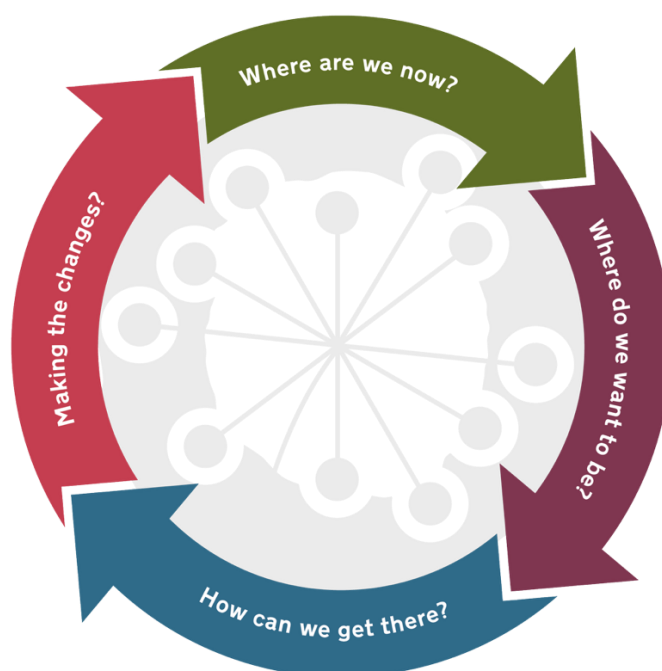


Making Practical Changes to School Grounds

This short toolkit is provided to support practical changes in school grounds, no matter what the changes are. This document contains overall principles and steps which you should consider before any changes are made in a school grounds.

Practical changes are only a small part of the LtL Process of Change. Please familiarise yourself with the process below and be confident you have consulted and thoughtfully arrived at a decision to make changes.



Before you start the practical changes to your grounds, please ensure that you have:

- Undertaken your site audit to highlight the challenges your site has in relation to climate change.
- Read the Engaging your Pupils document, to ensure that learners are fully involved.
- Read the Technical Area Introductions, which focus your priorities.
- Read the Practical Options for Change, to make choices over which practical options you are to implement.



Please read the introduction to each area and use the boxes to make notes.

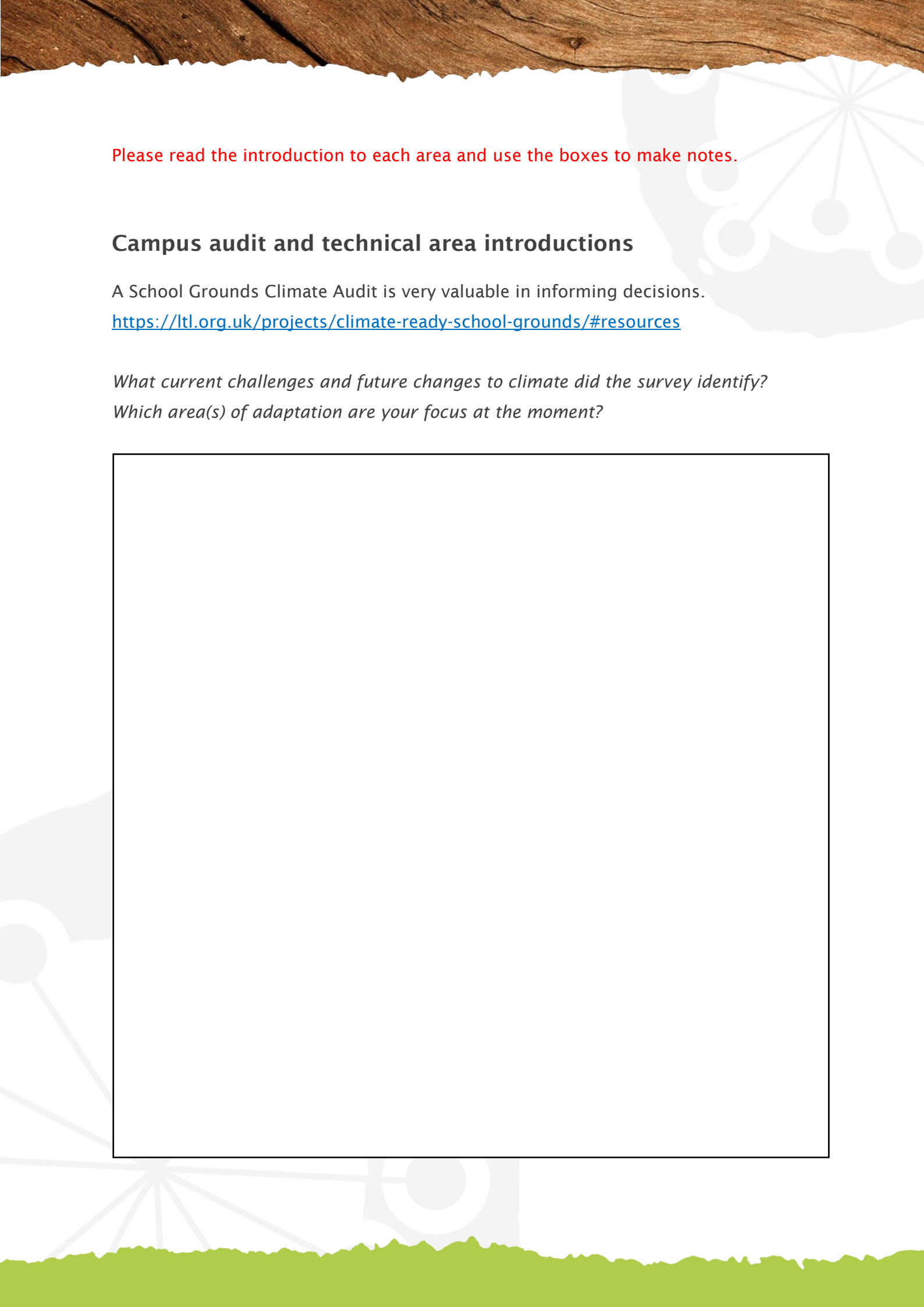
Campus audit and technical area introductions

A School Grounds Climate Audit is very valuable in informing decisions.

<https://ltl.org.uk/projects/climate-ready-school-grounds/#resources>

What current challenges and future changes to climate did the survey identify?

Which area(s) of adaptation are your focus at the moment?

