THE COUNTRY TRUST

England & Wales · Charity number 1122103

Details

Status	Registered
Legal form	Charitable company
Company number	06436266
Registered	2007-12-21
Register	View on the Charity Commission register

Contact

Address	The Country Trust Moulsham Mill Centre Parkway Chelmsford CM2 7PX
Phone	01245961049
Email	info@countrytrust.org.uk
Website	www.countrytrust.org.uk

Activities

Objects: 3.1 To promote study of and to disseminate knowledge of the earth and of all that lives in, upon and above it and in particular to promote study of and to disseminate knowledge of the land natural resources plants and living creatures and of Mankind's effect upon them; 3.2 To promote knowledge of and understanding of Mankind's natural cultural and architectural heritage and to protect preserve and stimulate public interest in and care for those matters; 3.3 To protect preserve enrich and stimulate public interest in and care for the beauty and character of the land and countryside; 3.4 To provide or promote the provision of facilities whereby the public in general and young persons in particular may gain access to the countryside and whereby they may be educated about the countryside in general and about matters concerning the countryside and the enjoyment thereof; 3.5 To promote sound learning about the importance of the land and is products to the whole of modern society; 3.6 To carry out such other legally charitable purposes as are necessary for the attainment of the above objects or any of them.

Activities: To bring food, farming and the working countryside alive for those children least able to access it whether through disadvantage or disability. We do this through Farm Discovery day visits to real working farms throughout England and North Wales, Farm in a Box, Countryside Discovery residentials and yearlong Food Discovery programmes where children discover growing, cooking and even selling food.

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Classification

- **How:** Provides Human Resources, Provides Services
- **What:** Education/training, Environment/conservation/heritage
- **Who:** Children/young People, The General Public/mankind

Geography

- **Area of benefit:** NOT DEFINED. IN PRACTICE, ENGLAND AND WALES
- Throughout England And Wales

Finances

Period end	Income	Expenditure	Assets	Employees
2024-12-31	£1,549,244	£1,550,177	£530,526	13
2023-12-31	£1,379,887	£1,430,668	£531,459	11
2022-12-31	£1,206,639	£1,397,117	£582,240	11
2021-12-31	£992,527	£966,950	£772,718	10
2020-12-31	£561,786	£552,177	£747,141	9

Trustees

Name	Role	Appointed
Gavin Craig Linley		2024-10-02
Guy Deatker		2024-10-02
Jeremy Paul Godsmark Finnis		2026-02-24
Keranjit Kaur		2022-06-29
Margaret Anne Bufton-McCoy		2022-06-29
Mark Alexander Everitt		2025-12-10
Michael George Lockyer Gent		2022-06-29
Rachael Frossell		2024-07-01

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THE COUNTRY TRUST

England & Wales - Charity number 1122103

Accounts

Country Trust

Connecting children with the land that sustains us all

Annual Report & Accounts 2024

President: The Duke of Westminster

Vice Presidents:

Sir Henry Aubrey-Fletcher Bt
Sir Nicholas Bacon Bt
V Beaumont
Lord Boswell of Aynho DL
W Butterfield
Earl of Carnarvon
J M Carr-Ellison
J Knappett B Ed NPQH
Lord Dear QPM
T. Fanshawe
W J Henderson DL
M Kendall
W Kendall DL
Hon. John Leigh-Pemberton
G Long MBE
Hon G E Lopes
L V Lyle MA PGCE
M Maclay DL
H Mills DL
H R Oliver-Bellasis FRAgS
Dame Fiona Reynolds DBE
J Serjeant BA (Hons) ACA
I N Tegner CA FRSA
F Weston MA (Cantab)

Chief Executive:

J D Attenborough MA (Cantab) FRSA

Registered address:

Moulsham Mill, Parkway, Chelmsford CM2 7PX Tel: 01245 961049

Ambassadors:

N Partheeban BVM&S BSc(Hons) PGCert(DHH) PIAGrM R.Ani.Tech. FRSA MRCVS
A Pawsey
J Pawsey

Trustees:

The Trustees who served the charity during the year were as follows

S D Bell BA (Hons) (Chairman) (stepped down June 2024)

M A Bufton-McCoy B Phil, Cert Ed (Appointed Co-Chair June 2024)

G Deatker (appointed October 2024)

T C M Fawcett BSc (Hons)

R J Frossell (appointed July 2024)

M Gent

K Kaur BSc(Hons) GTP (QTS) MA NPQH

C.Linley BA (Hons) CAIA (appointed October 2024)

M Nicholls (appointed October 2024)

A J Stafford MA (Oxon) (Appointed Co-Chair June 2024)

Bankers:

CAF Bank Ltd. 25 Kings Hill Ave, Kings Hill, West Malling, Kent ME19

Auditors:

Edmund Carr LLP 146 New London Road, Chelmsford, Essex, CM2 0AW

Lawyers:

Wrigleys Solicitors LLP 19 Cookridge Street, Leeds LS2 3AG

The Country Trust is the leading national educational charity that connects children from areas of high social and economic disadvantage with the land that sustains us all.

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Trustees' Report 2024

Executive Summary

We aim to provide food, farming and countryside opportunities for the most disadvantaged children in society.

Our Programmes

In 2023/24:

- We increased the number of children taking part in our Farm Discovery programme by 3% to 23,727.
- Over 30,000 children engaged with our core programmes from 568 schools.
- We provided over 150,000 learning hours to children.
- Over 5,000 children benefitted from the sensory activities and video content in our Farm in a Bag before their Farm Discovery visit increasing confidence, curiosity and connection.
- 33,516 partici-pants registered to take part in our Plant Your Pants soil health campaign.
- On average 44.5% of children in the schools we worked with met EVER6 FSM criteria.

Our Influence

We have continued to call for financial support for farmers to host educational farm visits to be made available through the Sustainable Farming Incentive. Though it has twice been announced as 'coming soon' for farmers, in March 2025 SFI was closed to new applicants and our understanding is that the funding may be available as a capital item to those with agreements.

We drew together responses from across our sector, and through the highly engaged global community at Sorted Food, as the basis for our response to the Curriculum Review. We were delighted to see that the response from the youth led Shadow Review closely aligned with our own, particularly their call for a more experiential, nature-centred curriculum.

Impact Themes Across Programmes

Our Impact

Our 2023-4 Impact Report is available here.

Impact on Children:

1. Children accessed experiences they would not have had otherwise
2. Children gained confidence and tried new things
3. Children developed an understanding of where food comes from, and the importance of farms
4. Children interacted with the natural world, helping them build a connection with, and appreciation of, nature
5. The Programmes benefitted disengaged and lower attaining children

Impact on Teachers:

1. Teachers gained confidence in bringing elements of food, farming and the natural world into their teaching.
2. Farm visits enhanced the school curriculum, supporting teaching and learning in a range of subject areas
3. Teachers were inspired to use more real-world learning activities with their students

I never knew that just being away from the city could feel so good...My favourite thing was the freedom to feel good and be me.

-Post-residential thank you letter, Yorkshire

Impact:

- More children than ever before commented on the value of being away from electronic devices whilst on the residential.
- 90% of children said they had done something for the first time during their farm visit.
- 91% of teachers reported that their pupils were still talking about their farm visit 2 weeks later.
- 100% of teachers said that Country Trust programmes gave their pupils real-world experiences they would not otherwise have had.
- 97% of teachers said their pupils gained confidence in trying new things during Food Discovery.
- 71% of children said that they would definitely like to visit a farm again, with a further 9% saying they probably would like to.
- 100% of teachers said that Country Trust programmes supported teaching and learning in school.
- 100% of teachers said that Country Trust programmes provided valuable expert knowledge.
- 100% of teachers learnt something new about their pupils whilst on the residential.
- 100% of teachers agreed that their residential improved their understanding of the value of food and farming education, and their confidence using this in their practice.
- 100% of teachers felt better equipped to bring elements of farming into their classroom teaching following their farm visit.
- 2 weeks after the visit, 91% of teachers reported that they were bringing elements of food, farming and the visit into their teaching.

Visiting Gander Farm is the highlight of our year. Since weaving farming into our curriculum using the Country Trust resources, we were blown away by how much knowledge the children had and were able to recall on the day. This visit enables us to bring learning to life, far better than any text book or PowerPoint. -Teacher

I've never tried any fruit and vegetables apart from these because we don't have enough money, so my mum has to save money for things like bread. **-Pupil, West Earlham Junior School**

Meeting Need and Demand

"Poverty becomes the enemy of opportunity: talent and potential are wasted in its wake" The Joseph Rowntree Foundation (2024)

One in three children in the UK lives in poverty, and numbers continue to rise. Poverty is life limiting and life threatening. It profoundly affects education, health, life chances and prevents children from connecting with the natural world – the source of life. The need and demand for our work continues to grow (there are over 7000 schools eligible for our programmes), and the lasting difference we can make is evident.

Key Challenges

- More demand for our work as cuts in school budgets impact opportunities for real world learning
- Achieving sustained growth in income to allow us to continue to grow our provision
- Aligning the timing of grants and donations and securing multi-year commitments so that we can confidently book schools into our programmes at the start of the school year ensuring teachers can integrate our activities with the curriculum.
- Meeting the growth in demand for transport subsidies for schools whilst also growing income for our programmes. We fundraised for and distributed £100,000 of subsidies to support around 427 farm visits for over 11,000 children – a 47.7% increase on 2023.

Responding to Challenge

At the start of 2024 we had to dramatically change our residential programme, following the sudden closure of two Suffolk residential centres, which left us with booked residentials and no accommodation. Our team were able to work miracles and by summer 2024 had developed an entirely new programme in Sussex for 146 children from inner London, with food and farming experiences at its heart.

At the same time as developing the new Sussex programme, we have developed an innovative new residential programme with the Ernest Cook Trust in the Lake District. It includes a co-creation process allowing children to help shape their own programme and contribute to conversations around the sustainable future of our planet alongside highly influential individuals like Tim Smit.

Our Farm in a Box National Programme and our Soil Health campaign enable us to reach schools located in the country's most deprived areas where we don't yet have a presence on the ground. However, in 2025 we will be restructuring the delivery of both programmes in order to increase their sustainability.

About us: Our Programmes

Farm Discovery

Day visits to working farms for school and community groups. These are led by our Coordinators who work with host farmers and teachers/group leaders to ensure a safe visit with appropriate sensory experiences and hands-on activities. *Provided free of charge*.

Countryside Residentials

Immersing children in the countryside for 2-4 days, Coordinators organise and support a tailored programme, including a farm visit, working with teachers and third party providers to ensure a memorable, safe, and happy time away from home. *We provide a subsidy of at least a third.*

Food Discovery

A Country Trust Coordinator takes a class on a journey through food: growing vegetables, preparing and cooking meals, tasting produce, visiting local farms, running their own markets, and experiencing the joy of sharing a feast. The depth of the programme gives children the time to explore many aspects of food. *Schools make a contribution if they can*.

Farm in a Box

A box of hands-on, sensory farm-centred activities plus video content created on a theme by The Country Trust, ordered and presented by teachers in eligible schools. Centrally packed and distributed and *provided free of charge*.

Sustaining Impact

Supporting teachers to be the gateway to opportunity for children and sustain the impact of our programmes through the provision of: digital resources including 'seeds to supper'; CPD for some schools; and through modelling by and conversation with our Coordinators. *Provided free of charge*.

Residential in a Box

A digital/physical resource to support Outdoor Learning Centres to better prepare and support children, parents and teachers from disadvantaged communities for their residential and to increase their engagement. *Provided free of charge*.

Farm in a Bag

5 sensory activity cards with matching hands-on resources from the farm, a presentation about the farm and a welcome video from the farmer. Given to the teacher at the pre-visit to use before the visit and then returned at the visit ready to be reused. *Provided free of charge*.

Plant Your Pants Soil Health campaign

Our public facing campaign designed to enable people of all ages to discover the wonderful and vital life of the soil. Planting cotton pants and digging them up 8 weeks later is a fun and engaging way to make the invisible life of the soil visible. *Provided free of charge*.

Core Values:

We believe you grow by learning from others

We think the quality of our connections with others has an important effect on who we can be and what we can do

We are active participants in a world which inspires and sustains us

Aspirational values:

We want everyone to know that their contribution is welcome and valued

We aspire to be child-centred, no matter what our role is

Theory of Change

We continue to refresh our Theory of Change as a dynamic underpinning of our work. We have recently worked on a results framework and have introduced a new motif to help to describe our approach.

Through food, farming and countryside experiences, disadvantaged children build a foundation to ...

Our core aims

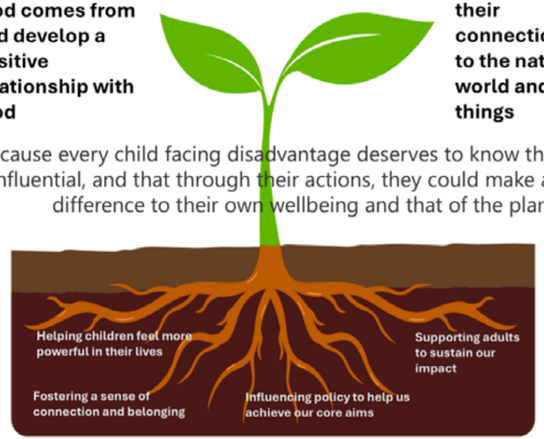
Understand where food comes from and develop a positive relationship with food

Understand their connection to the natural world and living things

Why?

Because every child facing disadvantage deserves to know that they are influential, and that through their actions, they could make a positive difference to their own wellbeing and that of the planet

Our 'roots' to success



Country Trust

Theory of Change

The Problem	The human race is dependent on the natural world for survival. However, there is no consistent provision (resource or structure) for every child to discover the land that sustains us all and to explore first-hand the fundamental connection between the way we live, our own health and the health of the planet. Therefore children, particularly the most disadvantaged, are ill-equipped to grow to actively contribute to, and benefit from, a thriving society and planet.
Activities	Farm Discovery (and FIABag) · Food Discovery · Countryside Residentials · Farm in a Box National · Sustaining Impact · Soil Campaign · Policy Work
Intermediate Outcomes	**Children (& adults) who engage with The Country Trust:** • are able to imagine a wider range of future possibilities • are excited to use/discuss what they have learnt • have a better understanding of how to interact with the natural world around them • are more confident to try new things • are more curious about the world, particularly food, farming and the land that sustains us all • are more able to make connections between their lives and food, farming and the land that sustains us all **Parents who engage with The Country Trust:** • Feel more confident to encourage/ support their children to try new things **Teachers who engage with The Country Trust:** • place greater value on food and farming education • are more confident to use food and farming experiences to support pupil learning
Longer Term Outcomes	**Children (& adults) who engage with The Country Trust:** • demonstrate a greater belief in their own agency • are more likely to choose/pursue outdoor hobbies/interests/careers related to food, farming and the land that sustains us all • are more likely to make (or want to make) informed choices about food, farming and the land that sustains us all **Teachers who engage with The Country Trust:** • seek out and use more real-world learning experiences in their teaching
Overall Aim	Through first-hand experiences of food, farming and the land, The Country Trust aims to empower children, particularly the most disadvantaged, and the adults who influence them, to discover their connection with the land that sustains us all, to be confident, curious and create change in their lives and the world around them so that they, society and the planet can thrive.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

We want our team and our programmes to better reflect the diversity of the children and the communities we serve. However, we remain very early in our journey to increase the diversity of our workforce. We have secured a six-month secondment from the John Lewis Partnership through the Golden Jubilee Trust to review the structure, terms and conditions of our delivery workforce which we hope will enable us to address this more effectively. Our Board is reasonably diverse in terms of age, gender and ethnicity and we value the connections, creativity and inspiration that this unlocks. We were proud to be part of the launch of the AgDiversity online awareness course.

Activities

How the Charity's activities deliver public benefit

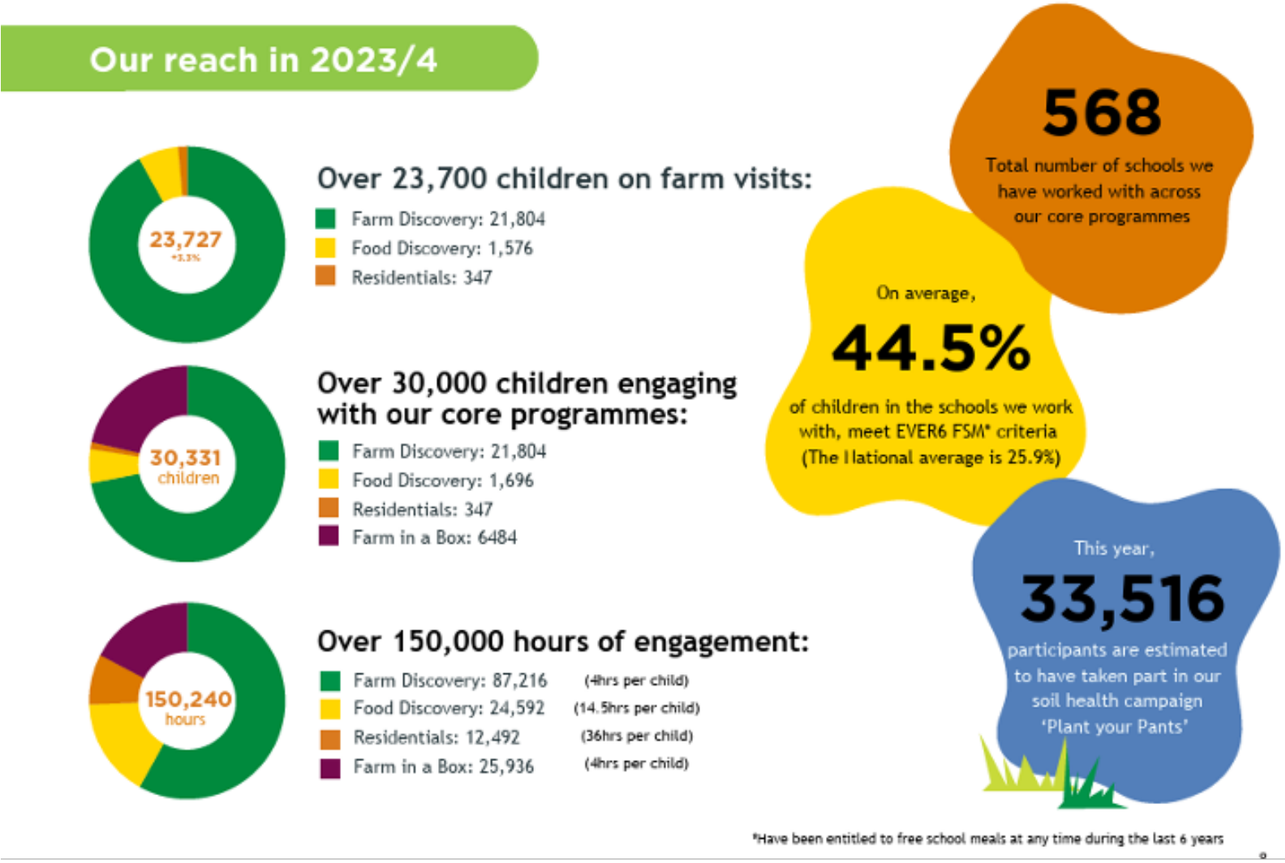
In setting our programme each year we have regard to the Charity Commission's general guidance on public benefit. The Trustees always ensure that the programmes we undertake are in line with our charitable objectives and aims. Our ambitious aims are that:

- Every child should have the opportunity to visit a real working farm, to discover through first-hand experience where their food comes from.
- Every child should have the chance to discover connections between the food they eat, their own health and the health of the planet.
- Every child should have the opportunity to develop the confidence and curiosity to explore the living world.

Our focus being on those children with the most limited opportunities.

We use an evaluation framework, based on our Theory of Change, to gather feedback on all the activities we offer. We collate and analyse all feedback, which then informs our programme design. Feedback from children, teachers and parents suggests that the Trust is achieving its goal of helping to put in place some of the building blocks that will improve the life chances of the children who take part in our programmes - curiosity, confidence, connection, and feeling more powerful in their lives.

We are in the unique position of being able to provide programmes which support teachers to engage children with learning, and support physical, emotional and social wellbeing. We can build food knowledge and food confidence, provide access to food and farming related climate learning and enable children to discover that they can be active participants. We can create connections between pupils, farmers and the natural world. We can speak up on relevant education, agriculture and food issues, taking the lead or supporting others.



How we work

How we work

All our programmes are designed to create moments that provoke curiosity, making learning irresistible. Children learn most deeply when they are following their natural curiosity as it places them at the centre of their learning.

Giving children time, space and the tools to understand the world around them – whether it's in their school grounds, a farm or at the beach – allows them to discover for themselves the wonder and connectedness of life.

As so many of the children we work with have limited experiences, we ensure that new experiences are crafted carefully and consciously into our programmes, building confidence and happy memories.

Through opportunities to see that their actions make a difference, our aim is to help children feel more powerful in their lives. Through being guided to successfully experience and build relationships with new places and new people, we aim to foster a sense of connection and belonging.

Our Operating Context

The Impact of Poverty

In 2022/23, the Department of Work and Pensions estimated that 4.3 million children (30% of UK children) were living in poverty, a rise of 100,000 from the previous year. This increase is reflected in the number of children eligible for Free School Meals, with 2.1 million now qualifying—24.6% of all pupils, 25.9% in Primary Schools. Poverty is more prevalent in Black and Asian families, with 51% and 47%, respectively, experiencing financial hardship (Child Poverty Action Group, 2024).

Children in poverty face significant challenges that can affect their health, education, and long-term social outcomes, including poor physical and mental health, bullying, academic struggles, and difficulty finding employment. Disadvantaged primary school children also attend school less frequently than their peers, which negatively impacts learning and social development (The Childhood Trust, 2024).

Mental health issues such as anxiety and worry increase as these children progress through primary school, affecting their concentration and motivation. Many also feel inadequate when comparing their possessions to wealthier peers. Food insecurity is another major issue, with 7.2 million people in the UK (17% of children) living in food-insecure households in 2022/23, an increase of 2.5 million from the previous year (UK Parliament, 2024). This anxiety, combined with poor diet, leads to lower academic performance (The Childhood Trust, 2024).

Dietary inequalities have long-term effects, with 1 in 3 British children leaving primary school overweight (NHS England, 2021). The consumption of ultra-processed foods increases the risk of unhealthy eating habits, contributing to conditions like obesity and diabetes, which are linked to lower educational outcomes (Chavez-Ugalde et al., 2024; Bowden et al., 2024). Malnourished children often struggle with fatigue, concentration, and motivation in school.

Disadvantaged children also face difficult home environments, including overcrowded living conditions, limited access to technology, and housing instability. These factors contribute to chronic stress and emotional distress, making it harder for them to focus on their education.

Teachers and school leaders are witnessing the impact of rising living costs on pupils and families. These financial strains are affecting school budgets, limiting access to educational opportunities and resources that many children rely on, especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Access to green space, nature and farming

There is strong evidence that spending time in nature promotes a wide range of positive outcomes for children and young people, including:

- Increased physical activity, mental health, and well-being
- Improved behaviour and emotional resilience
- Better school attendance, engagement, and achievement

The Children's People and Nature Survey (2023) found that 84% of children and young people believe looking after the environment is important, and 87% want to do more to protect it.

However, children from ethnically diverse households or lower-income backgrounds often face greater health and learning inequalities and tend to spend less time in nature each week. The latest Green Space Index research shows a third of children in Britain do not have access to any nearby spaces where they can run and explore freely, let alone green natural spaces. This lack of exposure to green spaces not only diminishes their quality of life but also restricts their ability to engage in play and social interactions, which are vital for cognitive and social development.

Who We Support

We have become more aware that there is a widespread lack of understanding, even a disbelief of the day-to-day reality, of the most disadvantaged in our community, and how poverty impacts access to good food, green space, the natural world, and opportunity, which in turn affects diet, health, the ability to participate and the ability to thrive. This is why we aim to provide opportunities for the most disadvantaged children in society.

We determine eligibility for our programmes on the following basis, though will always consider individual circumstances as we know that poverty can be hidden.

Primary schools with greater than the national average (25.9%) eligibility for Free School Meals

- A specialist SEND or SEMH school.
- An alternative provider of education, including;

- Pupil Referral Units for primary-age children

- Local Authority hospital and outreach departments.

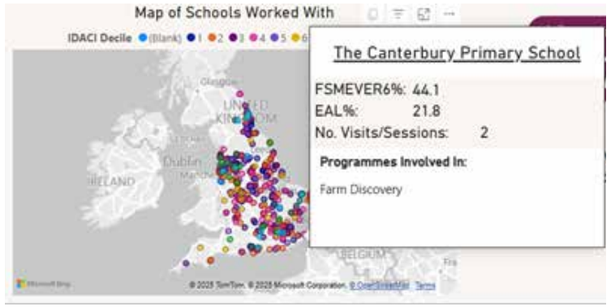
- School with high percentage of children receiving Service Pupil Premium
- A group or organisation supporting disadvantaged primary children outside of formal education e.g.
- A holiday activity programme for Pupil Premium children of primary age. A group supporting refugee / asylum seeker children / families.
- A group supporting vulnerable families.
- A group supporting Looked After Children.
- A group supporting Young Carers.

Where we work

Our Farm, Food and Residential Coordinators are located across England and North Wales delivering hands-on, real-world food and farm experiences. During 2024 our team increased in size slightly and as we now have a well-established team, where funding allowed, Coordinators delivered more visits.

Map showing locations of delivery team across our core programmes.

Thanks to a transformational six-month secondment of a data analyst from the John Lewis partnership we now have a suite of management information dashboards.



Map showing example of information dashboard, showing the locations of the schools we work with.

Last year the average percentage of children eligible for Free School Meals taking part in our programmes was 44%.

Map showing eligible schools, over 7000 schools are eligible for our programmes.

Farming

2024 was another turbulent and challenging year for farming, not only as a result of weather and climate, but also with a change of government bringing uncertainty to the new agricultural support scheme, the land use policy and concerns about the future resulting from changes to Inheritance Tax. We have continued to call for Educational Access payments (financial rewards for farmers welcoming children and others to their farms for educational visits) to be available to as many farmers as possible through inclusion in the Sustainable Farming Incentive. This has been promised but not yet delivered.

Global Risk

The 2024 World Bank Global Risks report identified five of the top ten risks over the next ten years as being environmental. In addition, it reports that 'Inequality (wealth, income) is perceived as the most central risk of all, playing a significant role in both triggering and being influenced by other risks. It is contributing to weakening trust and diminishing our collective sense of shared values.'

Climate Change

COP29 marked a significant milestone as dedicated spaces were created to ensure the meaningful participation of children within the Youth-led Climate Forum for the first time. Four children, including the youngest at just 10 years old, took on roles as moderators and speakers, engaging directly with Parties and observer organisations. Their participation highlighted the importance of inclusivity and intergenerational collaboration in driving climate action.

The Department for Education recognises the need that 'all young people are prepared for a world impacted by climate change through learning and practical experience' and this is reflected in their Sustainability and Climate Change strategy.

> **Given the immediacy of the challenges of a changing climate it is Natural England's view that children need to be equipped with a good understanding of the environment, skills such as creative problem solving and the emotional resilience to face it.**
>
> -Natural England 2024

Transformational education that enables every child to become ecologically literate through first hand experience of nature and food systems is at the heart of our response to the government's Curriculum Review.

Education 2024 summary

- **Budget Allocation:** In the 2024-25 financial year, total public spending on education in the UK was £116 billion, reflecting an 11% decrease since 2010-11
- **Increased Numbers:** There was a notable increase in home schooling, driven by various factors including challenges in traditional education systems to support children with special educational needs and mental health issues, especially post-pandemic.
- **Government Review:** Education Secretary Bridget Phillipson commissioned an independent review to refresh the curriculum and assessment system for 5- to 19-year-olds. In the Youth Led Shadow Review children and young people identified their priorities including;

  - Climate and nature integrated across all subject curricula
  - Hands-on experiential learning outdoors in nature
  - Training for teachers to deliver sustainability education

Teacher Recruitment and Retention Challenges

- Vacancies Rise: Full- and part-time teacher vacancies increased by 20% compared to the previous year.
- Retention Issues: Data revealed that almost 13% of newly qualified teachers left the profession after one year, and nearly 19% exited after their second year.

Socio-Economic Disparities

- Persistent Disadvantage: The proportion of pupils aged 11 classified as persistently disadvantaged increased from 11% in 2019 to 16% in 2023. At the end of primary school in 2023, this group was, on average, 11.6 months behind their non-disadvantaged peers.
- Free School Meal (FSM) Eligibility: The attainment gap between pupils eligible for FSM and those not eligible remained substantial. At age 5, there was a consistent gap of around 20 percentage points in achieving a 'good level of development.' At Key Stage 4, the gap widened further.

School Infrastructure

Building Conditions: Over 1.5 million students in England were taught in schools requiring major rebuilding or refurbishment. This inadequate infrastructure disproportionately affects students in deprived areas, potentially hindering their educational outcomes.

Our team now expect to prepare for non-verbal children, many more children with SEN/D, social, emotional and behavioural concerns, a lack of motor skills, physical fitness, attention span, younger children who aren't toilet trained. We are very conscious of being specialist providers for a growing and underserved audience. In response we have:

- Increased the average percentage of children eligible for Free School Meals across all the schools we worked with to 44% by careful targeting and prioritisation.
- We are providing more support and resources for teachers.
- School budget cuts and the cost of living crisis have significantly increased demand for transport subsidies, further stretching our fundraising. The total cost of the subsidies that we provided to schools in 2024 reached £100,000 (£67,000 in 2023).

Our impact at a glance

(statistics taken from evaluation of activities during the 2023-24 academic year)

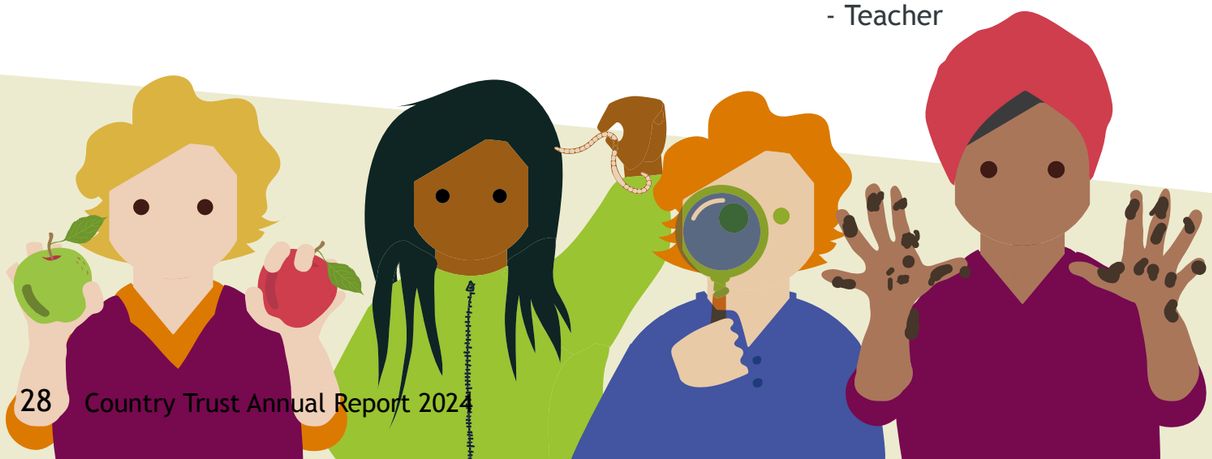
We are particularly proud that we continue to see evidence of teachers changing their practice as a result of their increased confidence and connection with food and farming following their time with us, and the positive impact they have seen our programmes have on their children.

Farm Discovery

Visits to working farms and estates are at the heart of all Country Trust programmes. Each year, we collaborate with innovative farmers and estate managers to provide thousands of disadvantaged children with immersive, hands-on experiences in food and farming.

In partnership with our farmer hosts, group leaders, and teachers, we carefully design Farm Discovery visits to meet the specific needs of each class or group. These visits offer engaging learning opportunities that align with the national curriculum. Children are introduced to crops and livestock, encouraged to ask questions and explore the food production process, and learn about the vital role agriculture plays in shaping our daily lives.

> “The students were thrilled to breathe real, clean air and learn about farm life first-hand. They eagerly fed the animals and learned about the great importance of the earth. This visit has provided a unique and memorable connection to nature for our students. The warmth of the farmers and the simplicity of farm life left a lasting impression on everyone”
>
> - Teacher



Impact on Children- Farm Discovery

- On average, the schools engaging with Farm Discovery have 43.1% of their pupils meeting ‘Ever 6 FSM’ criteria, compared to a national average of 25.9%.
- 100% of teachers felt that all or most of their children had enjoyed the visit.
- 97% of teachers said that they observed that all or most of their children were excited to talk to each other about what they were learning and doing.
- 92% of teachers said that all or most of the children wanted to talk to the farmer and/or Coordinator about what they were learning.
- 97% of teachers felt that all or most of their pupils had interacted with the natural world during their visit.
- After their visit, 71% of children said that they would definitely like to visit a farm again, with a further 9% saying they probably would like to.
- 79% of children said that they would like to find out more about farming.
- 74% of children felt that farms were important with a further 10% feeling that they probably were.
- 90% of children said that they had done something for the first time during their farm visit.

Our impact at a glance

(statistics taken from evaluation of activities during the 2023-24 academic year)

Impact on Teachers- Farm Discovery

- The programme has also supported teachers to gain confidence in bringing elements of farming into their classroom teaching, enabling a long lasting impact after the programme has ended. 100% of teachers felt better equipped to do this following their farm visit.
- 2 weeks after the visit, 91% of teachers reported that they were bringing elements of food, farming and the visit into their teaching.
- 84% of teachers reported that they were running more real-world learning activities with their pupils two weeks after their visit.
- 100% of teachers reported that the farm visit supported their teaching and learning in school.
- 98% of teachers said the visit was very or extremely valuable in providing expert knowledge and guidance of food, farming and the natural world.
- 99% of teachers felt that it had been extremely or very valuable to have sole use of the farm and a visit that was tailormade for them.
- 100% of teachers rated the programme as extremely or very valuable in giving their pupils real-world experiences they would not otherwise have had access to.
- 94% of teachers felt they had learnt something new about their pupils during the farm visit.

When we were feeding the cows and the picnic - we were in peace and it's so different to here (in the city) where it's so loud.

Child

It was so muddy and we were allowed to go out and get super messy and no one got in trouble!

Child

We loved being able to dig in the ground and find all the worms and creatures.

Child

Great day, lovely school, loads of questions, huge amounts of curiosity. Yr 4 children from centre of Peterborough, some of whom had never been on a coach before; didn't know how to fasten a seat belt. The farm sits on a hill and from the yard you look across the Welland Valley to the opposite hillside. The first children who came off the bus literally couldn't believe that the view was real "that looks like wallpaper, it's a painting, it can't be real" then "I just saw a bird fly across it, it must be real.

Coordinator's session report

The children thoroughly enjoyed their visit to the farm. I knew they would enjoy meeting the animals and sitting on the tractor, but it has also been interesting to note how much they enjoyed looking at the different coloured grasses, running through the long grasses and discussing the flowers. A number of other teachers have also told me that my class have been talking about the trip (on the playground, etc).

Teacher, Welsh House Farm Community School and Special Needs Resources Base

Our impact at a glance

(statistics taken from evaluation of activities during the 2023-24 academic year)

- On average, teachers gave a score of 5.9 out of 6 for the communication and information they received about their farm visit, the health and safety of the visit and the appropriateness and relevance of activities on the visit.
- The average score given for visit organisation and delivery was 6 out of 6.

Case Study: Horizon Academy

A teacher from Horizon Academy, which has been bringing groups of children on Farm Discovery visits for the last four years, explains why the Farm Discovery programme is so important for their pupils:

“We go because they’ve never been to a farm! They all think that farming is where the cows and the sheep are, but this isn’t that type of farm. It’s so many experiences that they don’t normally get to see. That passion from the farmer that we go to, his passion about how he’s the 5th generation of farming, it’s been his Great Grandad, his Grandad, his Dad. We’re in a deprived area, a lot of parents don’t work, I don’t think children in our school see that side of life, their experiences are different in so many ways.

It’s a way of the children understanding where food comes from... they can pop out to Aldi or Asda and see the bread on the shelf, but actually the starting point is on the farm. It was really interesting for them to see how wheat is grown, how much seed is needed and how much that would grow into. They got to meet what they called ‘The Crop Doctors’ who put all the medicines on the crops. The farmer talks about ways of making farming better for the environment as well. Last year we made bug hotels from materials they found on the farm.”

The teacher also explained how the farm visit links to a range of curriculum areas, enabling students to consolidate what they have learnt throughout their time at primary school and apply it in a new context:

“When you looks across the curriculum from the whole year, we can link it to various topics, part of it is looking at the environment and fossil fuels, in science they do electricity and renewable energy sources so it links to the bigger picture, and you get to see positive farming as well. There’s also ways of linking it back to science [topics] taught in the earlier year groups as well, looking at plants and the life cycle of plants.”

Follow up learning continues in school, extending the impact of the visit:

“Afterwards they might write thank you letters to the farm or, other times, they have done research into different types of farming.”

Our impact at a glance

(statistics taken from evaluation of activities during the 2023-24 academic year)

Food Discovery

Our Food Discovery programmes immerse children in every stage of the farm to fork journey—growing, cooking, tasting, and even selling food. Pupils learn how to prepare soil, plant, nurture, and harvest seasonal vegetables and herbs. With our support, schools connect Food Discovery to key curriculum topics and foster meaningful discussions about the environment and the wider world.

Children are introduced to a variety of healthy foods and are encouraged to explore new tastes and smells in a safe, supportive space. They learn how to cook affordable, nutritious meals using the crops they've grown alongside other simple, wholesome ingredients. Through visits to local farms, pupils gain insight into large-scale crop production. They put their maths skills to use by running a Playground Market, selling produce to parents and peers, and conclude the programme by preparing a Harvest Feast to share with family, friends, and farmers.

The programme cascades into the home, as children take home meals they have prepared and windowsill gardens to grow at home. We have found that the programme has a lasting impact on the children and family and that the positive impact of the programme has reached throughout the school and encouraged them to improve their outdoor spaces.

> "It was lovely to see the parents engaging and taking an interest in what the children have been doing and seeing their children achieve success as due to the type of school we are (alternative provision), many of our children and parents have been disillusioned with the school systems/learning."
>
> - Teacher

> "Child A who is EAL/SEN and on a Learning Support Plan, she originates from Somalia - her father has a disability and is sole carer for his three children in the UK. It provided an opportunity for them as a family, beyond what they can afford, and enabled Dad to be actively involved in his child's learning which helped build a stronger home/school relationship with the family."
>
> - Teacher

Impact on Children- Food Discovery

100% of teachers agreed that Food Discovery provided experiences that their pupils would otherwise not have had.

