

We asked people all over the country to make artwork and write poems responding to the natural world around them.

Art by Post: Poems for Our Planet is a series of creative booklets, designed by artists and activists, that guide participants through activities, and use poetry, creativity and nature to inspire and support wellbeing, while also making connections with the living world around us.

Artists and gardeners Bibo & Brian Keeley, Shazea Quraishi, Anna Selby, Paul Pulford, Doug Francisco, Love Ssega, Jess Thom, Amanda Thomson, Lemn Sissay and Ackroyd & Harvey were commissioned as part of this project, and the six booklets they created were then sent out by post and email to more than 4,000 people aged 18 to 92 across the UK.

This series of six booklets focused on how creativity and the natural world can support wellbeing, and explored feelings and positive action around climate change. Artists led participants, step by step, through creative tasks to develop their own creative responses.

The booklets came with a Freepost envelope and an email address for participants to send their responses back by post or email to the Southbank Centre from March to July 2023. As part of the Southbank Centre's *Planet Summer* season, artists Ackroyd & Harvey were commissioned to make a public art installation based on the *Art by Post: Poems for Our Planet* project. The resulting artwork created from living grass features some of the poems from the Art by Post community, providing a platform for voices from all over the country.

This souvenir collection is a record of the wide variety of poems, writing, illustrations and paintings sent back to the Southbank Centre from across the UK.

Huge thanks to all the participants involved for their contribution to the project.

'In My Eden'

By Kevin Fitzgerald

The soils now nurse the newly born,
as greens weave into the lawn.

Waters dive to greet the root,
to cut the ways that pump the fruit.

And insects kick at their shells,
as sleeping seeds turn in the dark.

Winters white sorrows hang in shreds,
like the sheets of lovers' beds.

For the spring is pulsing deep in the gears,
to drive the tips of tender spears.

The sun sheds and peels,
soft winds seek out skin to feel.

The coming triumph of the flowers,
The stretching muscle of the wood.

'HILLSIDE'

By Michele Blake

Bobbing cowslip reaching out
Cradled in pockets of grassy banks
Shining yellow tall and proud
Rising fearless of the view
Looking beyond the horizon
Swaying in the healing sun
Leaves me breathless
With joy

'Morecambe'

By Jendy Bullman

Warm sea wall,
Pebbles under foot,
Tide coming in,
Waves running up and down the beach.
Opposite, Grange Over Sands,
To the right, the Lake District,
Blue sky overhead.
Fiesta ice-cream in my hand,
My loved one beside me.
Soon a walk along the promenade,
Home,
And a brew with a view.