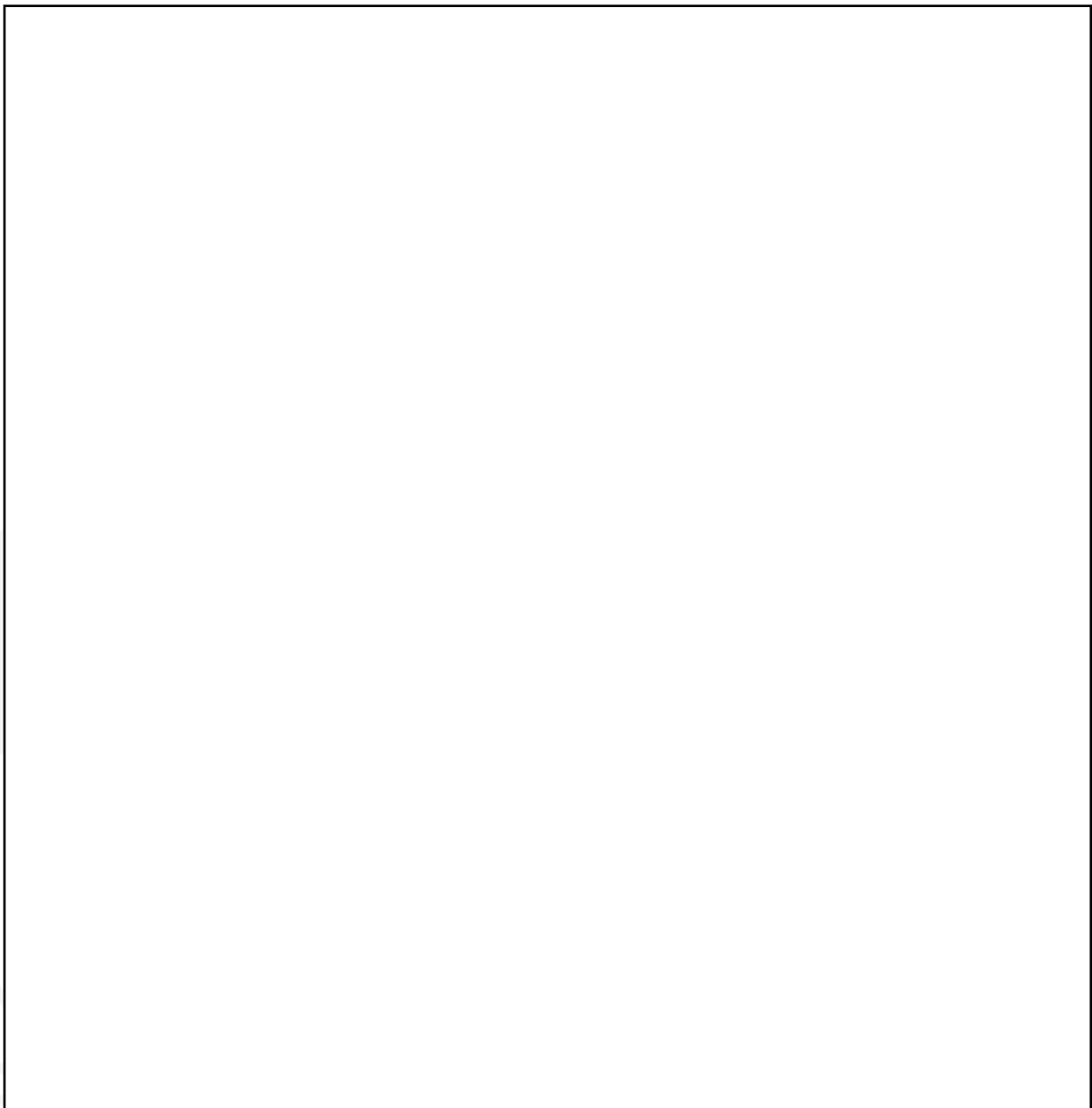




Local and specialist advice

Within the school community and local community you may have individuals with expertise in things such as gardening, tree planting, surface water management, or pupil involvement in planting and practical changes. Local councils or environmental charities also often have a role in supporting climate adaptation and biodiversity gain. Do ask colleagues, pupils and parent council representatives before answering this.

Who can help with specific advice to you about your changes?

