed a locally-run shop that sells healthy, affordable, locally grown, environmentally friendly, and plastic-free (as much as possible) vegetables.

"There are some fully organic shops around and what they're doing is amazing, but they are not affordable for everyone. We can't make enough impact if the richest 20% can shop organic and the rest of us have to shop at big cheaper supermarkets with lots of unsustainably grown, plastic-wrapped products".

"Providing affordable veg, especially with the veg boxes, also really helps to encourage people to eat more vegetables and healthy food, which is something we hear a lot from our community members".



Photo credit: Camille Straatman

Switching to Clean Transport

Carpenter Jonny's EV

Carpenter Jonny recently made the switch to a fully electric van. "I've been waiting to get an electric van since electric cars first came in. The issue was the size: as a carpenter I need a van big enough to fit a sheet of plywood. I finally got the van a year ago on a leasing arrangement. I wouldn't be able to afford to buy it outright as it's £50k on the road, but Mercedes had a one-year lease that made it affordable for me"

"It's lovely. I hated to think of the toxic diesel fumes, driving past schools and poisoning those little lungs. Awful."

"The electricity is all renewable - I have a renewable tariff at home - I set it to charge at off peak times so I'm not hogging the wind power. The charge point at my house was free with the van and I only need to charge it once a week as all my jobs are local, so I've offered to hire out the charge point to neighbours to encourage them to get electric vehicles. I'd be really happy if I could persuade two people to take the plunge."



Photo credit: Jack Nicholls

Upcycling & Upskilling Knowle West

Re:work

Re:work helps young people in Knowle West to develop practical skills for sustainability, including landscape management and a furniture re-use and restoration project.

Re:work's story starts in the late 90s when there were concerns around youth unemployment and a lack of meaningful activities in Knowle West. An empty school building that was going to be used as a TV set provided a great opportunity for young people to learn some painting and decorating. The project was a success and soon they started working on refurbishing and renovating local homes, especially with quick wins such as free draught proofing and support with energy efficiency, and sharing these skills more widely with local residents.

They have now started refurbishing and selling old furniture in their high street shop on Filwood Broadway, which has just re-launched after a major fire caused significant damage. It not only sells refurbished furniture, but also hosts repair cafes and training, and enables local makers and upcyclers to sell on commission or host workshops.



Photo credit: Re:Work

Connecting human & planetary health

Southmead Hospital's Nature Recovery Ranger

Did you know that Southmead Hospital has 19 hectares of green space? They are now providing access to this green space and outdoor activities to improve the mental and physical health of patients, healthcare staff and local residents.

The hospital is working with the Centre for Sustainable Healthcare to host a Nature Recovery Ranger and three Nature Recovery interns.

Nature Recovery intern Daisy explains: "So many hospitals have this amazing green space, hectares and hectares of it. Bristol is probably one of the smaller ones and we still have so much to offer to communities. For example, we have an allotment gardening club that people can be referred to by their link worker as part of the growing movement towards green social prescribing and all rangers are doing Forest School training to see what the hospital can offer to schools that don't have that outdoor space".

Other activities include the creation of a rooftop herb garden that is used by the hospital kitchen, allotments for staff, rewilding meadows and the creation of a map that shows the quickest routes between the hospital and its green spaces. They have also hosted butterfly survey walks, relaxing nature walks for staff and more...



Photo credit: Southmead Hospital's Nature Recovery Ranger

Did you know that Bristol is twinned with Beira?

Bristol Link with Beira

Beira, a low-lying coastal city in Mozambique, is one of the world's most at-risk cities for climate disasters. It has always been vulnerable to flooding, but since 2000 the annual flooding risk and vulnerability to cyclones has become much worse due to climate change. There were especially bad floods in 2019, during Cyclone Idai; and again in 2021 with Cyclone Eloise. A recently completed green urban park, the largest in Southern Africa, includes flood plains and mangrove planting to alleviate the effects of flooding.

Bristol has a special relationship with Beira as a twin city. This city friendship agreement was set up in 1990 to support the struggle against Apartheid in nearby South Africa.

The cities are building on this twinning relationship to collaborate on climate resilience. The charity Bristol Link with Beira (BLB) raised funds in 2019 to rebuild a community centre using cyclone resistant roofing techniques, and in the lead-up to COP 26, published posts on social media and the website describing how communities in Beira are addressing each of the SDGs.

Did you know, one of the meeting rooms in City Hall is named after Beira? BLB is a voluntary organisation and would love to hear from you if you would like to support their work in any way.



Photo credit: Bristol Link with Beira

Eating for Community and Climate

Bristol National Food Service

National Food Service Bristol organises weekly pay-as-you-can community meals in Lockleaze for friends and neighbours to cook and eat together. NFS Bristol's founder Louise explains that Lockleaze needed more opportunities for people to get together in an affordable and accessible way, and that communal eating is not only important for the community but also for the environment. How does communal eating reduce environmental impact?

"At home, people sometimes throw away half of the food they buy and each person is using gas and electricity individually. We reduce our food waste as much as possible; we freeze all our leftovers and sell them as takeaway and only use gas and electricity once to feed many people. We also occasionally get surplus food and always have a veggie or vegan option, which we really encourage people to try. It is always fun to discover new food."



Photo credit: Bristol National Food Service