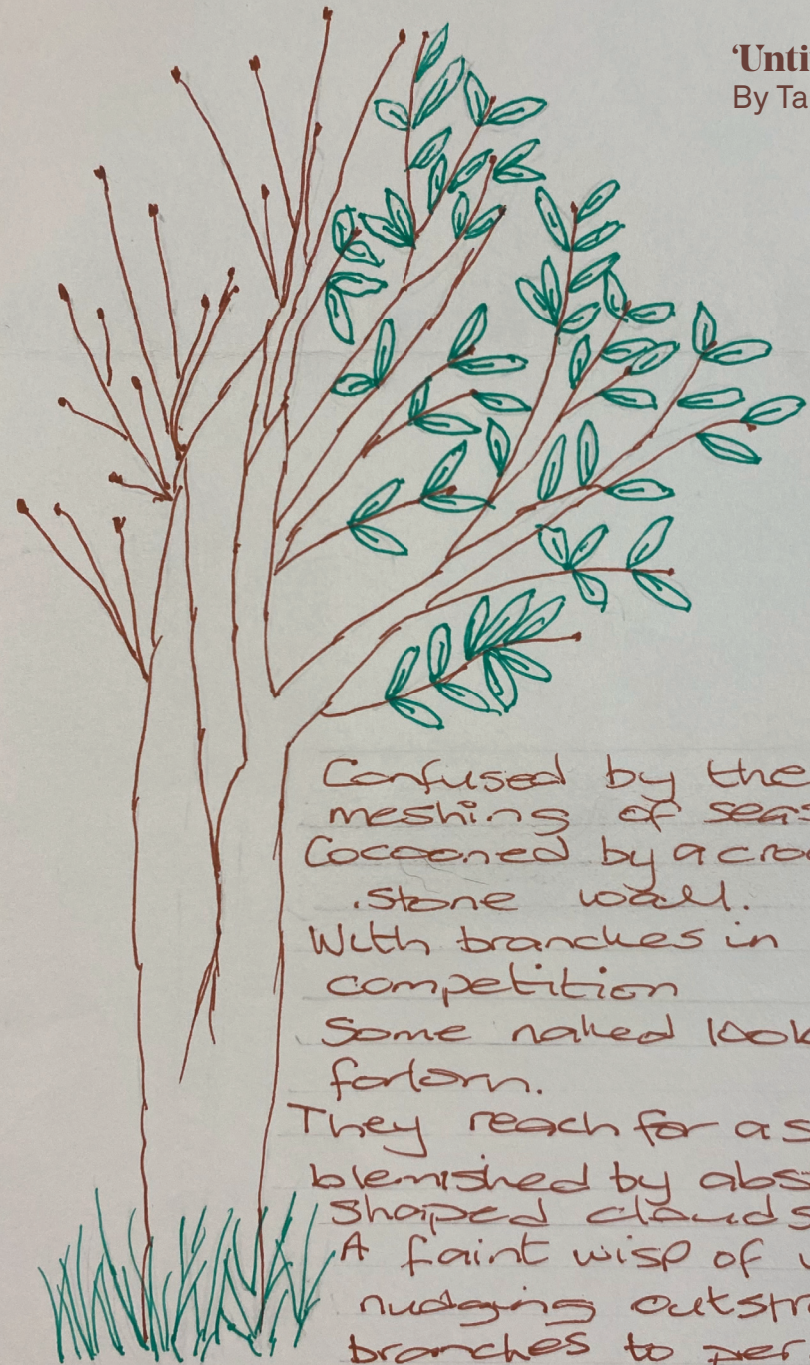
'Untitled'

By Ann Portnoy

Cherry blossom blooming
Resting in her leafy bower
The Lochness is my garden

'Untitled'

By Tania Wood



Confused by the
meshing of seasons.
Cocooned by a crooked
stone wall.
With branches in
competition
Some naked looking
forlorn.
They reach for a sky
blemished by abstract
shaped clouds.
A faint wisp of wind
nudging outstretched
branches to perform
an age old dance

'Oak Tree'

By Jendy Bullman

I live in a wood
Between the garden and the brook.
In my branches birds and squirrels
Live their busy lives.
I am a haven for birds, animals, insects,
Micro organisms,
Girls and boys who enjoy climbing trees,
And building tree houses
Around me are more trees
Footpaths, people forest bathing
Sometimes motor bikes
Riding where they shouldn't.
My leaves are easily recognised.
People know I am an oak.
My acorns are treasured,
Sometimes eaten.
I live for centuries, but
In the end, I die
As do all plants and creatures
On this planet.
But I can begin again,
A new oak forest
Springing from my buried acorns.

'Epic Iced Cross Country, Epping Forest, January'

By Peter Crockford

The morning winter sunshine produced the starheist brilliance
The paths like corrugated iron, rippling with frozen ruts
A soundtrack of gasps and pants, crunch and scrapes
Immersed in a steely hard world, the icy earth
The breathtaking air, the blinding lights glare

The greens of the grass and leaves, lurid & the bright
yellow drench
The sky a blinding blue, as over a nursery book beach
Everything enhanced and extreme adrenaline at full pump
Senses in keeping with setting, maxed out on all fronts.

Limbs driving onwards and up hills, cardio gasping for breath.
Striving for balance on tortuous ground, stinging cold on
exposed flesh
Struggling for grip on ice too solid to submit to a spike
Concentration paramount so wholly alive, but also at the edge
That weekend so many events succumbed to health and safety
To the organisers of ours, huge thanks and respect for knowing...