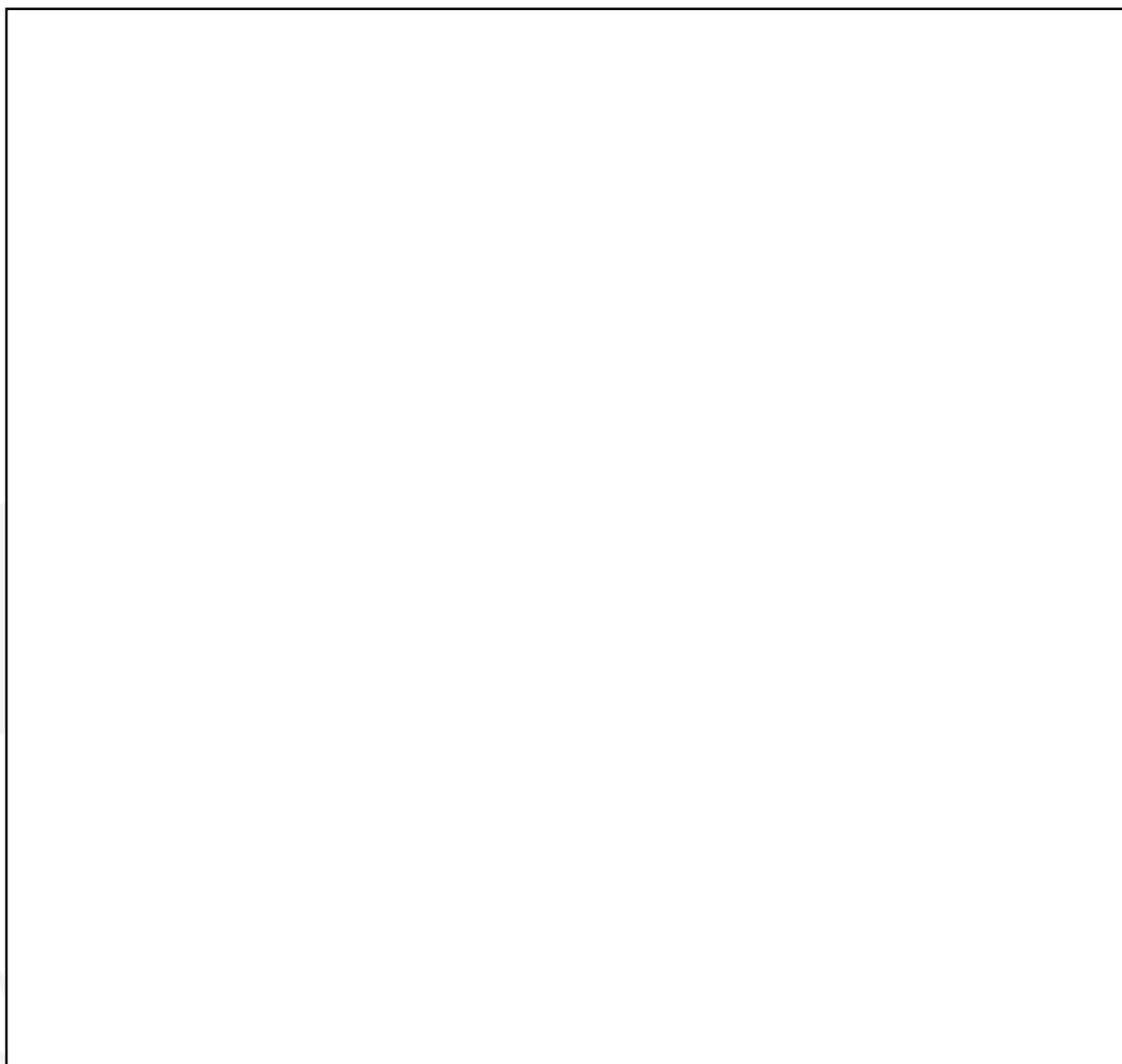


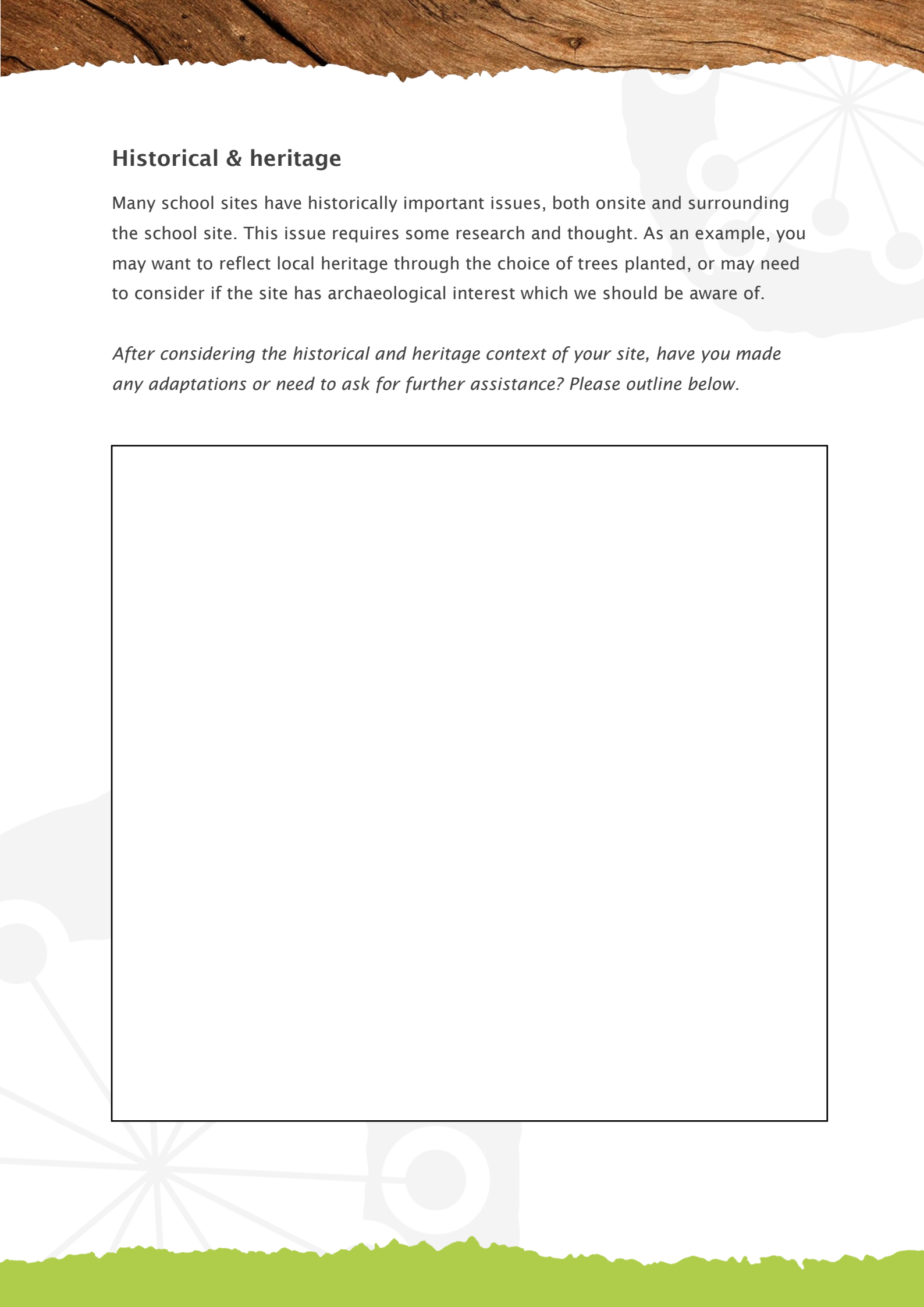


Learner involvement

We believe that the process of improving school grounds should always involve the users – the pupils. The process of auditing, decision making and implementation of climate adapted spaces in school grounds is an important learning opportunity. This should extend to as many pupils as possible, ideally connected to curricular learning, and not rely solely on a small group such as an eco-committee.

How are your pupils going to be engaged in the planning, decision-making and implementing these climate adaptations?