- Teachers rated the access to real-world experiences as particularly valuable for their students. 97% of teachers rated this as extremely or very valuable.
- In 87% of sessions, all or most children tried something for the first time.
- Teachers reported that 100% of their students had interacted with the natural world during the programme.
- 100% of teachers agreed that all pupils, regardless of their learning needs or abilities had opportunities to engage with Food Discovery activities.
- 54.8% of teachers reported hearing all or most of their pupils talking about cooking at home, since starting Food Discovery.
- 66.7% of teachers said that all or most of their pupils had talked about wanting to grow their own vegetables at home or had already started doing so.

Our impact at a glance

(statistics taken from evaluation of activities during the 2023-24 academic year)

Impact on teachers - Food Discovery

- 61.1% of teachers strongly agreed or agreed that they were confident in leading cooking sessions in the classroom (an 18.5% overall shift towards agreement from pre-programme).
- 66.6% of teachers strongly agreed or agreed that they were confident in leading food growing sessions in the classroom (an 11.3% overall shift towards agreement).
- 80.5% of teachers strongly agreed or agreed that they were confident in using food in their teaching (an 28.1% overall shift towards agreement).
- 61.1% of teachers strongly agreed or agreed that they were confident in using elements of farming in their teaching (an 30.3% overall shift towards agreement).
- 86.1% of teachers strongly agreed or agreed that they were confident in using the natural world in their teaching (an 24.6% overall shift towards agreement).
- 94.4% of teachers found the programme extremely or very valuable for providing expert knowledge and guidance of food, farming and the natural world.
- 88.9% of teachers found the programme extremely or very valuable for supporting teaching and learning in school.

Impact on parents - Food Discovery

A third of teachers reported that even 'hard to reach' parents attended Food Discovery sessions, suggesting that they could be a vehicle for improving parental engagement.

83.3% of parents/carers who attended found the Family Session useful or very useful.

66.7% of parents who attended the Family Session agreed that it had encouraged them to do more cooking and growing with their children at home, with 87% saying they or their child had tried something for the first time at the session.

> **I've never been allowed to dig in the dirt before, can we do this every session?**
>
> Child

> **We did like this like this bean thing with a tortilla, and I never actually eat beans and I tried and it was actually really good, and that changed my opinion on beans. I felt like shocked that something that doesn't look that nice is actually so good.**
>
> Child

> **Normally, like before we done cooking, I was just like bored because we didn't get to do like anything fun before. But now that we had cooking, it was like really, really fun… Because you get to add new things. And you get to, you get to try stuff that you've never tried before from other countries.**
>
> Child

> **I would love to cook for like my family. I said when I'm older, I'll come round yours and I'll cook for ya. So I cooking lessons, I'd really like that more because then at this age, I think cooking could be good because you can start cooking at a young age and then as you're older, you might become really good.**
>
> Child

> **I wanna keep doing experiments, like with the planting and that stuff that we did like in the dark and light. I want to be a scientist. That's why.**
>
> Child

> **"It kind of inspired me to get my like gardening plot because that's what I'm working with right now in my family. Like we're making benches for it and we're planting all kinds of seeds.**
>
> Child

Case Study: Food Discovery White House Farm Primary School, Norwich

Avoidant restrictive food intake disorder, more commonly known as ARFID, is a condition characterised by avoidance of certain foods or types of food, and/or having restricted intake in terms of the overall amount eaten.

At a primary school we supported this year, one child suffered from ARFID.

His parent reported that the only food that he would eat for a number of years was white bread. Through participation in the Food Discovery programme, this child was able to make life-changing progress in his relationship with food. The programme supported him to engage with food through preparation in cooking sessions and being supported to taste raw ingredients.

The child's father joined a 'Family Cooking' session and the Deputy Headteacher reported that he "took time off work especially to come along, they worked together to cook lasagne and whilst the son didn't eat the finished dish he tried lots of things in the process which his Dad was thrilled about. This programme has helped Dad keep the momentum of supporting him with his eating."

The boy's father described to The Country Trust how his son's participation in the programme had changed his family's lives. Having previously had little support from their doctor or a specialist, he was delighted to see that since taking part in Food Discovery, his son could now eat a range of vegetables and reported that he also joins his family to eat the dishes he has prepared in school and is very excited and proud to discuss his progress and now varied palate with anybody who will listen!

Countryside Discovery Residentials

Despite the significant challenges due to the closure of Ringsfield Hall, our Suffolk base, the residential programme has had an impactful year, working with almost 350 children across 12 schools with high levels of disadvantage. We moved several of our schools booked to visit Suffolk to a new programme in Sussex and set up a new, pioneering programme funded by The Ernest Cook Trust in the Lake District.

Feedback from teachers and students provides the evidence that Country Trust Residentials are inclusive, enjoyable, and effectively support children to learn new things and engage with nature. The residential programme has also supported teachers to gain confidence in using food, farming and the natural world in their teaching and increase their awareness of the benefits of outdoor learning.

When it came to asking teachers how they felt about the change in programme they were extremely positive:

> **The activities are next level'** Lansbury Lawrence Teacher

Impact on teachers:

- 89% of teachers said they planned to use the residential experiences in their teaching when they returned to school.
- 100% of teachers said their confidence in using elements of farming and food in their teaching had increased after the residential.
- 100% of teachers said they had a greater understanding of the value of farming and food education after the residential.
- 100% of teachers gave the management, coordination and health and safety of the residential a maximum score of 6/6.

Impact on children:

- More children than ever before commented on the value of being away from electronic devices whilst on the residential.
- 100% of teachers reported that their students were excited to share what they had learned on the residential.
- 100% of teachers reported that their students had interacted with the natural world.
- 100% of teachers said that most or all of their pupils had enjoyed the residential.

> **I learnt about plants and animals like cows. I learnt their poo has lots of nutrition and helps the soil.'** - child

> **'I found out that you could make paint with onion skin.'** - child

> **'I learnt that we should pinch stinging nettles so they don't sting us.'** -child

Farm in a Box

Farm in a Bag

Our ‘Farm in a Box’ programme supports children and educators to have a farm-centred experience without leaving their schoolgrounds or location. Full of hands-on resources, each Box helps to spark children’s curiosity, develop their confidence and support them to make a real connection with the wider world of food, farming and the countryside.

In partnership with family bakers, Warburtons, in Autumn 2023 our Boxes reached 6484 children. We sent 240 boxes to schools with an average of 50% of children meeting Ever6-FSM criteria, almost twice the national average.

The Farm in a Boxes are full of resources and activities enabling children to discover the diverse world of food and farming through sensory play and investigation, and seeing real farmers, their stories and crops. The resources in the Box are designed to be reused by future cohorts too, made more likely by increased staff confidence.

The difference we make - Farm in a Box

Impact on Children:

- 100% of teachers observed some or all of their pupils interacting with the natural world when using the Box.
- 99% of teachers observed some or all of their pupils being excited to talk to each other about what they were learning and doing from the Box.

Impact on teachers:

- 85% of teachers wanted to use elements of farming in their teaching in the future since using the Box.
- 92% of teachers reported that the Box had made them feel more confident using the natural world in their teaching.
- 93% of teachers said they wanted to run more real-world learning activities with their pupils after receiving the Box.

Farm in a Bag

FIABag is a collection of resources, given to schools to prepare children for their visit. Each bag has 5 pre-printed activity cards focusing on the senses with items to feel from the farm and an opportunity to taste something linked to their visit. Teachers also receive a PowerPoint presentation to share with their class, which includes an introduction from the farmer, some photos of the farm, some sound clips and a map which helps the children see where the farm is located in relation to their school. These bags are re-useable and are given out at the pre-visit and returned at the visit.

FIABags were developed with the help of funding from Farming in Protected Landscapes and are designed to prepare children for their visit, to give them some basic knowledge to build on, some familiarity with the farm and the farmer in advance and to start engaging their curiosity.

Residential in a Box

All schools that attend a Country Trust residential are sent a digital teacher pack, including a link to online ‘Residential in a Box’ (RIAB) resources. These were developed with support from The Ernest Cook Trust as part of the OWL collaboration and are also available on OWL residentials. Resources include a journey journal and activities that explore children’s feelings ahead of a residential, help build teamwork and introduce some of the new sensory experiences children may encounter. Documents to share with parents, both to prepare for the residential beforehand and to embed learning afterwards, are also included. In addition, some schools are sent a physical RIAB to support pre- and post-residential sessions.

> **“They most loved the Zoom call with the farmer and making seed bombs which we dispersed on a welly walk. The animal poo lesson also grabbed their attention!”** Teacher

> **“They loved the feely bags activity where they had to guess what was in each bag, and they came up with some great adjectives to describe.”** Teacher

> **“The quality of the resources was brilliant and I was very impressed with the real-world application.”** Teacher

Soil Campaign- Plant Your Pants!

Soil is the most species-rich habitat on Earth, it's home to 59% of life on our planet, and around 95% of our food depends on it. But survey data from a Childwise survey reveals that around 40% of children don't know that soil is important for the food they eat, and 1/3 of children don't have the opportunity to put their hands in soil – either through play or activities such as gardening.

As a result, we have continued to champion and celebrate soil. Following the successful pilot of our 'Plant Your Pants' public engagement campaign in 2023, with the continued support of the Hiscox Foundation, we encouraged the nation to plant their pants once again in 2024. The aim is to make the invisible life of the soil visible, through burying something that's 100% cotton, waiting at least 8 weeks, and observing how much of the cotton has been 'eaten' by organisms in the soil.

In 2024 our digital campaign was featured in 37 pieces of media coverage and reached over 33,000 participants. The campaign provided free access to a range of resources including our brand new 'sensory emails' containing films, activities and articles which guided participants through a journey to explore soil through each of their five senses. Our film resources were viewed 1,759 times and our teaching and learning resources were downloaded by 529 unique users. We estimate around 15,000 children accessed these materials.

In 2023/24, soil based activities featured in all of our programmes. These activities included planting, growing, composting, putting hands in the soil, comparing soil types, observing soil through a microscope and looking for minibeasts, and covered a wide range of learning areas such as soil health, biodiversity in soil, soil composition, erosion and flooding. Our work on soil was filmed for the 'Six inches of soil' documentary and featured in the accompanying book.

> **I never realised soil was so important!**
>
> Child

> **I've never been allowed to dig in the dirt before.**
>
> Child

Thanks to AGCO Foundation funding, we were able to provide a soil-themed conference for the whole Country Trust team, enabling them to work with soil experts and learn how to bring soil to life across our programmes. We, and the children we work with, have benefitted greatly from our partnerships and connections with soil scientists and champions across the country. We were even able to take children to the John Innes Centre to work alongside scientists researching soil antibiotics! The comments from children evidence a growing awareness of the importance of soil, and increased opportunities to connect with, enjoy and explore this vital natural resource.

> **It was so muddy and we were allowed to go out and get super messy and no one got in trouble!**
>
> Child

> **We loved being able to dig in the ground and find all the worms and creatures.**
>
> Child

> **Wow that's amazing, when I am touching soil there are all those living things all over my hands - that's cool!**
>
> Child

> **If we didn't have soil we would be dead.**
>
> Child

Our policy work

In 2023/24, our primary focus has continued to be ensuring that the new agricultural support scheme, ELMS, provides financial assistance to as many farmers as possible for hosting educational visits. We have advocated for the inclusion of Educational Access Payments (Ed1), concentrating primarily on the Sustainable Farming Incentive (SFI), the component of ELMS which is expected to engage the most farmers. Following a year of significant changes, including a new government, applications to SFI are now closed and we wait to see whether those in the scheme will be able to access Ed1.

In summer 2024, the government announced a Curriculum and Assessment Review. We collaborated with various organisations in the farm, food, and fair education sectors including the global YouTube channel Sorted Food, to craft a compelling response, aiming to elevate farm, food, and nature education from an optional addition to a critical component of the curriculum, thereby providing lifelong benefits for children, society, and the planet. Additionally, we continue to be actively involved in the Nature Premium Campaign Steering Group, the Food Education Network and the Fair Education Alliance. We have spoken up for the positive impact of Farming in Protected Landscapes and are delighted the scheme is going to be extended for another year.

> **It is so important to teach the next generation about where their food comes from as well as the wider benefits of being on a farm for the day. The government should be doing all it can to maximise these opportunities. The change I see over the course of the day in the children's behaviour and concentration is amazing.**
>
> Farmer host

Farming in Protected Landscapes

FIPL, which was launched by Defra in 2021, funds projects that support four themes:

1. Climate – Mitigating climate change and achieving net zero.
2. Nature – Promoting nature recovery.
3. People – Enhancing health and well-being through access to the landscape.
4. Place – Supporting sustainable, nature-friendly farm businesses and enhancing landscape quality.

In 2022 The Country Trust began to work with farmers and FiPL officers in Protected Landscapes to secure funding for farm visits aligned with the programme's priorities: Climate, Place, and especially People, where we excel.

Since 2022, as a result of FIPL funding The Country Trust has delivered 553 farm visits across 10 Protected Landscapes, reaching 11,613 children from disadvantaged communities.

- People: The FIPL funded projects had a transformative impact on both participants and farmers by:
- Engaging children from diverse backgrounds, including ethnic minorities, SEND pupils, and non-school groups like refugees.
- Boosting farmers' capacity and confidence to host visits, supporting their farm diversification efforts.
- Providing schools with expert Coordinators and tailored resources, including preparatory resources such as The Country Trust's bespoke Farm in a Bags (FIABag) created and piloted with FiPL funding, to enhance engagement and ensure effective learning.

Reaching Diverse Communities with FiPL

On average, schools participating in Farm Discovery have 43.1% of pupils meeting ‘Ever 6 FSM’ criteria, compared to the national average of 25.9%.

The schools we work with through the FiPL funded work serve long-established communities, as well as children and families from a range of ethnic and cultural backgrounds. On average, schools participating in Farm Discovery have 27.6% of pupils with English as an Additional Language (EAL). Our programmes also support children with diverse physical, educational, social, and emotional needs.

Engaging Non-School Groups

Beyond schools, we have collaborated with:

- Children’s charities such as Barnardo’s and SELFA in Skipton
- A refugee group
- A women’s refuge
- The Government-funded HAF programme in Bolton, which provides holiday activities and food for children eligible for free school meal benefits

By intentionally reaching these diverse audiences, we are ensuring that more children can explore, enjoy, and understand the landscape, regardless of their background or circumstances.

High Weald AONB

> This was amazing. I have never seen some of the children this engaged. They were inquisitive and loved asking Harry questions, and I’ve never seen them enjoy a trip this much or learn so much while remaining engaged. We have had a fabulous day, and I’d honestly love to do this again next year—I’m going to ask the office to sort it. – Teacher

Forest of Bowland AONB

> If it wasn’t for The Country Trust, our children would be going nowhere this year. They live between school and home, and that is it. We can’t take our children on trips anymore because we can’t afford to, so The Country Trust is a lifesaver for us. – Teacher

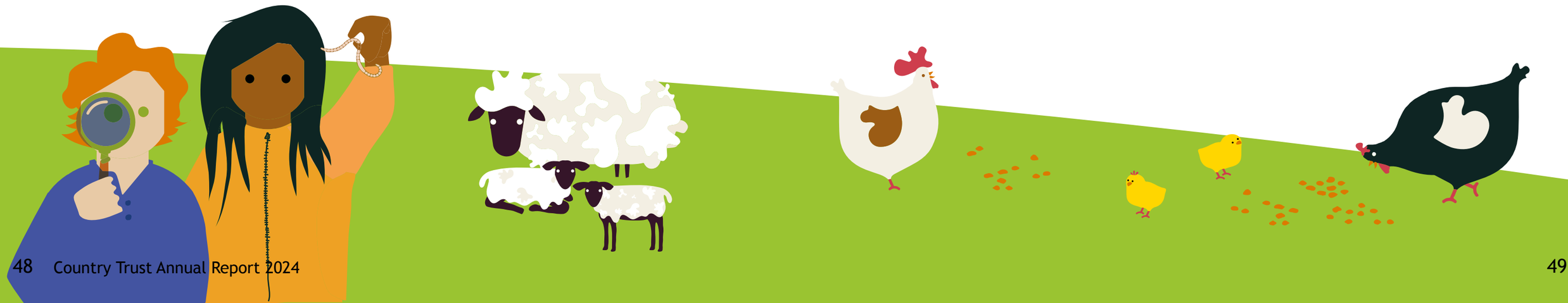
> I actually thought it was going to be rubbish, but it turned out to be the best day of my life. – Pupil

Suffolk Coasts and Heaths National Park

> It’s just great to get these kids out into the countryside. On the journey here, it was obvious that they had never been outside of our town. They were asking about the houses they could see and didn’t know what a village was. – Teacher

Norfolk Broads National Park

> I have been a teacher for 15 years, and this is definitely the best visit I have ever been on! It is so important for these children to learn about farming and nature. Teacher



Strategic direction

Our 5 Year Plan

By intentionally reaching these diverse audiences, we are ensuring that more children can explore, enjoy, and understand the landscape, regardless of their background or circumstances.

The 5 pillars of the Plan are:

- **Growth:** Significantly increase engagement to 120,000 children per annum by year 5
- **Diversification:** Finding new ways to deliver quality programmes at scale, ourselves, or with and through others. Supporting teachers to sustain the impact of our work and farmers to engage in farm education
- **Influence:** Focussing our effort to influence policies that support our mission in food, farming, and education
- **Impact and Evaluation:** Our Impact Framework including our Theory of Change will enable us to measure and share the difference we make and will be 'living' documents. We will build academically robust evidence for farm education too
- **Infrastructure:** Developing our team, knowledge, IT and resources to support growth and development

Next steps with our Strategic Plan

2025 will be year 4 of our 5 Year Plan.

Our aims are:

- At least 50,000 children taking part in our core programmes
- Collect evidence that we are reaching children in the most disadvantaged areas
- Collect evidence that we are creating foundations for a connection to the land, for a positive relationship with food, and a connection to the natural world and living things
- Develop our understanding of how our approach can become a scaleable solution
- Provide opportunities for participants in all our programmes to discover soil and make soil centred resources and inspiration available to all schools and the public
- Continue to seek funding to allow us to use our pre-activity resources to build confidence, curiosity and connection, sharing these with others where appropriate
- Support teachers to sustain the impact of our visits through a blend of physical and digital resources and e-communications
- Ensure the importance of food and farming education is seen and heard by policy makers and we help them to ‘join the dots’ across departments, particularly focusing on those areas under review by government
- Seek significant new sources of income to allow us to consolidate and then grow to meet demand and need with confidence
- Ensuring that our foundations of income, technology, leadership, governance, financial and information management underpin our growth and that our employment model is fit for the future
- Improve and extend the capabilities of others through partnerships

Fundraising

Income increased by 12.3% and expenditure increased by 8.4% in comparison to 2023 (to £1,549,244 and £1,550,177) The net outcome was as expected though actual figures were lower than budgeted. 33% of our income was unrestricted. £380,283 of income received in 2024 was deferred to 2025 because it relates to the planned delivery of activity in the spring and summer terms.

We were pleased to finish the year with a balanced position having increased our income by 12.3% in comparison with 2023. Despite spending less than we had budgeted and raising less than we had anticipated we were able to:

- Grow our Farm Discovery programme
- Continue to offer most of our programmes free of charge.
- Develop two new residential programmes
- Offer Farm in a Bag to 193 school visits to build children's confidence, curiosity and sense of connection prior to a Farm Discovery visit. A 42% increase on 2023.
- Offer more transport subsidies than ever before (£100k v £67k in 2023) where the cost of coach travel was a barrier to participation.
- Deliver the second year of our Soil Health Campaign attracting 10,000 more registrations
- Meet together face to face as a whole team for the first time in four years.
- Continue to review our existing programmes and train the team to ensure we kept pace with the needs of teachers and children.

Aligning the timing of receipt of income with the optimum timing for booking in our programmes with schools and farms remains a significant challenge for us.

Controls

Financial management consists of monthly management accounts that are distributed to all Trustees for review. Monthly forecasting enables Trustees to view the financial landscape ahead along with a mid-year review and detailed consideration in the third quarter prior to preparing the budget for the following year. A new Finance Sub Committee was formed in autumn 2024 to provide additional scrutiny and support.

CEO or Trustee authorisation is required for all payments; all payments made by the Charity over £6,000 require dual authorisation with an authorised Trustee signatory. The charity is required to have an audit as our income is over £1m.

Reserves policy

Trustees operate a RAG approach to assessing reserves with a green zone at around 3 months of operating reserves.

Based on our expenditure budget for 2025 this would indicate a reserves level of approximately £448,159. Overall reserves decreased from £531,459 to £530,526, of which unrestricted reserves decreased from £503,211 to £484,364, as a result of a planned use of reserves for our 5 Year Plan. Our aim is for a break even budget again in 2025 but should our monitoring indicate any cause for concern we will take prompt action. In addition, our intention is to build an operating reserve to allow us to authorise activity in the year ahead.

Fundraising

The Board has adopted the Charity Governance Code and is working through the seven principles to ensure good governance.

Legal and ethical fundraising remains a key objective of the Trustees, and they take their responsibilities with regard to proper fundraising practice very seriously. They are guided by the Charity Commission's Charity fundraising: a guide to trustee duties (CC20 updated Oct 2022) as well as the Charity Governance Code (updated 2020 – we are alert to the expected update of the code in early 2025), and the Guidance Note from the Fundraising Regulator on New Reporting Requirements published October 2018 and updated January 2023 (we are alert to the expected update in 2025), and the Covid fundraising guidance issued during 2021. The Country Trust is registered with the Fundraising Regulator and complies with the Code of Fundraising Practice.

In 2024, approximately 56% of our income came from charitable trusts and foundations,15% from government bodies (exclusively Farming in Protected Landscapes) 16% from companies, 6% from other donations, and 6% from service users, primarily schools in the form of the balance of the cost of residential visits after our subsidy has been applied, or as a contribution from schools towards the cost of Food Discovery programmes.

Donors to The Country Trust can be assured that:

- Fundraising activity is included within the Trust's Risk Register, which is reviewed at each Board meeting; a senior member of staff directly involved with fundraising is present at every Board meeting.
- The Charity does not currently make use of professional fundraisers or commercial participators.
- The Charity complies with the Fundraising Regulator's voluntary regulation scheme.
- All fundraising is carried out by employed staff, managed by the CEO or Senior Managers who report to the CEO, or very occasionally by named volunteers working closely with the employed staff on our behalf, primarily networking with peers and friends. Some volunteers will fundraise in aid of The Country Trust through fundraising platforms and the Charity provides support for them on its website.
- The Charity did not receive any complaints about fundraising activities carried out by The Charity or someone acting on The Charity's behalf. We will be ensuring that our current website refresh includes raising the visibility of how to complain.
- The Charity respects the privacy of the public, including the need to take special care with vulnerable people. Any mailing or emailing for fundraising purposes is in accordance with GDPR preferences. Public fundraising is through online fundraising platforms, or through static collection goblets and is carried out in accordance with the Code of Fundraising Practice. The Charity undertakes very little face to face fundraising and what is done is events based and primarily by invitation.
- The Charity will comply with requests issued by the Fundraising Preference Service.
- The Charity strives to maintain GDPR compliance and is registered with the ICO.

Fundraising

The Charity continues to derive most of its funding from grant making trusts, but with a growing number of companies now supporting our work. We continued to sustain a good percentage of funding within multi-year agreements. For the first time in 2024 we ran an online auction and are very grateful to all those who donated, championed and bid, and especially to the auction house Lacey Scott Knight who hosted the auction for us.

We are very grateful indeed for the support received from all our funders, and mention here those who have given permission for their support to be acknowledged in this report:

29th May 1961 Charitable Trust, AIM Foundation, AGCO Foundation, Aldgate and Allhallows Foundation, Anguish Educational Fund, Ardian UK and the Ardian Foundation, Aurora Trust, Barbour Foundation, Bayfield Charitable Trust, BASF, British Gypsum, Bruno Schroder Trust, The Barratt Family Charitable Trust, Carr-Ellison Charitable Trust, Chadacre Agricultural Trust, Catherine Cookson Charitable Trust, The CLA Charitable Trust, The Clarkson Foundation, De Brito, DCR Allen Charitable Trust, D'Oyly Carte Charitable Trust, Dulverton Trust, Earl of Fitzwilliam Charitable Trust, Lance Coates Charitable Trust, Ernest Cook Trust, Essex Community Foundation, Darlington Building Society, Doves Farm, Farming in Protected Landscapes Scheme, Fenwick, Frontier Agriculture UK, George F White, The Girdlers' Company, The Hadrian Trust (2025 donation), WA Handley Trust, Forbes Charitable Foundation, The Hiscox Foundation, A Hume Country Clothing and Outfitters, Four Winds Trust, Gerald Palmer Eling, Impax Asset Management, The Joicey Trust, Gransden Show, Hedley Foundation, Adrian Swire CT, Sir James Knott Trust, Sir James Roll Charitable Trust, John Lewis Golden Jubilee Trust, Julia Rausing Trust, John and Pamela Salter Trust, Laura Capel Charitable Trust, Lady Hind Trust, The Lund Trust, Lujenna Educational Trust, Lycetts Insurers and Financial Services, Manydown Charitable Trust, The Mercers' Company, Merchant Taylor Foundation, Muckle LLP Community Fund, Mr & Mrs Rackham Charitable Trust, NFU, Nineveh Charitable Trust, Northumberland Freemasons Charitable Trust, Northumberland Estates, Northumbrian Water, Norwich Freemen's Charity, Pilkington Charities, The Farmers Company Charitable Fund, PF Charitable Trust, Oxbury Bank, Omex Ltd , Leach Fourteenth Trust, The Rank Foundation, Reece Foundation, Ridley Family Charity, Riverford Organic Foods, The Rothschild Foundation, Royal Society of Chemistry, Rural Solutions, Ryecroft Glenton, The Shears Foundation, The Bacon Charitable Trust, The Dumbreck Charity, The Bernard Sunley Charitable Foundation, South of England Agricultural Society, Squires Foundation, Felix Thornley Cobbold Agricultural Trust, Troy Asset Management, Thomas's Foundation, Tesco Community Grants, Tyne and Wear Community Foundation, Warburtons Ltd, Westminster Foundation, The Garfield Weston Foundation, The Wheler Foundation, Sovereign Healthcare Foundation, Steel Charitable Trust, St Nicholas Education Trust, Suffolk Community Foundation, Yorkshire Agricultural Society, The Verney Foundation.

Thanks are due to the Charity's President, Vice Presidents, Ambassadors, Champions, Trustees and staff for their support in identifying and making introductions to potential new funding sources.

Structure, Governance and Management

Structure

The Country Trust was founded in 1978 and is registered with the Charity Commission under Charity Number 1122103. The Board of Trustees, President, Board of Vice Presidents, Ambassadors, Chief Executive Officer, senior staff members and professional advisers are listed on page 1.

On the 23rd November 2007 the Country Trust was incorporated; it became a company limited by guarantee and not having share capital. On the 1st January 2008, the Charity commenced trading as an incorporated Charity. The Company number is 6436266 and the registered address is shown on page 1.

Governing document

The Charity is governed by the Memorandum and Articles of Association of the Country Trust Ltd.

Governing Body

The structure of the Charity consists of a Board of Trustees and a Chief Executive supported by a Senior Leadership Team. The Board of Trustees is a self-appointing body and includes a good gender balance and a range of experience. Several Trustees have direct experience of our services either as teachers or active farmer hosts. Trustees with the relevant experience have particular responsibility for Finance and Safeguarding. The Chief Executive reports directly to the Co-Chairs of Trustees and is responsible for the day-to-day running of the Charity. The Charity is very fortunate to be supported by a President, Vice Presidents and Ambassadors who are an advisory, networking and fundraising resource.

Recruitment and training of Trustees

Trustees are recruited as and when required through advertising, personal recommendation and through the recommendation of third-party advisors according to the Board's specifications concerning eligibility, personal competence, and specialist skills. Potential candidates are invited to apply and are interviewed by the Chair and at least one other Trustee. Successful applicants are co-opted to join the Board until their appointment is confirmed. One Trustee stepped down during the year (Chair of Trustees) and four were appointed. Two Trustees were appointed as Co-Chairs. One Trustee undertook The Essential Trustee Training Trustee training with Stone King. Three Trustees completed their standard safeguarding training. Two renewed their online safety training.

Organisational management

The Charity's Trustees are legally responsible for the overall management and control of the Charity. The Board of Trustees meets at least four times a year to discuss and implement strategic issues, monitor income and expenditure, monitor risk, review and approve policies and approve annual budgets. The day to day running of the Charity is delegated to the Chief Executive, the Senior Leadership Team, staff and sessional staff, who report to the Board monthly and quarterly.

Structure, Governance and Management

Risk management

The Board of Trustees is responsible for the management of risks associated with the activities of the Charity. The Board refers to the Charity's Risk Register at each meeting which is prepared and updated by the Chief Executive.

The top 6 major risks identified and monitored in 2024 were:

- Inadequate fundraising – mitigated by: Annual budgets include risk analysis, monthly financial reports show progress against budget, 'new' spend is brought to the Board, detailed Mid-Year Review, active communication with our funders, new product development.
- Public Health Emergency – teacher shortages through ill health, and mental wellbeing concerns resulting from the pandemic and ongoing stress. Mitigated by patient and persistent communication with teachers, continued prioritisation of pre-visits, teacher survey to ascertain priorities, additional resources to support teachers to sustain the impact of our programmes.
- Dependency on individual knowledge and relationships – (employed) key areas of vulnerability fundraising, IT, H and S, Digital – mitigated by: IT assistant supported to do an apprenticeship degree, secondment from John Lewis Partnership, Digital assistant employed, H and S 'how to' guides prioritised, increased fundraising capacity, greater visibility of key fundraising information and improved management information.
- High staff turnover – this relates in part to vacancies that we haven't felt financially confident enough to fill e.g. Policy Lead, and the loss of a key role (Impact Lead) after a few months because of a fulltime employment opportunity. Our greenlighting process has also increased nervousness about the retention of our delivery team.
- Employment contractual issues - mitigated by: transition from self employment to employment.
- Legal and regulatory compliance– as above, plus new contracts were developed for all our self employed delivery team.

Risk Assessments are prepared by staff and self-employed sessional contractors for all activities led by the Charity. The Charity ensures that all our active host farmers have a Risk Assessment in place for Country Trust visits. These Risk Assessments are prepared, owned and managed by the host farmer but where required, support for the process, including signposting to external industry guidance, is provided by the Charity. The Charity receives the help of professional advisors for risks associated with health and safety, safeguarding and employment practice.

The Board of Trustees also has in place key controls for use by the Charity, such as formal agendas for meetings, comprehensive strategic planning and monthly management accounting, established lines of reporting, formal written policies and a review schedule, clear authorisation levels for all payments and a safeguarding policy which provides guidance for all on best safe practice for adults within an organisation working with children.

Structure, Governance and Management

Openness and accountability

We strive to involve participants in programme design and the comprehensive feedback gathered from stakeholders during the year is constantly used to inform practice. Our annual evaluation reports are published online and publicised through social media and printed materials. We continue to be pleased with participation rates in our online pupil surveys sent to teachers after each farm visit. Our ambition is to do more to gather meaningful contributions from children and to gather more evidence of our longer term impact.

This is our Position Statement:

The Country Trust connects children with the land that sustains us all. We aim to foster an understanding of farming, food production and countryside management in all its many guises and raise awareness of the way in which we are all participants in agriculture through the food that we eat.

The Country Trust visits and activities are structured to support the National Curriculum, personal development and wellbeing. Our carefully planned opportunities and experiences are designed to empower children to be curious, confident and create change in their lives and the world around them so that they and society can thrive.

We do not consider ourselves to be a charity that campaigns for or against any particular form of farming or land management. However:

- We do seek to influence policy makers where this makes it more likely that we will achieve our mission. For example, for educational access to farms to be supported as a standalone public good, and for food and farming education to be a vital part of education, health, wellbeing, sustainability and food strategies.
- In the context of the climate emergency and rapid loss of biodiversity, we design our programmes to help children to understand the unique responsibilities that farmers and land managers have for soil health and biodiversity, stewardship of non-renewable resources and locking up carbon.

Our intention is that children will be in a better position to make informed decisions, understanding that their choices matter, and may be influential in the future shape of farming and the countryside.

Structure, Governance and Management

GDPR

We use our database to extend our compliance with the GDPR regulations – subscription to Newsletters allows for double opt in as well as providing the usual ability to unsubscribe.

Cybersecurity

The Country Trust continues to be vigilant with regard to Cybersecurity. All CT staff are required to complete annual training as part of our Cyber insurance obligations. We continue to use the NCSC's (National Cyber Security Centre) monitoring tools. Continued vigilance meant that there were no serious issues in 2024.

Safeguarding

Government guidance is clear that all organisations working with children, young people, families, parents and carers have particular responsibilities. At The Country Trust we recognise that the welfare of all children is paramount and that all children, regardless of ability or culture, have equal rights of protection. We have a duty of care when they are in our charge, and we will do everything we can to provide a safe and caring environment whilst they attend our activities. Our policy for child safeguarding is on our website and is reviewed annually by our Board of Trustees. The Country Trust is a member of SAFEcic, an umbrella organisation providing safeguarding training, advice and standards. All staff, volunteers and Trustees undertake safeguarding training and undergo DBS checks where this is permitted for their role.

Safeguarding is reviewed at the quarterly Board meetings. There were 7 safeguarding concerns raised within 2024 (9 in 2023 for comparison) including disclosures by children pertaining to potential signs of neglect and abuse. All concerns were followed through in accordance with our Policy. Trustees have continued to keep their safeguarding training up to date and keep abreast of any significant changes.

Health and Safety

Our Health and Safety policy can be found on our website and is reviewed every two years. Safeguarding, and Health and Safety reports of all disclosures, accidents, incidents and near misses and subsequent actions taken are brought to every Board meeting, preserving the appropriate confidentiality. Health and Safety briefings are issued to the whole team at key moments in the farming calendar (eg lambing), whenever there is a learning or update to be shared and are integrated into new programmes (eg Residential in a Box). H and S training is made available in written (How to Guides) and video form and engagement is tracked.

Pre-visits to farms are mandatory for schools (with very limited exceptions) in order that proper planning can be undertaken including understanding the particular needs of the children.

The Trustees would like to thank everyone involved with The Country Trust – farmers, teachers, funders, our delivery team, staff, volunteers and everyone who has provided incredible support and encouragement during the last year.

Statement of compliance with prevailing laws and regulations

The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the accounting policies set out in notes to the accounts and comply with the charity's governing document, the Charities Act 2011 and Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland published in October 2019.

This report has been prepared in accordance with the provisions applicable to companies entitled to the small companies' exemption.

Approved by the Board of Trustees on 17 May 2025 and signed on its behalf by:

M A Bufton McCoy

Anne Bufton McCoy

A Stafford

Andrew Stafford

Accounts

The Country Trust

Trustees Report

Statement of trustees' responsibilities

The trustees (who are also the directors of The Country Trust for the purposes of company law) are responsible for preparing the Trustees' Report and the financial statements in accordance with applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice), including FRS 102 "The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland". The report and accounts have been prepared in accordance with the provisions in the Companies Act 2006 relating to small companies.

Company law requires the trustees to prepare financial statements for each financial year. Under company law the trustees must not approve the financial statements unless they are satisfied that they give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the charitable company and of the incoming resources and application of resources, including its income and expenditure, of the charitable company for that period. In preparing these financial statements, the trustees are required to:

- select suitable accounting policies and apply them consistently;
- observe the methods and principles in the Charities SORP;
- make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent;
- state whether applicable accounting standards, comprising FRS 102 have been followed, subject to any material departures disclosed and explained in the financial statements; and
- prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the charitable company will continue in business.

The trustees are responsible for keeping proper accounting records that can disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the charitable company and enable them to ensure that the financial statements comply with the Companies Act 2006. They are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the charitable company and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

The trustees are responsible for the maintenance and integrity of the corporate and financial information included on the charitable company's website. Legislation governing the preparation and dissemination of financial statements may differ from legislation in other jurisdictions.

Opinion

We have audited the financial statements of The Country Trust (the 'charitable company') for the year ended 31 December 2024, which comprise the Statement of Financial Activities, Balance Sheet, Statement of Cash Flows, and Notes to the Financial Statements, including significant accounting policies. The financial reporting framework that has been applied in their preparation is applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards, including Financial Reporting Standard 102 The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice).

In our opinion the financial statements:

- give a true and fair view of the state of the charitable company's affairs as at 31 December 2024 and of its incoming resources and application of resources, including its income and expenditure, for the year then ended;
- have been properly prepared in accordance with United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice; and
- have been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Companies Act 2006.

Basis for opinion

We conducted our audit in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (UK) (ISAs (UK)) and applicable law. Our responsibilities under those standards are further described in the auditor responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements section of our report. We are independent of the charitable company in accordance with the ethical requirements that are relevant to our audit of the financial statements in the UK, including the FRC's Ethical Standard, and we have fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with these requirements. We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion.

Conclusions relating to going concern

In auditing the financial statements, we have concluded that the trustees use of the going concern basis of accounting in the preparation of the financial statements is appropriate.

Based on the work we have performed, we have not identified any material uncertainties relating to events or conditions that, individually or collectively, may cast significant doubt on the charitable company's ability to continue as a going concern for a period of at least twelve months from when the original financial statements were authorised for issue.

Our responsibilities and the responsibilities of the trustees with respect to going concern are described in the relevant sections of this report.

Other information

The other information comprises the information included in the Trustees' Report, other than the financial statements and our auditor's report thereon. The trustees are responsible for the other information contained within the Trustees' Report. Our opinion on the financial statements does not cover the other information and, except to the extent otherwise explicitly stated in our report, we do not express any form of assurance conclusion thereon. Our responsibility is to read the other information and, in doing so, consider whether the other information is materially inconsistent with the financial statements or our knowledge obtained in the course of the audit or otherwise appears to be materially misstated. If we identify such material inconsistencies or apparent material misstatements, we are required to determine whether this gives rise to a material misstatement in the financial statements themselves. If, based on the work we have performed, we conclude that there is a material misstatement of this other information, we are required to report that fact.

We have nothing to report in this regard.