H₂O

WATER WATER EVERYWHERE,
BUT CAN'T AFFORD A DROP TO DRINK!
WATER PRICES HIGH AND SO ARE
ELECTRICITY AND GAS AND DON'T
KNOW WHAT TO DO AND SO SIGH.

MADE 3 BILLION, BUT NEVER
CHANGED A CAST IRON PIPE.
THEN THEY SOLD IT ONE NIGHT,
WHILE I'M STRUGGLING TO HAVE A BITE.

ALL THOSE 'DECISION MAKERS' ARE OUT OF SIGHT
EACH DAY I WONDER HOW I'LL SURVIVE THE
NIGHT.

WHAT TO DO? HOW DO I FIGHT?
WHEN IT IS OUR REPRESENTATIVES THAT
HAVE CAUSED THIS PLIGHT!

WATER WATER EVERYWHERE
HERE I SIT BETWEEN THE WILES
WHEN RAIN + STORMS + FLOODS THOSE ISLES
AND HARDLY ANYONE SMILES.

'H₂O'

By Micheal Charder

'Troutbridge 2'

By Clive Gresswell

i am at peace
i am in pieces
floating on the scene
the balmy air
the deep-pressed green.

on the very crease of existence
i hover by the river
up and over the bridge
the undulating
cloud snakes across the blue

sky as sun smiles
as my love of earth deepens
as i gaze into the water
reflecting my inner being.

'Sands of Wright'

By Catherine Sian Padgett

White sand
Warm beneath my feet.
Blue sky
No clouds.
Waves lap rhythmically on the shore,
Bright sun,
Sea shimmers.
A cowrie – miniature perfection.
A rounded pebble – a warm egg in my hand.
No human noise
Sounds of the sea
Surround me.

'Untitled'

By Victoria Ajani

DESERT EXPERIENCE BY A WEST AFRICAN MAN.

The man decided to travel from Africa to Europe on foot because he was desperate for a better life.

This trip entailed walking large desert areas.

He reminisced that the harsh conditions made him stop and turned back, when he finally

managed to exit the desert into a major City.

According to him, he suffered extreme dehydration, hallucinations and exhaustion.

His mouth was dry, his tongue felt stuck to

The roof of his mouth.

His lips cracked and bled.

His head was painful and heavy

His body was dry and hot

He thirsted and yearned for water in the very dry land where there was none

He thought that was the end of his life, he was convinced he almost died and he would never

attempt such a treacherous journey again.

HE LEARNED HIS LESSON!!!

Iceland

Herring hang like frozen daggers from wooden frames,

As the daylong sunlight tans their whispery skins.

Water frozen for millennia drips into growing oceans, drowning the land.

On the seashore polished pebbles groan and grind as the breathing waves place and replace them.

Trees, in yoga poses, appear like shadows on the horizon,

Branches stretching for the freedom of the skies, but hidebound by gravity.

Hot plaited lava, red hearted, black skinned, slides downwards, core cooling, building new land over old.

A Dali landscape where ponds of yellow and green bubble,

And chlorine and sulphur gases perfume the air.

Waterfall curtains of frothy white hang vertically

Whilst rainbows dance.

Iceland.

'Iceland'

By Adele M Franklin

'Soil'

By Gill Bone

Soil feeds the nations
Soil feeds the trees
Soil grows the flowers
Without soil, where would the earthworms be?

Soil never disperses
Just goes to other places
Soil grows the food that animals live on
Without soil, where would farmers be?

Soil is necessary for life on land.

'Time'

By Merel Van Der Knoop

Walking up the hill path I listen to the rhythm of my footsteps.
Playfully the gentle breeze dances with a loose strand of hair.
I can taste the thick salty sea air on my windburn lips.

As I reach the cliff edge a majestic view appears before me.
Pausing for a moment, I soak up the vibrancy of colours.
Letting my eyes wonder along the horizon I softly sigh.

Within me something stirs.
A forgotten memory of feeling whole.
Oh, to stand on this earth feeling so complete yet so small.