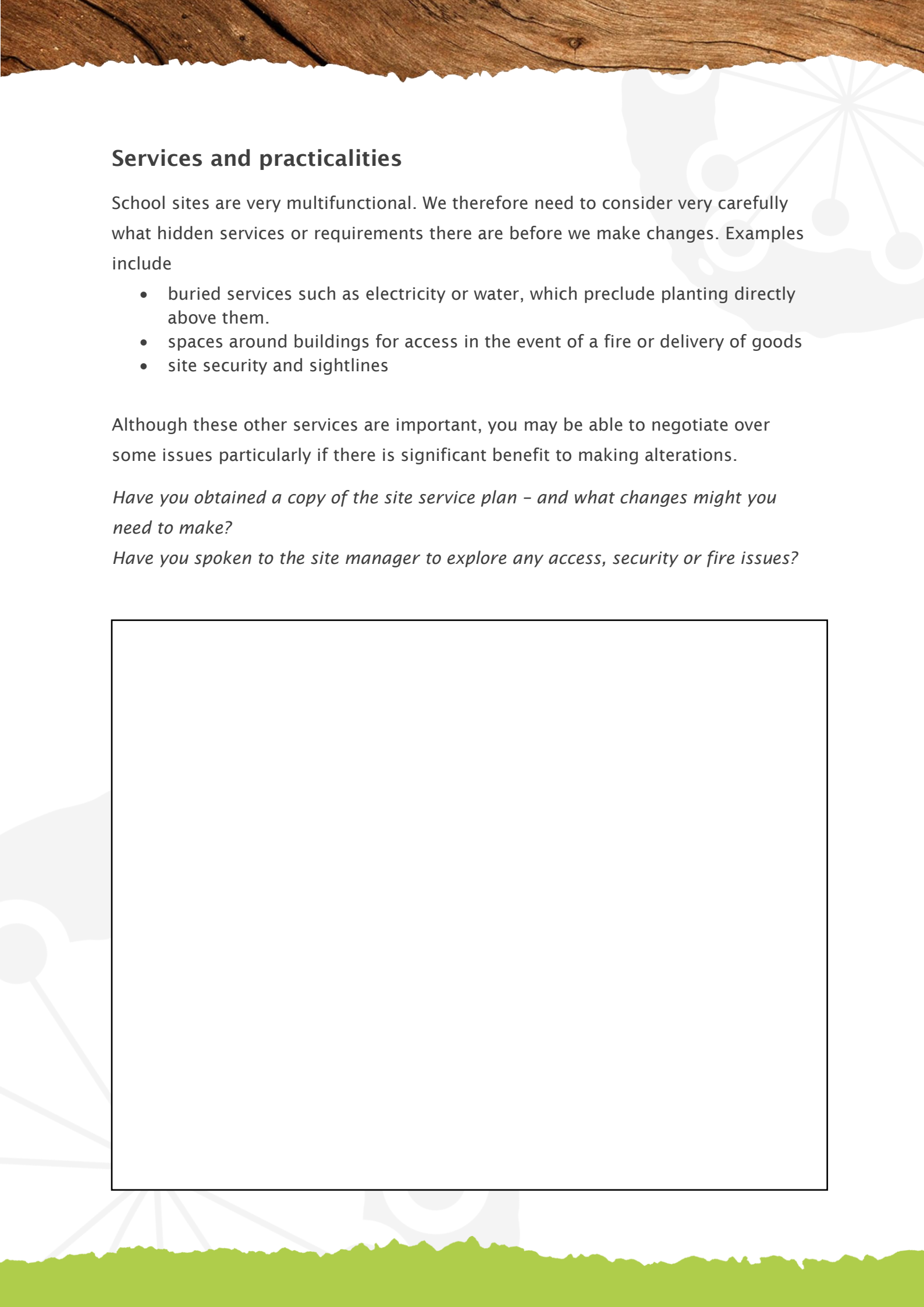




Historical & heritage

Many school sites have historically important issues, both onsite and surrounding the school site. This issue requires some research and thought. As an example, you may want to reflect local heritage through the choice of trees planted, or may need to consider if the site has archaeological interest which we should be aware of.

After considering the historical and heritage context of your site, have you made any adaptations or need to ask for further assistance? Please outline below.



Services and practicalities

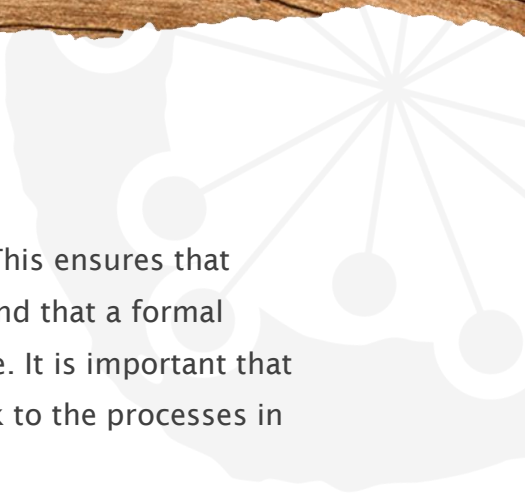
School sites are very multifunctional. We therefore need to consider very carefully what hidden services or requirements there are before we make changes. Examples include

- buried services such as electricity or water, which preclude planting directly above them.
- spaces around buildings for access in the event of a fire or delivery of goods
- site security and sightlines

Although these other services are important, you may be able to negotiate over some issues particularly if there is significant benefit to making alterations.

Have you obtained a copy of the site service plan – and what changes might you need to make?

Have you spoken to the site manager to explore any access, security or fire issues?

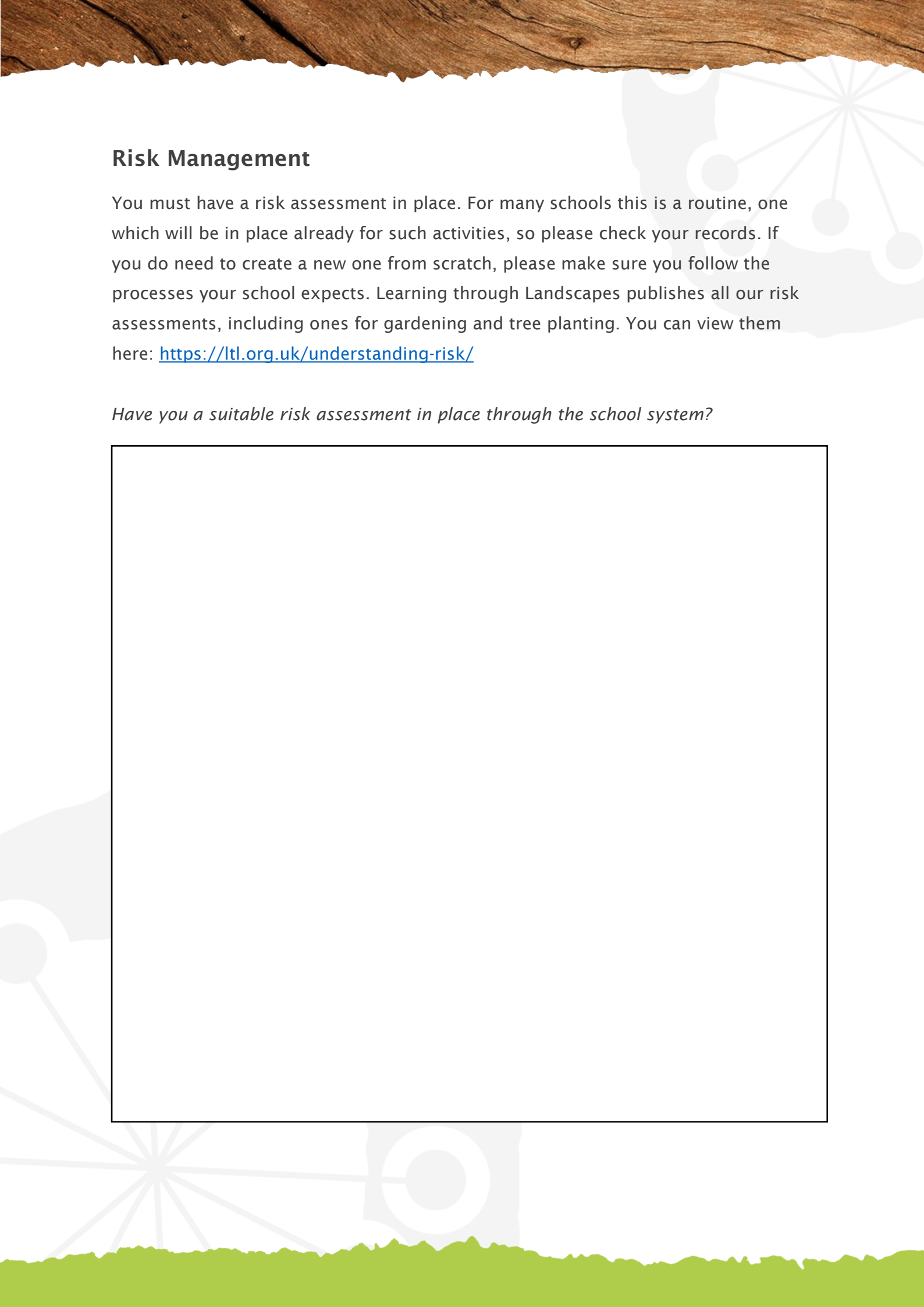


Permissions for practical changes

Most site owners have a process to notify them of changes. This ensures that practicalities (see previous question) have been considered and that a formal adoption of the changed spaces and resources can take place. It is important that you build a good relationship with the site manager and stick to the processes in place.