The Country Trust

Independent Auditor's Report to the Members of The Country Trust

Opinion on other matter prescribed by the Companies Act 2006

In our opinion, based on the work undertaken in the course of the audit:

- the information given in the Trustees' Report (incorporating the Directors' Report) for the financial year for which the financial statements are prepared is consistent with the financial statements; and
- the Directors' Report has been prepared in accordance with applicable legal requirements.

Matters on which we are required to report by exception

In the light of our knowledge and understanding of the company and its environment obtained in the course of the audit, we have not identified material misstatements in the Trustees' Report.

We have nothing to report in respect of the following matters where the Companies Act 2006 requires us to report to you if, in our opinion:

- adequate accounting records have not been kept, or returns adequate for our audit have not been received from branches not visited by us; or
- the financial statements are not in agreement with the accounting records and returns; or
- certain disclosures of directors' remuneration specified by law are not made; or
- we have not received all the information and explanations we require for our audit.
- the trustees were not entitled to prepare the financial statements in accordance with the small companies regime and take advantage of the small companies' exemptions in preparing the Directors' Report and from the requirement to prepare a Strategic Report.

Responsibilities of trustees

As explained more fully in the Statement of Trustees' Responsibilities, the trustees (who are also the directors of the charitable company for the purposes of company law) are responsible for the preparation of the financial statements and for being satisfied that they give a true and fair view, and for such internal control as the trustees determine is necessary to enable the preparation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

In preparing the financial statements, the trustees are responsible for assessing the charitable company's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless the trustees either intend to liquidate the charitable company or to cease operations, or have no realistic alternative but to do so.

Auditor responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements

Our objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements as a whole are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an auditor's report that includes our opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with ISAs (UK) will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of these financial statements.

Irregularities, including fraud, are instances of non-compliance with laws and regulations. We design procedures in line with our responsibilities, outlined above, to detect material misstatements in respect of irregularities, including fraud. The extent to which our procedures are capable of detecting irregularities, including fraud is detailed below:

Our approach to identifying and assessing the risks of material misstatement in respect of irregularities, including fraud and non-compliance with laws and regulations, was as follows;

• The engagement partner ensured that the engagement team collectively had the appropriate competence, capabilities and skills to identify or recognise non-compliance with applicable laws and regulations.
• We focused on specific laws and regulations which we considered may have a direct material effect on the financial statements or the operations for the company, including the Companies Act 2006, Charities Act 2011, tax legislation and data protection, and employment legislation.

We assessed the susceptibility of the company's financial statements to material misstatement, including obtaining an understanding of how fraud might occur by;

• Making enquiries of management as to where they considered there was susceptibility to fraud, their knowledge of actual, suspected and alleged fraud.
• Considered the internal controls in place to mitigate the risks of fraud and non-compliance with laws and regulations.

To address the risk of fraud through management bias and override of controls, we:

• Performed analytical procedures to identify any unusual or unexpected relationships.
• Tested journal entries to identify unusual transactions.

In response to the risk of irregularities and non-compliance with laws and regulations, we designed procedures which included, but were not limited to:

• Agreeing financial statement disclosures to underlying supporting documentation.
• Reading the minutes of meetings of those charged with governance..
• Enquiring of management as to actual and potential litigation and claims.

Because of the inherent limitations of an audit, there is a risk that we will not detect all irregularities, including those leading to a material misstatement in the financial statements or non-compliance with regulation. This risk increases the more that compliance with a law or regulation is removed from the events and transactions reflected in the financial statements, as we will be less likely to become aware of instances of non-compliance. The risk is also greater regarding irregularities occurring due to fraud rather than error, as fraud involves intentional concealment, forgery, collusion, omission or misrepresentation.

As part of an audit in accordance with ISAs (UK), we exercise professional judgement and maintain professional scepticism throughout the audit. We also:

- Identify and assess the risks of material misstatement of the financial statements, whether due to fraud or error, design and perform audit procedures responsive to those risks, and obtain audit evidence that is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion. The risk of not detecting a material misstatement resulting from fraud is higher than for one resulting from error, as fraud may involve collusion, forgery, intentional omissions, misrepresentations, or the override of internal control.
- Obtain an understanding of internal control relevant to the audit in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the charitable company's internal control.
- Evaluate the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of accounting estimates and related disclosures made by the trustees.

The Country Trust

Independent Auditor's Report to the Members of The Country Trust

- Conclude on the appropriateness of the trustees use of the going concern basis of accounting and, based on the audit evidence obtained, whether a material uncertainty exists related to events or conditions that may cast significant doubt on the charitable company's ability to continue as a going concern. If we conclude that a material uncertainty exists, we are required to draw attention in our auditor's report to the related disclosures in the financial statements or, if such disclosures are inadequate, to modify our opinion. Our conclusions are based on the audit evidence obtained up to the date of our auditor's report. However, future events or conditions may cause the charitable company to cease to continue as a going concern.
- Evaluate the overall presentation, structure and content of the financial statements, including the disclosures, and whether the financial statements represent the underlying transactions and events in a manner that achieves fair presentation.

We communicate with those charged with governance regarding, among other matters, the planned scope and timing of the audit and significant audit findings, including any significant deficiencies in internal control that we identify during our audit.

Use of our report

This report is made solely to the charitable company's trustees, as a body, in accordance with Chapter 3 of Part 16 of the Companies Act 2006. Our audit work has been undertaken so that we might state to the charitable company's trustees those matters we are required to state to them in an auditor's report and for no other purpose. To the fullest extent permitted by law, we do not accept or assume responsibility to anyone other than the charitable company and its trustees as a body, for our audit work, for this report, or for the opinions we have formed.

S Morrell

Sandra Morrell (Senior Statutory Auditor)
For and on behalf of Edmund Carr LLP, Statutory Auditor

146 New London Road
Chelmsford
Essex
CM2 0AW

Date: 30 May 2025

The Country Trust

Statement of Financial Activities for the Year Ended 31 December 2024
(Including Income and Expenditure Account and Other Comprehensive Income)

	Note	Unrestricted funds £	Restricted funds £	Total 2024 £	Total 2023 £
Income and Endowments from:					
Donations and legacies	3	489,380	948,030	1,437,410	1,219,533
Charitable activities	4	-	89,776	89,776	143,273
Investment income	5	21,718	-	21,718	16,631
Other income		-	340	340	450
Total income		511,098	1,038,146	1,549,244	1,379,887
Expenditure on:					
Raising funds		134,454	-	134,454	119,158
Charitable activities	6	468,876	946,847	1,415,723	1,311,510
Total expenditure		603,330	946,847	1,550,177	1,430,668
Net (expenditure)/income		(92,232)	91,299	(933)	(50,781)
Transfers between funds		73,385	(73,385)	-	-
Net movement in funds		(18,847)	17,914	(933)	(50,781)
Reconciliation of funds					
Total funds brought forward		503,211	28,248	531,459	582,240
Total funds carried forward	16	484,364	46,162	530,526	531,459

All of the charitable company's activities derive from continuing operations during the above two periods.

The Country Trust

(Registration number: 6436266)
Balance Sheet as at 31 December 2024

	Note	2024 £	2023 £
Fixed assets			
Tangible assets	12	9,000	6,115
Current assets			
Debtors	13	204,146	105,564
Cash at bank and in hand	14	749,951	907,158
		954,097	1,012,722
Creditors: Amounts falling due within one year	15	(432,571)	(487,378)
Net current assets		521,526	525,344
Net assets		530,526	531,459
Funds of the charitable company:			
Restricted income funds			
Restricted funds		46,162	28,248
Unrestricted income funds			
Unrestricted funds		484,364	503,211
Total funds	16	530,526	531,459

These financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the special provisions relating to companies subject to the small companies regime within Part 15 of the Companies Act 2006.

The financial statements on pages 74 to 90 were approved by the trustees, and authorised for issue on..17 May 2025.. and signed on their behalf by:

M A Bufton-McCoy

.....

M A Bufton-McCoy B Phil, Cert Ed
Co-Chair

Statement of Cash Flows for the Year Ended 31 December 2024

	Note	2024 £	2023 £
Cash flows from operating activities			
Net movement in funds per SOFA		(933)	(50,781)
Adjustments			
Depreciation		2,153	1,767
Investment income	5	(21,718)	(16,631)
		(20,498)	(65,645)
Working capital adjustments			
(Increase)/decrease in debtors	13	(98,582)	19,292
Increase/(decrease) in creditors	15	8,386	(21,068)
(Decrease)/increase in deferred income		(63,193)	103,690
Net cash flows from operating activities		(173,887)	36,269
Cash flows from investing activities			
Interest receivable and similar income	5	21,718	16,631
Purchase of tangible fixed assets	12	(5,038)	(2,624)
Net cash flows from investing activities		16,680	14,007
Net (decrease)/increase in cash and cash equivalents		(157,207)	50,276
Cash and cash equivalents at 1 January		907,158	856,882
Cash and cash equivalents at 31 December		749,951	907,158

All of the cash flows are derived from continuing operations during the above two periods.

Notes to the Financial Statements for the Year Ended 31 December 2024

1 Charitable company status

The charitable company is limited by guarantee, incorporated in England & Wales, and consequently does not have share capital. Each of the trustees is liable to contribute an amount not exceeding £1 towards the assets of the charitable company in the event of liquidation.

2 Accounting policies

Summary of significant accounting policies and key accounting estimates

The principal accounting policies applied in the preparation of these financial statements are set out below. These policies have been consistently applied to all the years presented, unless otherwise stated.

Statement of compliance

The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice (applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102)) (issued in October 2019) - (Charities SORP (FRS 102)), the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) and the Companies Act 2006.

Basis of preparation

The Country Trust meets the definition of a public benefit entity under FRS 102. Assets and liabilities are initially recognised at historical cost or transaction value unless otherwise stated in the relevant accounting policy notes.

Going concern

The trustees consider that there are no material uncertainties about the charitable company's ability to continue as a going concern nor any significant areas of uncertainty that affect the carrying value of assets held by the charitable company.

Income and endowments

All income is recognised once the charitable company has entitlement to the income, it is probable that the income will be received and the amount of the income receivable can be measured reliably.

Donations and legacies

All donated income and grants receivable are included in income on receipt except where the donor requires that the sum is to be treated as income in future accounting periods, in which case it is deferred. Where a donor has specified that a donation should be used for a particular purpose this is treated as restricted income.

Grants receivable

Grants are recognised when the charitable company has an entitlement to the funds and any conditions linked to the grants have been met. Where performance conditions are attached to the grant and are yet to be met, the income is recognised as a liability and included on the balance sheet as deferred income to be released.

Deferred income

Deferred income represents grants and service fees received in respect of visits and activities taking place after the year end. It also represents unrestricted income where that income relates to future periods.

Donated services and facilities

Where services or facilities are provided to the charitable company as a donation that would normally be purchased from our suppliers, this benefit is included in the financial statements at it's fair value unless it's fair value cannot be reliably measured, then at the cost to the donor or the resale value of goods that are to be sold.

Investment income

Interest received is accounted for when the interest is credited on the Bank deposit accounts.

Charitable activities

Income from charitable activities arises from educational visits and activities where schools or other partners fund all or a proportion of the costs incurred.

Expenditure

All expenditure is accounted for on an accruals basis and includes VAT as the charity is not VAT registered. Governance costs are associated with the governance arrangements of the charity. Where expenditure is apportioned between charitable activities and support costs, this is done based on the portion that is applicable to the direct provision of educational visits and activities or the administration of the charity. In the case of staff costs, this is based on the time spent on charitable activities or administration.

Raising funds

These are costs incurred in attracting voluntary income, the management of investments and those incurred in trading activities that raise funds.

Charitable activities

Charitable activities comprise costs incurred in carrying out educational visits and activities to farms, estates and the wider countryside, and in schools.

Governance costs

These include the costs attributable to the charitable company’s compliance with constitutional and statutory requirements, including audit, strategic management and trustees meetings and reimbursed expenses.

Taxation

The charitable company is considered to pass the tests set out in Paragraph 1 Schedule 6 of the Finance Act 2010 and therefore it meets the definition of a charitable company for UK corporation tax purposes. Accordingly, the charitable company is potentially exempt from taxation in respect of income or capital gains received within categories covered by Chapter 3 Part 11 of the Corporation Tax Act 2010 or Section 256 of the Taxation of Chargeable Gains Act 1992, to the extent that such income or gains are applied exclusively to charitable purposes.

Tangible fixed assets

Individual fixed assets costing a significant amount are initially recorded at cost, less any subsequent accumulated depreciation and subsequent accumulated impairment losses.

The Country Trust

Notes to the Financial Statements for the Year Ended 31 December 2024

Depreciation and amortisation

Depreciation is provided on tangible fixed assets so as to write off the cost or valuation, less any estimated residual value, over their expected useful economic life as follows:

Asset class	Depreciation method and rate
Office equipment & software	25% reducing balance

Trade debtors

Trade and other debtors are recognised at the settlement amount due.

Cash and cash equivalents

Cash and cash equivalents comprise cash on hand and call deposits, and other short-term highly liquid investments that are readily convertible to a known amount of cash and are subject to an insignificant risk of change in value.

Trade creditors

Creditors are recognised at their settlement amount.

Fund structure

Unrestricted income funds are general funds that are available for use at the trustees's discretion in furtherance of the objectives of the charitable company.

Designated funds are funds set aside by the trustees out of unrestricted funds for specific future purposes or projects.

Restricted income funds are those donated or received for use in a particular area or for specific purposes, the use of which is restricted to that area or purpose.

Pensions and other post retirement obligations

The charitable company operates a defined contribution pension scheme which is a pension plan under which fixed contributions are paid into a pension fund and the charitable company has no legal or constructive obligation to pay further contributions even if the fund does not hold sufficient assets to pay all employees the benefits relating to employee service in the current and prior periods.

Contributions to defined contribution plans are recognised in the Statement of Financial Activities when they are due. If contribution payments exceed the contribution due for service, the excess is recognised as a prepayment.

Financial instruments

Classification

The charitable company only holds basic financial instruments as defined in FRS 102. The financial assets and financial liabilities of the charitable company and their measurement basis are as follows:

Financial assets - trade and other debtors are basic financial instruments and are debt instruments measured at amortised cost. Prepayments are not financial instruments.

Cash at bank - is classified as a basic financial instrument and is measured at face value.

Financial liabilities - trade creditors, accruals and other creditors are financial instruments, and are measured at amortised cost. Taxation and social security are not included in the financial instruments disclosure definition. Deferred income is not deemed to be a financial liability, as the cash settlement has already taken place and there is an obligation to deliver services rather than cash or another financial instrument.

3 Income from donations and legacies

	Unrestricted funds £	Restricted funds £	Total 2024 £
Donations	117,827	423,259	541,086
Legacies	6,592	-	6,592
Charitable Trusts and grant making bodies	364,961	493,948	858,909
Donated services and gifts in kind	-	30,823	30,823
	489,380	948,030	1,437,410

	Unrestricted funds £	Restricted funds £	Total 2023 £
Donations	161,965	296,158	458,123
Charitable Trusts and grant making bodies	400,741	359,299	760,040
Donated services and gifts in kind	-	1,370	1,370
	562,706	656,827	1,219,533

The Country Trust

Notes to the Financial Statements for the Year Ended 31 December 2024

4 Income from charitable activities

	Unrestricted funds £	Restricted funds £	Total 2024 £
Countryside Discovery Residential Visits	-	68,237	68,237
Food Discovery	-	21,539	21,539
	-	89,776	89,776

	Unrestricted funds £	Restricted funds £	Total 2023 £
Countryside Discovery Residential Visits	-	121,067	121,067
Food Discovery	-	22,206	22,206
	-	143,273	143,273

5 Investment income

	Unrestricted funds £	Restricted funds £	Total 2024 £
Interest receivable on bank deposits	21,718	-	21,718
	21,718	-	21,718

	Unrestricted funds £	Restricted funds £	Total 2023 £
Interest receivable on bank deposits	16,631	-	16,631
	16,631	-	16,631

6 Expenditure on charitable activities

	Activity undertaken directly £	Activity support costs £	2024 £
Countryside Discovery Residential Visits	147,044	75,266	222,310
Food Discovery	183,856	84,639	268,495
Farm Visits	517,093	271,812	788,905
Farm in a Box	44,805	28,124	72,929
Soil	41,726	21,358	63,084
	934,524	481,199	1,415,723

	Activity undertaken directly £	Activity support costs £	2023 £
Countryside Discovery Residential Visits	193,948	79,054	273,002
Food Discovery	178,296	72,674	250,970
Farm Visits	440,639	179,605	620,244
Farm in a Box	70,494	30,104	100,598
Soil	47,383	19,313	66,696
	930,760	380,750	1,311,510

The expenditure analysed above includes governance costs of £9,480 (2023 - £6,636) which relate directly to charitable activities. See note 7 for further details.

The Country Trust

Notes to the Financial Statements for the Year Ended 31 December 2024

7 Analysis of governance and support costs

Support costs allocated to charitable activities

	Governance costs £	Staff costs £	Administration costs £	Total 2024 £
Countryside Discovery Residential Visits	1,532	52,192	21,542	75,266
Food Discovery	1,718	58,695	24,226	84,639
Farm Visits	5,350	183,564	82,898	271,812
Farm in a Box	470	15,901	11,753	28,124
Soil	410	14,828	6,120	21,358
	9,480	325,180	146,539	481,199

	Governance costs £	Staff costs £	Administration costs £	Total 2023 £
Countryside Discovery Residential Visits	1,383	51,739	25,941	79,063
Food Discovery	1,271	47,568	23,850	72,689
Farm Visits	3,141	117,530	58,928	179,599
Farm in a Box	502	18,794	10,793	30,089
Soil	339	12,636	6,335	19,310
	6,636	248,267	125,847	380,750

Governance costs

	Total 2024 £	Total 2023 £
Audit fees		
Audit of the financial statements	6,000	4,200
Other fees paid to auditors	3,480	2,436
	9,480	6,636

8 Net incoming/outgoing resources

Net outgoing resources for the year include:

	2024 £	2023 £
Fees payable to auditor	9,480	6,636
Depreciation of fixed assets	2,153	1,767

9 Trustees remuneration and expenses

No trustees, nor any persons connected with them, have received any remuneration from the charitable company during the year.

No trustees have received any other benefits from the charity during the year.

During the year, 2 trustees was reimbursed for reasonable travel expenses of £417 (2023: £73 reimbursed to 1 trustee).

10 Staff costs

The aggregate payroll costs were as follows:

	2024 £	2023 £
Staff costs during the year were:		
Wages and salaries	473,361	383,893
Social security costs	40,084	33,524
Pension costs	10,335	8,606
	523,780	426,023

The monthly average number of persons (including senior management team) employed by the charitable company during the year expressed by head count was as follows:

	2024 No	2023 No
Charitable activities	2	2
Support and administration	15	12
	17	14

The average number of persons employed by the charity during the year expressed as full time equivalents was 13.3 (2023: 10.9).

17 (2023 - 14) of the above employees participated in the Defined Contribution Pension Schemes.

The number of employees whose emoluments fell within the following bands was:

	2024 No	2023 No
£60,001 - £70,000	1	1

The total employee benefits of the key management personnel of the charitable company were £70,129 (2023 - £69,533).

11 Taxation

The charitable company is a registered charity and is therefore exempt from taxation.

12 Tangible fixed assets

	Office equipment & software £	Total £
Cost		
At 1 January 2024	16,877	16,877
Additions	5,038	5,038
At 31 December 2024	21,915	21,915
Depreciation		
At 1 January 2024	10,762	10,762
Charge for the year	2,153	2,153
At 31 December 2024	12,915	12,915
Net book value		
At 31 December 2024	9,000	9,000
At 31 December 2023	6,115	6,115

13 Debtors

	2024 £	2023 £
Trade debtors	96,820	93,150
Prepayments	28,503	12,414
Accrued income	78,472	-
Other debtors	351	-
	204,146	105,564

14 Cash and cash equivalents

	2024 £	2023 £
Cash at bank	749,951	907,158

15 Creditors: amounts falling due within one year

	2024 £	2023 £
Trade creditors	28,510	24,432
Other taxation and social security	10,496	9,242
Other creditors	3,808	3,928
Accruals	9,474	6,300
Deferred income	380,283	443,476
	432,571	487,378

	2024 £	2023 £
Deferred income at 1 January 2024	443,476	339,786
Resources deferred in the period	380,283	443,476
Amounts released from previous periods	(443,476)	(339,786)
Deferred income at year end	380,283	443,476

The deferred income relates to performance related grants and grants for activities that are due to take place in future periods.

The Country Trust

Notes to the Financial Statements for the Year Ended 31 December 2024

16 Funds

Current year:

	Balance at 1 January 2024 £	Incoming resources £	Resources expended £	Transfers £	Balance at 31 December 2024 £
Unrestricted funds					
General	503,211	511,098	(603,330)	73,385	484,364
Restricted					
a) Residential	-	172,557	(147,045)	(5,295)	20,217
b) Food discovery	13,581	224,100	(183,856)	(27,880)	25,945
c) Farm visits	-	559,435	(524,225)	(35,210)	-
d) Farm in a Box	-	49,995	(49,995)	-	-
e) Soil	14,667	32,059	(41,726)	(5,000)	-
Total restricted	28,248	1,038,146	(946,847)	(73,385)	46,162
Total funds	531,459	1,549,244	(1,550,177)	-	530,526

The specific purposes for which the funds are to be applied are as follows:

Restricted funds:
a) Funds to subsidise the cost of Countryside Discovery Residential visits enabling disadvantaged primary age children to experience food, farming and the countryside.
b) For teaching disadvantaged primary school children to grow & cook fresh produce, explore local farms, run playground markets & a harvest feast, and to train teachers in relevant elements of Learning Outside the Classroom.
c) Funds relating to the provision of Farm and Countryside Discovery educational day visits bringing the working countryside to life for primary school children from disadvantaged areas, and now the Farm in a Box programme bringing farm centred, hands on, experiential learning into schools, groups and homes.
d) This fund is to support children and educators so that they can have a farm-centred experience without leaving their school grounds or location.
e) Fund for our new Soil Health Campaign – Plant Your Pants. It's a public engagement campaign to help everyone think differently about the earth beneath our feet and to discover how it supports all our lives.

Transfers from restricted funds represent a contribution to cover central support and administration.

Prior year:

	Balance at 1 January 2023 £	Incoming resources £	Resources expended £	Transfers £	Balance at 31 December 2023 £
Unrestricted funds					
General	559,034	579,335	(498,538)	(136,620)	503,211
Restricted					
a) Residential	-	182,258	(193,948)	11,690	-
b) Food discovery	21,228	190,649	(178,296)	(20,000)	13,581
c) Farm visits	-	296,159	(440,639)	144,480	-
d) Farm in a Box	1,978	63,486	(71,864)	6,400	-
e) Soil	-	68,000	(47,383)	(5,950)	14,667
Total restricted funds	23,206	800,552	(932,130)	136,620	28,248
Total funds	582,240	1,379,887	(1,430,668)	-	531,459

The Country Trust

Notes to the Financial Statements for the Year Ended 31 December 2024

17 Analysis of net assets between funds

Current year:

	Unrestricted funds £	Restricted funds £	Total funds at 31/12/2024 £
Tangible fixed assets	9,000	-	9,000
Current assets	525,745	428,352	954,097
Current liabilities	(50,381)	(382,190)	(432,571)
Total net assets	484,364	46,162	530,526

Prior year:

	Unrestricted funds £	Restricted funds £	Total funds at 31/12/2023 £
Tangible fixed assets	6,115	-	6,115
Current assets	675,869	336,853	1,012,722
Current liabilities	(178,773)	(308,605)	(487,378)
Total net assets	503,211	28,248	531,459

18 Prior year Statement of Financial Activities

	Note	Unrestricted £	Restricted £	Total 2023 £
Income and Endowments from:				
Donations and legacies	3	562,706	656,827	1,219,533
Charitable activities	4	-	143,273	143,273
Investment income	5	16,631	-	16,631
Other income		-	450	450
Total income		579,337	800,550	1,379,887
Expenditure on:				
Raising funds		119,158	-	119,158
Charitable activities	6	379,382	932,128	1,311,510
Total expenditure		498,540	932,128	1,430,668
Net income/(expenditure)		80,797	(131,578)	(50,781)
Transfers between funds		(136,620)	136,620	-
Net movement in funds		(55,823)	5,042	(50,781)
Reconciliation of funds				
Total funds brought forward		559,034	23,206	582,240
Total funds carried forward	16	503,211	28,248	531,459

Country Trust

To support our work visit:
www.countrytrust.org.uk

Registered charity no. 1122103

Head office: Moulsham Mill, Parkway, Chelmsford, Essex. CM2 7PX

President: The Duke of Westminster

Registered with FUNDRAISING REGULATOR

ico. Information Commissioner's Office

THE COUNTRY TRUST

England & Wales - Charity number 1122103

Accounts

Country Trust

Connecting children with the land that sustains us all

Annual Report & Accounts 2023

President: The Duke of Westminster

Vice Presidents:

Sir Henry Aubrey-Fletcher Bt
Sir Nicholas Bacon Bt
V Beaumont *(appointed September 2023)*
Lord Boswell of Aynho DL
W Butterfield
Earl of Carnarvon
J M Carr-Ellison
J Knappett B Ed NPQH
Lord Dear QPM
T. Fanshawe
W J Henderson DL
M Kendall
W Kendall DL
D Laing MA RIBA *(deceased March 2024)*
Hon. John Leigh-Pemberton
G Long MBE *(appointed September 2023)*
Hon G E Lopes
L V Lyle MA PGCE
M Maclay DL
H Mills DL *(appointed September 2023)*
H R Oliver-Bellasis FRAgS
Dame Fiona Reynolds DBE
E P Serjeant *(stepped down December 2023)*
J Serjeant BA (Hons) ACA
I N Tegner CA FRSA
F Weston MA (Cantab)

Chief Executive:

J D Attenborough MA (Cantab) FRSA

Registered address:

Moulsham Mill, Parkway, Chelmsford CM2 7PX Tel: 01245 961049

Ambassadors: *(appointed 2023)*

S Green
N Partheeban BVM&S BSc (Hons) PGCert (DHH) PIAGrM R.Ani.Tech. FRSA MRCVS
A Pawsey
J Pawsey

Trustees:

The Trustees who served the charity during the year were as follows:

S D Bell BA (Hons) (Chairman)
M A Bufton-McCoy B Phil, Cert Ed
T C M Fawcett BSc (Hons)
S Fish BA (Hons) PGCE
R J Frossell *(stepped down September 2023)*
M Gent
K Kaur BSc(Hons) GTP (QTS) MA NPQH
N Partheeban BVM&S BSc(Hons) PGCert (DHH) PIAGrM R.Ani. Tech. FRSA MRCVS *(stepped down September 2023)*
A J Stafford MA (Oxon)

Bankers:

CAF Bank Ltd. 25 Kings Hill Ave, Kings Hill, West Malling, Kent ME19

Auditors:

Edmund Carr. LLP 146 New London Road, Chelmsford, Essex, CM2 0AW

Lawyers:

Wrigleys Solicitors LLP 19 Cookridge Street, Leeds LS2 3AG

The Country Trust is the leading national educational charity that connects children from areas of high social and economic disadvantage with the land that sustains us all.

Country Trust – Trustees' Report 2023

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During the 2023 academic year:

We connected over 70,100 children with the land that sustains us all, across our Farm, Residential, Food Discovery and Farm in a Box programmes and our Soil Health Campaign.

22,966 children participated in our face-to-face programmes and 26,726 in our Farm in a Box programme, providing over 246,400 hours of engagement in all, the majority of which was provided free of charge. In addition, we estimate that 21,000 people took part in the pilot of our innovative Plant Your Pants Soil Health Campaign.

We introduced Farm in a Bag as a 'light' version of Farm in a Box building the confidence, curiosity and sense of connection of 2,864 children through sensory activities and video content before 136 Farm Discovery visits. This was thanks to funding from Farming in Protected Landscapes.

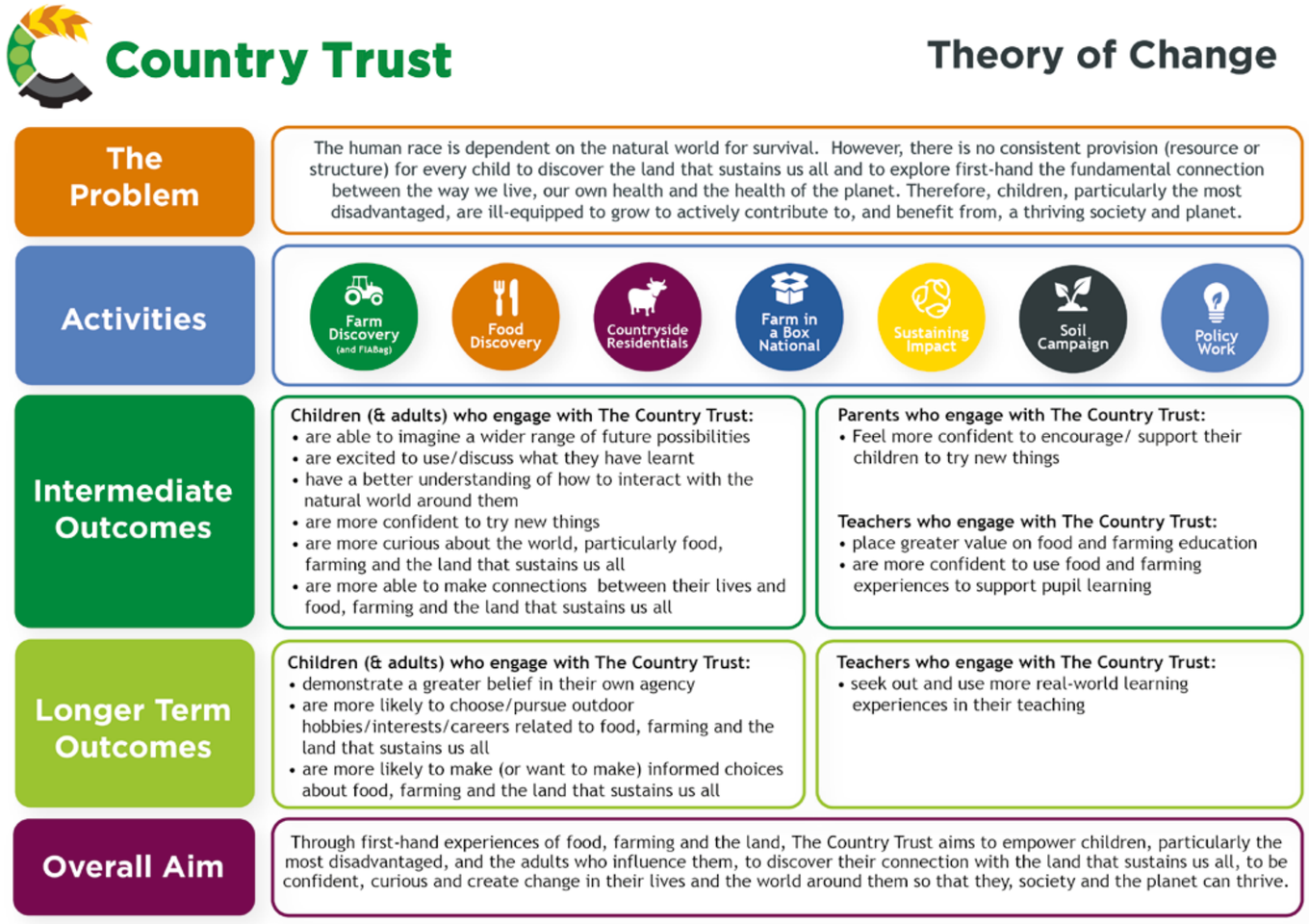
We developed Residential in a Box with the support of the Ernest Cook Trust/ Dulverton Trust OWL collaboration to support Outdoor Learning Centres to better prepare and support children, parents and teachers from disadvantaged communities for their residential and to increase their engagement, and also to support our own residential visits.

We completed the second year of our 5 Year Plan, and revised our Theory of Change to incorporate learning from our evaluation and to better reflect the needs of the children we serve and the world in which we operate.

Theory of Change

Poverty is deepening in the UK and we felt it was important to include the following line when we revised our Theory of Change.

There is a widespread lack of understanding, even a disbelief of the day-to-day reality, of the most disadvantaged in our community, and how poverty impacts access to good food, green space, the natural world, and opportunity, which in turn affects diet, health, the ability to participate and the ability to thrive.



An overview of our Impact

Engagement with learning

99% of teachers said that they observed that all or most of their children were excited to talk to each other about what they were learning and doing.

95% of teachers reported that all or most of their children had talked about or referred to their farm visit after the visit.

92% of children said that they would like to find out more about farming.

Enhancing curriculum teaching

87% of teachers are now bringing elements of farming and the visit into their classroom teaching

83% of teachers are using the natural world in their teaching more often following on from their visit.

Cultural capital; aspirations/ possibilities (broader development)

94% of pupils said that they had done something for the first time during their visit.

Language and literacy, relationships

“We’ve been able to see our children behaving differently in this environment - social skills, exploring and investigating.

Children were using new vocabulary in their play after engaging with hands on experiences.”

Zoe Miller,
Wellhome Academy

About us: Our Programmes

Farm Discovery

Day-visits to working farms for school and community groups. These are led by our Coordinators who work with host farmers and teachers/group leaders to ensure a safe visit with appropriate sensory experiences and hands-on activities. *Provided free of charge*.

Countryside Residentials

Immersing children in the countryside for 2-4 days, Coordinators organise and support a tailored programme, including a farm visit, working with teachers and third party providers to ensure a memorable, safe, and happy time away from home. *We provide a subsidy of at least a third.*

Food Discovery

A Country Trust Coordinator takes a class on a journey through food: growing vegetables, preparing and cooking meals, tasting produce, visiting local farms, running their own markets, and experiencing the joy of sharing a feast. The depth of the programme gives children the time to explore many aspects of food. *Schools make a contribution if they can*.

Farm in a Box

A box of hands-on, sensory farm-centred activities plus video content created on a theme by The Country Trust, ordered and presented by teachers in eligible schools. Centrally packed and distributed and *provided free of charge*.

Sustaining Impact

Supporting teachers to be the gateway to opportunity for children and sustain the impact of our programmes through: a new 'seeds to supper' digital offer for REAch2 Multi Academy Trust; CPD for some schools; and through modelling by and conversation with our Coordinators. *Provided free of charge*.

Residential in a Box

A digital/physical resource to support Outdoor Learning Centres to better prepare and support children, parents and teachers from disadvantaged communities for their residential and to increase their engagement. *Provided free of charge*.

Farm in a Bag

5 sensory activity cards with matching hands-on resources from the farm, a presentation about the farm and a welcome video from the farmer. Given to the teacher at the pre-visit to use before the visit and then returned at the visit ready to be reused. *Provided free of charge*.

Plant Your Pants Soil Health campaign

Our first public facing campaign designed to enable people of all ages to discover the wonderful and vital life of the soil. Planting cotton pants and digging them up 8 weeks later is a fun and engaging way to make the invisible life of the soil visible. *Provided free of charge*.

Core Values:

We believe you grow by learning from others

We think the quality of our connections with others has an important effect on who we can be and what we can do

We are active participants in a world which inspires and sustains us

Aspirational values:

We want everyone to know that their contribution is welcome and valued

We aspire to be child-centred, no matter what our role is

An overview of funding at the end of December 2023

Cash at the bank broadly represents unrestricted reserves, held in accordance with the charity's policy of aiming for three months' operating reserves, a small amount of restricted reserves, and deferred income – income received in 2023 in respect of activities taking place after the year end.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

We want our team and our programmes to better reflect the diversity of the children and the communities we serve and continue to take steps towards this.

We have worked hard to try and promote recruitment opportunities through a wide range of networks and continue to explore when and how we can support people to join us who may not have the formal qualifications or experience that we have required in the past.

Our Board continues to be reasonably diverse in terms of age, gender and ethnicity and we are excited about the connections, creativity and inspiration that this is unlocking.

Activities

How the Charity's activities deliver public benefit

In setting our programme each year we have regard to the Charity Commission's general guidance on public benefit. The Trustees always ensure that the programmes we undertake are in line with our charitable objectives and aims. Our ambitious aims are that:

- **Every child should have the opportunity to visit a real working farm, to discover through first-hand experience where their food comes from**
- **Every child should have the chance to discover connections between the food they eat, their own health and the health of the planet**
- **Every child should have the opportunity to develop the confidence and curiosity to explore the living world**

Our focus being on those children with the most limited opportunities.

We use an evaluation framework, based on our Theory of Change, to gather feedback on all the activities we offer. We collate and analyse all feedback and this then informs our programme design. This year we interviewed children one and two years after their Food Discovery programme and introduced a new survey for teachers two weeks after their Farm Discovery visit.

Feedback from children, teachers and parents suggests that the Trust is achieving its goal of helping to improve the life chances of the children who take part in our programmes. We are in the unique position of being able to provide programmes which support teachers to engage children with learning and support physical, emotional and social wellbeing.

We can build food knowledge and food confidence, provide access to food and farming related climate learning and enable children to discover that they can be active participants. We can create connections between pupils, farmers and the natural world. We can speak up on relevant education, agriculture and food issues, taking the lead or supporting others.

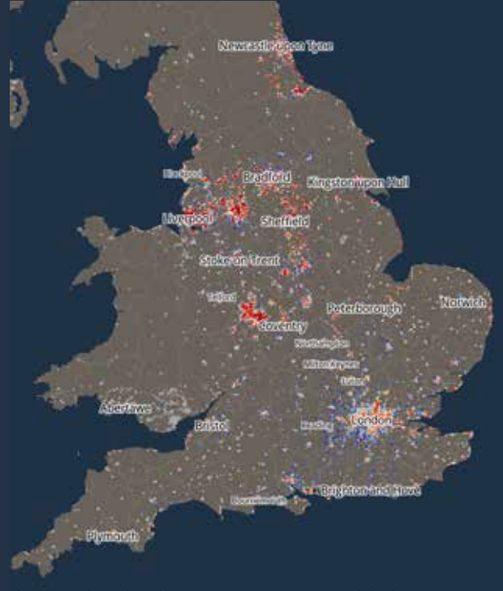
How we support our participants

How we work

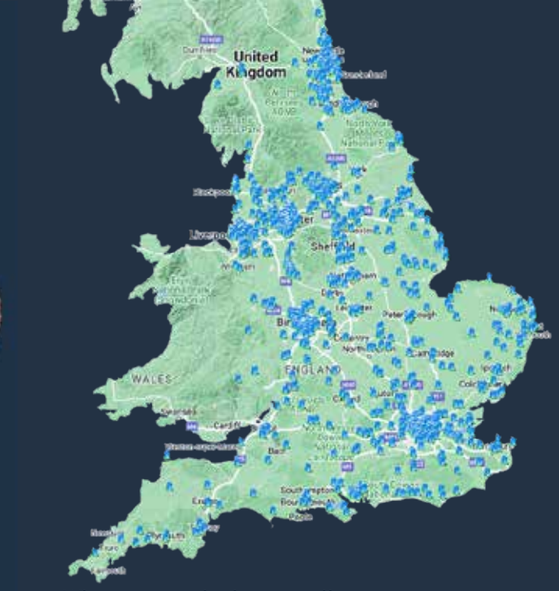
All our programmes are designed to create moments that provoke curiosity, making learning irresistible. Children learn most deeply when they are following their natural curiosity as it places them at the centre of their learning.