'City Life'

By Lizzie Wainwright

Today at my window, a welcome sunny beacon of light, I squint my eyes, although in comparison my laptop is blinding. The blue light to which the nation is glued, surrendered.

Whilst I work, I watch the magpies work too, nesting in the chimney stacks of the terraced houses, row by row. I feel mesmerised whilst they play, rustling their feathers and calling to each other not even knowing I exist.

In the distance, behind the historic library lies Wavertree Park, one of many green spaces this city holds. I step out for a walk. The openness is powerful yet calming, and the trees with an eerie slant welcome you into their safety and make you feel cocooned.

As I return home refreshed, I take a deep breath and ponder the arrival of the wildflower beds to awaken to enjoy their beauty, and watch them swaying in a gentle sunny breeze. My heart feels lifted.

Back at my window, I gaze up from the laptop lid to take a moment; as the day passes, and the light fades, the gentle hum of the cars become more frequent as the rush hour tempo peaks. A reminder about what I love and hate about city life. Bitter sweet.

'Haikus'

By volunteers at Walton Charity

The pond water shimmers
The tadpoles are swimming
A new life begins

Cherry blossoms bloom
Bees are buzzing, birds are singing
Summer is on its way

Poppy heads are nodding
Pink, red, yellow and white
Dancing in the sunshine

Grass is fresh cut
Dandelions peeping through
Smelling of summer

'Untitled'

By Ian

The wind is blowing
The trees are rocking about
And here comes the rain

'Untitled'

By Elaine

Seedlings growing up
Made strong by the sunshine & rain
Becoming flowers

'Untitled'

By Adrian

Its allotment day
I wonder what the jobs are
Karen speaks - we jump

'Untitled'

By Margaret

*Sun shines and rain falls
Birds sing and flowers appear
Its time, Spring is here*



'I would feel it had been damaged in some way'

By Ruth Hill

Too powerful
To escape
Two bodies
Curling around each other
Each full in the water
My body feels full in the water.

'The Partaire of Marigolds'

By Mireille Lipski

The partaire of marigolds!
Brighten our hearts and open our eyes!

The many children walk about
Singing a song to warm our hearts
While all the while, flowers mingle
In song and symphony with a smile.

Children pass and open their eyes
A myriad of symphony and song
Their reflection in the petals returns
The many faces colours and smiles.

'Thoughts'

By Shirley Arkush

I'm thinking about apple blossom flying away
with those thoughts.

Can one have colours?
blue
and pink
and white?

All my thoughts
get blown away

they will be green

and shining red

the blossom
needs to stay with me
to stay on earth.

We see the apples forming on the tree, the sparrow sits upon the
bow, does he have thoughts too?

'I am indifferent to colour'

By Aubrey Jacobus

I am indifferent to colour
I have no visual sense.
My dad had a deep red velvet cloak and I spilt dark ink onto it. I
remember the red.
But I remember more
the grainy salt
my mother used to remove it.

Weeds thrive here untouched
The soil nurturing all growth
For all life on Earth

'Tower Hamlets Cemetery Park'

By Susan Shaw

Today I walked amongst the headstones
But I wasn't visiting the dead
I went to see the lovely blooms
Of life-affirming spring instead.

I didn't read the names on graves
In memory of those long gone
But thought about the names of the flowers
Testament to life begun

Snowdrops, crocuses and violets
Their very names speak of spring
Their sight brings as much hope and gladness
As hearing the first cuckoo sing

In the midst of life is death
Here, in the midst of death is spring
Always holding out the hope
For what the coming year will bring.

'Poems'

By Karen Evans

'My body'

By Luke Squire

My body is big and small
Long and tall
Adequate like a viaduct
Cars pass through my head at night
My legs are thick and thin
Sometimes I just can't swim
In the river of my thoughts
All ideas are shop bought
My head is full of air
I don't have a chair to rest my bones
I stand by the phone
When my living is done
From my hat to my tum
I shall laugh from above
And say right time to love.

'Green Beans'

By Anon

Always attractive by themselves
Long
Stiff
Firm
It's been weeks.