*Who and what is the process for gaining permission to make your changes?
Is there any formal 'adoption' process when the changes have been made?*





Risk Management

You must have a risk assessment in place. For many schools this is a routine, one which will be in place already for such activities, so please check your records. If you do need to create a new one from scratch, please make sure you follow the processes your school expects. Learning through Landscapes publishes all our risk assessments, including ones for gardening and tree planting. You can view them here: <https://ltl.org.uk/understanding-risk/>

Have you a suitable risk assessment in place through the school system?



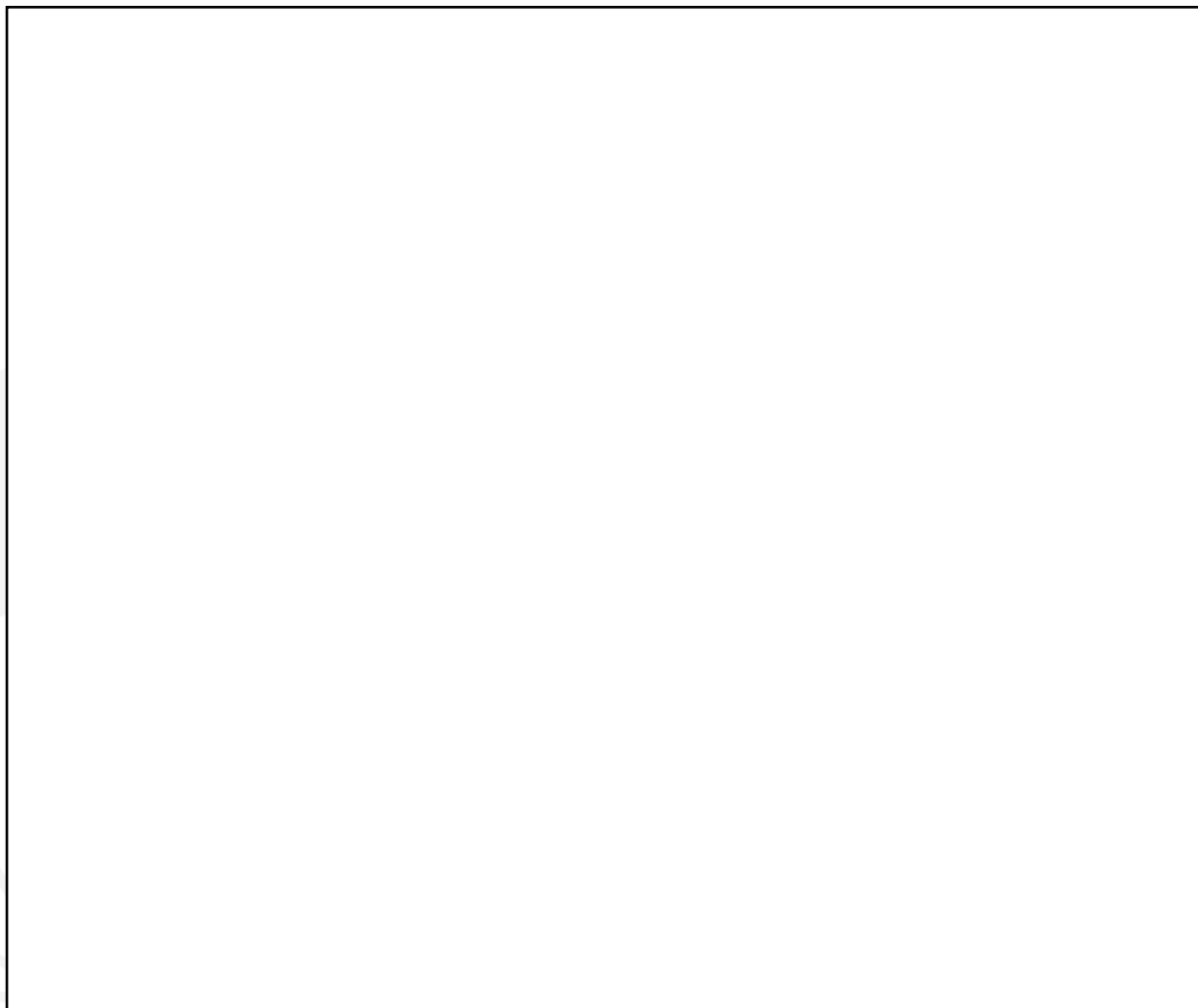
Ethos and learner access

Spaces in school grounds are multifunctional, and the children will benefit a lot from accessing your new, climate adapted, nature rich spaces.

While it may be appropriate in some spaces to exclude children through fencing or restrictions, do consider carefully the benefits of enabling access for children.

Fences can be temporary while young trees or plants grow, you can provide pathways and spaces between smaller restricted areas, spaces can be created with enough room for children to move around between the new plants and trees. You should also consider how you can make access inclusive and appropriate for those pupils and staff with additional needs.

How will the pupils be enabled to access the spaces you are creating?