Giving children time, space and the tools to understand the world around them – whether it's in their school grounds, on a farm or at the beach – allows children to discover for themselves the wonder and **connectedness** of life.

As so many of the children we work with have limited experiences, we ensure that new experiences are crafted carefully and consciously into our programmes, building **confidence** and happy memories.



Indicies of Multiple Deprivation Map (2019)
Source: mapmaker.cdrc.ac.uk/



Where we worked across all programmes
September 2022 - August 2023

Who we support

We work with children who experience disadvantage through:

- low income households - according to the Child Poverty Action Group 29% of children in the UK (4.2 million) were living in persistently disadvantaged circumstances in 2021-22 owing to poverty (3.9m in 2020-21)
- being on the margins of, or excluded from, or refusing mainstream education
- Having SEN/D (Special Educational Needs/Disabilities) or SEMH needs (Social, Emotional and Mental Health)
- being looked-after children, children in care
- having responsibilities as a Young Carer
- having refugee or asylum seeker status

These children may rarely travel outside their immediate community and therefore may have limited access to quality green space and the countryside.

They may have limited access to good, healthy and varied food;

They may have little or no opportunity to grow things, have contact with animals, pursue hobbies or take part in cultural or sporting activities;

They are more likely to miss out on opportunities to meet positive adult role models, to be inspired and pursue ambitions.

Poverty of opportunity and experience from an early age can negatively impact health, wellbeing and access to education. This then affects a children's ability to achieve success in adult life.

How we support our participants

Our operating context

- According to the Department of Work and Pensions, 350,000 more children were pulled into relative poverty in 2021-2022.
- In January 2023, over 2 million pupils were eligible for Free School Meals, 23.8% of all pupils (25.9% in primary schools), which is an increase of 122,000 pupils since January 2022.
- The percentage of children living in relative low income households is significantly higher in Black and Asian families, with 53% and 47% respectively experiencing financial hardship. Additionally, families where someone has a disability experience a 36% poverty rate.
- Persistently disadvantaged pupils - those eligible for free school meals for at least 80 per cent of their time at school - are around one year (12.2 months) behind their non-disadvantaged peers.
- More than half (56%) of children living in poverty are worried that their family's lack of money will affect their future opportunities as an adult, while many are feeling they are missing out on the ordinary joys of life, with 78% reporting not having the opportunity to experience days out.
- 68% of senior leaders in schools with the most disadvantaged intakes report cuts to trips and outings in 2023 particularly outings where there are transport costs, or other extra-curricular activities (65%). These numbers have doubled in a year.

- Country Trust Coordinators report that:
  - Children continue to have significant educational, emotional, social, behavioural and physical issues, particularly younger children.
  - An unprecedented level of cancellations of Farm Discovery visits with schools short-staffed, teachers stressed and budget crises.
- Each Country Trust activity is more costly to deliver as a result of developing more support, training, resources etc and compensating our delivery team for delays and cancellations.
- Funders continue to report that they have been 'overwhelmed' with applications.
- Farmers have spoken increasingly about the disconnection they feel exists between food production and consumers and their concerns about the future of the agricultural workforce (in its broadest sense).
- The future of the new agricultural support system ELM has become a little clearer, Educational Access payments have increased and we are hopeful of their inclusion within the Sustainable Farming Incentive where the largest number of farmers will be found.
- With climate change, new trade and workforce agreements and the continued dominance of supermarkets there are increasing concerns about food security.

Climate Change and farming

At COP28 in December 2023 the central importance of what we grow and eat was finally recognised as being key to a sustainable future.

At the Sustain Annual Conference in December 2023 Lord Deben said:

> **"We need to concentrate all our efforts in explaining that the future of food is either sustainable or there isn't one. We have to do it if we are going to go on having harvests. We have to do it if we are going to fight against obesity and the illness that comes with it. We have to do it if we are going to have resilient agriculture.**
>
> **Nature is an integrated business. We can't do without biodiversity and diversity. It makes the countryside beautiful, but it also enables us to have harvest after harvest. if we go on as we are there will be no more harvests. if we go on as we are, we will not be able to feed ourselves. We need to recover an attitude to the soil that is of respect."**

Education 2023 summary

- All sectors of the education system are facing a workforce crisis
- There is a continued and significant impact of the pandemic on for example, attendance, mental and physical wellbeing, attainment, personal and social skills, behaviour, readiness for school
- The number of pupils with an education, health and care plan for more complex special educational needs and disabilities has increased by around 50% in just five years – but funding has not caught up with the level of need
- Only 5% of primary schools reached the Government's target of 90% of pupils reaching the expected standard in key stage 2 reading, writing and mathematics in 2019
- Pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds experience an attainment gap (relative to their more affluent peers) equivalent to 19 months of learning by the time they sit their GCSEs. Two fifths of this gap has appeared by the age of 5
- Absence from education is now one of the most pressing issues facing England's education system – persistent absence (missing more than 10% of sessions) has increased from 13% to 24%

Thousands of children start school each year without basic skills, the disadvantage gap is growing, and education at every level is experiencing a chronic recruitment and retention challenge.

In response we have

- Increased our provision of resources to children and teachers in Early Years settings, particularly addressing language and communication, opportunities and experiences of the diverse world, trying new foods, purposeful play and social interaction
- Increased the average percentage of children eligible for Free School Meals across all the schools we worked with to 44% by careful targeting and prioritisation
- Provided more support and resources for teachers

Where we work

Our Farm, Food and Residential Coordinators are located across England and North Wales delivering hands-on, real-world food and farm experiences.

During 2023 our team decreased in size slightly but as more of the team are now quite well established in their areas this has not prevented growth. A large number of repeat bookings and extra demand for our programmes has led to an increase in the number of children visiting farms and accessing Food Discovery. This is long awaited, hard won and much needed (by schools) growth.

Our operating context continues to be impacted by budget cuts in schools, staff shortages and ill health and the cost of living crisis impacted everyone. Our Coordinators are self-employed and the role is parttime and seasonal and some of our delivery team have had to seek greater financial security in employed roles elsewhere.

Our Farm in a Box National Programme and our Soil Health campaign enable us to reach schools located in the country's most deprived areas where we don't yet have a presence on the ground.

Activities, achievements, performance and public benefit

OUR REACH - 2023 ACADEMIC YEAR

We connected over **70,100** children with the land, across our Farm, Residential, Food Discovery and Farm in a Box programmes and our Soil Health Campaign.

22,966 children participated in our face to face programmes and **26,276** in our Farm in a Box programme providing over **246,400** hours of engagement.

In addition, we estimate that **21,000** people took part in our new Plant Your Pants Soil Health Campaign.

We introduced Farm in a Bag as a 'light' version of Farm in a Box building the confidence, curiosity and sense of connection of **2,864** children through sensory activities and video content before **136** Farm Discovery visits thanks to funding from Farming in Protected Landscapes.

Farm visits **91,864** hours - assumes **22,966** children spent **4** hours on a farm. Includes Residential and Food Discovery children

Farm in a Box - **105,104** hours - assumes **26,276** children spent **4** hours on activities. Some will have spent longer but some teachers may not have fully utilised their Box

Residential - **21,276** hours - assumes **591** children spent **3 x 12** hour days participating

Food Discovery - **28,160** hours - assumes **1,760** children spent **16** hours on the programme during the year.

Our impact at a glance

(statistics taken from evaluation of activities during the 2022-23 academic year)

We are particularly proud of the evidence of teachers changing their practice as a result of their increased confidence and connection with food and farming following their time with us, and the positive impact they have seen our programmes have on their children.

Impact on children – Farm Discovery

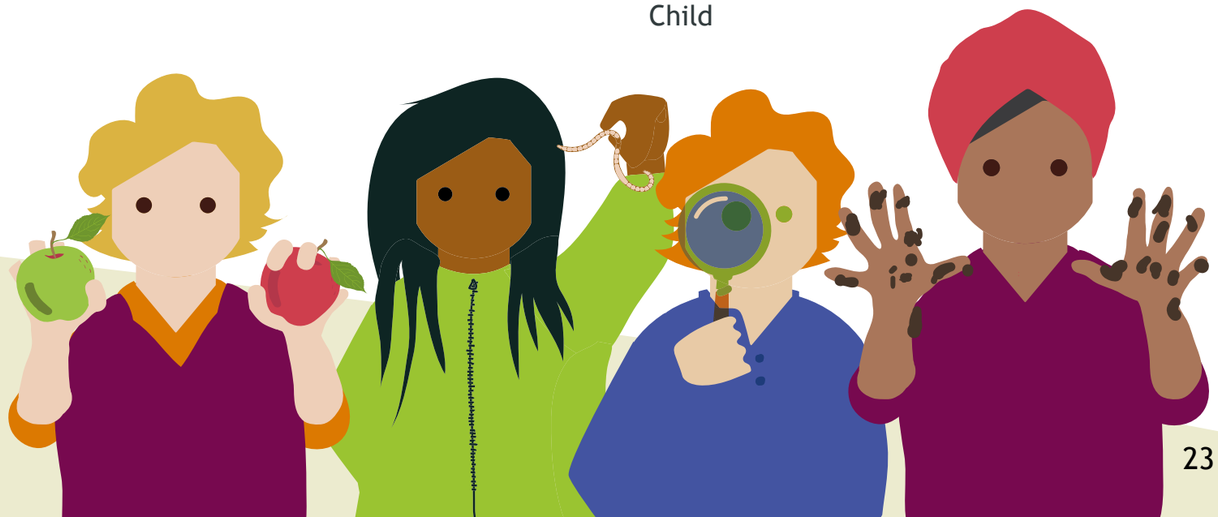
- 88% of the children who gave feedback said they'd definitely like to go back to the farm with an additional 9% saying they probably would
- 89% of children thought that farms were important with a further 10% feeling that they probably were
- 99% of teachers thought that all or most of their children had enjoyed the visit with 89% of teachers feeling that all of them had
- 99% of teachers said that they observed that all or most of their children were excited to talk to each other about what they were learning and doing
- 95% of teachers said that all or most of the children wanted to talk to the farmer and/or Coordinator about what they were learning
- 95% of teachers reported that all or most of their children had talked about or referred to their farm visit after the visit
- 94% of pupils said that they had done something for the first time during their visit
- 92% of children said that they would like to find out more about farming

Impact on teachers – Farm Discovery

- Over 90% teachers said they had learnt something new about their pupils during a Farm Discovery visit
- 97% of teachers felt better equipped to bring elements of farming into the classroom teaching with 63% strongly agreeing
- 91% of teachers intended to use a farm visit next year as a core aspect of their curriculum planning with 65% strongly agreeing
- 87% of teachers are now bringing elements of farming and the visit into their classroom teaching
- 87% of teachers report that they were still using elements of farming and the visit in their teaching two weeks after a farm discovery visit
- 83% of teachers are running more 'real life' learning activities with their pupils

> **"This was a day of firsts for many of the children who live in a very urban area close to school and often do not venture far outside of this area. Many had never visited the countryside and were surprised by how many fields were contained in one farm and how far they could see across the fields."**
>
> Session report

> **"I enjoyed learning that nature has natural treasures, so you don't have to have money to see nice things."**
>
> Child



Our impact at a glance

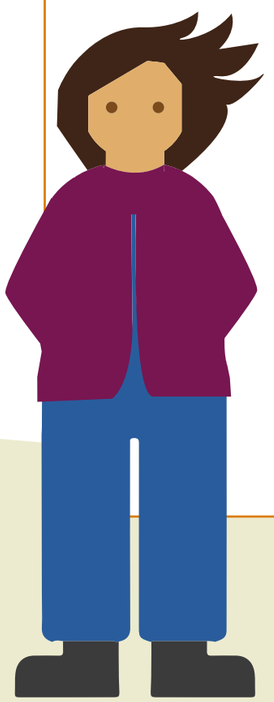
(statistics taken from evaluation of activities during the 2022-23 academic year)

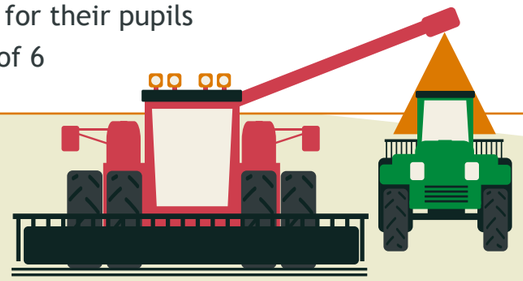
The impact of the pandemic on school life means that in 2023 many teachers (and children, and their parents) had little or no experience of school visits before coming on a Country Trust visit.

We have worked very hard to provide additional support and understanding and are proud of the following statistics.

Quality – Farm Discovery

- 99% of teachers scored the communication and information they received about their visit as 5 or 6 out of 6
- All teachers scored the organisation and delivery of the visit as 5 or 6 out of 6
- 99% of teachers scored the Health and Safety during the visit as 5 or 6 out of 6
- 98% of teachers scored the appropriateness and relevance of the activities for their pupils as 5 or 6 out of 6





Case Study: Grangetown Primary

Stephen Jackson, deputy head at Grangetown Primary, explains why they decided to send nearly all their year groups on Farm Discovery visits last year.

"Our school is in an area of high deprivation of around 80% pupil premium, one of the highest in the country. Life experiences and the future opportunities are the main two areas that we were always focusing on - our children can live in a bubble and there's not much else out there - that's been the biggest eye opener since coming out of COVID in particular.

When our CT Coordinator sent all the details of farm visits we just jumped onboard because we want to give our children any opportunities and experiences. We've sent our years 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6s. The feedback has been incredible from the farmers, the people who run the visits, and from teachers coming back.

For our children to be going to these real working farms has been unbelievable. Not only the life experiences, but also future opportunities for the children that they may not have even considered themselves, careers in this area that they may have. I think our SEND children have really enjoyed the visits too because of the sensory elements and the practicality of it all.

All the teachers went on pre-visits, and you know how successful these visits were going to be because the teachers came back so enthused, so invigorated by what was going on. And obviously [they feed into] our science sessions and things. We've got those lived experiences now of what we're teaching, and we can always relate to those.

We've got the practical life experiences, we've had writing opportunities based on the farm visits for the children's creative writing, retelling what happened. That's really supported the teachers. And I don't think many of the teachers have really been on working farms, so they've gained an experience that they can share with future classes. And the more we go on, then it's only going to get better because they can plan in more."

Our impact at a glance

(statistics taken from evaluation of activities during the 2022-23 academic year)

Impact on teachers - Food Discovery

- At the end of the programme there was a 22% increase in the number of teachers either agreeing or strongly agreeing that they were confident leading cooking sessions in the classroom
- At the end of the programme there was a 23% increase in the number of teachers either agreeing or strongly agreeing that they were confident leading food growing sessions with pupils
- At the end of the programme there was a 55% increase in the number of teachers either agreeing or strongly agreeing that they were confident using elements of farming in their teaching
- Teachers used Food Discovery to enhance a wide variety of curriculum subject areas, with science being the most frequently mentioned, as well as taking inspiration from the style of learning, use of spaces, structure and management of sessions, and parental involvement

Impact on pupils - Food Discovery

"The whole project has been extremely inclusive regardless of language, ability or learning needs and EVERY child has taken something positive from this!"

Teacher

"A child with ASD and cerebral palsy has benefitted from the sessions. With the hands-on activities, he has been able to engage on the same level as any other child in the class. The sessions have also benefitted pupils with behavioural issues who have been very engaged and offered them a different way to learn."

Teacher

"Plants are a bit like humans they almost need the same things to grow. I'm excited to watch my plants grow."

Child - reported speech from Coordinator end of growing session report

"We planted some peas and one girl asked, very thoughtfully, "But how do you get more peas from that pea?" I asked if anyone else could explain and another girl said: "You get a thing on the plant, that's like a suitcase, and inside that are the peas"."

From Coordinator end of gardening session report

"I felt proud when I tried new food because I never tried tomatoes because I thought they were bad but they are a bit tangy but still good."

Pupil

"One child had removed their gloves and was elbow deep in the bag of top soil. When asked what they enjoyed or learnt he said: "Getting muddy hands, it felt really nice, I've never done that before"."

From Coordinator end of gardening session report

"An EAL child began talking to other children during the gardening sessions, whereas before they had been reluctant to."

Teacher

"One child who doesn't have many opportunities at home to grow or cook food. He has never experienced a farm before (like many children in the class) and thrived during food discovery lessons. He often struggles with learning and it was lovely to see his confidence."

Teacher

"One child has less tantrums when we have wet play as he knows why rain is so important to farmers and animals, another child has found he enjoys gardening and that it helps him to relax and not think of stressful things."

Teacher

Our impact at a glance

(statistics taken from evaluation of activities during the 2022-23 academic year)

Impact on parents and the community – Food Discovery

Food is such an important part of life. It brings people together as well as celebrates our cultural differences. Our schools serve communities of people who have migrated to London from all over the world. Sharing our experiences of cooking and eating is such a lovely way for us to embrace our diversity.

The majority of our children do not speak English as a first language and many of our pupils have additional needs; experiential learning opportunities such as cooking, gardening, shopping and selling provide wonderful real-life contexts for developing language skills and teamwork.

Assistant Headteacher

Children engaged well with the social aspect of speaking to adults. It was a great way for us to interact with our parents which is something we are working hard on improving.

Teacher

Case Study: Food Discovery Longer term impact

At Holy Trinity Catholic Primary, we carried out interviews with pupils who had taken part in Food Discovery one year ago to learn more about how Food Discovery had continued to impact their relationship with food:

"I remember when we made a salad with the Country Trust, I took it home and had the recipe and we had it for our tea. My dad even ate it, and he doesn't normally eat different food. He loved it. I made it again and I showed my whole family how to make it and we were talking about what we can add to it to make it even nicer.

Me and my dad cook together now. It's mad because before, when I wasn't at school, I liked to watch the footy or listen to music in my room. When we go shopping for food, we look at more fresh stuff and talk about what we could make with it. We made scrambled eggs with onions and green herbs the other day. It didn't work the first time but the second time, it was boss! I like cooking. So does my dad, now."

Child A – Year 5

"I loved the time when we grew stuff in school because I'd never done it before. Our garden has all pavements, so we didn't grow anything. I have a disability sometimes that makes me use a wheelchair. It annoys me and gets me down but when I was growing food, it made me feel stronger, like in my mind and my body. I loved it. We have some pots that we grow a bit of salad and some herbs in now, but I'd love to grow more stuff because I like how it makes me feel. Maybe I'll have my own garden one day to grow my own food that I like to eat."

Child P – Year 5

Increasing our provision for teachers

Teachers are crucial gateways to opportunity for disadvantaged children and we have been thinking hard over the last few years as to how to extend our reach, and offer more of what we know and do to more teachers.

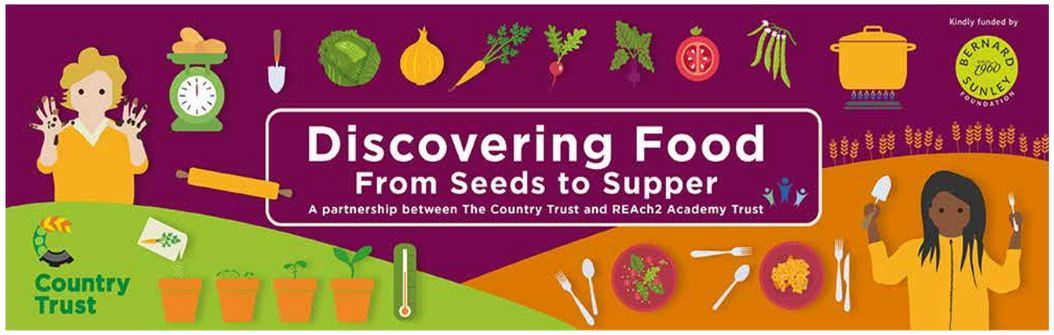
Farm in a Box has proved to be a very successful innovation and in 2023 we drew on our 10 years of experience with Food Discovery to create a support framework and resources to support REAch2 Multi Academy Trust in delivering their 'Seeds to Supper' promise for pupils across their 60 primary schools.

Discovering Food from Seeds to Supper was aimed at building teachers' confidence and saving them time, channelling their attention to exactly what they need to succeed. We also highlighted ways the curriculum could be explored through food whilst bringing some extra fun... and a bit of dirt, into the classroom!

A total of 57 school staff subscribed from 53 different schools to receive a classroom wall planner and stickers and pea seeds to grow, and three digital handbooks sent via email throughout the year, along with video resources and a Twitter feed sharing opportunities and resources from other organisations.

Communication was the biggest challenge throughout the project: ensuring that information reached the right people, at the right time and that school staff would have time to digest the information.

We are now taking the learning from this programme to adapt the resources for wider use and to inform work with the Co-op Academies Trust, the aim being that teachers will engage with materials as part of their subject planning rather than as an additional project.



Farm in a Box

In September 2021, Ofsted published a new Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) Statutory Framework and Ofsted inspection framework with strong emphasis on widening experiences and learning about the diverse world.

In 2022/23 our Farm in a Box (FIAB) was for Early Years children. It was a box full of resources and activities enabling children to discover the diverse world of food and farming through sensory play and investigation, and seeing real farmers, their stories and crops. 995 EYFIAB (Early Years Farm in a Box) were ordered and delivered in the autumn 2022 to 750 settings; 393 boxes were ordered and delivered in the spring of 2023 to 308 settings: school and other early years settings.

The youngest children in our society have been drastically affected by Covid19. Language and communication development have been adversely impacted as have personal, social, emotional and physical development, with those in the poorest households having suffered the most. Children from deprived backgrounds often lack opportunities and access to different toys, resources and experiences.

Early Years Farm in a Box provided fun resources which were developed to be used in a structured way in the safe and encouraging setting of a school or nursery. The resources in the Box were designed to be reuseable, and to be a continuing source of ideas, inspiration and confidence for teachers. Where we have previously only delivered FIAB to schools, EYFIAB provided the opportunity to cast the net wider and work with other Early Years settings like nurseries.

Working with Delivery Partners (local authority and charity contacts in Essex and Greater Manchester) we were able to target a proportion of the boxes to non-school settings who tend to be off the radar when it comes to provision.

The difference we make *(responses were gathered from teacher surveys and interviews)*

Background:

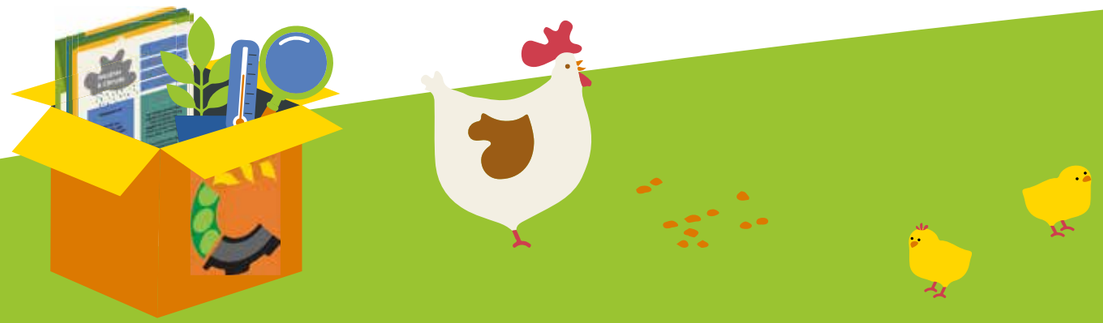
- Average FSMEver6 of the school settings was over 40%.
- An estimated 26,270 children reached with Autumn Box, 9,950 of these also experienced the Spring Box
- 60% of settings provided feedback in autumn and 45% in spring

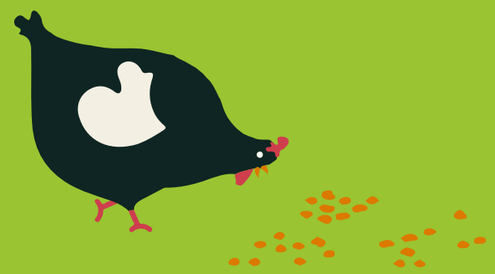
Impact on Children:

- 67% of teachers said that they had observed most or all of their children communicating about what they had learnt in some way.
- 95.5% of teachers reported that they had observed independent engagement with the FIAB theme (including activities and resources).
- 91% of teachers reported that all or most of their children tried something new

Impact on teachers:

- 93% of teachers agreed that they were confident to use elements of farming in their teaching after using the autumn and spring FIAB in contrast with only 60% before the boxes, an increase of 33 percentage points.
- 87% of respondents said they had used the Autumn Box after the initial activities.
- 100% of respondents said they would recommend EYFIAB to other teachers/practitioners.
- Teachers rated the overall quality of the boxes and their contents 5.8 and 5.55 out of 6 in Autumn and Spring respectively.





Farm in a Box

Many teachers have reported that the resources were used repeatedly, and not just in a Farm in a Box (FIAB) context. Having designed the resources to be reused it was gratifying to get feedback like this (taken from interviews):

> **We've got those activity cards now and we laminated extra bits that came in the farm in the box. So they've got a bit of longevity in them and we'll definitely plan that in again for next year, obviously without you sending us resources, and we'll do a similar day.**

> **We've kept everything with the view of doing it again in the autumn [next year] and learning from what we've done this time round to help us provide even better than what we did from our first run.**

> **So other than anything that's perishable, we have kept everything to make sure that we've got everything there that we need and we would then just buy whatever it would be in terms of food bits or whatnot to supplement what we needed. So we found because of the way that you had provided the boxes, it's ideal to be kept and reused.**

> **I think we would be braver in terms of saying OK, perhaps we need to do it over 2 days and not try and shoehorn so much in in one go to try and make sure we get that real quality out of it and give that to give the children that time to really explore and learn and understand.**

It wasn't a stated aim of Farm in a Box, and most Boxes were targeted to areas where we didn't have a presence on the ground, but some Boxes did lead to schools booking Farm Discovery visits for their children. Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) children are very young to be going on farm visits and these are children whose life experiences are often limited. However, with the support of FIAB, one teacher noted,

> **I think by getting [the visit] in earlier, the children take it more as 'this is normal, this is within my normal realms of experience' and it by giving them that knowledge from an earlier age, they can then start to draw on that knowledge so soon as they go into year one and they're doing something to do with farm animals or whatever, straight away they can link back to, oh, I've already done some learning about that and when they've had those first hand experiences, particularly going on a visit, that's what they remember.**
>
> **And so they're not going from a point of knowing nothing, they're already starting to build upon what they've already learnt and I think that then puts them in a stronger position for moving their learning on further because they've already got something in the bank.**

Farm in a Box Local

We also delivered 143 Farm in a Box Locals (FIAB Local) during 2022-23

The programme makes use of real resources from real farms with ready-made activities for teachers to use. Each Box is prepared individually by our Farm Discovery Coordinator for a particular class and teacher and relates to a specific farm.

Whilst getting children out on to farms remains a high priority for the Farm Discovery teams, current issues in education during the year meant that this was often challenging, and Farm in a Box Local remained a viable option for many schools, and was also a way of preparing pupils for the world of the farm, as a box of resources and activities are provided to the school for the teacher to use at their convenience.

Budgetary constraints and staffing issues are two major concerns for schools both of which affect their ability to take children out on educational visits. Farm in a Box Local enabled pupils to experience something of the world of farming without the cost of travel and the staff:pupil ratios necessary for an external outing. The Local Box also supported teachers in a bespoke way, as Coordinators planned the contents within the box with the teacher.

The difference we make

- Average FSM Ever6 of schools which took part was over 40%
- Teachers rated the quality of the process from booking to using the resources and support with health and safety 5.85 out of 6

Teachers

- All teachers agreed that all their pupils, regardless of learning style and ability, had the opportunity to engage with Farm in a Box activities
- 79% agreed that FIAB Local had improved their confidence in taking outside to learn
- 92% agreed that they intended to run more real-world learning activities with their pupils as a result of FIAB Local

Children

- 90% of teachers reported that they had observed all of their pupils enjoying the activities
- 71% of teachers reported that all or most of their pupils want to talk to their farmer or Coordinator to ask them questions
- In group feedback, all pupils responded said they wanted to find out more about farming
- 82% of teachers reported that they observed all of their pupils excited to talk to their peers about what they were learning and doing
- 97% teachers reported that all of their pupils had interacted with the natural world as part of FIAB Local
- 98% of teachers reported that that they observed all or most of their children developing their independent learning skills
- In group feedback, 96% of children agreed that farms are important

Countryside Discovery Residentials

The difference we make *(analysis of feedback from 6 residentials and 3 run as a series of day visits)*

Impact on children:

- Star Rating by Pupils 4.6 out of 5
- 81% of pupils said they either like or love the countryside (4 or 5 on scale)
- 89% said farms were important (4 or 5 on scale)
- 94% found out something new
- 95% did something for the first time

"They all had an amazing time. Judging by the comments I heard, this experience will stay with them forever."

Mayville Primary Year 6 Teacher June 2023

10% of responses in the children's pre-residential questionnaire said they were least looking forward to things to do with nature: muddy puddles, seeing bugs, crabs, spiders, fields. The residentials have activities built into them which allow children to explore the natural world, specifically to support children's confidence of how to interact.

"A few children were brave holding the crabs despite being afraid initially and were very gentle in handling. Lots of curiosity in understanding them and their anatomy."

"They absolutely loved the sensory element of touching the wheat grains during the farm visit."

Impact on teachers:

- 93% said that all their pupils enjoyed the residential (100% said all or most)
- 85% said that all their pupils were excited to talk to each other about what they were doing (100% said all or most)
- 85% said that their pupils interacted with the natural world (100% said all or most)
- 78% said children wanted to ask questions of the farmer, coordinator or other adults (100% said all or most)

"We had such a fantastic time on this residential…They gained such an independence and freedom over the 4 days that they were in Suffolk and they built memories that they'll take with them on in their journeys. Hopefully this experience will ensure they want to continue to get out there and explore the natural world."

Solebay Primary Academy Year 6 Teacher, June 2023

New developments

Under the ‘Diversification’ pillar of our 5 Year Plan we launched our Plant Your Pants Soil Health Campaign.

Soil is a precious resource and yet it is being lost or degraded across the world. It is critical for life: as well as producing 95% of our food, good soil purifies water, mitigates flooding, combats drought, stores carbon and is even a source of new medicines. According to a Childwise survey, 27% of primary school children have never or hardly ever played or dug in soil.

We wanted to find a way to enable children to make that first fundamental connection with the land that sustains us – getting their hands in the soil and discovering the life within it. We asked families, schools, nurseries and farmers across the UK to bury a pair of cotton pants for a few months, and together, explore the world beneath our feet.

Plant Your Pants (PYP)

2023 Highlights:

- 300 physical PYP packs for eligible schools
- Digital packs for other schools and general public
- c.19,000 people engaged with soil (target of 11,000)
  - 1,095 public registrations
  - 8,450 school children through physical PYP packs
  - 12,500 school children through digital packs
- An interactive map for participants to log the burying and digging up of their pants
- 4 ‘hub’ schools took part in PYP but with the added bonus of a soil scientist to work with them, and a soil themed Farm Discovery visit

> **I will remember planting our pants. Digging in the fields and finding so many worms. Looking at how soil is made up by collecting some and shaking it up with water.**
>
> Child

> **During discussions about the importance of soil to farmers, the effect of the weather on the soil, the children quickly linked together how everything fits as a part of the whole and said that if the words did not make holes in the soil, when it rains there would be flooding.**
>
> Coordinator session report

> **I didn’t see soil as a living thing…I saw soil as something that something grows in and that worms live in. Yeah, but I didn’t appreciate how alive the actual soil is with all of the microorganisms. And having seen a pair of cotton pants completely disappear, [it’s mind blowing].**
>
> Mrs Turner, Morlands Primary

What next: We took on a lot for our pilot year! But we learnt a great deal, and while feedback was great, there wasn’t as much of it as we would have liked. So, in 2024 we have three aims:

- simplify the public campaign by making it easy for everyone to see for themselves the life in the soil
- make more of soil across our established programmes
- work hard to get more feedback so we can get even more people passionate about soil in 2025

Our policy work

Our Vision

Food, Farming and Countryside opportunities and experiences are available to ALL children, especially persistently disadvantaged children.

Why?

The human race is dependent on the natural world for survival. However, there is no consistent provision (resource or structure) for every child to discover the land that sustains us all and to explore first-hand the fundamental connection between the way we live, our own health and the health of the planet. Therefore, children, particularly the most disadvantaged, are ill-equipped to grow to actively contribute to, and benefit from, a thriving society and planet (as identified in our Theory of Change)

To achieve our vision, we will work with policy makers to help ensure:

- Every child has the opportunity to visit a real working farm, to discover through first-hand experience where their food comes from
- Every child has the chance to discover the connections between the food they eat, their own health and the land that sustains us all
- Every child can develop the confidence and curiosity to explore the natural world

How?

We will demonstrate the difference food and farm opportunities and experiences make especially for the most disadvantaged children – helping to join the dots between government departments, especially health, education and agriculture.

Our priorities:

At a time of fundamental change in our agricultural support system (post Brexit) to ensure that as many farmers as possible are supported to welcome children to their farms.

Status: Educational Access payments (Ed1) are now included in Mid Tier Countryside Stewardship and CS+. We have also been successful in raising awareness of Ed1, and in enabling farmers to add Ed1 retrospectively to their CS agreements. Inclusion of Ed1 in the Sustainable Farming Incentive is our next objective.

To ensure that the importance of firsthand experience of food and farming is included in all relevant new government strategies and policies.

Status: Firsthand experience has been absent from all new relevant government strategies and policies. We continue to raise our voice about this. We are part of the Fair Education Alliance, The Food Education Network, Sustain, the Outdoors for All Working group, the Nature Premium Steering Group and the Access to Farms Network.

To ensure that food and farming experiences are included within 'cultural capital'.

Status: Teachers are starting to talk about Country Trust programmes in this way and occasionally our involvement is mentioned in an Ofsted report. We have more work to do to gather and present evidence.

> **"A HUGE thank you for…a fantastic trip to the farm for our school. It was run excellently and the communication running up to it was very good. The children were all engaged, activities good for the cohort and perfect for our children's needs. Thank you also for the pre-visit - this made a big difference. It was an excellent visit for our children's cultural capital."**
>
> Matt Barker, The Stable School

Our ambition is to establish food, farming, and countryside opportunities as part of a fair education for all children, ensuring no child's future is limited by their socio-economic background. That's why we support the call for a Nature Premium, as a government funded, statutory requirement for schools to take children regularly into nature. And it's why we play an active role in the Fair Education Alliance.

Strategic direction

Our 5 Year Plan

The need and demand for our work continues to grow significantly. Our five-year strategy is underpinned by our Theory of Change and centres around our ambition to greatly increase the number of children who have access to meaningful food, farming and land centred opportunities and experiences.

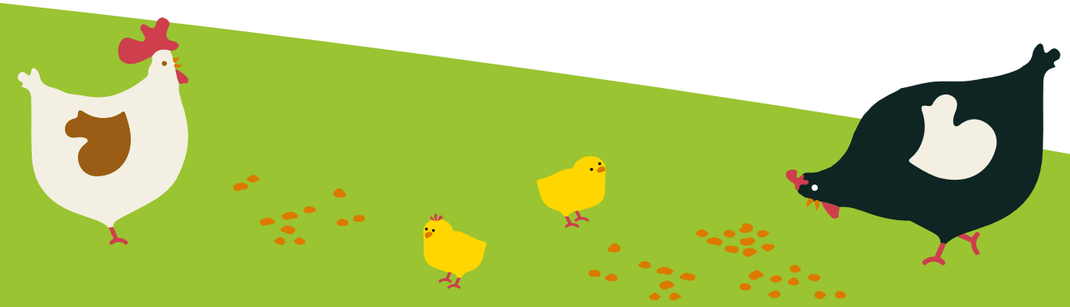
The 5 pillars of the Plan are:

- **Growth:** Significantly increase engagement to 120,000 children per annum by year 5
- **Diversification:** Finding new ways to deliver quality programmes at scale, ourselves, or with and through others. Supporting teachers to sustain the impact of our work and farmers to engage in farm education
- **Influence:** Focussing our effort to influence policies that support our mission in food, farming, and education
- **Impact and Evaluation:** A new Impact Framework including our Theory of Change will enable us to measure and share the difference we make. We will build academically robust evidence for farm education too
- **Infrastructure:** Developing our team, knowledge, IT and resources to support growth and development

2024 will be year 3 of our 5 Year Plan and another step towards our ambition to bring food, farming and countryside experiences to 120,000 children from disadvantaged backgrounds each year by 2027.

Our aims:

- At least 55,000 children taking part in our core programmes
- A second year of our Soil Campaign with 30,000 people taking part
- To deepen the connection with soil through all our programmes
- Collect evidence that we are reaching children in the most disadvantaged areas
- Collect evidence that we are consistently achieving our outcomes
- Increase our use of Farm in a Bag to enhance Farm Discovery
- Seek transformative gifts to enable us to continue to grow to meet demand and need
- Improve and extend the capabilities of others through partnerships
- Support teachers to sustain the impact of our visits through pre and post provision of resources and support, blending physical, digital and e-communications
- Ensure that the importance of food and farming education is seen and heard by policy makers particularly focusing on the Sustainable Farming Incentive
- Ensure that our foundations of income, technology, leadership, governance, financial and information management underpin our growth



Strategic direction

Residentials

There have been closures across the country of residential centres/outdoor learning centres as a result of Covid. We had an exciting plan for a new, low cost but high quality residential in Suffolk based at the Blaxhall YHA and focused on a farm but had to abandon the plan when the Youth Hostel Association (YHA) suddenly announced they were selling Blaxhall.