'Power Breathing'

By Noreen Webber

Drowning
In slimy and smooth
Soaring blue
Would help me escape?

The Mermaid Queen's Trash Manifesto

I am a mermaid
Queen
From the plastic-riddled sea
I know the solution
To this riddle
All these treasures are
Falling to falling
Too fast...
The ebb the flow
The turn the tide
The time to lose
Material gain
The sea the sea
Drifting draftily
Teach your pups
Teach them
To stop.

'The Mermaid Queen's Trash Manifesto'

By Fiona Simmons

'Marvellous Memories'

By Dr Afsana Elanko

Initially inviting introductions,
Followed by interesting instructions.
Delightful description of AbP project,
Allowing us in our thoughts to reflect.
Presented the perfect poet,
She said we could do-it.

Giving us inspiration,
She could entice the nation.
She said think of an object,
With our thoughts we connect.
Today I will be the poet,
Who would have known it.

The poet reads,
In our mind sowing seeds.
Making marvellous memories,
In my mind I have colourful draperies.
Thoughts, tantalising, tingling in my mind,
For all these years I have been blind.

Reading poetry together,
Our thoughts fluttering like a feather.
Caught in our world of words,
Flying high like birds.
Expressing our thoughts,
Tying the words together like knots.

Sharing lovely luscious words,
Thoughts coming like herds.
Feels safe like between friends,
Writing our thoughts with our pens.
Task set, list of objects,
Are we following, the poet checks.

Comparing the object and giving it life,
Our thoughts are free like wildlife.
Slowly encouraging us,
We get a buzz.
We are creating without care,
Having our own unique flare.
Poem created with this beautiful, bubbling, beaming, balladeer,
Reading and enjoy the creation my darlings dear.
The praise came, Absolutely! Right! Oh, it's lovely! Mmmmmmm
Oh, beautiful! That's beautiful! Thanks so much for Afsana! Wow!
That's so generous!
That was our workshop together.

'Jackie?'

By Jacqueline Charles

Yes you're here,
lovely
I tried two

the thing I remember and find really funny really funny
oh dear
that's it
not yet
would you like to know another one?

what's reasonable
absolutely right
I want in middle of room
I want to enjoy

this week I could try blue
that's right
spit it out.

'Pay Attention!'

By Sally Amor

Hard and slippery
Cracking underfoot
Dropping down an inch to the grass field.
This is a patch of ice where rain
has fallen in the cold field.

It's like a river
The continuous rain has formed a
flow of water off the sloping field.
How to get around it?
Mud and water everywhere.
Muddy and wet feet.

Now it is hard
Harder than any other surface.
This hurts the knees and has given
me plenty of scars
There is no give and plenty of dust.



Bandit Bird

Cloak & Dagger

Water wailer

Sudden stabber

Stilt-stalker

Frog-Forker

Eel-splitter

Fish-slurper

Worm-whipper

Mouse-masher

Chick-slicker

'Bandit Bird'

By Pamela Coren

'Untitled'

By Joseph David

Poetry needs to cry
To ask for the lost
The impossible
The reminder is all we have
Years of service love and patience
All summed up in our motto, Yes Dear.

'In Nature'

By Helen White

My go-to environment is the sea. Sometimes, when I go out of my front door at 7.30am, I can smell the ozone. The sea changes all the time: from low to high Tide; from flat calm to violent storm; from Mediterranean turquoise to dirty brown. I love the sound of the wavelets dribbling onto the pebble beach, as much as I love the roar and thump of the rough sea, crashing onto the concrete sea wall. I feel it every day The biting cold seven degrees in March to the silky soft nineteen degrees at the end of the summer. In spring, the seaweed grows and grabs my legs. In winter it dies away. I taste the salt.

'Mountains'

By Chris Andrews

Climbing a mountain in the Lake District. There is the noise of the sheep, the waterfalls and very distant cars. The air is extremely fresh. The higher up you go, the more out of breath you become. The scenery is stunning consisting of fields, mountains, lakes, small houses in the distance. While eating a stash of Kendall mint cake, simply delicious. Under foot the mountain is sold as the wind tries to blow everyone off their feet.