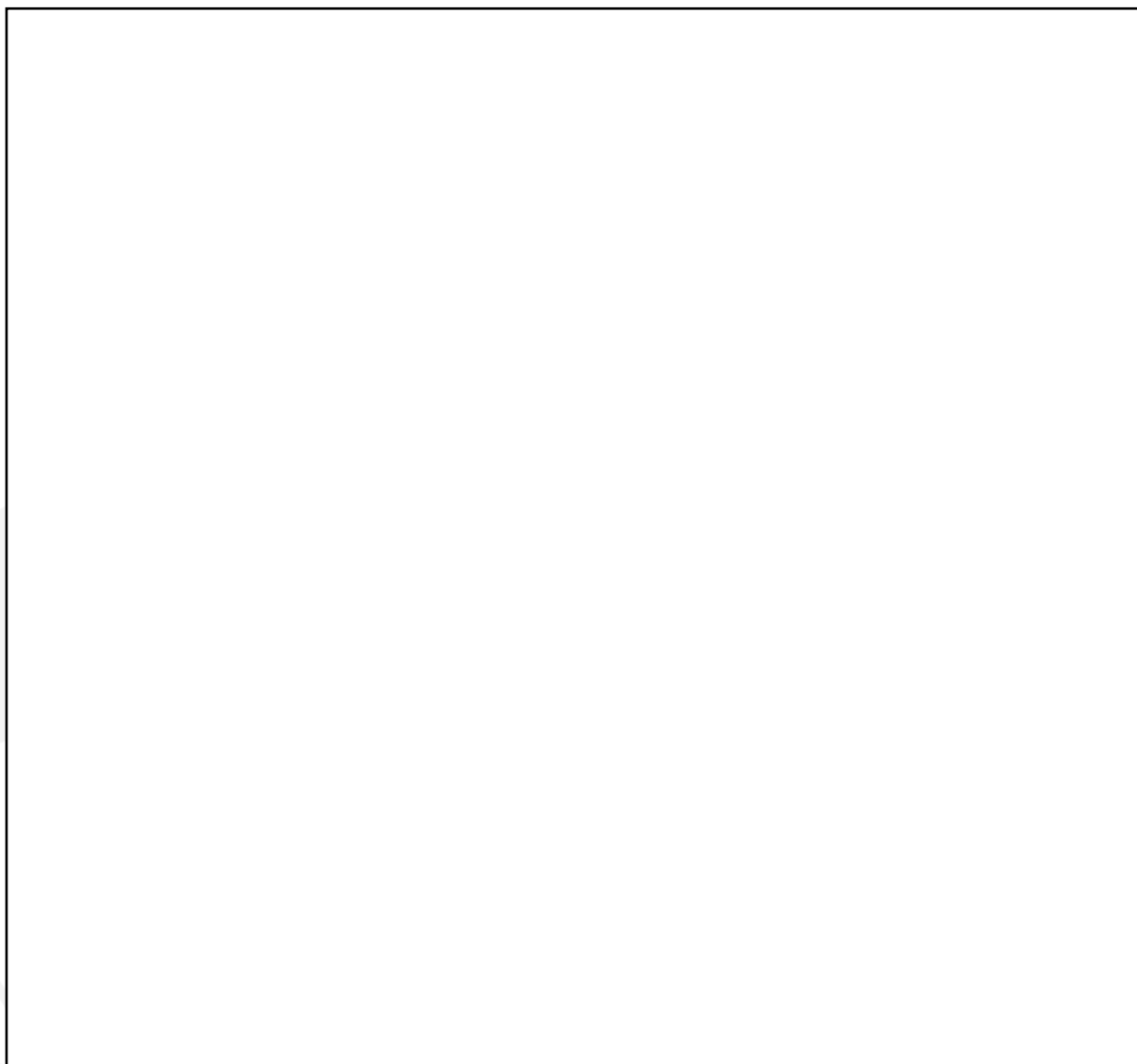


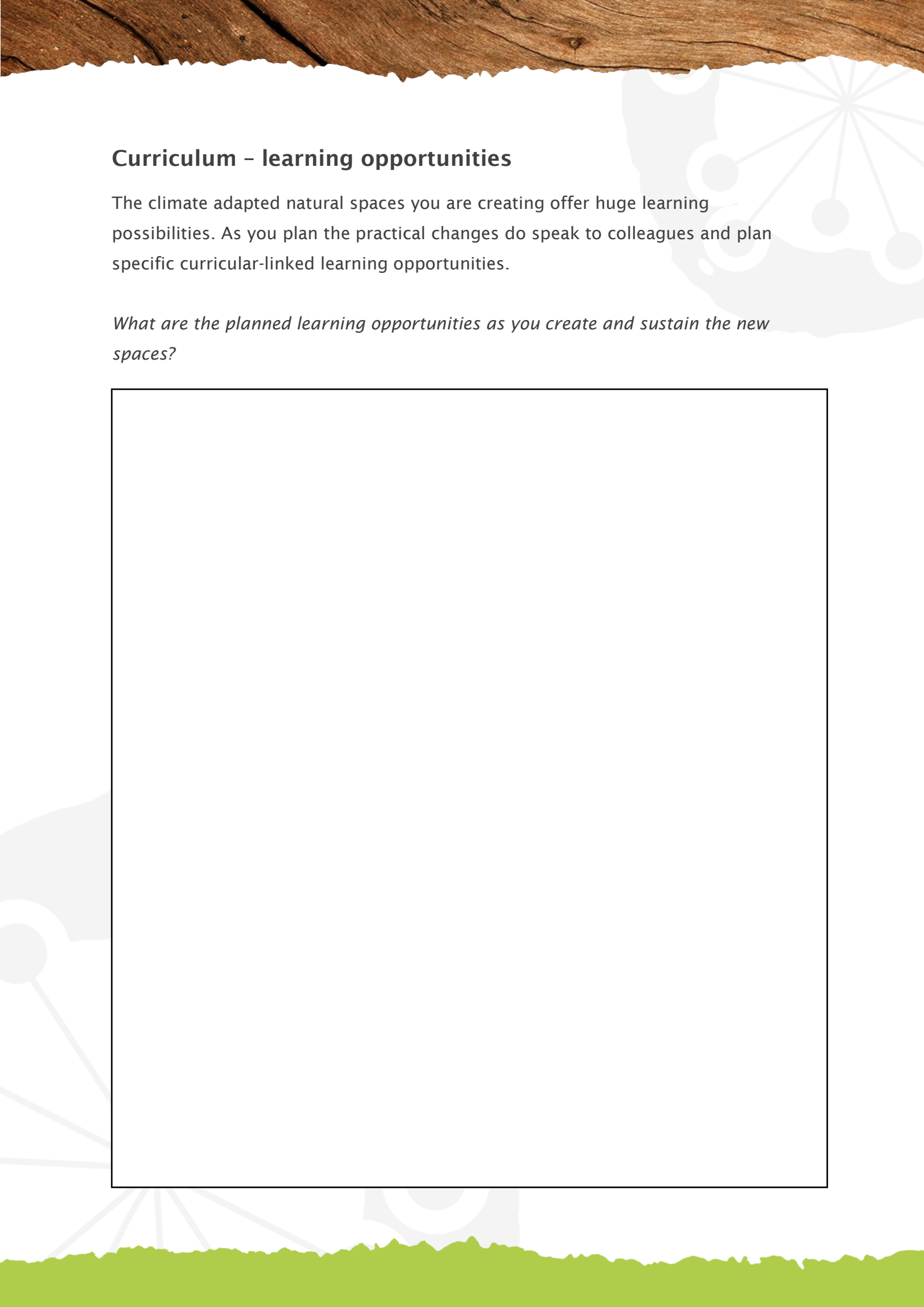


Use of the changed spaces for play

Playing in nature has significant benefits for all children and young people. The benefits include improving physical and mental health, developing pro-environmental attitudes, nature and climate literacy. Access to nature on a daily basis is a right for all children. Yet the access can be considered carefully – trees and hedges alongside paths, garden areas next to entrances or classroom windows are examples of being very close to nature. You may also be able to allow much closer access as trees mature, shrubs or hedges grow larger.

What are your plans for enabling play around or in your new spaces?

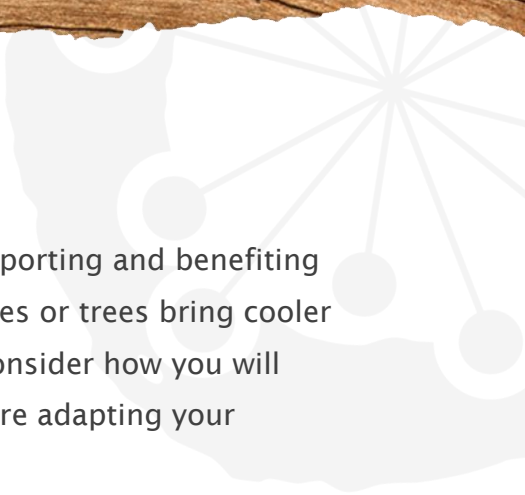




Curriculum – learning opportunities

The climate adapted natural spaces you are creating offer huge learning possibilities. As you plan the practical changes do speak to colleagues and plan specific curricular-linked learning opportunities.