Having ended our association with Hautbois House Centre in Norfolk, all our residentials for London schools were then focused on Ringsfield Hall in Suffolk with an increasingly impactful farm and coast based programme. Very sadly, Ringsfield Hall announced its immediate closure in early 2024 bringing 30 years of Country Trust residentials in Suffolk to an end. Plans are now underway for a new residential on the Sussex Downs and we are very grateful to a key funder, the Girdlers Livery Company for their unwavering support amidst so much change.

The schools we serve have found it increasingly difficult to encourage anxious parents to allow children to attend residentials post Covid and adapting to a sudden change of location has proved a step too far for some, this year. We look forward to using Residential in a Box to build confidence in the future.

Working with the Ernest Cook Trust (ECT) we are excited to be developing our first residential programme in Cumbria with a focus on it being a replicable low cost, farm focused (ECT have purchased a farm) residential. The programme will launch in autumn 2024 and our ambition is for it to be co-created with our participants.

Fundraising

Income increased by 14.4% and expenditure increased by 2.4% in comparison to 2022 (to £1,379,887 and £1,430,668) The net outcome was as expected though actual figures for both income and expenditure were lower than budgeted. 42% of our income was unrestricted. £443,476 of income received in 2023 was deferred to 2024 because it relates to the planned delivery of activity in the spring and summer terms.

We were pleased to finish the year with a much lower than expected planned deficit as we are now approaching the limit of the reserves which accumulated thanks to large legacies. Despite spending less than we had budgeted and raising slightly less than we had anticipated (though still an increase on 2022), we were able to:

- Grow all our programmes in line with our 5 Year Plan
- Continue to offer many of our programmes free of charge
- Offer Farm in a Bag to 136 school visits to build children's confidence, curiosity and sense of connection prior to a Farm Discovery visit
- Offer more transport subsidies than ever before (£67k) where the cost of coach travel was a barrier to participation
- Continue to innovate around Farm in a Box
- Deliver the pilot year of our Soil Health Campaign
- Deliver Seeds to Supper to support teachers in the REAch2 Multi Academy Trust
- Develop Residential in a Box
- Continue to review our existing programmes and train the team to ensure we kept pace with the needs of teachers and children

Controls

Financial management consists of monthly management accounts that are distributed to all Trustees for review.

Monthly forecasting enables Trustees to view the financial landscape ahead, along with a mid-year review and detailed consideration in the third quarter prior to preparing the budget for the following year.

CEO or Trustee authorisation is required for all payments; all payments made by the Charity over £5,000 require dual authorisation with an authorised Trustee signatory (raised to £6,000 at the end of 2023). The charity is now required to have an audit as our income is over £1m.

Reserves policy

Trustees operate a RAG approach to assessing reserves with a green zone at around 3 months of operating reserves.

Overall, during 2023, reserves decreased from £582,240 to £531,459, of which unrestricted reserves decreased from £559,034 to £503,211, as a result of a planned use of reserves for our 5 Year Plan.

At the end of 2023 free reserves (total reserves less restricted/designated funds and funds tied up in fixed assets) were calculated as being £497,096 and therefore within the green zone for our RAG approach to assessing reserves when compared with projected operating costs within the 2024 budget (3 months operating costs estimated to be £453,391).

Our aim is for a break-even budget in 2024 but should our monitoring indicate any cause for concern during the year we will take prompt action.

Fundraising

The Board has adopted the Charity Governance Code and is working through the seven principles to ensure good governance. Legal and ethical fundraising remains a key objective of the Trustees, and they take their responsibilities with regard to proper fundraising practice very seriously.

They are guided by the Charity Commission's ***Charity fundraising: a guide to trustee duties (CC20 updated Oct 2022)*** as well as the ***Charity Governance Code (updated 2020)***, and the ***Guidance Note from the Fundraising Regulator on New Reporting Requirements published October 2018*** and updated January 2023, and the Covid fundraising guidance issued during 2021. The Country Trust is registered with the ***Fundraising Regulator*** and complies with the ***Code of Fundraising Practice***.

In 2023, approximately 55% of our income came from charitable trusts and foundations, 33.2% from donations including companies, 0.1% from donated services and gifts in kind and 10% from service users, primarily schools in the form of the balance of the cost of residential visits after our subsidy has been applied, or as a contribution from schools towards the cost of Food Discovery programmes.

Donors to The Country Trust can be assured that:

- Fundraising activity is included within the Trust's Risk Register, which is reviewed at each Board meeting; a senior member of staff directly involved with fundraising is present at every Board meeting
- The Charity does not currently make use of professional fundraisers or commercial participators
- The Charity complies with the Fundraising Regulator's voluntary regulation scheme
- All fundraising is carried out by employed staff, managed by the CEO or Senior Managers who report to the CEO, or very occasionally by named volunteers working closely with the employed staff on our behalf, primarily networking with peers and friends. Some volunteers will fundraise in aid of The Country Trust through fundraising platforms and the Charity provides support for them on its website
- The Charity did not receive any complaints about fundraising activities carried out by The Charity or someone acting on The Charity's behalf. We will be ensuring that our current website refresh includes raising the visibility of how to complain
- The Charity respects the privacy of the public, including the need to take special care with vulnerable people. Any mailing or emailing for fundraising purposes is in accordance with GDPR preferences. Public fundraising is through online fundraising platforms, or through static collection goblets and is carried out in accordance with the Code of Fundraising Practice. The Charity undertakes very little face to face fundraising and what is done is events based and primarily by invitation

The Charity will comply with requests issued by the Fundraising Preference Service. The Charity strives to maintain GDPR compliance and has registered with the ICO.

Principal funding sources

Grant making trusts continue to be the largest source of funding for the Charity, but with a growing number of companies now supporting our work. We continued to sustain a good percentage of funding within multi-year agreements.

We are very grateful indeed for the support received from all our funders, and mention here those who have given permission for their support to be acknowledged in this report;

AGCO Foundation, Aldgate and Allhallows Foundation, Ardian UK and the Ardian Foundation, Barbour Foundation, BASF, British Gypsum, Bruno Schroder Trust, Catherine Cookson Charitable Trust, The CLA Charitable Trust, The Clarkson Foundation, Lance Coates Charitable Trust, Ernest Cook Trust, Darlington Building Society, Doves Farm, Fenwick, Frontier Agriculture UK, George F White, The Girdlers' Company, The Hadrian Trust, WA Handley Trust, The Hiscox Foundation, A Hume Country Clothing and Outfitters, Impax Asset Management, The Joicey Trust, Sir James Knott Trust, John Lewis Golden Jubilee Trust, The Lund Trust, Lycetts Insurers and Financial Services The Mercers' Company, Muckle LLP Community Fund, Northumberland Freemasons Charitable Trust, Oxbury Bank, The Rank Foundation, Reece Foundation, Ridley Family Charity, Riverford Organic Foods, The Rothschild Foundation, Royal Society of Chemistry, Rural Solutions, Ryecroft Glenton, The Shears Foundation, The Bernard Sunley Charitable Foundation, Squires Foundation, Felix Thornley Cobbold Agricultural Trust, Troy Asset Management, Tyne and Wear Community Foundation, Warburtons Ltd, Westminster Foundation, The Garfield Weston Foundation, The Wheler Foundation, Yorkshire Agricultural Society.

Thanks are due to the Charity's President, Vice Presidents, Ambassadors, Trustees and staff for their support in identifying and making introductions to potential new funding sources.

Transport costs

Requests for transport subsidies continued to rise in 2023 as school budgets and parental income continued to be squeezed.

Over £67,000 of subsidies were given out to support around 290 farm visits – that's nearly three times the 2022 total - enabling over 7,500 children to access farms. Transport subsidies are offered in addition to providing the Farm Discovery visits free of charge.

Structure, Governance and Management

Structure

The Country Trust was founded in 1978 and is registered with the Charity Commission under Charity Number 1122103. The Board of Trustees, President, Board of Vice Presidents, Ambassadors, Chief Executive Officer, senior staff members and professional advisers are listed on page 1.

On the 23rd November 2007 The Country Trust was incorporated; it became a company limited by guarantee and not having share capital. On the 1st January 2008, the Charity commenced trading as an incorporated Charity. The Company number is 6436266 and the registered address is shown on page 1.

Governing document

The Charity is governed by the Memorandum and Articles of Association of The Country Trust Ltd.

Governing Body

The structure of the Charity consists of a Board of Trustees and a Chief Executive supported by a Senior Leadership Team. The Board of Trustees is a self-appointing body and includes a good gender balance and a range of experience.

Several Trustees have direct experience of our services either as teachers or active farmer hosts. Trustees with the relevant experience have particular responsibility for Finance and Safeguarding.

The Chief Executive reports directly to the Chair of Trustees and is responsible for the day-to-day running of the Charity. The Charity is very fortunate to be supported by a President, Vice Presidents and Ambassadors who are an advisory, networking and fundraising resource.

Recruitment and training of Trustees

Trustees are recruited as and when required through advertising, personal recommendation and through the recommendation of third-party advisors according to the Board's specifications concerning eligibility, personal competence, and specialist skills.

Potential candidates are invited to apply and are interviewed by the Chair and at least one other Trustee. Successful applicants are co-opted to join the Board until their appointment is confirmed.

One Trustee stepped down during the year. One Trustee undertook Trustee training with both Stone King and The Institute of Chartered Accountants. Three Trustees renewed their standard safeguarding training and additional safeguarding training was undertaken by three Trustees.

Organisational management

The Charity's Trustees are legally responsible for the overall management and control of the Charity. The Board of Trustees meets at least four times a year to discuss and implement strategic issues, monitor income and expenditure, monitor risk, review and approve policies and approve annual budgets.

The day to day running of the Charity is delegated to the Chief Executive, the Senior Leadership Team, staff and sessional staff, who report to the Board monthly and quarterly.

GDPR

We use our database to extend our compliance with the GDPR regulations – subscription to Newsletters allows for double opt in as well as providing the usual ability to unsubscribe.

Structure, Governance and Management

Risk management

The Board of Trustees is responsible for the management of risks associated with the activities of the Charity. The Board refers to the Charity's Risk Register at each meeting which is prepared and updated by the Chief Executive.

The top 6 major risks identified and monitored in 2023 were:

- **Inadequate fundraising** - mitigated by: Annual budgets include risk analysis, monthly financial reports show progress against budget, 'new' spend is brought to the Board, detailed Mid-Year Review, active communication with our funders, new product development
- **Public Health Emergency** - teacher shortages through ill health, and mental wellbeing concerns resulting from the pandemic and ongoing stress are now more of a concern than Covid itself. Mitigated by patient and persistent communication with teachers, continued prioritisation of pre-visits, teacher survey to ascertain priorities, additional resources to support teachers to sustain the impact of our programmes
- **Education Funding cuts** - mitigated by: Continued focus on measuring and reporting on the relevance of our work including a revised Theory of Change and associated Impact Framework, working to influence policy, adapting our fundraising
- **Poor governance by the Board** - mitigated by: Regular Board meetings, sub committees for finance and strategy, key decisions checked with external professionals eg insurers, accountants, funders
- **Dependency on individual knowledge and relationships - (employed) key areas of vulnerability fundraising, IT, H and S, Digital** - mitigated by: IT assistant supported to do an apprenticeship degree, Digital assistant recruited through Time to Shine, H and S 'how to' guides prioritised, increased fundraising capacity, greater visibility of key fundraising information
- **Major loss of farms** - mitigated by ongoing (and seemingly successful) work to ensure Ed 1 payments are included within all aspects of ELMs, new e-comms with farmer hosts, ongoing recruitment

Risk Assessments are prepared by staff and self-employed sessional contractors for all activities led by the Charity. The Charity ensures that all our active host farmers have a Risk Assessment in place for Country Trust visits. These Risk Assessments are prepared, owned and managed by the host farmer but where required, support for the process, including signposting to external industry guidance, is provided by the Charity. The Charity receives the help of professional advisors for risks associated with health and safety, safeguarding and employment practice.

The Board of Trustees also has in place key controls for use by the Charity, such as formal agendas for meetings, comprehensive strategic planning and monthly management accounting, established lines of reporting, formal written policies and a review schedule, clear authorisation levels for all payments and a safeguarding policy which provides guidance for all on best safe practice for adults within an organisation working with children.

Structure, Governance and Management

Openness and accountability

We strive to involve participants in programme design and the comprehensive feedback gathered from stakeholders during the year is constantly used to inform practice. Our annual evaluation reports are published online and publicised through social media and printed materials.

We continue to be pleased with participation rates in our online pupil surveys sent to teachers after each farm visit. The introduction of a new survey for teachers two weeks after a farm visit has given very encouraging results about the 'stickiness' of the impact of the visit. Case studies undertaken with children one and two years after a Food Discovery year proved to be very powerful.

This is our Position Statement:

The Country Trust connects children with the land that sustains us all. We aim to foster an understanding of farming, food production and countryside management in all its many guises and raise awareness of the way in which we are all participants in agriculture through the food that we eat.

Country Trust visits and activities are structured to support the National Curriculum, personal development and wellbeing. Our carefully planned opportunities and experiences are designed to empower children to be curious, confident and create change in their lives and the world around them so that they and society can thrive.

We do not consider ourselves to be a charity that campaigns for or against any particular form of farming or land management. However:

- We do seek to influence policy makers where this makes it more likely that we will achieve our mission. For example, for educational access to farms to be supported as a standalone public good, and for food and farming education to be a vital part of education, health, wellbeing, sustainability and food strategies
- In the context of the climate emergency and rapid loss of biodiversity, we design our programmes to help children to understand the unique responsibilities that farmers and land managers have for soil health and biodiversity, stewardship of non-renewable resources and locking up carbon

Our intention is that children will be in a better position to make informed decisions, understanding that their choices matter, and may be influential in the future shape of farming and the countryside.

Structure, Governance and Management

Cybersecurity

The Country Trust continues to be vigilant with regard to Cybersecurity. All CT staff are required to complete annual training as part of our Cyber insurance obligations.

We continue to use the NCSC's (National Cyber Security Centre) monitoring tools. Continued vigilance meant that there were no serious issues in 2023.

Safeguarding

Government guidance is clear that all organisations working with children, young people, families, parents and carers have particular responsibilities. At The Country Trust we recognise that the welfare of all children is paramount and that all children, regardless of ability or culture, have equal rights of protection.

We have a duty of care when they are in our charge, and we will do everything we can to provide a safe and caring environment whilst they attend our activities.

Our policy for child safeguarding is on our website and is reviewed annually by our Board of Trustees. The Country Trust is a member of SAFEcic, an umbrella organisation providing safeguarding training, advice and standards.

All staff, volunteers and Trustees undertake safeguarding training and undergo DBS checks where this is permitted for their role. Safeguarding is reviewed at the quarterly Board meetings.

There were 9 safeguarding concerns raised within 2023 (8 in 2022 for comparison) including disclosures by children and potential signs of neglect and abuse. There was one instance of bullying by children from another school on a residential which was resolved with the residential partner and schools.

All were followed through in accordance with our Policy. Trustees have continued to keep their safeguarding training up to date and keep abreast of any significant changes.

Health and Safety

Our health and safety policy can be found on our website and is reviewed every two years. Safeguarding, and Health and Safety reports of all disclosures, accidents, incidents and near misses and subsequent actions taken are brought to every Board meeting, preserving the appropriate confidentiality.

Health and Safety briefings are issued to the whole team at key moments in the farming calendar (eg lambing), whenever there is a learning or update to be shared and are integrated into new programmes (eg Residential in a Box). H and S training is made available in written (How to Guides) and video form and engagement is tracked.

Pre-visits to farms are mandatory for schools (with very limited exceptions) in order that proper planning can be undertaken including understanding the particular needs of the children.

The Trustees would like to thank everyone involved with The Country Trust – farmers, teachers, funders, our delivery team, staff, volunteers and everyone who has provided incredible support and encouragement during the last year.

Statement of compliance with prevailing laws and regulations

The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the accounting policies set out in notes to the accounts and comply with the charity's governing document, the Charities Act 2011 and Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland published in October 2019.

This report has been prepared in accordance with the provisions applicable to companies entitled to the small companies' exemption. Approved by the Board of Trustees on:

2 May 2024 and signed on its behalf by: S D Bell

Steve Bell, Chair of Trustees.

Accounts

The Country Trust

Independent Auditor's Report to the Members of The Country Trust

Opinion

We have audited the financial statements of The Country Trust (the 'charitable company') for the year ended 31 December 2023, which comprise the Statement of Financial Activities, Balance Sheet, Statement of Cash Flows, and Notes to the Financial Statements, including significant accounting policies. The financial reporting framework that has been applied in their preparation is applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards, including Financial Reporting Standard 102 The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice).

In our opinion the financial statements:

- give a true and fair view of the state of the charitable company's affairs as at 31 December 2023 and of its incoming resources and application of resources, including its income and expenditure, for the year then ended;
- have been properly prepared in accordance with United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice; and
- have been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Companies Act 2006.

Basis for opinion

We conducted our audit in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (UK) (ISAs (UK)) and applicable law. Our responsibilities under those standards are further described in the auditor responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements section of our report. We are independent of the charitable company in accordance with the ethical requirements that are relevant to our audit of the financial statements in the UK, including the FRC's Ethical Standard, and we have fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with these requirements. We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion.

Conclusions relating to going concern

In auditing the financial statements, we have concluded that the trustees use of the going concern basis of accounting in the preparation of the financial statements is appropriate.

Based on the work we have performed, we have not identified any material uncertainties relating to events or conditions that, individually or collectively, may cast significant doubt on the charitable company's ability to continue as a going concern for a period of at least twelve months from when the original financial statements were authorised for issue.

Our responsibilities and the responsibilities of the trustees with respect to going concern are described in the relevant sections of this report.

Other information

The other information comprises the information included in the Trustees' Report, other than the financial statements and our auditor's report thereon. The trustees are responsible for the other information contained within the Trustees' Report. Our opinion on the financial statements does not cover the other information and, except to the extent otherwise explicitly stated in our report, we do not express any form of assurance conclusion thereon. Our responsibility is to read the other information and, in doing so, consider whether the other information is materially inconsistent with the financial statements or our knowledge obtained in the course of the audit or otherwise appears to be materially misstated. If we identify such material inconsistencies or apparent material misstatements, we are required to determine whether this gives rise to a material misstatement in the financial statements themselves. If, based on the work we have performed, we conclude that there is a material misstatement of this other information, we are required to report that fact.

We have nothing to report in this regard.

Opinion on other matter prescribed by the Companies Act 2006
In our opinion, based on the work undertaken in the course of the audit:

- the information given in the Trustees' Report (incorporating the Directors' Report) for the financial year for which the financial statements are prepared is consistent with the financial statements; and
- the Directors' Report has been prepared in accordance with applicable legal requirements.

Matters on which we are required to report by exception
In the light of our knowledge and understanding of the company and its environment obtained in the course of the audit, we have not identified material misstatements in the Trustees' Report.

We have nothing to report in respect of the following matters where the Companies Act 2006 requires us to report to you if, in our opinion:

- adequate accounting records have not been kept, or returns adequate for our audit have not been received from branches not visited by us; or
- the financial statements are not in agreement with the accounting records and returns; or
- certain disclosures of directors' remuneration specified by law are not made; or
- we have not received all the information and explanations we require for our audit.
- the trustees were not entitled to prepare the financial statements in accordance with the small companies regime and take advantage of the small companies' exemptions in preparing the Directors' Report and from the requirement to prepare a Strategic Report.

Responsibilities of trustees
As explained more fully in the Statement of Trustees' Responsibilities, the trustees (who are also the directors of the charitable company for the purposes of company law) are responsible for the preparation of the financial statements and for being satisfied that they give a true and fair view, and for such internal control as the trustees determine is necessary to enable the preparation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

In preparing the financial statements, the trustees are responsible for assessing the charitable company's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless the trustees either intend to liquidate the charitable company or to cease operations, or have no realistic alternative but to do so.

Auditor responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements
Our objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements as a whole are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an auditor's report that includes our opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with ISAs (UK) will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of these financial statements.

Irregularities, including fraud, are instances of non-compliance with laws and regulations. We design procedures in line with our responsibilities, outlined above, to detect material misstatements in respect of irregularities, including fraud. The extent to which our procedures are capable of detecting irregularities, including fraud is detailed below:

The Country Trust

Independent Auditor's Report to the Members of The Country Trust

Our approach to identifying and assessing the risks of material misstatement in respect of irregularities, including fraud and non-compliance with laws and regulations, was as follows;

• The engagement partner ensured that the engagement team collectively had the appropriate competence, capabilities and skills to identify or recognise non-compliance with applicable laws and regulations.
• We focused on specific laws and regulations which we considered may have a direct material effect on the financial statements or the operations for the company, including the Companies Act 2006, Charities Act 2011, tax legislation and data protection, and employment legislation.

We assessed the susceptibility of the company's financial statements to material misstatement, including obtaining an understanding of how fraud might occur by;

• Making enquiries of management as to where they considered there was susceptibility to fraud, their knowledge of actual, suspected and alleged fraud.
• Considered the internal controls in place to mitigate the risks of fraud and non-compliance with laws and regulations.

To address the risk of fraud through management bias and override of controls, we:

• Performed analytical procedures to identify any unusual or unexpected relationships.
• Tested journal entries to identify unusual transactions.

In response to the risk of irregularities and non-compliance with laws and regulations, we designed procedures which included, but were not limited to:

• Agreeing financial statement disclosures to underlying supporting documentation.
• Reading the minutes of meetings of those charged with governance..
• Enquiring of management as to actual and potential litigation and claims.

Because of the inherent limitations of an audit, there is a risk that we will not detect all irregularities, including those leading to a material misstatement in the financial statements or non-compliance with regulation. This risk increases the more that compliance with a law or regulation is removed from the events and transactions reflected in the financial statements, as we will be less likely to become aware of instances of non-compliance. The risk is also greater regarding irregularities occurring due to fraud rather than error, as fraud involves intentional concealment, forgery, collusion, omission or misrepresentation.

As part of an audit in accordance with ISAs (UK), we exercise professional judgement and maintain professional scepticism throughout the audit. We also:

- Identify and assess the risks of material misstatement of the financial statements, whether due to fraud or error, design and perform audit procedures responsive to those risks, and obtain audit evidence that is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion. The risk of not detecting a material misstatement resulting from fraud is higher than for one resulting from error, as fraud may involve collusion, forgery, intentional omissions, misrepresentations, or the override of internal control.
- Obtain an understanding of internal control relevant to the audit in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the charitable company's internal control.
- Evaluate the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of accounting estimates and related disclosures made by the trustees.

Independent Auditor's Report to the Members of The Country Trust

- Conclude on the appropriateness of the trustees use of the going concern basis of accounting and, based on the audit evidence obtained, whether a material uncertainty exists related to events or conditions that may cast significant doubt on the charitable company's ability to continue as a going concern. If we conclude that a material uncertainty exists, we are required to draw attention in our auditor's report to the related disclosures in the financial statements or, if such disclosures are inadequate, to modify our opinion. Our conclusions are based on the audit evidence obtained up to the date of our auditor's report. However, future events or conditions may cause the charitable company to cease to continue as a going concern.
- Evaluate the overall presentation, structure and content of the financial statements, including the disclosures, and whether the financial statements represent the underlying transactions and events in a manner that achieves fair presentation.

We communicate with those charged with governance regarding, among other matters, the planned scope and timing of the audit and significant audit findings, including any significant deficiencies in internal control that we identify during our audit.

Use of our report

This report is made solely to the charitable company's trustees, as a body, in accordance with Chapter 3 of Part 16 of the Companies Act 2006. Our audit work has been undertaken so that we might state to the charitable company's trustees those matters we are required to state to them in an auditor's report and for no other purpose. To the fullest extent permitted by law, we do not accept or assume responsibility to anyone other than the charitable company and its trustees as a body, for our audit work, for this report, or for the opinions we have formed.

S Morell
Sandra Morrell (Senior Statutory Auditor)
For and on behalf of Edmund Carr LLP, Statutory Auditor

146 New London Road
Chelmsford
Essex
CM2 0AW

Date: 2 May 2024

Statement of Financial Activities for the Year Ended 31 December 2023
(Including Income and Expenditure Account and Other Comprehensive Income)

	Note	Unrestricted funds £	Restricted funds £	Total 2023 £	Total 2022 £
Income and Endowments from:					
Donations and legacies	3	562,706	656,827	1,219,533	1,108,124
Charitable activities	4	-	143,273	143,273	95,056
Investment income	5	16,631	-	16,631	3,259
Other income		-	450	450	200
Total income		579,337	800,550	1,379,887	1,206,639
Expenditure on:					
Raising funds		119,158	-	119,158	107,475
Charitable activities	6	379,382	932,128	1,311,510	1,289,642
Total expenditure		498,540	932,128	1,430,668	1,397,117
Net income/(expenditure)		80,797	(131,578)	(50,781)	(190,478)
Transfers between funds		(136,620)	136,620	-	-
Net movement in funds		(55,823)	5,042	(50,781)	(190,478)
Reconciliation of funds					
Total funds brought forward		559,034	23,206	582,240	772,718
Total funds carried forward	16	503,211	28,248	531,459	582,240

All of the charitable company's activities derive from continuing operations during the above two periods.

The Country Trust

(Registration number: 6436266)
Balance Sheet as at 31 December 2023

	Note	2023 £	2022 £
Fixed assets	12	6,115	5,258
Current assets			
Debtors	13	105,564	124,856
Cash at bank and in hand	14	907,158	856,882
		1,012,722	981,738
Creditors: Amounts falling due within one year	15	(487,378)	(404,756)
Net current assets		525,344	576,982
Net assets		531,459	582,240
Funds of the charitable company:			
Restricted		28,248	23,206
Unrestricted funds			
General funds		503,211	559,034
Total funds	16	531,459	582,240

These financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the special provisions relating to companies subject to the small companies regime within Part 15 of the Companies Act 2006.

The financial statements on pages 67 to 83 were approved by the trustees, and authorised for issue on 2 May 2024 and signed on their behalf by:

S D Bell

S D Bell BA (Hons)
Trustee

The Country Trust

Statement of Cash Flows for the Year Ended 31 December 2023

	Note	2023 £	2022 £
Cash flows from operating activities			
Net movement in funds per SOFA		(50,781)	(190,478)
Adjustments			
Depreciation		1,767	1,459
Investment income	5	(16,631)	(3,259)
		(65,645)	(192,278)
Working capital adjustments			
Decrease/(increase) in debtors	13	19,292	(99,868)
(Decrease)/increase in creditors	15	(21,068)	23,977
Increase in deferred income		103,690	106,952
Net cash flows from operating activities		36,269	(161,217)
Cash flows from investing activities			
Interest receivable and similar income	5	16,631	3,259
Purchase of tangible fixed assets	12	(2,624)	(1,779)
Net cash flows from investing activities		14,007	1,480
Net increase/(decrease) in cash and cash equivalents		50,276	(159,737)
Cash and cash equivalents at 1 January		856,882	1,016,619
Cash and cash equivalents at 31 December		907,158	856,882

All of the cash flows are derived from continuing operations during the above two periods.

1 Charitable company status

The charitable company is limited by guarantee, incorporated in England & Wales, and consequently does not have share capital. Each of the trustees is liable to contribute an amount not exceeding £1 towards the assets of the charitable company in the event of liquidation.

2 Accounting policies

Summary of significant accounting policies and key accounting estimates
The principal accounting policies applied in the preparation of these financial statements are set out below. These policies have been consistently applied to all the years presented, unless otherwise stated.

Statement of compliance
The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice (applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102)) (issued in October 2019) - (Charities SORP (FRS 102)), the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) and the Companies Act 2006.

Basis of preparation
The Country Trust meets the definition of a public benefit entity under FRS 102. Assets and liabilities are initially recognised at historical cost or transaction value unless otherwise stated in the relevant accounting policy notes.

Going concern
The trustees consider that there are no material uncertainties about the charitable company's ability to continue as a going concern nor any significant areas of uncertainty that affect the carrying value of assets held by the charitable company.

Income and endowments
All income is recognised once the charitable company has entitlement to the income, it is probable that the income will be received and the amount of the income receivable can be measured reliably.

Donations and legacies

All donated income and grants receivable are included in income on receipt except where the donor requires that the sum is to be treated as income in future accounting periods, in which case it is deferred. Where a donor has specified that a donation should be used for a particular purpose this is treated as restricted income.

Grants receivable

Grants are recognised when the charitable company has an entitlement to the funds and any conditions linked to the grants have been met. Where performance conditions are attached to the grant and are yet to be met, the income is recognised as a liability and included on the balance sheet as deferred income to be released.

The Country Trust

Notes to the Financial Statements for the Year Ended 31 December 2023

Deferred income

Deferred income represents grants and service fees received in respect of visits and activities taking place after the year end. It also represents unrestricted income where that income relates to future periods.

Donated services and facilities

Where services or facilities are provided to the charitable company as a donation that would normally be purchased from our suppliers, this benefit is included in the financial statements at it's fair value unless it's fair value cannot be reliably measured, then at the cost to the donor or the resale value of goods that are to be sold.

Investment income

Interest received is accounted for when the interest is credited on the Bank deposit accounts.

Charitable activities

Income from charitable activities arises from educational visits and activities where schools or other partners fund all or a proportion of the costs incurred.

Expenditure
All expenditure is accounted for on an accruals basis and includes VAT as the charity is not VAT registered. Governance costs are associated with the governance arrangements of the charity. Where expenditure is apportioned between charitable activities and support costs, this is done based on the portion that is applicable to the direct provision of educational visits and activities or the administration of the charity. In the case of staff costs, this is based on the time spent on charitable activities or administration.

Raising funds

These are costs incurred in attracting voluntary income, the management of investments and those incurred in trading activities that raise funds.

Charitable activities

Charitable activities comprise costs incurred in carrying out educational visits and activities to farms, estates and the wider countryside, and in schools.

Governance costs
These include the costs attributable to the charitable company's compliance with constitutional and statutory requirements, including audit, strategic management and trustees meetings and reimbursed expenses.

Taxation
The charitable company is considered to pass the tests set out in Paragraph 1 Schedule 6 of the Finance Act 2010 and therefore it meets the definition of a charitable company for UK corporation tax purposes. Accordingly, the charitable company is potentially exempt from taxation in respect of income or capital gains received within categories covered by Chapter 3 Part 11 of the Corporation Tax Act 2010 or Section 256 of the Taxation of Chargeable Gains Act 1992, to the extent that such income or gains are applied exclusively to charitable purposes.

Tangible fixed assets
Individual fixed assets costing a significant amount are initially recorded at cost, less any subsequent accumulated depreciation and subsequent accumulated impairment losses.

Depreciation and amortisation
Depreciation is provided on tangible fixed assets so as to write off the cost or valuation, less any estimated residual value, over their expected useful economic life as follows:

Asset class	Depreciation method and rate
Office equipment & software	25% reducing balance

Trade debtors
Trade and other debtors are recognised at the settlement amount due.

Cash and cash equivalents
Cash and cash equivalents comprise cash on hand and call deposits, and other short-term highly liquid investments that are readily convertible to a known amount of cash and are subject to an insignificant risk of change in value.

Trade creditors
Creditors are recognised at their settlement amount.

Fund structure
Unrestricted income funds are general funds that are available for use at the trustees's discretion in furtherance of the objectives of the charitable company.

Designated funds are funds set aside by the trustees out of unrestricted funds for specific future purposes or projects.

Restricted income funds are those donated or received for use in a particular area or for specific purposes, the use of which is restricted to that area or purpose.

Pensions and other post retirement obligations
The charitable company operates a defined contribution pension scheme which is a pension plan under which fixed contributions are paid into a pension fund and the charitable company has no legal or constructive obligation to pay further contributions even if the fund does not hold sufficient assets to pay all employees the benefits relating to employee service in the current and prior periods.

Contributions to defined contribution plans are recognised in the Statement of Financial Activities when they are due. If contribution payments exceed the contribution due for service, the excess is recognised as a prepayment.

The Country Trust

Notes to the Financial Statements for the Year Ended 31 December 2023

Financial instruments

Classification

The charitable company only holds basic financial instruments as defined in FRS 102. The financial assets and financial liabilities of the charitable company and their measurement basis are as follows:

Financial assets - trade and other debtors are basic financial instruments and are debt instruments measured at amortised cost. Prepayments are not financial instruments.

Cash at bank - is classified as a basic financial instrument and is measured at face value.

Financial liabilities - trade creditors, accruals and other creditors are financial instruments, and are measured at amortised cost. Taxation and social security are not included in the financial instruments disclosure definition. Deferred income is not deemed to be a financial liability, as the cash settlement has already taken place and there is an obligation to deliver services rather than cash or another financial instrument.

3 Income from donations and legacies

	Unrestricted funds £	Restricted funds £	Total 2023 £
Donations	161,965	296,158	458,123
Charitable Trusts and grant making bodies	400,741	359,299	760,040
Donated services and gifts in kind	-	1,370	1,370
	562,706	656,827	1,219,533

	Unrestricted funds £	Restricted funds £	Total 2022 £
Donations	65,056	171,826	236,882
Charitable Trusts and grant making bodies	403,810	389,382	793,192
Donated services and gifts in kind	72,050	6,000	78,050
	540,916	567,208	1,108,124

4 Income from charitable activities

	Unrestricted funds £	Restricted funds £	Total 2023 £
Countryside Discovery Residential Visits	-	121,067	121,067
Food Discovery	-	22,206	22,206
	-	143,273	143,273

	Unrestricted funds £	Restricted funds £	Total 2022 £
Countryside Discovery Residential Visits	-	87,080	87,080
Food Discovery	-	7,616	7,616
Farm Visits	-	360	360
	-	95,056	95,056

5 Investment income

	Unrestricted funds £	Restricted funds £	Total 2023 £
Interest receivable on bank deposits	16,631	-	16,631
	16,631	-	16,631

	Unrestricted funds £	Restricted funds £	Total 2022 £
Interest receivable on bank deposits	3,259	-	3,259
	3,259	-	3,259

6 Expenditure on charitable activities

	Activity undertaken directly £	Activity support costs £	2023 £
Countryside Discovery Residential Visits	193,948	79,054	273,002
Food Discovery	178,296	72,674	250,970
Farm Visits	440,639	179,605	620,244
Farm in a Box	70,494	30,104	100,598
Soil	47,383	19,313	66,696
	930,760	380,750	1,311,510

	Activity undertaken directly £	Activity support costs £	2022 £
Countryside Discovery Residential Visits	153,327	84,474	237,801
Food Discovery	148,363	81,739	230,102
Farm Visits	393,213	222,637	615,850
Farm in a Box	117,922	87,967	205,889
	812,825	476,817	1,289,642

The expenditure analysed above includes governance costs of £6,636 (2022 - £6,000) which relate directly to charitable activities. See note 7 for further details.

7 Analysis of governance and support costs

Support costs allocated to charitable activities

	Governance costs £	Staff costs £	Administration costs £	Total 2023 £
Countryside Discovery Residential				
Visits	1,383	51,739	25,941	79,063
Food Discovery	1,271	47,568	23,850	72,689
Farm Visits	3,141	117,530	58,928	179,599
Farm in a Box	502	18,794	10,793	30,089
Soil	339	12,636	6,335	19,310
	6,636	248,267	125,847	380,750

	Governance costs £	Staff costs £	Administration costs £	Total 2022 £
Countryside Discovery Residential				
Visits	1,131	35,977	47,366	84,474
Food Discovery	1,095	34,814	45,830	81,739
Farm Visits	2,903	92,290	127,444	222,637
Farm in a Box	871	27,679	59,417	87,967
	6,000	190,760	280,057	476,817

Trustees Report

Governance costs

	Total 2023 £	Total 2022 £
Audit fees		
Audit of the financial statements	4,200	4,000
Other fees paid to auditors	2,436	2,000
	6,636	6,000

8 Net incoming/outgoing resources

Net outgoing resources for the year include:

	2023 £	2022 £
Fees payable to auditor	6,636	6,000
Depreciation of fixed assets	1,767	1,459

9 Trustees remuneration and expenses

No trustees, nor any persons connected with them, have received any remuneration from the charitable company during the year.

No trustees have received any other benefits from the charity during the year.

During the year, 1 trustee was reimbursed for reasonable travel expenses of £73 (2022: £107 reimbursed to 1 trustee).

10 Staff costs

The aggregate payroll costs were as follows:

	2023 £	2022 £
Staff costs during the year were:		
Wages and salaries	383,893	317,724
Social security costs	33,524	25,716
Pension costs	8,606	7,201
Other staff costs	-	39,550
	426,023	390,191

The monthly average number of persons (including senior management team) employed by the charitable company during the year expressed by head count was as follows:

	2023 No	2022 No
Charitable activities	2	2
Support and administration	12	9
	14	11

The average number of persons employed by the charity during the year expressed as full time equivalents was 10.9 (2022: 10.2).

14 (2022 - 11) of the above employees participated in the Defined Contribution Pension Schemes.

The number of employees whose emoluments fell within the following bands was:

	2023 No	2022 No
£60,001 - £70,000	1	1

The total employee benefits of the key management personnel of the charitable company were £69,533 (2022 - £69,920).

11 Taxation

The charitable company is a registered charity and is therefore exempt from taxation.

12 Tangible fixed assets

	Office equipment & software £	Total £
Cost		
At 1 January 2023	14,253	14,253
Additions	2,624	2,624
At 31 December 2023	16,877	16,877
Depreciation		
At 1 January 2023	8,995	8,995
Charge for the year	1,767	1,767
At 31 December 2023	10,762	10,762
Net book value		
At 31 December 2023	6,115	6,115
At 31 December 2022	5,258	5,258

13 Debtors

	2023 £	2022 £
Trade debtors	93,150	103,119
Prepayments	12,414	21,737
	105,564	124,856

14 Cash and cash equivalents

	2023 £	2022 £
Cash at bank	907,158	856,882

Cash at the bank broadly represents unrestricted reserves, held in accordance with the charity's policy of aiming for three months' operating reserves, a small amount of restricted reserves, and deferred income, income received in 2023 in respect of activities taking place after the year end.