'On Deal Beach (After the Funeral)'

By Ross Barnes

I sifted gritty sand thru my fingertips, my left hand found a pebble, round & smooth, worn by a millennium of waves, chalk too, milk white.
I saw the pier, now level with my eyes, I smelt the briny wind, blowing clouds and birds to the west, I heard people but could not see them. Then, licked the pebble I'd kept, So shiny and salty upon my lips... reminded me, I fancied...
Some fish
 and
 chips.

Bournemouth Beach

The seaside is so innocent, always
Children playing in the sand as they've done for
centuries

Couples parading their affection
Old people reliving their memories
Here by the shore, I find peace
It waits for me among the shells and stones,
inside the waves.

'Bournemouth Beach'

By Louise van Wingerden

'The Water'

By Gary Hindmarsh

Pitter patter on window pane
from leaf to stream to waterfall.
river under rainbow, made of same.
The driest place, with half an inch
which at a pinch in a whole year falls;
to wettest place, which was that day
we forgot to take our brolly.

Leaky pipe up through the night,
In buckets, drips call for a plumber.
'Cup of tea', you and me, made of same.
The driest time lips pursed
No whet of whistle, spittle cursed,
to wettest after hard day's graft,
that comes with hops and barley.

Waves surfed upon a summer's shore
Waves from havens sighted call,
Before a mist that comes to cool.
As a lighthouse turns and a fog horn sounds

To a trawler, bravely returning from outer seas
Brings the day's catch home for mushy peas.

The fountain for the park days stroll
Bath tubs full to relieve our toil
Tomorrow take rod and fly feathered with foil
As a kingfisher arrows and as a man ponders heart
To let his words flow as shone within a droplets gleam
And for all of us through our dreamlike stream.

To the docks, through the locks, up canals and through ports,
We wear our capes of good hope for all our good thoughts.

'Untitled haikus'

By Sebastian Elanko

Night falls moon shining,
Urinating boy at pond,
Universe shaking.

Stolen light from sun,
Shining moon at nightfall,
Thief hides dawn to dusk.

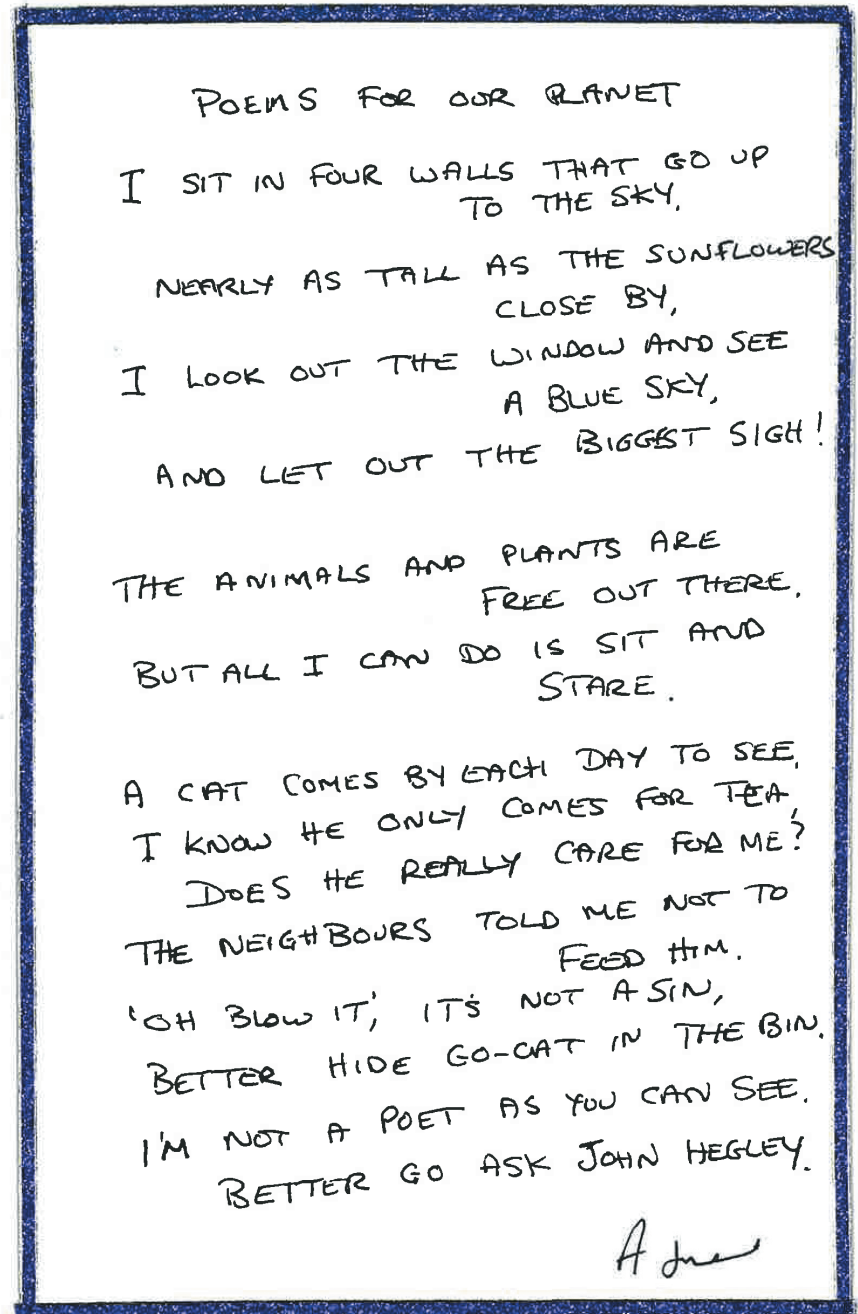
Moon shines like a boat,
Stars glitters like a rolling fish,
Ocean created.