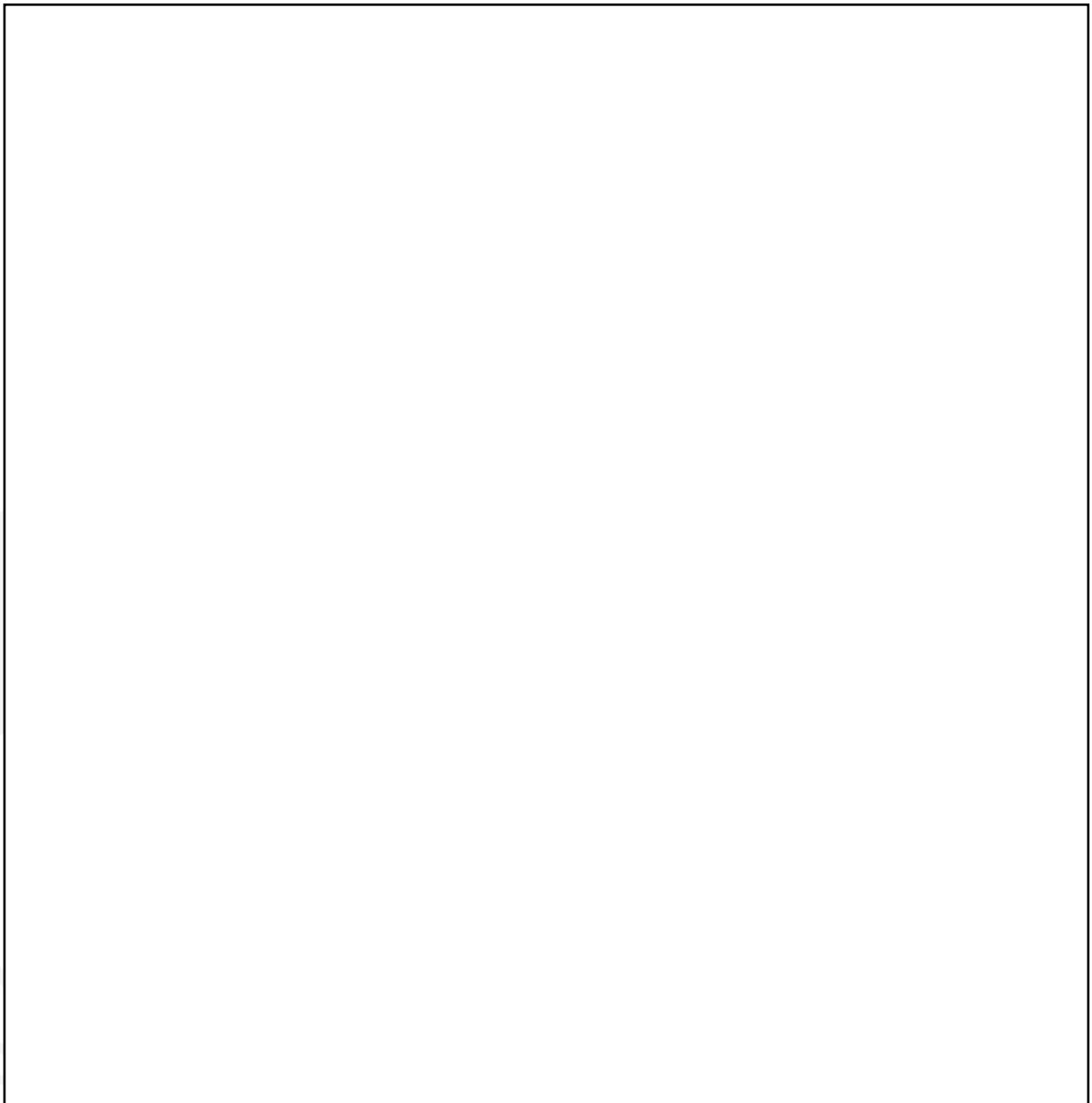
What are the planned learning opportunities as you create and sustain the new spaces?