15 Creditors: amounts falling due within one year

	2023 £	2022 £
Trade creditors	24,432	47,841
Other taxation and social security	9,242	6,128
Other creditors	3,928	4,461
Accruals	6,300	6,540
Deferred income	443,476	339,786
	487,378	404,756

	2023 £	2022 £
Deferred income at 1 January 2023	339,786	232,834
Resources deferred in the period	443,476	339,786
Amounts released from previous periods	(339,786)	(232,834)
Deferred income at year end	443,476	339,786

16 Funds

Current year:

	Balance at 1 January 2023 £	Incoming resources £	Resources expended £	Transfers £	Balance at 31 December 2023 £
Unrestricted funds					
General	559,034	579,335	(498,538)	(136,620)	503,211
Restricted					
a) Residential	-	182,258	(193,948)	11,690	-
b) Food discovery	21,228	190,649	(178,296)	(20,000)	13,581
c) Farm visits	-	296,159	(440,639)	144,480	-
d) Farm in a Box	1,978	63,486	(71,864)	6,400	-
e) Soil	-	68,000	(47,383)	(5,950)	14,667
Total restricted	23,206	800,552	(932,130)	136,620	28,248
Total funds	582,240	1,379,887	(1,430,668)	-	531,459

The specific purposes for which the funds are to be applied are as follows:

Restricted funds:

a) Funds to subsidise the cost of Countryside Discovery Residential visits enabling disadvantaged primary age children to experience food, farming and the countryside.

b) For teaching disadvantaged primary school children to grow & cook fresh produce, explore local farms, run playground markets & a harvest feast, and to train teachers in relevant elements of Learning Outside the Classroom.

c) Funds relating to the provision of Farm and Countryside Discovery educational day visits bringing the working countryside to life for primary school children from disadvantaged areas, and now the Farm in a Box programme bringing farm centred, hands on, experiential learning into schools, groups and homes.

d) This fund is to support children and educators so that they can have a farm-centred experience without leaving their school grounds or location.

e) Fund for our new Soil Health Campaign – Plant Your Pants. It's a public engagement campaign to help everyone think differently about the earth beneath our feet and to discover how it supports all our lives.

The Country Trust

Notes to the Financial Statements for the Year Ended 31 December 2023

Prior year:

	Balance at 1 January 2022 £	Incoming resources £	Resources expended £	Transfers £	Balance at 31 December 2022 £
Unrestricted funds					
General	686,314	544,175	(578,292)	(93,163)	559,034
Restricted					
a) Residential	1,678	139,644	(153,328)	12,006	-
b) Food discovery	84,726	90,864	(148,362)	(6,000)	21,228
c) Farm visits	-	297,456	(393,213)	95,757	-
d) Farm in a Box	-	134,500	(123,922)	(8,600)	1,978
Total restricted funds	86,404	662,464	(818,825)	93,163	23,206
Total funds	772,718	1,206,639	(1,397,117)	-	582,240

17 Analysis of net assets between funds

Current year:

	Unrestricted funds £	Restricted funds £	Total funds at 31/12/2023 £
Tangible fixed assets	6,115	-	6,115
Current assets	675,869	336,853	1,012,722
Current liabilities	(178,773)	(308,605)	(487,378)
Total net assets	503,211	28,248	531,459

Prior year:

	Unrestricted funds £	Restricted funds £	Total funds at 31/12/2022 £
Tangible fixed assets	5,258	-	5,258
Current assets	731,299	250,439	981,738
Current liabilities	(177,523)	(227,233)	(404,756)
Total net assets	559,034	23,206	582,240

18 Prior year Statement of Financial Activities

	Note	Unrestricted £	Restricted £	Total 2022 £
Income and Endowments from:				
Donations and legacies	3	540,916	567,208	1,108,124
Charitable activities	4	-	95,056	95,056
Investment income	5	3,259	-	3,259
Other income		-	200	200
Total income		544,175	662,464	1,206,639
Expenditure on:				
Raising funds		107,475	-	107,475
Charitable activities	6	470,817	818,825	1,289,642
Total expenditure		578,292	818,825	1,397,117
Net expenditure		(34,117)	(156,361)	(190,478)
Transfers between funds		(93,163)	93,163	-
Net movement in funds		(127,280)	(63,198)	(190,478)
Reconciliation of funds				
Total funds brought forward		686,314	86,404	772,718
Total funds carried forward	16	559,034	23,206	582,240

The Country Trust

The following pages do not form part of the statutory financial statements.

The Country Trust

Detailed Statement of Financial Activities for the Year Ended 31 December 2023

	Total 2023 £	Total 2022 £
Income and Endowments from:		
Donations and legacies (analysed below)	1,219,533	1,108,124
Charitable activities (analysed below)	143,273	95,056
Investment income	16,631	3,259
Other income	450	200
Total income	1,379,887	1,206,639
Expenditure on:		
Raising funds	119,158	107,475
Charitable activities (analysed below)	1,311,510	1,289,642
Total expenditure	1,430,668	1,397,117
Net expenditure	(50,781)	(190,478)
Net movement in funds	(50,781)	(190,478)
Reconciliation of funds		
Total funds brought forward	582,240	772,718
Total funds carried forward	531,459	582,240

This page does not form part of the statutory financial statements.

The Country Trust

Detailed Statement of Financial Activities for the Year Ended 31 December 2023

	2023	2022
	£	£
Donations and legacies		
Donations and legacies	458,123	236,882
Grants, including capital grants	760,040	793,192
Donated services and facilities	1,370	78,050
	1,219,533	1,108,124
	£	£
Charitable activities		
Countryside Discovery Residential Visits	121,067	87,080
Food Discovery	22,206	7,616
Farm Visits	-	360
	143,273	95,056
	£	£
Charitable activities		
Programmes - Transport	99,258	52,481
Programmes - Accommodation	73,298	68,522
Expenses relating to visits and activities	73,715	55,733
Self-employed contractors	537,455	541,316
Salaries, national insurance and pensions	311,718	296,004
Staff mileage, accommodation and expenses	66,660	66,113
Volunteer mileage, accommodation and expenses	571	776
Office costs	41,357	31,201
Computer and website costs	1,050	15,448
Promotion and publicity	13,505	15,653
Insurance	8,040	6,589
Recruitment and training	7,077	4,532
Subscriptions and sundry costs	4,561	2,022
Bank charges	365	467
Legal and professional fees	5,563	13
Consultancy	30,207	58,545
Annual conference	4,283	13,801
Trustee expenses	460	320
Depreciation	1,767	1,459
Packing & Distrubution	23,964	52,647
Auditors' remuneration	6,636	6,000
	1,311,510	1,289,642

This page does not form part of the statutory financial statements.

Country Trust

To support our work visit:
www.countrytrust.org.uk

Registered charity no. 1122103

Head office: Moulsham Mill, Parkway, Chelmsford, Essex. CM2 7PX

President: The Duke of Westminster

Registered with FUNDRAISING REGULATOR

ico. Information Commissioner's Office

THE COUNTRY TRUST

England & Wales - Charity number 1122103

Accounts

Annual Report & Accounts 2022

Country Trust

Connecting children with the land that sustains us all

President: The Duke of Westminster

Vice Presidents:

Sir Henry Aubrey-Fletcher Bt
Sir Nicholas Bacon Bt
Lord Boswell of Aynho DL
W Butterfield
Earl of Carnarvon
J M Carr-Ellison
J Knappett B Ed NPQH
J Compton (deceased Jan 2023)
Lord Dear QPM
T. Fanshawe
W J Henderson DL
M Kendall
W Kendall DL
D Laing MA RIBA
Hon. John Leigh-Pemberton
Hon G E Lopes
L V Lyle MA PGCE
M Maclay DL
H R Oliver-Bellasis FRAgS
Dame Fiona Reynolds DBE
E P Serjeant
J Serjeant BA (Hons) ACA
I N Tegner CA FRSA
F Weston MA (Cantab)

Chief Executive:

J D Attenborough MA (Cantab) FRSA

Registered address:

Moulsham Mill, Parkway, Chelmsford CM2 7PX Tel:01258 608363

Trustees:

The Trustees who served the charity during the year were as follows:

S D Bell BA (Hons) (Chairman)

J Brown BSc (Hons) PGCE (stepped down June 2022)

M A Bufton-McCoy B Phil, Cert Ed (appointed June 2022)

T C M Fawcett BSc (Hons)

S Fish BA (Hons) PGCE (appointed June 2022)

R J Frossell

M Gent (appointed June 2022)

K Kaur BSc(Hons) GTP (QTS) MA NPQH (appointed June 2022)

G M H Mills DL (stepped down June 2022)

N. Partheeban BVM&S BSc(Hons) PGCert(DHH) PIAGrM R.Ani.Tech. FRSA MRCVS

A J Stafford MA (Oxon)

Bankers:

CAF Bank Ltd. 25 Kings Hill Ave, Kings Hill, West Malling, Kent ME19

Independent Examiner:

Edmund Carr. LLP 146 New London Road, Chelmsford, Essex, CM2 0AW

Lawyers:

Wrigleys Solicitors LLP 19 Cookridge Street, Leeds LS2 3AG

The Country Trust is the leading national educational charity that connects children from areas of high social and economic disadvantage with the land that sustains us all.

Country Trust – Trustees' Report 2022

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How we support our beneficiaries

During the 2022 calendar year:

We connected 55,370 children with the land that sustains us all, across our Farm, Residential, Food Discovery and Farm in a Box programmes, providing 260,000 hours of engagement.

We championed the importance of first-hand experiences of food and farming with government.

We began two new areas of work – supporting teachers to sustain the impact of our programmes and the Plant Your Pants Soil Health Campaign, and for the first time provided a significant offer for Early Years and Foundation Stage, through our EYFS Farm in a Box.

We completed the first year of our 5 Year Plan, evaluating our impact against our new Theory of Change.

Country Trust

Theory of Change

Problem	Inputs / activities	Intermediate outcomes	Long-term outcomes	Overall aim
Poverty of opportunity and experience from an early age negatively impacts health, wellbeing, and the likelihood of a successful adult life, and with it the ability to contribute to a thriving, sustainable society	Farm Discovery Food Discovery Countryside Residentials Farm in a Box (online, local and national)	**Young people who engage with the Country Trust** ...have a better understanding of how to interact with the natural world around them ...are excited to use/discuss what they have learnt ...feel supported and more confident to try new things ...feel more curious about the world, particularly food, farming and the countryside ...are more able to make connections between their lives and food, farming and the countryside	...are more likely to choose to spend time outdoors and in the countryside ...demonstrate a greater belief in their own agency ...are keener to try new things ...are more likely to pursue hobbies or careers related to food, farming and the countryside ...are able to imagine a wider range of future possibilities and are more confident working towards them ...are more likely to make positive / informed choices on food, farming and the countryside	Through food, farming and countryside experiences The Country Trust aims to empower children to be confident, curious and create change in their lives and the world around them so that they, and society, can thrive
		Teachers who engage with the Country Trust ...place greater value on real-world learning experiences ...gain confidence to offer broader pupil-led opportunities		
		Parents who engage with the Country Trust ...feel more curious about how their lives connect to food, farming and the countryside ...are more likely to make positive / informed choices on food, farming and the countryside		

Vision

A fair, sustainable and inclusive society in which all children, irrespective of background, are able to thrive and achieve their potential

How we support our beneficiaries

Farm Discovery

Day-visits to working farms for school and community groups. These are led by our Coordinators who work with host farmers and teachers/group leaders to ensure a safe visit with appropriate sensory experiences and hands-on activities.

Countryside Residentials

Immersing children in the countryside for 2-4 days, Coordinators organise and support a tailored programme, including a farm visit, working with teachers and third party providers to ensure a memorable, safe, and happy time away from home.

Sustaining Impact

Throughout our programmes we train teachers: formally through CPD and ITT sessions and informally through modelling and conversations. In 2022 we started a new pilot project in partnership with a large multi-academy trust, equipping teachers to take children on the seeds to supper journey.

Food Discovery

A Country Trust Coordinator takes a class on a journey through food: growing vegetables, preparing and cooking meals, tasting produce, visiting local farms, running their own markets, and experiencing the joy of sharing a feast. The depth of the programme gives children the time to explore many aspects of food.

Farm in a Box

A box of farm-centred activities and resources created by The Country Trust, delivered by school staff either: Local - created by a local Coordinator with a local farm for a local school, or National - a range of boxes funded by different partners, packed and distributed centrally to hundreds of schools.

Core Values:

We believe you grow by learning from others

We think the quality of our connections with others has an important effect on who we can be and what we can do

We are active participants in a world which inspires and sustains us

Aspirational values:

We want everyone to know that their contribution is welcome and valued

We aspire to be child-centred, no matter what our role is

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

We want our team and our programmes to better the reflect the diversity of the children and the communities we serve and continue to take steps towards this.

We have worked hard to try and promote recruitment opportunities through a wide range of networks and are exploring when and how we can support people to join us who may not have the formal qualifications or experience that we have required in the past.

Recruitment of Trustees during 2022 resulted in a more diverse Board and we are excited about the connections, creativity and inspiration that this is unlocking.

Activities

How the Charity's activities deliver public benefit

In setting our programme each year we have regard to the Charity Commission's general guidance on public benefit. The Trustees always ensure that the programmes we undertake are in line with our charitable objectives and aims. Our ambitious aims are that:

- **Every child should have the opportunity to visit a real working farm, to discover through first-hand experience where their food comes from.**
- **Every child should have the chance to discover connections between the food they eat, their own health and the health of the planet.**
- **Every child should have the opportunity to develop the confidence and curiosity to explore the living world.**

We use an evaluation framework to gather feedback on all the activities we offer. We collate and analyse the feedback and this then informs our programme design. Feedback from children, teachers and parents suggests that the Trust is achieving its goal of helping to improve the life chances of the children who take part in our programmes. We are in the unique position of being able to provide programmes which support teachers to engage children with learning and support physical, emotional and social wellbeing.

We can build food knowledge and food confidence, provide access to food and farming related climate learning and enable children to discover that they can be active participants. We can create connections between pupils, farmers and the natural world. We can speak up on relevant education, agriculture and food issues, taking the lead or supporting others.

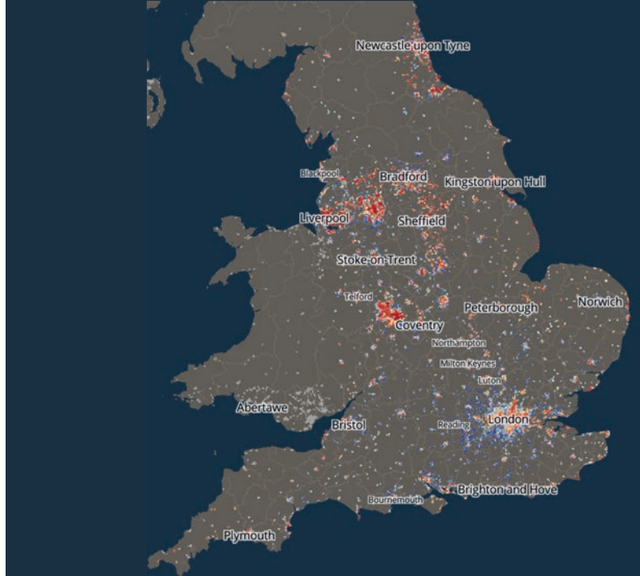
How we support our beneficiaries

How we work

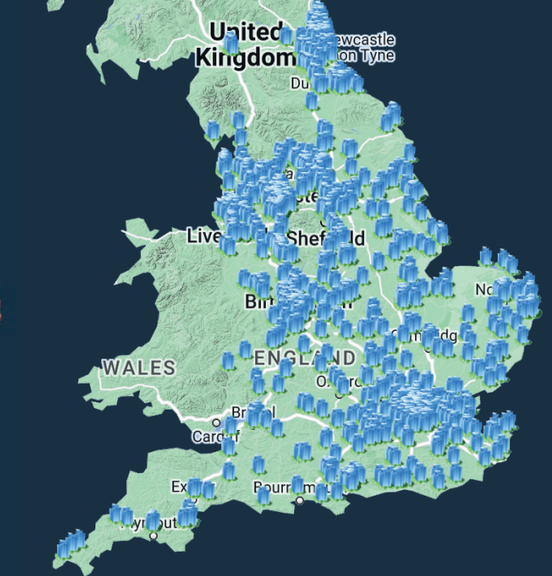
All our programmes are designed to create moments that provoke curiosity, making learning irresistible. Children learn most deeply when they are following their natural curiosity as it places them at the centre of their learning.

Giving children time, space and the tools to understand the world around them – whether it's in their school grounds, a farm or at the beach – allows children to discover for themselves the wonder and connectedness of life.

As so many of the children we work with have limited experiences, we ensure that new experiences are crafted carefully and consciously into our programmes, building confidence and happy memories.



Indicies of Multiple Deprivation Map (2019)
Source: mapmaker.cdrc.ac.uk/



Where we work across all programmes

Who we support

We work with children who experience disadvantage through:

- low family income – according to the Child Poverty Action Group 29% of children in the UK (4.2 million) were in poverty in 2021-2022;
- being on the margins of, or excluded from, or refusing mainstream education;
- Having SEN/D (Special Educational Needs/Disabilities) or SEMH needs (Social, Emotional and Mental Health);
- being looked-after children, children in care;
- having responsibilities as a Young Carer;
- having refugee or asylum seeker status.

These children may rarely travel outside their immediate community and therefore may have limited access to quality green space and the countryside.

They may have limited access to good, healthy and varied food;

They may have little or no opportunity to grow things, have contact with animals, pursue hobbies or take part in cultural or sporting activities;

They are more likely to miss out on opportunities to meet positive adult role models, to be inspired and pursue ambitions.

Poverty of opportunity and experience from an early age can negatively impact health, wellbeing and access to education. This then can affect children's ability to achieve success in adult life.

How we support our beneficiaries

Our operating context

- The number of children eligible for Free School Meals has increased by 32% since 2020 (9% in 2022)
- Children's physical and mental health has been negatively impacted, with particular concern for those with SEN/D and those eligible for FSM
- 50% of schools expect to be in deficit next year. Schools are already cutting visits and enrichment activities.
- Country Trust Coordinators report that:
  - Children have greater educational, emotional, social, behavioural and physical issues
  - Many teachers are more stressed and chaotic, more prone to frequently changing plans, cancelling at short notice
- Each CT activity is more costly to deliver as a result of developing more support, training, resources etc and compensating our delivery team for delays and cancellations.
- Many funders report that they have been 'overwhelmed' with applications, and some individual giving is affected by the cost-of-living crisis.
- There is heightened awareness of the needs of children from disadvantaged circumstances and the importance of addressing food poverty, affordable nutrition and poverty of opportunity.
- Farmers have spoken increasingly about their disconnection from consumers and their concerns about the future of the agricultural workforce (in its broadest sense).
- The future of the new agricultural support system ELM has been uncertain and new trade deals may bring competition from cheaper food produced to lower standards.
- Increasing concerns about food security
- Evidence of climate change affecting our food production has continued to grow

The continuing impact of Covid

Recently published reports back up what our Coordinators are experiencing in the course of their work.

Early Years

Published by the First 1001 Days Movement and the Institute of Health Visiting in November 2022, the report, *'Casting Long Shadows: The ongoing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on babies, their families and the services that support them,'*[1] finds that:

- An overwhelming majority, 95 per cent of Health Visitor respondents said they are seeing an ongoing negative impact on babies' and young children's social skills due to the pandemic.
- 92 per cent believe the pandemic has had a negative impact on children's communication, speech and language skills, emotional wellbeing and development.
- Almost half of respondents said that 'many' babies they work with are affected by parental anxiety, stress or depression due to the pandemic, which is affecting bonding and responsive care.
- More than 4 in 10 (44 per cent) said that 'many' of the babies they work with are currently affected by increased exposure to domestic conflict, child abuse and neglect – higher than the proportion of professionals making the same observation in summer 2020 (29 per cent).
- A total of 40 per cent of survey respondents reported that 'many' babies they worked with had been affected by the loss of family income or increased risk of food poverty.

Key stage One and Two

Despite the Department for Education's "Education Recovery Programme" implemented to counteract the impact of Covid, the National Audit Office concluded in February 2023 that: *'the gap between disadvantaged pupils and other pupils at the end of primary school had widened since 2019.'*[2]

Government statistics show that Covid 19 is likely to have had a damaging effect on school attendance. Disadvantaged pupils are more likely to miss school. The latest national statistics showed 33.6% of pupils who were eligible for free school meals were persistently absent in Autumn 2021, compared to 20.0% of pupils who were not eligible.

How we support our beneficiaries

Furthermore, 30.6% of pupils who receive SEND support were persistently absent in Autumn 2021, compared with 21.5% for pupils who are not identified with SEND.[3]

Teachers

In total, over seven million teacher days have been lost to stress and mental health issues in the past five years. They showed a steady increase, highlighting the pressures that the pandemic put on teaching staff.[4]

Where we work

Our Farm, Food and Residential Coordinators are located across England and North Wales delivering hands-on, real-world food and farm experiences.

Farm in a Box local remains a very useful alternative to be able to offer schools who cancel or are unable to plan visits. During 2022 we were able to increase our team slightly, but we also lost Coordinators. Our Coordinators are self-employed and our operating context continues to be impacted by budget cuts in schools, staff shortages and ill health meaning that some of our delivery team have had to seek greater financial security in employed roles elsewhere. Our Farm in a Box National Programme enables us to reach schools located in the country's most deprived areas where we don't yet have a presence on the ground.

1. https://parentinfantfoundation.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/F1001D-Casting-Long-Shadows-FINAL-NOV-22.pdf
2. https://www.nao.org.uk/reports/education-recovery-in-schools-in-england/
3. https://committees.parliament.uk/committee/203/education-committee
4. FOI request https://www.theguardian.com/education/2022/jul/31/teacher-sick-days-soar-as-poor-conditions-take-toll-on-mental-health

Activities, achievements, performance and public benefit

OUR REACH - 2022 CALENDAR YEAR

We connected **55,370** children with the land across our Farm, Farm in a Box, Residential and Food Discovery programmes.

35,147 pupils - **1,339** classes - received our Farm in a Box Local and National programmes. That's **140,588** hours of engagement (assumes **35,147** children spent 4 hours on activities. Some will have spent longer but some teachers may not have fully utilised their Box).

20,223 children on real working farms - approximately **80,890** hours (assumes each child spends **4** hours on the farm. Includes Residential and Food Discovery children).

1,537 children took part in a Food Discovery programme - approximately **21,518** hours (programmes still slightly variable coming out of Covid so we have assumed **14** hours per child)

643 children spent between 3 and 5 days in the countryside on a Countryside Discovery Residential visit. Approximately **23,148** hours (assumes **3** x **12** hour days)

Our impact at a glance

(statistics taken from evaluation of activities during the 2021-2 academic year)

Focus on: Curiosity

We want children who engage with our programmes to:

- **better understand how to interact with the natural world around them**
- **feel more curious about the world, particularly food, farming and the countryside**

Children learn best when they can see how what they study links to real world experiences and connects with and supports their learning of other subjects.

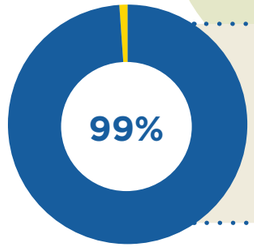
> **Learning in this fashion engages and enthuses pupils, develops their natural curiosity, and motivates them to find out more.**
>
> (Maintaining Curiosity, a Survey into Science Education in Schools, Ofsted Publications 2013)

We work hard to support teachers and children to understand the vital place that food, farming and the countryside has in all our lives: it is the land that sustains us all. For many of the children we work with, the farmed landscape is a new world and a new experience. Helping children explore this world on their own terms and at their own pace is critical as it gives them ownership of their knowledge through their own curious exploration.

> **I loved when we dug through the soil… I learned the actual names for some insects so it was pretty cool.**
>
> Pupil, Great Yarmouth Primary Academy

An increasing number of teachers tell us that they have children in their class with sensory processing needs. These pupils can find encounters in the natural world particularly problematic. However, carefully scaffolded opportunities can support many children to overcome their fears.

> **I got to smell a pineapple weed, it smelled great.**
>
> Pupil, Calcot Junior School



of teachers said they had observed all or most of their children engaging with the natural world through touching and feeling, listening, tasting, smelling and observing

> **I've never tasted honey until today. I love it! It tastes so sweet! The bees are so clever to make it and so kind to share it with us. Thank you bees!**
>
> Pupil, Bishop's Primary School

> **Gave children more awe and wonder about the natural world and the importance of nature in areas they didn't realise.**
>
> Laura Vincent, Scunthorpe CofE Primary School

Children are encouraged to ask questions to further their learning during our programmes – what do they want to find out? Who can they ask?

> **So, there's more than one type of apple? I love apples but didn't think they had different tastes.**
>
> James Knott CofE Primary School

> **How does the same seeds know to grow different types of peas? All the pea seeds in here (magazine) look the same. How do they get different?**
>
> Pupil, Banks Road Primary School

Our impact at a glance

(statistics taken from evaluation of activities during the 2021-2 academic year)

Focus on: Confidence

We want children who engage with our programmes to:

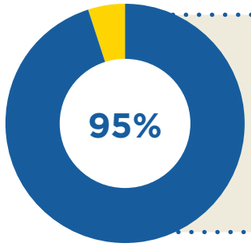
- **feel supported, confident to try new things**

Confident children believe in themselves and their abilities and ideas. Our Coordinators and host farmers consciously scaffold experiences for children so that they can build up their confidence in doing new things in small steps. This could be tasting new foods, touching a farm animal, or going pony trekking.

> **It's been amazing to see the children grow in confidence trying new foods. I have loved seeing them try things for the first time and whilst I was aware of the level of deprivation in the school it has reminded me of how limited some of our children's diet and experiences were. This has opened up their world a little bit and given the adults an opportunity to talk about new foods as well.**
>
> Teacher, Waterside Primary School

> **A child who did not want to stroke the chicken went from hands in her pockets, to a little touch with a finger to a quick stroke to a continuous stroke with a big grin on her face. This was achieved by the farmer choosing the right chicken and being supportive and mindful.**
>
> Observation from Coordinator for Valley Primary Academy visit

> **I loved the horse riding and I even asked my mum if I can start a horse riding lesson there because I had so much fun.**
>
> Amelia, St Joseph's Primary School, Yorkshire school thank you letter



of children said they had done something for the first time

> **Some of the shy children were very active and participated a lot. Had more confidence. Children with English as an additional language were talking more and happier.**
>
> Martin Sjaz, St Cuthberts

We want children who engage with our programmes to::

- **be excited to use/discuss what they have learnt**

This desire to talk about what they have learnt and done often has a longer term effect, supporting the retention of learning, with lots of teachers mentioning that children are still talking about their experiences after the visit or session, which then naturally feeds into writing across different subject areas:

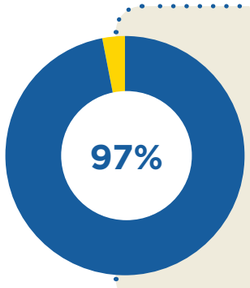
> **The engagement from our children was amazing and every child came back and could talk about the experience. Many children had been able to retain a lot of the new vocabulary which they had heard.**
>
> Luisa Pancisi, St James' C of E Infants

Pupils who speak English as an additional language, or who lack confidence speaking to others, particularly benefit from these farm-centred experiences:

> **One child who is usually quite reserved, really came out of their shell when we were gardening as he found he was good at it. It was lovely to see him become more of a 'leader' and more confident at talking to his peers.**
>
> Teacher, Food Discovery end of programme evaluation, Waterside Primary Academy

Doing new things generates feelings of pride and independence, and can open opportunities for new hobbies and interests:

> **The majority of the children loved the visit. This is something that the children in my school would not normally be able to see and so the children enjoyed talking about it later that week in our lessons.**
>
> Richard Nicholls, Star Academy



of teachers tell us that they observed all or most of their pupils excited to talk with each other about what they have done and learnt during our programmes

Our impact at a glance

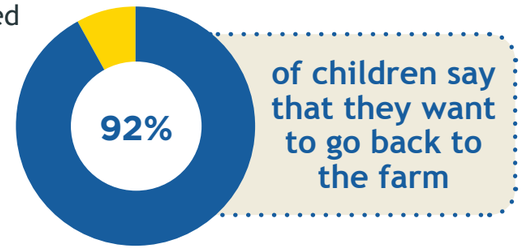
(statistics taken from evaluation of activities during the 2021-2 academic year)

Focus on: Connections

We want children who engage with our programmes to be more able to make connections between their lives and food, farming and the countryside.

As children explore the world around them through our programmes, they make sense of the journey of food, from farm to fork, and start to make all sorts of connections. The most fundamental of these is understanding how important farms are and over 90% of the children we have worked with say they think farms are important – a 9% higher score in comparison with a national Childwise survey asking the same question. The connections children make range from environmental to emotional to academic.

This could be ascribed to the happy memories they have built during the visit (all those new experiences which have boosted their confidence), but Coordinators also try to do activities which teachers and children can repeat so that they can recreate the same feelings they had on the farm:



> **We were lying on the tarp under the trees doing a listening exercise and afterwards talking about how being in the forest made us feel, the answers I expected were given including 'relaxed, calm, peaceful, chilled, sleepy' and then a boy said 'alive' which I thought was wonderful.**
>
> Coordinator session report after The Beeches Primary school visit

Some of the connections children make are academic: their curiosity and the tools they have used during the day to discover things for themselves enable them to start making connections with their classroom learning:

> **It was really hands on and the children were able to consolidate the learning they had carried out in school.The children all said how much they had enjoyed themselves and how much they had learnt.**
>
> Amanda Batterbee, Marshland St James Primary & Nursery School

Learning in the 'real-world' supports children to make their own connections, further supporting the retention of their learning:

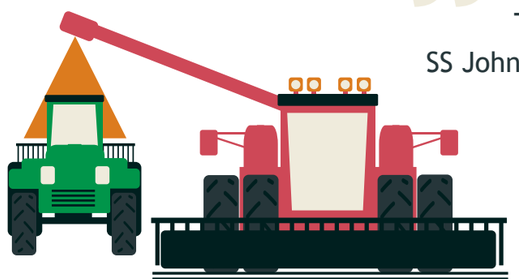
> **We were looking at tiny holes in sprigs of rosemary with magnifiers, and talking about photosynthesis. He said 'it's like a perfect circle, with plants giving out oxygen and taking in carbon dioxide, and animals doing it the other way round. We all depend on each other'. I could see that it was a total 'light bulb' moment for him.**
>
> Farmer Host, Yorkshire

Over the course of longer programmes, like Food Discovery, children can realise their own agency, and start to take learning from school and farm to their home environments:

> **The children have become more aware that they are in control of the food they eat, and able to make their own choices. They are now looking forward to growing their own food at home and educating their parents!**
>
> Teacher, end of programme questionnaire, Beccles Primary Academy

With all our programmes, to a greater or lesser extent, there are also opportunities for teachers to explore how food, farming and the countryside are integral to global topics like sustainability:

> **Many of our pupils are disadvantaged and would not engage in activities involving cooking, growing, farming etc. at home. […] The sustainability aspect of the Food Discovery programme is vital in supporting our children's cultural capital and international responsibilities for a better future. We are starting to weave the UN sustainable goals into the curriculum, through Food Discovery these can be implemented in much more depth. The children have grown in the understanding of the importance of making sustainable changes, and their actions can have an impact both positively and negatively on the world.**
>
> Teacher, end of programme questionnaire, SS John Fisher and Thomas More Catholic Primary



Our impact at a glance

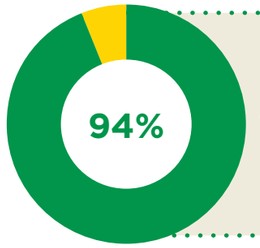
(statistics taken from evaluation of activities during the 2021-2 academic year)

Sustaining Impact: Teachers

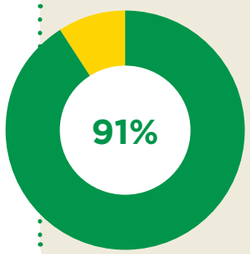
We want teachers who engage with our programmes to place greater value on real-world learning experiences and, longer term, gain the confidence to offer broader pupil-led opportunities.

Teachers play a vital role in ensuring that the work that we do in our programmes has a lasting and deep impact. Teachers see their pupils every day and can use the farm-centred experiences that we offer as a springboard for learning across the curriculum and to support their pupils' personal development. We offer teacher training within Food Discovery but acknowledge that much of the training across our programmes is informally modelled by our Coordinators sharing knowledge, expertise and Country Trust values.

> **The idea of cooking in the classroom and making a big pot to split between 30 children […] making a small portion to take home proved that to do a food activity is not as tricky as you might think. Gives me more confidence to do something with food in other topic/science lessons.**
>
> Teacher, Aylesbury Vale Academy



of teachers who we worked with said that they intended to run more real-world learning activities



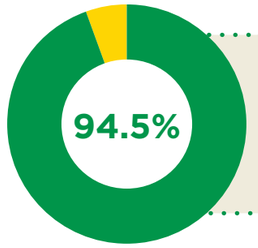
of teachers agree that our programmes allowed them to learn something new about their pupils

> **It has been wonderful to allow children to flourish within structured, hands on learning. This has been an area I have rolled out to many more lessons to encourage engagement from all.**
>
> Teacher, Beccles Primary

> **The experience allowed myself and other teachers to see the huge benefit being outside has on enhancing the children's learning and engagement.**
>
> Teacher, Maple Court Academy

> **The idea of starting with things in a box really offered some curiosity into what we were doing - this is an element that I would try again.**
>
> Elizabeth Hill, Rossmere Academy

> **The day has clearly had a massive impact on my class. It makes such a difference when they can actually make those real life connections that bring their learning to life.**
>
> Teacher, Poplars Community Primary School visit



of teachers agree that they feel more confident using the natural world in their teaching after being involved in one of our programmes

In our two school-based programmes, Food Discovery and Farm in a Box, **74%** of teachers agreed that their pupils had taken the lead in their learning, further demonstrating that this style of teaching is achievable in the classroom.

Case Study: Ollie's Farm Visit

Ollie, year 4, visited a dairy farm with his class. It wasn't his first visit to a farm, but he said he felt nervous about being there as, "it's different to being in school, so it's unusual."

We went to look at the growing calves and had the opportunity to go and bottle feed them and touch them. Ollie was very keen to watch how they behaved and had a lot of questions about how old they were, why their tongues were so rough. We went into the milking parlour next and were able to watch the cows being milked. Ollie was fascinated and wanted to know everything:

"Why is that one not being milked? Look at that one, there's already milk spurting out! Are they going to use that one what's been on the floor? That won't be clean". When the cows had gone out, the herdsmen gave the children the opportunity to put their fingers into the suction units so they could feel what the cows felt. Ollie and his friend agreed, "It's really gentle, the cows probably really like it."

Ollie noticed that the cows were eating while they were being milked and when they looked at the feed nuts he enjoyed feeling and smelling them commenting, "They smell quite sweet".

The herdsman brought out a patient and friendly cow which all the children were allowed to take turns to stroke while she was eating some nuts. Ollie couldn't get over how soft she felt.

Case Study: Alma's Farm Visit

Alma came on a visit to a mixed farm with her mixed year 1 and 2 class. She had never been to a farm before and was very excited to be there, although she was worried that the animals might bite.

She was pleased that she had put her own wellies on, as some people in her class had to change their shoes when they arrived at the farm and wear some from the farmer's welly bank.

Alma was really engaged with all the activities during the day: bottle feeding lambs, pretending to be a lamb after watching them play, looking at cows and chickens, grinding wheat to make flour, exploring a tractor, gathering different plants in a field and doing a bug hunt.

She was very keen to learn words for the new things she was seeing and on the class's walk back to the bus at the end of the day she instigated a guessing word game which enabled all of her peers to practice some of the vocabulary they had learnt and used during the day like butterfly, froghopper, ladybird, buttercup.

Farm Discovery

This year we have developed an online pupil feedback form automatically sent to the class teacher as soon as our Coordinators submit a session report to our database. We are really pleased at the response and to have made progress with our ambition to listen to children's voices more.

The difference we make *(analysis of 493 teacher feedback forms – a return rate of 80.8%. Pupil feedback was from 768 forms representing 2,517 pupils, a total of 15% of the children we worked with)*

Impact on children:

- 99% of teachers said that all or most of their pupils had engaged with the natural world, through observing, listening, smelling and touching
- 86% of children agreed that they would like to find out more about farming with 61% strongly agreeing
- 99% of teachers reported observing that all or most of their children were excited to talk to each other about what they were doing and learning
- 95% of teachers reported observing that all or most of their children wanted to talk to the farmer and/or Coordinator about what they were learning
- 91% of pupil respondents said they tried something for the first time on their visit
- 92% of the children who gave us feedback said they would like to go back to the farm with 83% being very happy at the thought
- 90% of children felt that farms were important with 75% feeling strongly that they were

> **"It was lovely to see the children building their confidence, lots were anxious about feeding/touching the animals and by the end of the trip, all children were confident doing so!"**
>
> Teacher, Coates Lane

Impact on teachers:

- 93% of teachers intended to use a farm visit next year as a core aspect of their curriculum planning with 71% strongly agreeing
- 95% of teachers intend to run more 'real world' learning activities with their pupils with 62% strongly agreeing
- 98% of teachers feel more confident in using the natural world in their teaching with 62% strongly agreeing
- 97% of teachers felt better equipped/inspired to bring elements of farming into their classroom teaching with 62% strongly agreeing

Quality:

- 99% of teachers rated the communication and information received prior to the visit as very good or excellent
- 100% of teachers rated the organisation and delivery on the day of the visit as very good or excellent
- 99% of teachers rated the Health and Safety on the visit as very good or excellent

> **"The engagement from our children was amazing and every child came back and could talk about the experience. Many children had been able to retain a lot of the new vocabulary which they had heard. It was great to hear the girls saying 'we could be farmers too' breaking down gender stereotypes."**
>
> Luisa Pancisi, St James' C of E Infants

> **"A fabulous experience, location, beautiful place to visit – great for staff and children's wellbeing, totally contrast to school. Children so motivated to ask questions and take part in all touching, feeding activities. Brilliant! Thanks Rosie, Philippa."**
>
> Shaun Mohan, Lache Primary

> **"A lot of the comments were about the tasting activity which we did next to the milking area. Really making that link that the milk from the cows makes this food. One of the girls made a point of bringing 'cows milk' in her drinks bottle and saying that it had to go in the fridge so it doesn't go off. Loads of amazing learning that would be so difficult to replicate in a classroom!!!"**
>
> email from Peter Bradbury, Dee Banks School after a visit

Food Discovery

The difference we make *(To evaluate our impact we use before and after programme questionnaires and end of session feedback forms for teachers, before and after programme questionnaires using a smileyometer and open feedback for pupils, and Coordinator session reports)*

Impact on children:

- At the end of the programme 96% of teachers either agreed or strongly agreed Food Discovery was an experience that most of their pupils would not normally have
- Food Discovery Coordinators told us that in 78% of sessions all children interacted with the natural world
- 86% of teachers told us that all or most of the pupils in their class had grown in confidence in trying new things throughout Food Discovery
- 96% of teachers told us that all or most of the pupils in their class wanted to talk to each other about what they were doing in Food Discovery
- 78% of teachers told us that all or most of the pupils in their class had reported talking to their families about what they had done or learnt in Food Discovery
- The proportion of children who told us they know how to prepare some or most vegetables increased from 70% at the beginning of the programme to 91% at the end of the programme
- 78% of teachers thought that all or most of their pupils developed their teamwork skills and 74% of teachers thought that pupils had developed their independence skills while taking part in Food Discovery

> **"A child that was particularly afraid of insects ended up looking in awe at a beetle she'd stumbled across, taking time to observe and describe it to her friends."**
>
> Coordinator session report, Moreland Primary School

> **"Normally I wouldn't try this, but because I've made it myself and tasted all the ingredients I'm definitely going to eat it! The courgette was amazing!"**
>
> Reported speech from children at a cooking session, Pear Tree Community Junior School

Impact on teachers:

- At the end of the programme 95% of teachers either agreed or strongly agreed that they were confident leading cooking session in the classroom
- At the end of the programme 83% of teachers either agreed or strongly agreed that they were confident leading food growing sessions with pupils
- At the end of the programme 77% of teachers either agreed or strongly agreed that they were confident using elements of farming in their teaching
- Teachers used Food Discovery to enhance a wide variety of curriculum subject areas, with science being the most frequently mentioned, as well as taking inspiration from the style of learning, use of spaces, structure and management of sessions, and parental involvement

Quality:

- 99.3% of Food Discovery sessions were rated very good or excellent for management and organisation
- 98.2% of Food Discovery sessions were rated very good or excellent for pupil enjoyment
- 87% of teachers said that all pupils enjoyed taking part in the programme as a whole
- 99.6% of Food Discovery sessions were rated very good or excellent for health and safety

Farm in a Box

Local (prepared by our Coordinators on a per school basis working with one farmer for each school) and National (ordered and delivered centrally at scale on a given theme – Discover Warburtons Wheat and Climate Action in 2021/2)

The difference we make *(responses were gathered from teacher surveys, pupil feedback forms were trialled, but response rates were disappointingly low, something that we have recently found a way to improve on!)*

Impact on children:

- 96% of teachers reported that all or most pupils were excited to talk to each other about what they were learning and doing
- 92.3% of teachers agreed that pupils are better prepared for visiting a farm
- For teachers who completed the feedback form having had a Live link with a farmer, 92% said most or all of their pupils wanted to talk to the farmer/ Coordinator to ask them questions
- 100% teachers stated that most or all of their pupils interacted (touched/ observed/listened) with the natural world and 96% said all or most pupils enjoyed the activities

"Pupils were extremely enthusiastic to learn, this includes most of our children who have English as an additional language. It encouraged them to communicate!"