Nightfall, shining moon,
Willow stands by pond at breeze,
Shades swept floating leaves.

'Untitled'

By Kim Laidler

How exciting is the colourful carnival of summer
Where just under the curtain of green willow
The mayfly trampoline on the river's edge
Leafy shadows show shapes of frogs leaping
Breathe and fill my lungs with the sweet smell
Close my eyes to the sound of traffic rolling in and out like
tidal waves.



'Poems for our planet'

By A Jones

'Bye Bees'

By Pamela Binns

I looked for bees on the Buddleia,
I searched the roses in vain,
I prayed we might have some sunshine,
And was answered with more pelting rain.

I looked for bees in the lupins
And searched; but the borders were bare.
My garden looked lonely, though blooming,
There wasn't a buzz in the air.

We've swept all the bees from the planet
By spraying our gardens and fields.
We thought we were being so clever
Increasing each acre crop yields.

But in truth ourselves are destroying,
We've poisoned ourselves on the way.
The bees knew it was time to desert us
And now they live far far away.

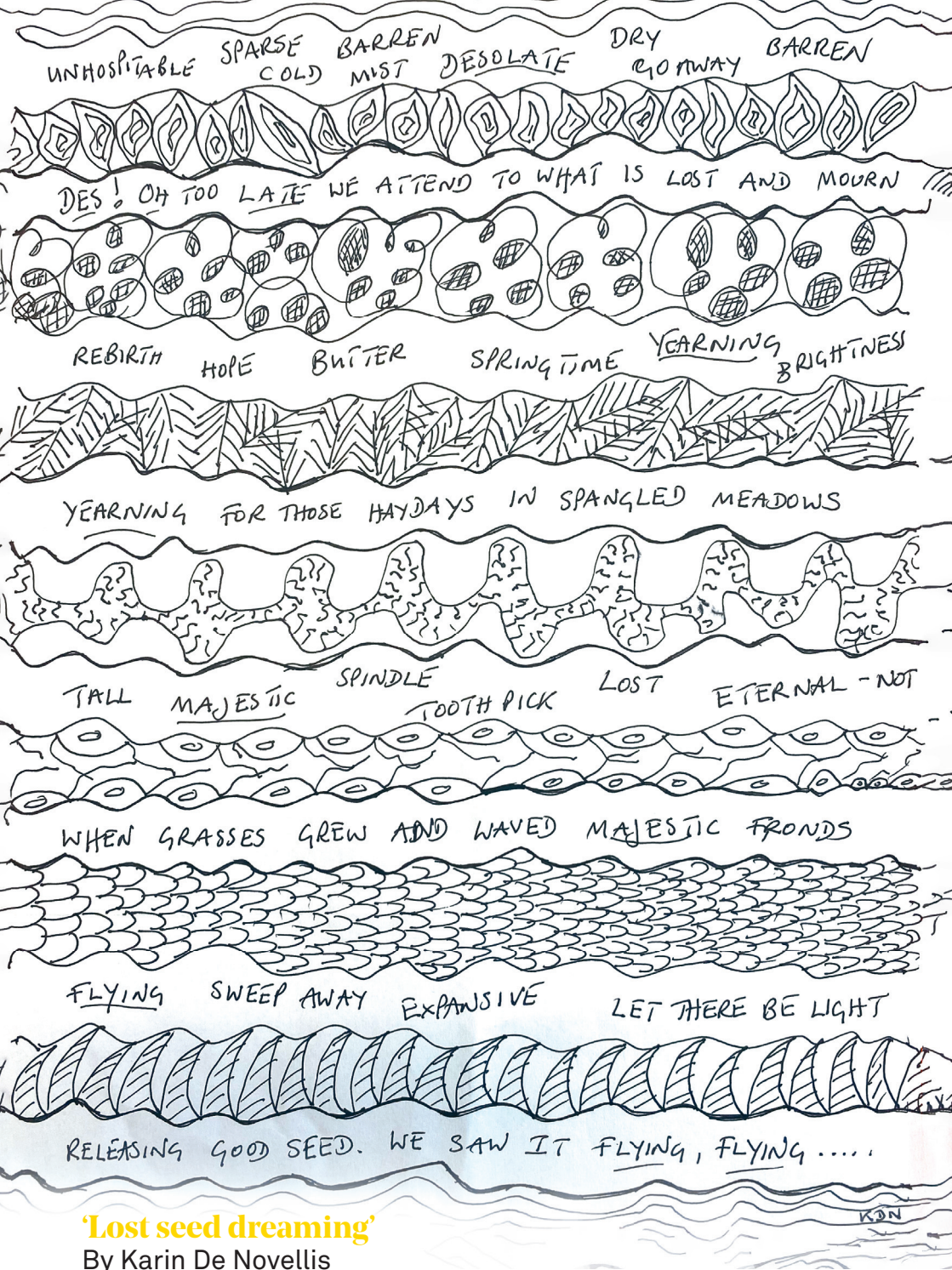
The pesticide fields were just poison
To our crops and ourselves and the bees,
So they left with their queens and their honey,
And who were we trying to please?

We forgot all about the Bumble,
How we needed him in our lives,
They knew they were not wanted,
Now we know – *we shall not survive.*

'NATURE GIVES'

By Vaila Harvey

Daylight arrives, I check the skies
Will I water the garden early or wait till later?
Opening my shed the smell of moisture and earth prevails
Latch the windows, pick up the watering can
The cold air envelops me as I walk to the tap
Should have worn a sweater
That fat slug looks so content and replete
No doubt from one of my plants
The lupin plugs are spreading out
Reminding me of palms and takes me back to Singapore
Where I used to live
Immediately I feel the tropical heat and
smell the sweet scents of exotic flowers
The calm is pricked by blaring sirens and I'm now in Italy
Another home for me, living next door to an ambulance depot
Screeching alarms night and day tempered by an operatic
neighbour
Learning arias from his 6th floor balcony.
Three quarters of an hour has given life to my garden
Reminded me of scents forgotten and sounds remembered.
Nature gives so much in unexpected moments!



'Lost seed dreaming'
By Karin De Novellis

Thank you to everyone who worked on the Art by Post: Poems for Our Planet project.

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