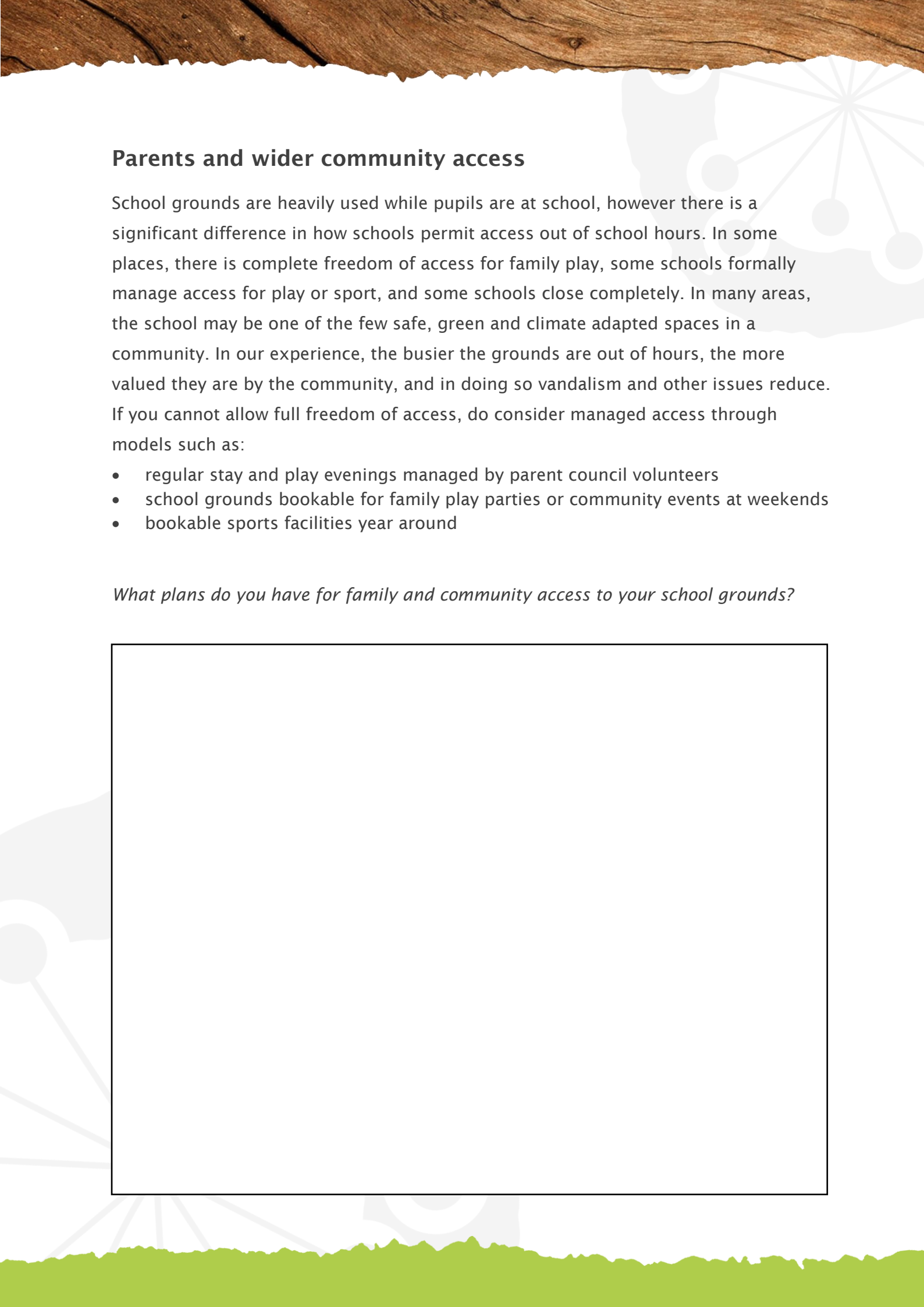


Community engagement and benefit

The wider community can often have a significant role in supporting and benefiting from your changes to spaces. This may be that the new hedges or trees bring cooler spaces, but also change the views which neighbours have. Consider how you will communicate to the community about the reasons why you are adapting your spaces.

What plans do you have to communicate the changes to the school neighbours and other community members?



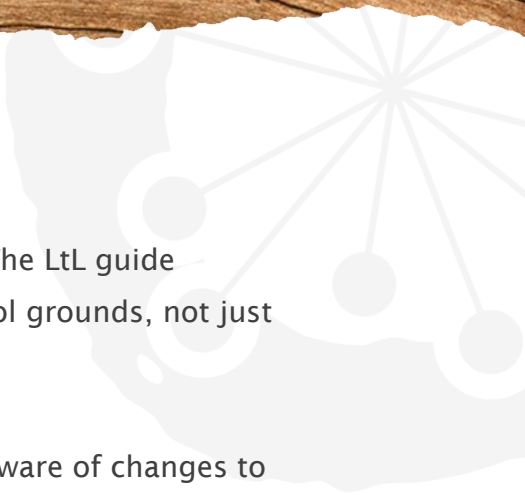


Parents and wider community access

School grounds are heavily used while pupils are at school, however there is a significant difference in how schools permit access out of school hours. In some places, there is complete freedom of access for family play, some schools formally manage access for play or sport, and some schools close completely. In many areas, the school may be one of the few safe, green and climate adapted spaces in a community. In our experience, the busier the grounds are out of hours, the more valued they are by the community, and in doing so vandalism and other issues reduce. If you cannot allow full freedom of access, do consider managed access through models such as:

- regular stay and play evenings managed by parent council volunteers
- school grounds bookable for family play parties or community events at weekends
- bookable sports facilities year around

What plans do you have for family and community access to your school grounds?



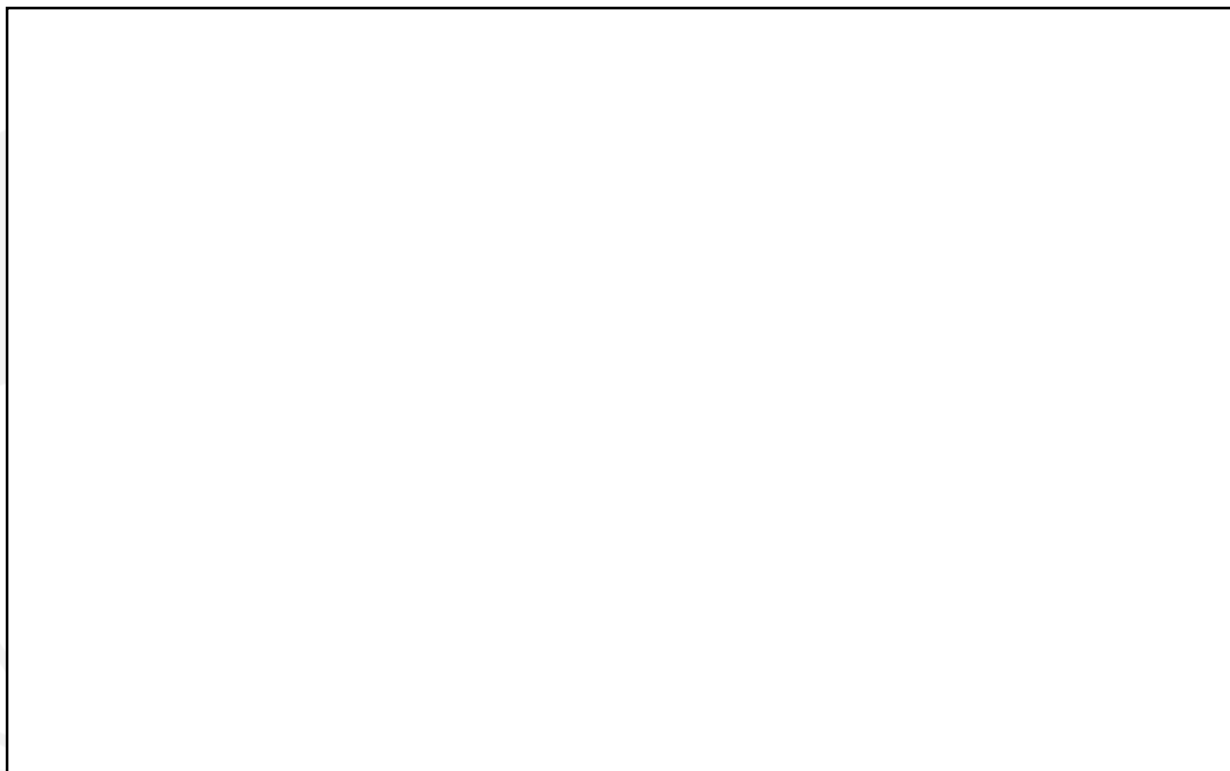
Maintenance of spaces

All spaces need a maintenance plan and pupil involvement. The LtL guide [‘Polli:Nation Maintenance Booklet’](#) is appropriate for all school grounds, not just those focused on pollinator friendly areas.

It is also important to note that subcontractors are often unaware of changes to spaces or are locked into specific maintenance contracts which they have to meet. Do, therefore, make sure that alongside formal notification of changes to the site owner, you also check that the maintenance team or subcontractors are aware of the changes and how to adapt their routine. This may represent a change in attitude and skills for some, moving from as neat as possible to nature being allowed to flourish.

Alongside formal maintenance, pupils and others in the school community can get involved in maintenance. This has many benefits for pupils, from ownership of the grounds, through better mental health, or developing the young workforce.

What maintenance plan have you got in place?





Sharing your changes and learning

It is important to share your success with all in the school community. As large and ever-changing communities, schools often struggle to keep awareness of projects for more than a short period of time.

We suggest planning how you might share the changes and learning with the whole school community using noticeboards, assemblies and newsletters. Photographs convey a lot, as does a focus on the 'why' things have been done.

You may also want to consider the opportunity for pupils as a learning experience to contact local press and share their work and the changes made. This has the benefit of engaging the wider community in climate adaptation awareness.

What is your sharing plan?