R Clarke St Marys Cockerton

"The sensory aspects to the Farm in a Box were brilliant. All activities today really encouraged discussions and encouraged opportunities to learn new vocabulary. All the children had a really fantastic day, and experienced things for the very first time."

Georgia Knights, Hazlewood Community

Impact on teachers:

- 96% of teachers said that the Box fully met or exceeded any objectives they had planned
- 96.7% of teachers rated the box content relevance 5 or 6 out of 6
- 100% of respondent teachers said they would recommend the Discover Warburtons Wheat Farm in a Box to other schools
- 92.3% of teachers agreed that the activities in the Box had better equipped them to use farming in their future classroom teaching
- 85% of teachers agreed that they intended to run more real-world learning activities and to use a FIAB as a core aspect of future curriculum planning

Quality:

- 100% of teachers rated the communication and planning 5 or 6 out of 6
- 95% agreed or strongly agreed that the ordering and delivery process ran smoothly for them (FIAB National

"I liked the links it made for children from nature to their own lives ie farm to fork. It made them think about processes and initial to final product."

Joanne Wright, Leiston Primary School

"The farm in a box resources have opened their eyes to life outside of their immediate community."

Felicity Rountree, Western Primary School

Case Study: Nathan's Residential

Nathan, year 4, was on a Residential visit to the Yorkshire Dales with his class. Most of his class hadn't stayed away from home since before Covid, if at all, and most hadn't ever left their urban Yorkshire town.

They had arrived the day before and were all quite tired after quite an emotional first-night away from home.

There was a 2 mile walk in the morning, including crossing a river using stepping stones. There were lots of stops to learn about the countryside they were walking in, how it was farmed, and with time learning to look out for specific plants and signs of life.

The children knew that there would be a quiz in the evening covering some of this information. Nathan was struggling a bit with both the length of the walk (as were most children), and that in the afternoon they would be doing pony trekking which he was very anxious about.

He asked his teacher several times during the walk what his horse would be like, how big it would be, whether he would like it. After lunch, when we arrived at the pony trekking centre, Nathan waited nervously by the horse he had been matched with for someone to help him on. With some assistance he mounted the horse and once he felt stable, he beamed and said, "I can feel the horse's heart beating!".

As they went on their short trek, he learnt he was very good at controlling his pony, "I'm so good at stopping him", and he was very proud of himself and grew in confidence over the afternoon.

All the children were very keen to exchange their pony experiences once they had dismounted, comparing how old their ponies were and discovering that they were all younger than the ponies.

They visited a trout farm after they had been pony trekking, and Nathan touched a massive trout which he said felt cold and slippery, and which amazed him.

They spent some time exploring a purpose built dry stone wall, climbing stiles and crawling through holes, and they all were absorbed by this experience.

The overall experience for Nathan, and his class, was success in lots of gentle, achievable challenges in a new environment away from home.

Countryside Discovery Residentials

The difference we make *(analysis of feedback from 6 residentials and 3 run as a series of day visits)*

Impact on children:

- Pupils rated the residentials on average 4.2 stars out of a maximum of 5 stars
- 87% of pupils did something they had not done before, with 73% of respondents mentioning doing new things as their favourite part of the residential
- There was an increase of 29% in children who thought farms were important, after the residential
- 100% of teachers felt that all or most of the children were excited to talk about what they have learnt

Impact on teachers:

- 100% of responding teachers said that they plan to use the residential as a core aspect of their curriculum planning next year
- 100% of responding teachers would recommend our residentials
- 50% of teachers told us in their pre-visit survey that they run 'real world' learning activities less than once a month while 100% of teachers who responded in the post-visit evaluation told us that they feel empowered to use more real-world learning experience in their work

Quality:

- 100% of teachers rated the communication and information received prior to the residential as excellent
- 100% of teachers rated the organisation and delivery of the residential as excellent
- 100% of teachers rated the Health and Safety on the residential as excellent

> **I found out that plants can be edible. Not all of them, but most of them. They can cure illnesses, heal you, and help you feel better.**
>
> Suffolk Residential, Post-visit pupil feedback

> **Memories for life. A great understanding of what is effectively an hour from their front doors.**
>
> Yorkshire Post-visit Teacher evaluation

> **I'm going to be a hairdresser but in one of these little villages. I want to get away from all the lights and the noise. My town is too stressful. I love it here, this is where I belong, I know it.**
>
> St Clare's Pupil, Yorkshire Residential

New developments

Under the ‘Diversification’ pillar of our 5 Year Plan we developed and launched two new programmes in 2022 and we brought out a new evolution of Farm in a Box.

Farm in a Bag

Having seen how Farm in a Box increased children’s curiosity, confidence and connection and increased the impact of a subsequent farm visit, we wanted to see whether we could develop a lower cost, re-useable, pre-visit activity that would still have significant impact. With funding from two Farming in Protected Landscapes funds (Lincolnshire Wolds AONB and Norfolk Broads AONB) we piloted Farm in a Bag. A re-useable bag of primarily sensory activities plus a short video, given to the teacher at the pre visit for use before the actual farm visit. Initial feedback is very encouraging and we are gradually accessing funding to equip more of our Coordinators with a set of bags.

Sustaining impact with Reach 2 Multi-Academy Trust

A brand-new programme of support just becoming available to teachers across 60 Reach2 academies with the aim of equipping and supporting teachers to take children on the ‘seeds to supper’ journey, one of the MAT’s ’11 before 11’ promises for all their pupils.

Our aim is to then have a suite of resources to offer more widely, enabling teachers to sustain the impact of food and farm centred activities.

Plant Your Pants – our soil campaign

We wanted to find a way to enable children to make that first fundamental connection with the land that sustains us - getting their hands in the soil and discovering the life within it.

That’s why we are asking families, schools, nurseries and farmers across the UK to bury a pair of cotton pants for a few months, and together, explore the world beneath our feet.

Burying pants is a technique that’s been used by scientists the world over to engage people in the science of soil health. The healthier the soil, the more disintegrated the cotton pants will be once they are dug up.

It’s a way that children can discover the life, both visible and invisible, in any patch of earth - from planters to parks, gardens, schools and farms. Our aim is to spark connection and curiosity along the way, guiding people how to look for signs of life, understand what it means and why it matters to each of us.

Plus we will be asking children to track their findings online and build up a picture of soil across the country. We are running the programme with scientists, teachers, parents and children involved at every stage.

Over time, we hope to build a nationwide understanding of the vital importance of soil and the role each of us can play in making our soil healthy.

Our policy work

The Country Trust is speaking up to ensure food, farming and countryside opportunities and experiences are available to ALL children, especially persistently disadvantaged children.

We know these opportunities offer the right balance of emotional, physical, social and educational development that benefit children and are vitally important for the future of British agriculture and for people and the planet to thrive. We are calling for:

- Every child to have the opportunity to visit a real working farm, to discover through first-hand experience where their food comes from
- Every child to have the chance to discover the connections between the food they eat, their own health and the health of the planet
- Every child to develop the confidence and curiosity to explore the natural world

Support for farmers

Over the past year we have been working hard to ensure as many farmers as possible are financially rewarded for opening their farms for educational visits. And we have had some success.

Through our efforts, Educational Access Payments (ED1) were added to Mid-Tier Countryside Stewardship agreements. Our challenge continues to be to ensure such payments continue when the new Environmental Land Management scheme is rolled out in 2024 and there are at last some positive signs. We will continue to speak up to ensure this becomes a reality.

We are also backing the call for support for farms under 5 hectares on urban fringes, not least because they are so well placed to provide opportunities for children from large urban areas.

With fuel costs so high, it is more important than ever that farms that are accessible by public transport, or are within walking distance of the schools we work with, are encouraged to open their gates for educational access visits.

Food and Farm Education for all

As well as ensuring there is adequate support from government for farmers, we are pushing for better and more food and agriculture education. An important part of this is backing the ‘Eat and Learn’ recommendations in the National Food Strategy.

We are asking Government to work across departments to ensure we achieve the much-needed shift in food culture to create a sustainable, resilient food system that supports people to live healthy lives. We believe this starts with first-hand experience of farming and food production.

Our ambition is to establish food, farming, and countryside opportunities as part of a fair education for all children, ensuring no child’s future is limited by their socio-economic background. That’s why we support the call for a Nature Premium, a government funded, statutory requirement for schools to take children regularly into nature.

And it’s why we play an active role in the Fair Education Alliance. We have introduced Kim McGowan Smith to both the Food Education Network and the Fair Education Alliance and think her work on food literacy provides an excellent framework to work with.

Speaking out...

Making the case for food and farming opportunities and experiences	Collaborating with partners to strengthen our case	Gathering evidence and case studies to support our case	Communicating our message
Educational Access all 3 elements of ELMs	Draft Sustainability and Climate Change Strategy	National Food Strategy White Paper	25 Year Plan UN Sustainability Goals

Working in partnership

Amplifying our message and strengthening the case for support

NFU EDUCATION

NATIONAL FEDERATION OF YOUNG FARMERS' CLUBS

Nature Premium

LANDAPP

Land Workers' Alliance
landworkersalliance.org.uk

sustain

Fair Education Alliance

Social Farms & Gardens

LEAF
LINKING ENVIRONMENT AND FARMING

CLA

Strategic direction

Our 5 Year Plan

In 2022 we launched a new 5 Year Plan, the first year of which coincided with schools, children, farmers, supporters, government and our workforce emerging from Covid, plus the increasing 'bite' of the cost-of-living crisis.

The 5 pillars of the Plan are:

- **Growth:** Significantly increase engagement to 120,000 children per annum by year 5
- **Diversification:** Finding new ways to deliver quality programmes at scale, ourselves, or with and through others. Supporting teachers to sustain the impact of our work and farmers to engage in farm education
- **Influence:** Focussing our effort to influence policies that support our mission in food, farming, and education
- **Impact and Evaluation:** A new Impact Framework including our Theory of Change will enable us to measure and share the difference we make. We will build academically robust evidence for farm education too
- **Infrastructure:** Developing our team, knowledge, IT and resources to support growth and development

Next steps with our Strategic Plan

2023 is year 2 of our 5 Year Plan.

With the help of all our supporters our aim is:

- Ensuring that our foundations of income, technology, leadership, governance, financial and information management underpin our progress
- 60,000 children taking part in our core programmes
- 10,000 children get their hands in the soil through our new Soil Campaign and in soil/photosynthesis focused farm visits
- Progress in making our Farm in a Box National boxes more regularly available
- Wider use of Farm in a Bag – a confidence building pre-visit encounter with farming
- Evidence that we are reaching children in the most disadvantaged areas
- Evidence that we are consistently achieving our outcomes
- New techniques to support teachers to sustain the impact of our programmes including a new partnership with Reach2 Multi Academy Trust
- Ensuring that the importance of food and farming education is seen and heard by policy makers

Strategic direction

Reimagining Residentials

In 2021 we laid out our plans to reimagine residentials and started to implement some of the ideas. 2022 was our first full residential season after the pandemic and it provided an opportunity to assess the changes we had made so far, for example to our Suffolk based programme, and the introduction of a parent video in Yorkshire.

We also reviewed our plans in the light of the significant impact Covid has had on the children, their families and their teachers, and were reassured to find that the reimagining we had done aligned well with the needs we were now seeing. However, the need for more time and resource to develop our plans was clear. The Ernest Cook OWL collaboration, and a small development charge to each school has freed up this time and capacity for 2023. Our plans are as follows:

- A fully rewritten teachers' handbook and a move to providing all our documentation online.
- Documents and resources to support parents and teachers. These include widget kit lists and timetables, a powerpoint presentation which can be shared online or at a parent meeting, pre and post visit lesson plans, a curriculum map and a document for parents which we will be translating via audio and text into Urdu, Bengali and Polish.
- New cooking and tasting sessions at all sites.
- A residential in a box.

Some of the above work will be shared with the OWL collaboration to be used by 10 other residential programmes across the UK who are providing residentials for disadvantaged children thanks to funding from The Ernest Cook Trust.

In addition, we are also looking at how we further support schools (and parents) who face significantly increased financial challenges.

Fundraising

Income increased by 21.5% and expenditure increased by 44.5% in comparison to 2021 (to £1,206,639 and £1,397,117) The net outcome was as expected though actual figures were lower than budgeted. 45% of our income was unrestricted. £339,786 of income received in 2022 was deferred to 2023 because it relates to the planned delivery of activity in the spring and summer terms.

The planned deficit enabled us to begin to use our reserves (fundamentally comprised of legacy income) in support of our 5 Year Plan. Our reserves position gave us the confidence and the capacity to:

- Sustain and grow our team of self-employed contractors a little, delivering more farm visits than pre-Covid in line with our 5 Year Plan
- Continue to offer Farm in a Box to schools in preparation for their farm visit, or as an alternative when visits were cancelled at short notice as a result of illness, staff shortages etc...
- Offer more transport subsidies than ever before where the cost of coach travel was a barrier to participation.
- Continue to innovate around Farm in a Box
- Develop our Soil Health Campaign
- Continue to review our existing programmes and train the team to ensure we kept pace with the needs of teachers and children.
- Grow our fundraising team

Controls

Financial management consists of monthly management accounts that are distributed to all Trustees for review.

Monthly forecasting enables Trustees to view the financial landscape ahead along with a mid-year review and detailed consideration in the third quarter prior to preparing the budget for the following year.

CEO or Trustee authorisation is required for all payments; all payments made by the Charity over £5,000 require dual authorisation with an authorised Trustee signatory. The charity had a successful Independent Examination (IE) in 2021 but is required to have an audit for 2022 as our income is over £1m.

Reserves policy

Trustees operate a RAG approach to assessing reserves with a green zone at around 3 months of operating reserves.

Based on our expenditure budget for 2023 this would indicate a reserves level of approximately £431,904. In 2022, overall reserves decreased from £772,718 to £582,240, of which unrestricted reserves decreased from £686,314 to £559,034 , as a result of a planned use of reserves for our 5 Year Plan.

Our plans will result in a deficit again in 2023, but we have mechanisms in place to reduce the deficit should our monitoring indicate any cause for concern and our intention is of course to return to at least a break-even budget.

Fundraising

The Board has adopted the Charity Governance Code and is working through the seven principles to ensure good governance.

Legal and ethical fundraising remains a key objective of the Trustees, and they take their responsibilities with regard to proper fundraising practice very seriously.

They are guided by the ***Charity Commission's Charity fundraising: a guide to trustee duties*** (CC20 updated Oct 2022) as well as the ***Charity Governance Code*** (updated 2020), and the ***Guidance Note from the Fundraising Regulator on New Reporting Requirements*** published October 2018 and updated January 2023, and the ***Covid fundraising guidance*** issued during 2021. The Country Trust is registered with the Fundraising Regulator and complies with the Code of Fundraising Practice.

In 2022, approximately 66% of our income came from charitable trusts and foundations, 19.6% from donations including companies, 8% from service users - primarily schools in the form of the balance of the cost of residential visits after our subsidy has been applied, or as a contribution from schools towards the cost of Food Discovery programmes, 6.5% from donated services and gifts in kind.

Donors to The Country Trust can be assured that:

- Fundraising activity is included within the Trust's Risk Register, which is reviewed at each Board meeting; a senior member of staff directly involved with fundraising is present at every Board meeting.
- The Charity does not currently make use of professional fundraisers or commercial participators.
- The Charity complies with the Fundraising Regulator's voluntary regulation scheme.
- All fundraising is carried out by employed staff, managed by the CEO or Senior Managers who report to the CEO, or very occasionally by named volunteers working closely with the employed staff on our behalf, primarily networking with peers and friends. Some volunteers will fundraise in aid of The Country Trust and the Charity provides support for them on its website.
- The Charity did not receive any complaints about fundraising activities carried out by The Charity or someone acting on The Charity's behalf. We will be ensuring that our current website refresh includes raising the visibility of how to complain.
- The Charity respects the privacy of the public, including the need to take special care with vulnerable people. Any mailing or emailing for fundraising purposes is in accordance with GDPR preferences. Public fundraising is through online fundraising platforms, or through static collection goblets and is carried out in accordance with the Code of Fundraising Practice. The Charity undertakes very little face to face fundraising and what is done is events based and primarily by invitation.

The Charity will comply with requests issued by the Fundraising Preference Service. The Charity strives to maintain GDPR compliance and has registered with the ICO.

Principal funding sources

As described above the Charity continues to derive most of its funding from grant making trusts, but with a growing number of companies now supporting our work. We continued to sustain a good percentage of funding within multi-year agreements.

We are very grateful indeed for the support received from all our funders, and mention here those who have given permission for their support to be acknowledged in this report:

Aldgate and Allhallows Foundation, Ardian UK and the Ardian Foundation, Britains Farm Toys, Bruno Schroder Trust, The CLA Charitable Trust, Lance Coates Charitable Trust, Ernest Cook Trust, Doves Farm, Frontier Agriculture UK, The Girdlers' Company, WA Handley Trust, The Hiscox Foundation, A Hume Country Clothing and Outfitters, Impax Asset Management, The Joicey Trust, Sir James Knott Trust, John Lewis Golden Jubilee Trust, The Lund Trust, The Mercers' Company, Muckle LLP Community Fund, Oxbury Bank, The Rank Foundation, Riverford Organic Foods, The Rothschild Foundation, Royal Society of Chemistry, The Shears Foundation, Soreen, The Bernard Sunley Charitable Foundation, Felix Thornley Cobbold Agricultural Trust, Tyne and Wear Community Foundation, Warburtons Ltd, Westminster Foundation, The Garfield Weston Foundation, The Wheler Foundation.

We were delighted to be able to work with two of our very generous supporters to hold two face to face fundraising events in London to introduce our work to new supporters. The Trustees would like to particularly thank those Foundations who have provided additional cost of living grants in recognition of the challenges charities and their beneficiaries are facing.

Thanks are also due to the Charity's President and Vice Presidents for their support in identifying and making introductions to potential new funding sources.

Transport costs

Requests for transport subsidies continued to rise in 2022 from schools in the area hardest hit by Covid, and then the cost-of-living crisis. Nearly £23,000 of subsidies were given out enabling over 3,000 children to access farms.

Structure, Governance and Management

Structure

The Country Trust was founded in 1978 and is registered with the Charity Commission under Charity Number 1122103. The Board of Trustees, President, Board of Vice Presidents, Chief Executive Officer and professional advisers are listed on page 2.

On the 23rd November 2007 the Country Trust was incorporated; it became a company limited by guarantee and not having share capital. On the 1st January 2008, the Charity commenced trading as an incorporated Charity. The Company number is 6436266 and the registered address is shown on page 1.

Governing document

The Charity is governed by the Memorandum and Articles of Association of the Country Trust Ltd.

Governing Body

The structure of the Charity consists of a Board of Trustees and a Chief Executive supported by a Senior Leadership Team. The Board of Trustees is a self-appointing body and includes a good gender balance and a range of experience.

Several Trustees have direct experience of our services either as teachers or active farmer hosts. Trustees with the relevant experience have particular responsibility for Finance and Safeguarding.

The Chief Executive reports directly to the Chair of Trustees and is responsible for the day-to-day running of the Charity. The Charity is very fortunate to be supported by a President and Vice Presidents who are an advisory, networking and fundraising resource.

Recruitment and training of Trustees

Trustees are recruited as and when required through advertising, personal recommendation and through the recommendation of third-party advisors according to the Board's specifications concerning eligibility, personal competence, and specialist skills. Potential candidates are invited to apply and are interviewed by the Chair and at least one other Trustee.

Successful applicants are co-opted to join the Board until their appointment is confirmed. Four new Trustees were appointed and two stepped down during the year. Five Trustees, including all our new Trustees, undertook governance training with Hempsons on Finance, Governance and Legal Duties.

One Trustee undertook an additional safeguarding related training course and two existing Trustees undertook Trustee training with Stone King.

Organisational management

The Charity's Trustees are legally responsible for the overall management and control of the Charity. The Board of Trustees meets at least four times a year to discuss and implement strategic issues, monitor income and expenditure, monitor risk, review and approve policies and approve annual budgets.

The day to day running of the Charity is delegated to the Chief Executive, the Senior Leadership Team, staff and sessional staff, who report to the Board monthly and quarterly.

Structure, Governance and Management

Risk management

The Board of Trustees is responsible for the management of risks associated with the activities of the Charity. The Board refers to the Charity's Risk Register at each meeting which is prepared and updated by the Chief Executive.

The top 6 major risks identified and monitored in 2022 were:

- **Inadequate fundraising** - mitigated by: Annual budgets include risk analysis, monthly financial reports show progress against budget, 'new' spend is brought to the Board, detailed Mid-Year Review, active communication with our funders, new product development.
- **Public Health Emergency** - mitigated by: Continued close monitoring of Government guidance, regular reviews of our health and safety and safeguarding guidance and training of our delivery team, open channels of communication with teachers and farmers.
- **Education Funding cuts** - mitigated by: Continued focus on measuring and reporting on the relevance of our work including a new Impact Framework, working to influence policy, adapting our fundraising, offering Farm in a Box as an alternative.
- **Poor governance by the Board** - mitigated by: Regular Board meetings, sub committees for finance and strategy, key decisions checked with external professionals eg insurers, accountants, funders.
- **Dependency on individual knowledge and relationships** - (employed) key areas of vulnerability fundraising, IT, H and S, Digital – mitigated by: IT assistant supported to do an apprenticeship degree, Digital assistant recruited through Time to Shine, H and S 'how to' guides prioritised, increased fundraising capacity, greater visibility of key fundraising information.
- **Impact of world events** - mitigated by: Looking for sustainable travel options, raising funds for travel subsidies, supporting the Sustain/LWA campaign for grants for small, peri-urban growers, working with refugee groups, 5% rise for the majority of the team, monitoring the impact of the cost of living on our team, surveying teachers to understand their situation, a new programme focused on supporting teachers to sustain impact.

Risk Assessments are prepared by staff and self-employed sessional contractors for all activities led by the Charity. Following recommendations arising from our regular reviews of Health and Safety, the Charity now ensures that all our active host farmers have a Risk Assessment in place for Country Trust visits. These Risk Assessments are prepared, owned and managed by the host farmer but where required, support for the process, including signposting to external industry guidance, is provided by the Charity. The Charity receives the help of professional advisors for risks associated with health and safety, safeguarding and employment practice.

The Board of Trustees also has in place key controls for use by the Charity, such as formal agendas for meetings, comprehensive strategic planning and monthly management accounting, established lines of reporting, formal written policies and a review schedule, clear authorisation levels for all payments and a safeguarding policy which provides guidance for all on best safe practice for adults within an organisation working with children.

Openness and accountability

We strive to involve participants in programme design and the comprehensive feedback gathered from stakeholders during the year is constantly used to inform practice. Our annual evaluation reports are published online and publicised through social media and printed materials.

We were very pleased to make progress in listening to children's voices through the implementation of an online pupil survey sent to teachers after each farm visit. Levels of participation are encouraging. A number of case studies were also completed by our Learning and Evaluation Lead.

This is our Position Statement:

The Country Trust connects children with the land that sustains us all. We aim to foster an understanding of farming, food production and countryside management in all its many guises and raise awareness of the way in which we are all participants in agriculture through the food that we eat.

Country Trust visits and activities are structured to support the National Curriculum, personal development and wellbeing. Our carefully planned opportunities and experiences are designed to empower children to be curious, confident and create change in their lives and the world around them so that they and society can thrive.

We do not consider ourselves to be a charity that campaigns for or against any particular form of farming or land management. However:

- We do seek to influence policy makers where this makes it more likely that we will achieve our mission. For example, for educational access to farms to be supported as a standalone public good, and for food and farming education to be a vital part of education, health, wellbeing, sustainability and food strategies.
- In the context of the climate emergency and rapid loss of biodiversity, we design our programmes to help children to understand the unique responsibilities that farmers and land managers have for soil health and biodiversity, stewardship of non-renewable resources and locking up carbon.

Our intention is that children will be in a better position to make informed decisions, understanding that their choices matter, and may be influential in the future shape of farming and the countryside.

GDPR

We use our database to extend our compliance with the GDPR regulations – subscription to Newsletters allows for double opt in as well as providing the usual ability to unsubscribe.

Cybersecurity

The Country Trust continues to be vigilant with regard to Cybersecurity. All CT staff are required to complete annual training as part of our Cyber insurance obligations.

We continue to use the NCSC's (National Cyber Security Centre) monitoring tools. Continued vigilance meant that there were no serious issues in 2022.

Safeguarding

Government guidance is clear that all organisations working with children, young people, families, parents and carers have particular responsibilities. At The Country Trust we recognise that the welfare of all children is paramount and that all children, regardless of ability or culture, have equal rights of protection.

We have a duty of care when they are in our charge, and we will do everything we can to provide a safe and caring environment whilst they attend our activities.

Our policy for child safeguarding is on our website and is reviewed annually by our Board of Trustees. The Country Trust is a member of SAFEcic, an umbrella organisation providing safeguarding training, advice and standards. All staff, volunteers and Trustees undertake safeguarding training and undergo DBS checks where this is permitted for their role.

Safeguarding is reviewed at the quarterly Board meetings. There were 8 safeguarding concerns raised within 2022 including disclosures by children and parents and potential signs of neglect and abuse observed in children, and one in relation to our own practice.

All were followed through in accordance with our Policy. Trustees have continued to keep their safeguarding training up to date and keep abreast of any significant changes.

Health and Safety

Our health and safety policy can be found on our website and is reviewed every two years. Following the last review, and a review of our policy in practice undertaken by Trustees, we strengthened our practice through making it a requirement that every active farmer host has an up-to-date Risk Assessment.

Safeguarding, and Health and Safety reports of all disclosures, accidents, incidents and near misses and subsequent actions taken are brought to every Board meeting, preserving the appropriate confidentiality. Health and Safety briefings are issued to the whole team at key moments in the farming calendar (eg lambing), whenever there is a learning or update to be shared and are integrated into new programmes (eg Farm in a Box). H and S training is made available in written and video form and engagement is tracked.

Pre-visits to farms are mandatory for schools (with very limited exceptions) in order that proper planning can be undertaken including understanding the particular needs of the children.

The Trustees would like to thank everyone involved with The Country Trust - farmers, teachers, funders, our delivery team, staff, volunteers and everyone who has provided incredible support and encouragement during another challenging year.

Statement of compliance with prevailing laws and regulations

The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the accounting policies set out in notes to the accounts and comply with the charity's governing document, the Charities Act 2011 and Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland published in October 2019.

This report has been prepared in accordance with the provisions applicable to companies entitled to the small companies' exemption.

Approved by the Board of Trustees on _____

Signed on its behalf by _____
Steve Bell, Chair of Trustees

Accounts

The Country Trust

Independent Auditor's Report to the Members of The Country Trust

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Opinion

We have audited the financial statements of The Country Trust (the 'charitable company') for the year ended 31 December 2022, which comprise the Statement of Financial Activities, Balance Sheet, Statement of Cash Flows, and Notes to the Financial Statements, including significant accounting policies. The financial reporting framework that has been applied in their preparation is applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards, including Financial Reporting Standard 102 The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice).

In our opinion the financial statements:

- give a true and fair view of the state of the charitable company's affairs as at 31 December 2022 and of its incoming resources and application of resources, including its income and expenditure, for the year then ended;
- have been properly prepared in accordance with United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice; and
- have been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Companies Act 2006.

Basis for opinion

We conducted our audit in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (UK) (ISAs (UK)) and applicable law. Our responsibilities under those standards are further described in the auditor responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements section of our report. We are independent of the charitable company in accordance with the ethical requirements that are relevant to our audit of the financial statements in the UK, including the FRC's Ethical Standard, and we have fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with these requirements. We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion.

Conclusions relating to going concern

In auditing the financial statements, we have concluded that the trustees use of the going concern basis of accounting in the preparation of the financial statements is appropriate.

Based on the work we have performed, we have not identified any material uncertainties relating to events or conditions that, individually or collectively, may cast significant doubt on the charitable company's ability to continue as a going concern for a period of at least twelve months from when the original financial statements were authorised for issue.

Our responsibilities and the responsibilities of the trustees with respect to going concern are described in the relevant sections of this report.

Other information

The other information comprises the information included in the Trustees' Report, other than the financial statements and our auditor's report thereon. The trustees are responsible for the other information contained within the Trustees' Report. Our opinion on the financial statements does not cover the other information and, except to the extent otherwise explicitly stated in our report, we do not express any form of assurance conclusion thereon. Our responsibility is to read the other information and, in doing so, consider whether the other information is materially inconsistent with the financial statements or our knowledge obtained in the course of the audit or otherwise appears to be materially misstated. If we identify such material inconsistencies or apparent material misstatements, we are required to determine whether this gives rise to a material misstatement in the financial statements themselves. If, based on the work we have performed, we conclude that there is a material misstatement of this other information, we are required to report that fact.

We have nothing to report in this regard.

Opinion on other matter prescribed by the Companies Act 2006
In our opinion, based on the work undertaken in the course of the audit:

- the information given in the Trustees' Report (incorporating the Directors' Report) for the financial year for which the financial statements are prepared is consistent with the financial statements; and
- the Directors' Report has been prepared in accordance with applicable legal requirements.

Matters on which we are required to report by exception
In the light of our knowledge and understanding of the company and its environment obtained in the course of the audit, we have not identified material misstatements in the Trustees' Report.

We have nothing to report in respect of the following matters where the Companies Act 2006 requires us to report to you if, in our opinion:

- adequate accounting records have not been kept, or returns adequate for our audit have not been received from branches not visited by us; or
- the financial statements are not in agreement with the accounting records and returns; or
- certain disclosures of directors' remuneration specified by law are not made; or
- we have not received all the information and explanations we require for our audit.
- the trustees were not entitled to prepare the financial statements in accordance with the small companies regime and take advantage of the small companies' exemptions in preparing the Directors' Report and from the requirement to prepare a Strategic Report.

Other matter
The prior year financial statements are unaudited because the total income in the prior year was below the audit requirement threshold.

Responsibilities of trustees

As explained more fully in the (set out on page), the trustees (who are also the directors of the charitable company for the purposes of company law) are responsible for the preparation of the financial statements and for being satisfied that they give a true and fair view, and for such internal control as the trustees determine is necessary to enable the preparation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

In preparing the financial statements, the trustees are responsible for assessing the charitable company's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless the trustees either intend to liquidate the charitable company or to cease operations, or have no realistic alternative but to do so.

Auditor responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements
Our objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements as a whole are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an auditor's report that includes our opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with ISAs (UK) will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of these financial statements.

The Country Trust

Independent Auditor's Report to the Members of The Country Trust

Irregularities, including fraud, are instances of non-compliance with laws and regulations. We design procedures in line with our responsibilities, outlined above, to detect material misstatements in respect of irregularities, including fraud. The extent to which our procedures are capable of detecting irregularities, including fraud is detailed below:

Our approach to identifying and assessing the risks of material misstatement in respect of irregularities, including fraud and non-compliance with laws and regulations, was as follows;

• The engagement partner ensured that the engagement team collectively had the appropriate competence, capabilities and skills to identify or recognise non-compliance with applicable laws and regulations.
• We focused on specific laws and regulations which we considered may have a direct material effect on the financial statements or the operations for the company, including the Companies Act 2006, Charities Act 2011, tax legislation and data protection, and employment legislation.

We assessed the susceptibility of the company's financial statements to material misstatement, including obtaining an understanding of how fraud might occur by;

• Making enquiries of management as to where they considered there was susceptibility to fraud, their knowledge of actual, suspected and alleged fraud.
• Considered the internal controls in place to mitigate the risks of fraud and non-compliance with laws and regulations.

To address the risk of fraud through management bias and override of controls, we:

• Performed analytical procedures to identify any unusual or unexpected relationships.
• Tested journal entries to identify unusual transactions.

In response to the risk of irregularities and non-compliance with laws and regulations, we designed procedures which included, but were not limited to:

• Agreeing financial statement disclosures to underlying supporting documentation.
• Reading the minutes of meetings of those charged with governance..
• Enquiring of management as to actual and potential litigation and claims.

Because of the inherent limitations of an audit, there is a risk that we will not detect all irregularities, including those leading to a material misstatement in the financial statements or non-compliance with regulation. This risk increases the more that compliance with a law or regulation is removed from the events and transactions reflected in the financial statements, as we will be less likely to become aware of instances of non-compliance. The risk is also greater regarding irregularities occurring due to fraud rather than error, as fraud involves intentional concealment, forgery, collusion, omission or misrepresentation.

As part of an audit in accordance with ISAs (UK), we exercise professional judgement and maintain professional scepticism throughout the audit. We also:

- Identify and assess the risks of material misstatement of the financial statements, whether due to fraud or error, design and perform audit procedures responsive to those risks, and obtain audit evidence that is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion. The risk of not detecting a material misstatement resulting from fraud is higher than for one resulting from error, as fraud may involve collusion, forgery, intentional omissions, misrepresentations, or the override of internal control.

Independent Auditor's Report to the Members of The Country Trust

- Obtain an understanding of internal control relevant to the audit in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the charitable company's internal control.
- Evaluate the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of accounting estimates and related disclosures made by the trustees.
- Conclude on the appropriateness of the trustees use of the going concern basis of accounting and, based on the audit evidence obtained, whether a material uncertainty exists related to events or conditions that may cast significant doubt on the charitable company's ability to continue as a going concern. If we conclude that a material uncertainty exists, we are required to draw attention in our auditor's report to the related disclosures in the financial statements or, if such disclosures are inadequate, to modify our opinion. Our conclusions are based on the audit evidence obtained up to the date of our auditor's report. However, future events or conditions may cause the charitable company to cease to continue as a going concern.
- Evaluate the overall presentation, structure and content of the financial statements, including the disclosures, and whether the financial statements represent the underlying transactions and events in a manner that achieves fair presentation.

We communicate with those charged with governance regarding, among other matters, the planned scope and timing of the audit and significant audit findings, including any significant deficiencies in internal control that we identify during our audit.

Use of our report

This report is made solely to the charitable company's trustees, as a body, in accordance with Chapter 3 of Part 16 of the Companies Act 2006. Our audit work has been undertaken so that we might state to the charitable company's trustees those matters we are required to state to them in an auditor's report and for no other purpose. To the fullest extent permitted by law, we do not accept or assume responsibility to anyone other than the charitable company and its trustees as a body, for our audit work, for this report, or for the opinions we have formed.

Colin Andrew Barker FCA (Senior Statutory Auditor)
For and on behalf of Edmund Carr LLP, Statutory Auditor

146 New London Road
Chelmsford
Essex
CM2 0AW

Date:.....

Statement of Financial Activities for the Year Ended 31 December 2022
(Including Income and Expenditure Account and Other Comprehensive Income)

	Note	Unrestricted funds £	Restricted funds £	Total 2022 £	Total 2021 £
Income and Endowments from:					
Donations and legacies	3	540,916	567,208	1,108,124	951,877
Charitable activities	4	-	95,056	95,056	40,532
Investment income	5	3,259	-	3,259	118
Other income		-	200	200	-
Total income		544,175	662,464	1,206,639	992,527
Expenditure on:					
Raising funds		107,475	-	107,475	80,274
Charitable activities	6	470,817	818,825	1,289,642	886,676
Total expenditure		578,292	818,825	1,397,117	966,950
Net (expenditure)/income		(34,117)	(156,361)	(190,478)	25,577
Transfers between funds		(93,163)	93,163	-	-
Net movement in funds		(127,280)	(63,198)	(190,478)	25,577
Reconciliation of funds					
Total funds brought forward		686,314	86,404	772,718	747,141
Total funds carried forward	16	559,034	23,206	582,240	772,718

All of the charitable company's activities derive from continuing operations during the above two periods.

The Country Trust

(Registration number: 6436266)
Balance Sheet as at 31 December 2022

	Note	2022 £	2021 £
Fixed assets	12	5,258	4,938
Current assets			
Debtors	13	124,856	24,988
Cash at bank and in hand	14	856,882	1,016,619
		981,738	1,041,607
Creditors: Amounts falling due within one year	15	(404,756)	(273,827)
Net current assets		576,982	767,780
Net assets		582,240	772,718
Funds of the charitable company:			
Restricted		23,206	86,404
Unrestricted funds			
General funds		559,034	686,314
Total funds	16	582,240	772,718

These financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the special provisions relating to companies subject to the small companies regime within Part 15 of the Companies Act 2006.

The financial statements on pages 67 to 83 were approved by the trustees, and authorised for issue on ..... and signed on their behalf by:

.....
S D Bell BA (Hons)
Trustee

The Country Trust

Statement of Cash Flows for the Year Ended 31 December 2022

	Note	2022 £	2021 £
Cash flows from operating activities			
Net movement in funds per SOFA		(190,478)	25,577
Adjustments			
Depreciation		1,459	1,400
Investment income	5	(3,259)	(118)
		(192,278)	26,859
Working capital adjustments			
(Increase)/decrease in debtors	13	(99,868)	4,996
Increase in creditors	15	23,977	9,785
Increase/(decrease) in deferred income		106,952	(304,867)
Net cash flows from operating activities		(161,217)	(263,227)
Cash flows from investing activities			
Interest receivable and similar income	5	3,259	118
Purchase of tangible fixed assets	12	(1,779)	(2,578)
Net cash flows from investing activities		1,480	(2,460)
Net decrease in cash and cash equivalents		(159,737)	(265,687)
Cash and cash equivalents at 1 January		1,016,619	1,282,306
Cash and cash equivalents at 31 December		856,882	1,016,619

All of the cash flows are derived from continuing operations during the above two periods.

1 Charitable company status

The charitable company is limited by guarantee, incorporated in England & Wales, and consequently does not have share capital. Each of the trustees is liable to contribute an amount not exceeding £1 towards the assets of the charitable company in the event of liquidation.

2 Accounting policies

Summary of significant accounting policies and key accounting estimates
The principal accounting policies applied in the preparation of these financial statements are set out below. These policies have been consistently applied to all the years presented, unless otherwise stated.

Statement of compliance
The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice (applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102)) (issued in October 2019) - (Charities SORP (FRS 102)), the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) and the Companies Act 2006.

Basis of preparation
The Country Trust meets the definition of a public benefit entity under FRS 102. Assets and liabilities are initially recognised at historical cost or transaction value unless otherwise stated in the relevant accounting policy notes.

Going concern
The trustees consider that there are no material uncertainties about the charitable company's ability to continue as a going concern nor any significant areas of uncertainty that affect the carrying value of assets held by the charitable company.

Income and endowments
All income is recognised once the charitable company has entitlement to the income, it is probable that the income will be received and the amount of the income receivable can be measured reliably.

Donations and legacies

All donated income and grants receivable are included in income on receipt except where the donor requires that the sum is to be treated as income in future accounting periods, in which case it is deferred. Where a donor has specified that a donation should be used for a particular purpose this is treated as restricted income.

Grants receivable

Grants are recognised when the charitable company has an entitlement to the funds and any conditions linked to the grants have been met. Where performance conditions are attached to the grant and are yet to be met, the income is recognised as a liability and included on the balance sheet as deferred income to be released.

The Country Trust

Notes to the Financial Statements for the Year Ended 31 December 2022

Deferred income

Deferred income represents grants and service fees received in respect of visits and activities taking place after the year end. It also represents unrestricted income where that income relates to future periods.

Donated services and facilities

Where services or facilities are provided to the charitable company as a donation that would normally be purchased from our suppliers, this benefit is included in the financial statements at it's fair value unless it's fair value cannot be reliably measured, then at the cost to the donor or the resale value of goods that are to be sold.

Investment income

Interest received is accounted for when the interest is credited on the Bank deposit accounts.

Charitable activities

Income from charitable activities arises from educational visits and activities where schools or other partners fund all or a proportion of the costs incurred.

Expenditure
All expenditure is accounted for on an accruals basis and includes VAT as the charity is not VAT registered. Governance costs are associated with the governance arrangements of the charity. Where expenditure is apportioned between charitable activities and support costs, this is done based on the portion that is applicable to the direct provision of educational visits and activities or the administration of the charity. In the case of staff costs, this is based on the time spent on charitable activities or administration.

Raising funds

These are costs incurred in attracting voluntary income, the management of investments and those incurred in trading activities that raise funds.

Charitable activities

Charitable activities comprise costs incurred in carrying out educational visits and activities to farms, estates and the wider countryside, and in schools.

Governance costs
These include the costs attributable to the charitable company’s compliance with constitutional and statutory requirements, including audit, strategic management and trustees meetings and reimbursed expenses.

Taxation
The charitable company is considered to pass the tests set out in Paragraph 1 Schedule 6 of the Finance Act 2010 and therefore it meets the definition of a charitable company for UK corporation tax purposes. Accordingly, the charitable company is potentially exempt from taxation in respect of income or capital gains received within categories covered by Chapter 3 Part 11 of the Corporation Tax Act 2010 or Section 256 of the Taxation of Chargeable Gains Act 1992, to the extent that such income or gains are applied exclusively to charitable purposes.

Tangible fixed assets
Individual fixed assets costing a significant amount are initially recorded at cost, less any subsequent accumulated depreciation and subsequent accumulated impairment losses.

Depreciation and amortisation
Depreciation is provided on tangible fixed assets so as to write off the cost or valuation, less any estimated residual value, over their expected useful economic life as follows:

Asset class	Depreciation method and rate
Office equipment & software	25% reducing balance

Trade debtors
Trade and other debtors are recognised at the settlement amount due.

Cash and cash equivalents
Cash and cash equivalents comprise cash on hand and call deposits, and other short-term highly liquid investments that are readily convertible to a known amount of cash and are subject to an insignificant risk of change in value.

Trade creditors
Creditors are recognised at their settlement amount.

Fund structure
Unrestricted income funds are general funds that are available for use at the trustees's discretion in furtherance of the objectives of the charitable company.

Designated funds are funds set aside by the trustees out of unrestricted funds for specific future purposes or projects.

Restricted income funds are those donated or received for use in a particular area or for specific purposes, the use of which is restricted to that area or purpose.

Pensions and other post retirement obligations
The charitable company operates a defined contribution pension scheme which is a pension plan under which fixed contributions are paid into a pension fund and the charitable company has no legal or constructive obligation to pay further contributions even if the fund does not hold sufficient assets to pay all employees the benefits relating to employee service in the current and prior periods.

Contributions to defined contribution plans are recognised in the Statement of Financial Activities when they are due. If contribution payments exceed the contribution due for service, the excess is recognised as a prepayment.

The Country Trust

Notes to the Financial Statements for the Year Ended 31 December 2022

Financial instruments

Classification

The charitable company only holds basic financial instruments as defined in FRS 102. The financial assets and financial liabilities of the charitable company and their measurement basis are as follows:

Financial assets - trade and other debtors are basic financial instruments and are debt instruments measured at amortised cost. Prepayments are not financial instruments.

Cash at bank - is classified as a basic financial instrument and is measured at face value.

Financial liabilities - trade creditors, accruals and other creditors are financial instruments, and are measured at amortised cost. Taxation and social security are not included in the financial instruments disclosure definition. Deferred income is not deemed to be a financial liability, as the cash settlement has already taken place and there is an obligation to deliver services rather than cash or another financial instrument.

3 Income from donations and legacies

	Unrestricted funds £	Restricted funds £	Total 2022 £
Donations	65,056	171,826	236,882
Charitable Trusts and grant making bodies	403,810	389,382	793,192
Donated services and gifts in kind	72,050	6,000	78,050
	540,916	567,208	1,108,124

	Unrestricted funds £	Restricted funds £	Total 2021 £
Donations	63,695	49,669	113,364
Legacies	96,000	-	96,000
Charitable Trusts and grant making bodies	340,368	401,510	741,878
Job retention scheme grant	635	-	635
	500,698	451,179	951,877

4 Income from charitable activities

	Unrestricted funds £	Restricted funds £	Total 2022 £
Countryside Discovery Residential Visits	-	87,080	87,080
Food Discovery	-	7,616	7,616
Farm Visits	-	360	360
	-	95,056	95,056

	Unrestricted funds £	Restricted funds £	Total 2021 £
Countryside Discovery Residential Visits	-	31,332	31,332
Food Discovery	-	4,200	4,200
Farm Visits	-	5,000	5,000
	-	40,532	40,532

5 Investment income

	Unrestricted funds £	Restricted funds £	Total 2022 £
Interest receivable on bank deposits	3,259	-	3,259
	3,259	-	3,259

	Unrestricted funds £	Restricted funds £	Total 2021 £
Interest receivable on bank deposits	118	-	118
	118	-	118

6 Expenditure on charitable activities

	Activity undertaken directly £	Activity support costs £	2022 £
Countryside Discovery Residential Visits	153,327	84,474	237,801
Food Discovery	148,363	81,739	230,102
Farm Visits	393,213	222,637	615,850
Farm in a Box	117,922	87,967	205,889
	812,825	476,817	1,289,642

	Activity undertaken directly £	Activity support costs £	2021 £
Countryside Discovery Residential Visits	87,439	45,282	132,721
Food Discovery	75,018	39,598	114,616
Farm Visits	419,153	220,186	639,339
	581,610	305,066	886,676

The expenditure analysed above includes governance costs of £6,000 (2021 - £3,530) which relate directly to charitable activities. See note 7 for further details.

This year, £470,817 (2021: £386,412) of charitable activity expenditure was unrestricted and £818,825 (2021: £500,234) was restricted.

7 Analysis of governance and support costs

Support costs allocated to charitable activities

	Governance costs £	Staff costs £	Administration costs £	Total 2022 £
Countryside Discovery Residential Visits	1,131	35,977	47,366	84,474
Food Discovery	1,095	34,814	45,830	81,739
Farm Visits	2,903	92,290	127,444	222,637
Farm in a Box	871	27,679	59,417	87,967
	6,000	190,760	280,057	476,817

	Governance costs £	Staff costs £	Administration costs £	Total 2021 £
Countryside Discovery Residential Visits	531	32,244	12,507	45,282
Food Discovery	455	27,674	11,469	39,598
Farm Visits	2,544	154,613	63,029	220,186
	3,530	214,531	87,005	305,066

Governance costs

	Total 2022 £	Total 2021 £
Audit fees		
Audit of the financial statements	4,000	-
Other fees paid to auditors	2,000	-
Independent examiner fees		
Examination of the financial statements	-	1,600
Other fees paid to examiners	-	1,930
	6,000	3,530

The Country Trust

Notes to the Financial Statements for the Year Ended 31 December 2022

8 Net incoming/outgoing resources

Net (outgoing)/incoming resources for the year include:

	2022 £	2021 £
Fees payable to auditor	6,000	-
Fees payable to independent examiner	-	3,530
Depreciation of fixed assets	1,459	1,401

9 Trustees remuneration and expenses

No trustees, nor any persons connected with them, have received any remuneration from the charitable company during the year.

No trustees have received any other benefits from the charity during the year.

During the year, 1 trustee was reimbursed for reasonable travel expenses of £107 (2021: no expenses reimbursed).

10 Staff costs

The aggregate payroll costs were as follows:

	2022 £	2021 £
Staff costs during the year were:		
Wages and salaries	317,724	254,141
Social security costs	25,716	17,710
Pension costs	7,201	5,442
Other staff costs	39,550	-
	390,191	277,293

The monthly average number of persons (including senior management team) employed by the charitable company during the year expressed by head count was as follows:

	2022 No	2021 No
Charitable activities	2	1
Support and administration	9	9
	11	10

The average number of persons employed by the charity during the year expressed as full time equivalents was 10.2 (2021: 7.1).

11 (2021 - 10) of the above employees participated in the Defined Contribution Pension Schemes.

The number of employees whose emoluments fell within the following bands was:

	2022 No	2021 No
£60,001 - £70,000	1	-

The total employee benefits of the key management personnel of the charitable company were £69,920 (2021 - £67,634).

11 Taxation

The charitable company is a registered charity and is therefore exempt from taxation.

12 Tangible fixed assets

	Office equipment & software £	Total £
Cost		
At 1 January 2022	12,474	12,474
Additions	1,779	1,779
At 31 December 2022	14,253	14,253
Depreciation		
At 1 January 2022	7,536	7,536
Charge for the year	1,459	1,459
At 31 December 2022	8,995	8,995
Net book value		
At 31 December 2022	5,258	5,258
At 31 December 2021	4,938	4,938

13 Debtors

	2022 £	2021 £
Trade debtors	103,119	1,100
Prepayments	21,737	23,809
Accrued income	-	79
	124,856	24,988

14 Cash and cash equivalents

	2022 £	2021 £
Cash at bank	856,882	1,016,619

15 Creditors: amounts falling due within one year

	2022 £	2021 £
Trade creditors	47,841	22,508
Other taxation and social security	6,128	8,297
Other creditors	4,461	6,491
Accruals	6,540	3,697
Deferred income	339,786	232,834
	404,756	273,827

	2022 £	2021 £
Deferred income at 1 January 2022	232,834	537,701
Resources deferred in the period	339,786	225,061
Amounts released from previous periods	(232,834)	(529,928)
Deferred income at year end	339,786	232,834

16 Funds

Current year:

	Balance at 1 January 2022 £	Incoming resources £	Resources expended £	Transfers £	Balance at 31 December 2022 £
Unrestricted funds					
General	686,314	544,175	(578,292)	(93,163)	559,034
Restricted					
a) Residential	1,678	139,644	(153,328)	12,006	-
b) Food discovery	84,726	90,864	(148,362)	(6,000)	21,228
c) Farm visits	-	297,456	(393,213)	95,757	-
d) Farm in a Box	-	134,500	(123,922)	(8,600)	1,978
Total restricted	86,404	662,464	(818,825)	93,163	23,206
Total funds	772,718	1,206,639	(1,397,117)	-	582,240

The specific purposes for which the funds are to be applied are as follows:

Restricted funds:
a) Funds to subsidise the cost of Countryside Discovery Residential visits enabling disadvantaged primary age children to experience food, farming and the countryside.
b) For teaching disadvantaged primary school children to grow & cook fresh produce, explore local farms, run playground markets & a harvest feast, and to train teachers in relevant elements of Learning Outside the Classroom.
c) Funds relating to the provision of Farm and Countryside Discovery educational day visits bringing the working countryside to life for primary school children from disadvantaged areas, and now the Farm in a Box programme bringing farm centred, hands on, experiential learning into schools, groups and homes.
d) This fund is to support children and educators so that they can have a farm-centred experience without leaving their school grounds or location.

The transfers from unrestricted funds is to eliminate restricted fund negative balances. Transfers from restricted funds represent a contribution to cover central support and administration.

The Country Trust

Notes to the Financial Statements for the Year Ended 31 December 2022

Prior year:

	Balance at 1 January 2021 £	Incoming resources £	Resources expended £	Transfers £	Balance at 31 December 2021 £
Unrestricted funds					
General	577,076	500,816	(432,340)	40,762	686,314
Designated funds					
i) Risk assessment	10,000	-	(820)	(9,180)	-
ii) Corporate fundraiser	120,000	-	(20,200)	(99,800)	-
iii) Strategic planning and innovation	20,000	-	(13,326)	(6,674)	-
	150,000	-	(34,346)	(115,654)	-
Total unrestricted funds	727,076	500,816	(466,686)	(74,892)	686,314
Restricted					
a) Residential	-	76,554	(73,355)	(1,521)	1,678
b) Food discovery	18,522	139,532	(63,681)	(9,647)	84,726
c) Farm visits	-	275,625	(363,228)	87,603	-
e) Country Trust Hampshire	1,543	-	-	(1,543)	-
Total restricted funds	20,065	491,711	(500,264)	74,892	86,404
Total funds	747,141	992,527	(966,950)	-	772,718

17 Analysis of net assets between funds

Current year:

	Unrestricted funds £	Restricted funds £	Total funds at 31/12/2022 £
Tangible fixed assets	5,258	-	5,258
Current assets	731,299	250,439	981,738
Current liabilities	(177,523)	(227,233)	(404,756)
Total net assets	559,034	23,206	582,240

Prior year:

	Unrestricted funds £	Restricted funds £	Total funds at 31/12/2021 £
Tangible fixed assets	4,938	-	4,938
Current assets	753,207	288,400	1,041,607
Current liabilities	(71,831)	(201,996)	(273,827)
Total net assets	686,314	86,404	772,718

18 Prior year Statement of Financial Activities

	Note	Unrestricted £	Restricted £	Total 2021 £
Income and Endowments from:				
Donations and legacies	3	500,698	451,179	951,877
Charitable activities	4	-	40,532	40,532
Investment income	5	118	-	118
Total income		500,816	491,711	992,527
Expenditure on:				
Raising funds		80,274	-	80,274
Charitable activities	6	386,412	500,264	886,676
Total expenditure		466,686	500,264	966,950
Net income/(expenditure)		34,130	(8,553)	25,577
Transfers between funds		(74,892)	74,892	-
Net movement in funds		(40,762)	66,339	25,577
Reconciliation of funds				
Total funds brought forward		727,076	20,065	747,141
Total funds carried forward	16	686,314	86,404	772,718

The following pages do not form part of the statutory financial statements.

Detailed Statement of Financial Activities for the Year Ended 31 December 2022

	Total 2022 £	Total 2021 £
Income and Endowments from:		
Donations and legacies (analysed below)	1,108,124	951,877
Charitable activities (analysed below)	95,056	40,532
Investment income	3,259	118
Other income	200	-
Total income	1,206,639	992,527
Expenditure on:		
Raising funds	107,475	80,274
Charitable activities (analysed below)	1,289,642	886,676
Total expenditure	1,397,117	966,950
Net (expenditure)/income	(190,478)	25,577
Net movement in funds	(190,478)	25,577
Reconciliation of funds		
Total funds brought forward	772,718	747,141
Total funds carried forward	582,240	772,718

The Country Trust

Detailed Statement of Financial Activities for the Year Ended 31 December 2022

	2022	2021
	£	£
Donations and legacies		
Donations and legacies	236,882	209,364
Grants, including capital grants	793,192	742,513
Donated services and facilities	78,050	-
	1,108,124	951,877
	£	£
Charitable activities		
Countryside Discovery Residential Visits	87,080	31,332
Food Discovery	7,616	4,200
Farm Visits	360	5,000
	95,056	40,532
	£	£
Charitable activities		
Programmes - Transport	52,481	22,213
Programmes - Accommodation	68,522	24,680
Expenses relating to visits and activities	55,733	107,062
Self-employed contractors	541,316	402,459
Salaries, national insurance and pensions	296,004	197,019
Staff mileage, accommodation and expenses	66,113	30,439
Volunteer mileage, accommodation and expenses	776	543
Office costs	31,201	26,426
Computer and website costs	15,448	4,859
Promotion and publicity	15,653	9,673
Insurance	6,589	5,193
Recruitment and training	4,532	7,490
Subscriptions and sundry costs	2,022	2,582
Bank charges	467	192
Legal and professional fees	13	36
Consultancy	58,545	27,456
Annual conference	13,801	13,323
Trustee expenses	320	100
Depreciation	1,459	1,401
Auditors' remuneration	6,000	-
Independent Examiner’s remuneration	-	3,530

The Country Trust

Detailed Statement of Financial Activities for the Year Ended 31 December 2022

	£	£
	1,236,995	886,676

This page does not form part of the statutory financial statements.

Country Trust

To support our work visit:
www.countrytrust.org.uk

Registered charity no. 1122103

Head office: Moulsham Mill, Parkway, Chelmsford, Essex. CM2 7PX

President: The Duke of Westminster

Registered with FUNDRAISING REGULATOR

ico. Information Commissioner's Office

THE COUNTRY TRUST

England & Wales - Charity number 1122103

Accounts

Annual Report & Accounts 2021

Country Trust

Connecting children with the land that sustains us all

President: The Duke of Westminster

Vice Presidents:

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Sir Nicholas Bacon Bt
Lord Boswell of Aynho DL
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J Serjeant BA (Hons) ACA
I N Tegner CA FRSA
F Weston MA (Cantab)

Chief Executive:

J D Attenborough MA (Cantab) FRSA

Registered address:
Moulsham Mill, Parkway, Chelmsford
CM2 7PX Tel:01258 608363

Trustees:

The Trustees who served the charity during the year were as follows:
M A Bufton-McCoy B Phil, Cert Ed (Chair) (resigned January 2021)
S D Bell BA (Hons) (Vice Chairman, appointed Chairman January 2021)
J Brown BSc (Hons) PGCE
T C M Fawcett BSc (Hons)
R J Frossell
G M H Mills DL
N. Partheeban BVM&S BSc(Hons) PGCert(DHH) PIAGrM R.Ani.Tech. FRSA MRCVS
A J Stafford MA (Oxon)

Bankers:

CAF Bank Ltd. 25 Kings Hill Ave, Kings Hill, West Malling, Kent ME19

Independent Examiner:

Edmund Carr. LLP 146 New London Road, Chelmsford, Essex, CM2 0AW

Lawyers:

Wrigleys Solicitors LLP 19 Cookridge Street,
Leeds LS2 3AG

The Country Trust is the leading national educational charity that connects children from areas of high social and economic disadvantage with the land that sustains us all

Country Trust - Trustees' Report

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How we support our beneficiaries

During the 2021 calendar year:

We connected over 43,500 children with the land that sustains us all, across our Farm, Residential and Food Discovery programmes.

We undertook a strategic review, refreshing our vision, mission, organisational values, Theory of Change, and Impact Framework, and we developed a new 5 Year Plan.

Our core values

At The Country Trust..

- We believe you grow by learning from others.
- We think that the quality of our connections with others has an important effect on who we can be and what we can do.
- We are active participants in a world which inspires and sustains us.

Aspirational values – values that we want to demonstrate more consistently in our work

- We aspire to be child-centred, no matter what our role is.
- We want everyone to know that their contribution is welcome and valued.

Country Trust

Theory of Change

Problem	Inputs / activities	Intermediate outcomes	Long-term outcomes	Overall aim
Poverty of opportunity and experience from an early age negatively impacts health, wellbeing, and the likelihood of a successful adult life, and with it the ability to contribute to a thriving, sustainable society	**Farm Discovery** **Food Discovery** **Countryside Residentials** **Farm in a Box** (online, local and national)	**Young people who engage with the Country Trust** ...have a better understanding of how to interact with the natural world around them ...are excited to use/discuss what they have learnt ...feel supported and more confident to try new things ...feel more curious about the world, particularly food, farming and the countryside ...are more able to make connections between their lives and food, farming and the countryside	...are more likely to choose to spend time outdoors and in the countryside ...demonstrate a greater belief in their own agency ...are keener to try new things ...are more likely to pursue hobbies or careers related to food, farming and the countryside ...are able to imagine a wider range of future possibilities and are more confident working towards them ...are more likely to make positive / informed choices on food, farming and the countryside	Through food, farming and countryside experiences The Country Trust aims to empower children to be confident, curious and create change in their lives and the world around them so that they, and society, can thrive
		Teachers who engage with the Country Trust ...place greater value on real-world learning experiences	...gain confidence to offer broader pupil-led opportunities	
		Parents who engage with the Country Trust ...feel more curious about how their lives connect to food, farming and the countryside	...are more likely to make positive / informed choices on food, farming and the countryside	

Vision

A fair, sustainable and inclusive society in which all children, irrespective of background, are able to thrive and achieve their potential

Created: August 2021
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How we support our beneficiaries

How the Charity's activities deliver public benefit:

In setting our programme each year we have regard to the Charity Commission's general guidance on public benefit. The Trustees always ensure that the programmes we undertake are in line with our charitable objectives and aims.

Our ambitious aims are that:

- **Every child should have the opportunity to visit a real working farm, to discover through first-hand experience where their food comes from.**
- **Every child should have the chance to discover connections between the food they eat, their own health and the health of the planet.**
- **Every child should have the opportunity to develop the confidence and curiosity to explore the living world.**

We use an evaluation framework to gather feedback on all the activities we offer. We collate and analyse the feedback and this then informs our programme design. Feedback from children, teachers and parents suggests that the Trust is achieving its goal of helping to improve the life chances of the children who take part in our programmes. We are in the unique position of being able to provide programmes which support teachers to re-engage children with learning and support physical, emotional and social wellbeing. We can build food knowledge and food confidence, provide access to food and farming related climate learning and enable children to discover that they can be active participants. We can create connections between pupils, farmers and the natural world. We can speak up on relevant education, agriculture and food issues, taking the lead or supporting others.

We deliver our mission through four programmes:

• **Farm Discovery:** Visits to real working farms and estates are central to all our programmes. Thanks to our incredible hosts every year thousands of children gain in-depth, hands-on experiences of food and farming.

• **Food Discovery:** A tailored yearlong programme to fully immerse children in all aspects of growing, cooking, tasting and even selling food.

• **Farm in a Box:** The newest of our programmes, Farm in a Box is delivered to schools and is packed with hands-on experiences, investigations and activities.

• **Countryside Residentials:** 2-4 night stays in Yorkshire, Suffolk or Norfolk. Giving children the opportunity to be fully immersed in the wonders of the countryside.

All our programmes are designed to create moments that provoke curiosity, making learning irresistible. Children learn most deeply when they are following their natural curiosity as it places them at the centre of their learning[1].

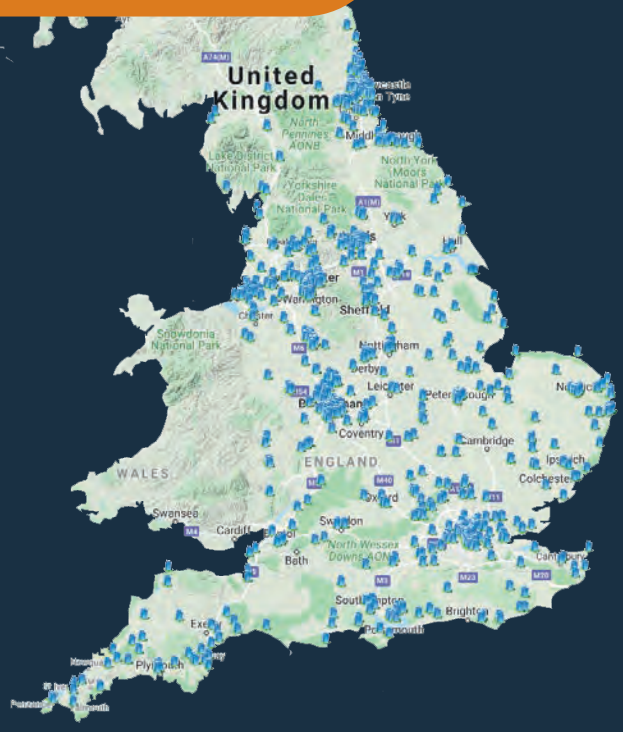
Giving children time, space and the tools to understand the world around them – whether its in their school grounds, a farm or the beach – allows children to discover for themselves the wonder and connectedness of life.

As so many of the children we work with have limited experiences, we ensure that new experiences are crafted carefully and consciously into our programmes.

1 Pete Moorhouse, Curiosity www.birthto5matters.org.uk

How we support our beneficiaries

Indicies of Multiple Deprivation Map (2019)
Source: mapmaker.cdrc.ac.uk/



Where we work across all programmes

Who we support

We work with children who experience disadvantage through:

- low family income
- being on the margins of, or excluded from, or refusing mainstream education
- SEN/D (Special Educational Needs/Disabilities) or SEMH needs (Social, Emotional or Mental Health)
- being looked-after children, or children in care
- having responsibilities as Young Carers
- having refugee or asylum seeker status.

Our operating context in 2021

- Agricultural policy in the UK, including the role of access and education, was undergoing a fundamental review because of Brexit.
- Farmers were recognised as vital keyworkers (according to the EIT Food Trust Report Farmers are the most trusted group within the food sector[1]).
- In a survey by Teach the Future, 68% children said they were interested in learning more about the environment and 69% teachers think there should be more teaching on this subject in schools[2].
- In a British Medical Journal article Imperial College academics said that eco-anxiety "risks exacerbating health and social inequalities between those more or less vulnerable to these psychological impacts" and noted its disproportionate impact on children and young people[3].
- Teachers were speaking out about the significant impact that confinement has had on children physically, emotionally, socially and educationally.
- The Nature Premium campaign was calling for funding for schools for every pupil to spend time in the natural world.
- Footballer Marcus Rashford brought the shocking levels of UK food poverty to wider attention.
- The National Food Strategy stated that 'it is time to take food education seriously' for the sake of our health, and the health of future generations.

---

1 EIT_Food_Trust_Report_2020.pdf (eitfood.eu)
2 What do the stats say? (teachthefuture.uk)
3 https://www.theguardian.com/society/2021/oct/06/eco-anxiety-fear-of-environmental-doom-weighs-on-young-people

How we support our beneficiaries

The continuing impact of Covid

"COVID-19 has given many people their first real insight into how others live and how unequal the United Kingdom is. On our TV screens, we have witnessed cramped living in poor quality, high-rise accommodation where families sleep four to a room, with no outside space and no digital access."[1]

The Legatum Institute estimates that an additional 700,000 people (including 120,000 children) have been plunged into hardship during the pandemic, bringing the number of people living in poverty to more than 15 million[2]. In a typical UK classroom, 30% of children live in poverty. Child poverty is associated with adverse developmental, health, educational and long-term social outcomes, including: poor physical health, mental health problems/ low sense of wellbeing, experience of stigma and bullying from peers, academic underachievement, subsequent employment difficulties and social deprivation[3].

The impact of the pandemic on all children has been substantial, but the educational gap between disadvantaged children and their peers has been exacerbated and the 'burgeoning chasm'[4] is only projected to grow: "Schools with a high percentage of children eligible for Free School Meals (FSM) experienced decreases in scores approximately twice as severe as schools with a low percentage of FSM eligible children.[5]"

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1 State of the Nation 2020-21: Social Mobility in Great Britain (publishing.service.gov.uk)
2 UK Poverty Unit | Legatum Institute (li.com)
3 Child poverty – RCPCH – State of Child Health
4 Lockdown, poverty and the disadvantage gap | Children's Commissioner for England (childrenscommissioner.gov.uk)
5 Best evidence on impact of Covid-19 on pupil attainment | EEF (educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk)

In addition to this, teachers report a wider range of issues resulting from the pandemic (and especially the subsequent school closures) that are affecting some of their pupils, these include: "reduced cognitive abilities (such as poor concentration, memory and stamina); lack of motivation and withdrawal; poor social skills and fractured friendships; lack of sleep; poor physical fitness, weight gain; and speech and language problems."[1] Compounded by the cancellation or reduction in activities (whole school assemblies/ performances/ playtime) and experiences (external visits/ visitors etc) that go towards rectifying 'social deprivation' and improve their wellbeing and sense of security and community, these issues are predominantly being seen in those children living in disadvantage who may not have access to such opportunities elsewhere.

"If you want to help children from working-class backgrounds, you have to teach them to read and write to prepare them for secondary school and for life, but you also have to give them access to that wider, richer curriculum. That is what will give them the foundations to be brave enough to make decisions, and confident enough to visit places that they may not otherwise have gone to."[2]

Covid continues to be present in schools causing staff shortages and cancellations of planned activities, as well as impacting on budgets. It also impacts the availability of our own team and farmer hosts. We are delighted to have Farm in a Box as an alternative to offer schools who have to cancel or postpone.

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1 Recovering from Covid-19: What Pupils and Schools Need Now (nfer.ac.uk)

2 Lockdown, poverty and the disadvantage gap | Children's Commissioner for England (childrenscommissioner.gov.uk)

How we support our beneficiaries

Activities, achievements, performance and public benefit

Our Reach - 2021 Calendar Year

We connected over 43,500 children with the land across our Farm, Residential and Food Discovery programmes.

36,200 teachers and pupils - 1400 classes - received our Farm in a Box Local and National programmes.

At least 100,000 hours (assumes 25,000 children spent 4 hours on activities, allows for non-participation in home-learning, and teachers ordering our national Boxes but not following through).

6,290 children on real working farms - approximately 25,160 hours (assumes each child spends 4 hours on the farm. Includes residential and some Food Discovery children)

1,400 children experienced at least one Food Discovery session (each child would normally have c.20 hours of Food Discovery, however the programme was very disrupted by Covid)

309 children spent between 3 and 5 days in the countryside on a Countryside Discovery Residential visit. Approximately 11,124 hours (assumes 3 x 12 hours days)

Our Impact

Curiosity

Children who take part in our programmes better understand how to interact with the natural world around them. They feel more curious about the world particularly food, farming and the countryside.

We want pupils to enjoy what they do with us. Enjoyment is key to irresistible learning[1]. Across our programmes, at least 88% of teachers report that their pupils' interest in learning increases as a result of their enjoyment of the activities. We deliberately plan hands-on and sensory activities in all our programmes in order to give children the experience and tools to interact with the natural world, whether by touching, noticing or listening. For many children these are new skills which have to be learned, and then the child can explore at their own pace. This allows space and time for curiosity to develop and for children to experience wonder. This also allows for those children who struggle with formal classroom education to engage with learning.

Many children have not visited the countryside before and have little understanding of where food comes from. Visiting farms and the countryside is one way of introducing children to this world, and we do this in our Farm Discovery and Residential programmes. However, it is critical for all our futures that children see the relevance to their lives and can find connections on their doorstep.

Our Food Discovery and Farm in a Box programmes enable children to explore their own world through the lens of farming and nature and teachers tell us their pupils are more curious about and interested in food, farming and the countryside as a result.

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1 Working in environments of enquiry - Mick Waters qca-1.pdf (sightlines-initiative.com)

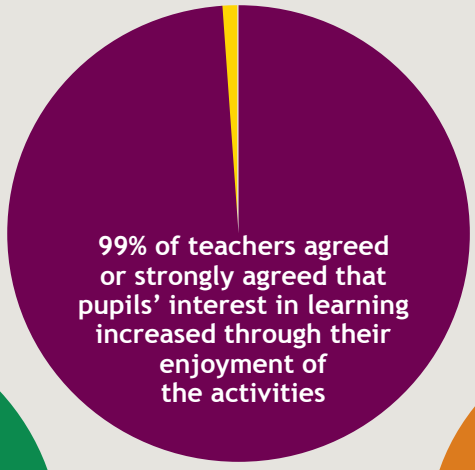
Theory of Change Pupil Outcomes

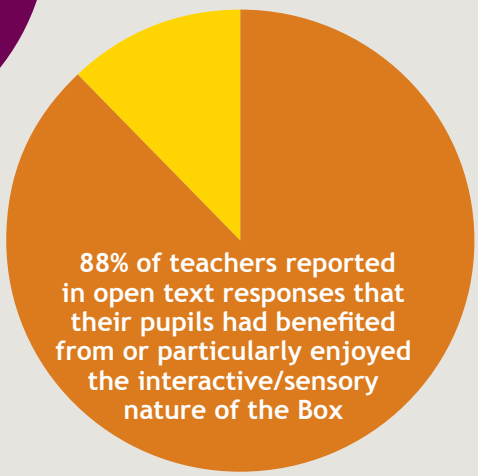
Intermediate Outcomes

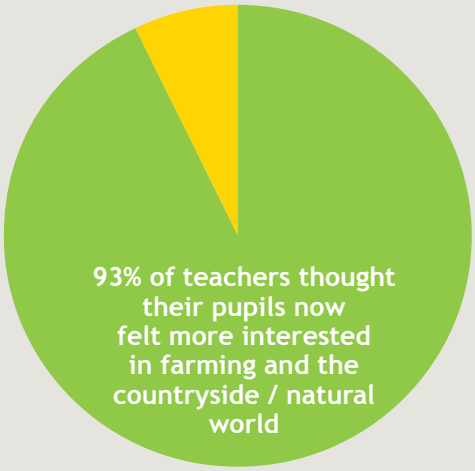
- ...have a better understanding of how to interact with the natural world around them
- ...feel more curious about the world, particularly food, farming and the countryside
- ...are excited to use/discuss what they have learnt
- ...are more able to make connections between their lives and food, farming and the countryside
- ... feel supported and more confident to try new things

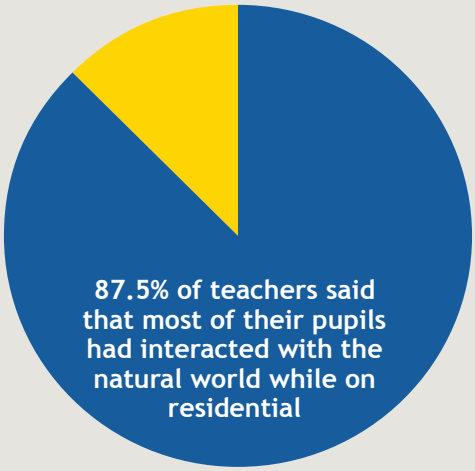
Country Trust Programmes

- Farm in a Box Local
- Farm in a Box National
- Residentials
- Farm Discovery
- Food Discovery









Our Impact

Confidence

Children who take part in our programmes are excited by what they have learnt, feel supported and more confident to try new things.

We want children to feel confident to talk about and share what they are learning. We make an assumption that feeling excitement (or another positive feeling) will result in children wanting to share, use or talk about what they are finding out. It is this same excitement and passion that can result in a child discovering their own agency (a longer-term outcome). Coping with trying new things – whether food or experiences – is something which children get better at the more supported attempts they have. Enabling children to feel success (regardless of their enjoyment of the attempt) is an important part of helping them try new things.

Over 82% of children who have taken part in our programmes report that they have done something for the first time. These 'firsts' can vary: visiting the countryside, tasting a particular food, looking at or holding an insect, and staying away from home are all common firsts for many of the children who take part in our programmes. Each programme consciously builds and scaffolds these experiences, supporting children to find ways they can manage new challenges in the future.

Language and communication are critical skills. When children want to share their learning through talking to each other, and feel that they can ask adults like farmers and Country Trust Coordinators questions, we know that they have some confidence to pursue their interests. All programmes allow opportunities for pupils to learn new vocabulary and Coordinators build in time for focused discussion and exploring what questions pupils want to ask farmers or other knowledgeable adults.

Theory of Change Pupil Outcomes

Intermediate Outcomes

- ...are excited to use/discuss what they have learnt
- ... feel supported and more confident to try new things
- ...have a better understanding of how to interact with the natural world around them
- ...feel more curious about the world, particularly food, farming and the countryside
- ...are more able to make connections between their lives and food, farming and the countryside

Country Trust Programmes

Connections

Children who take part in our programmes are more able to make connections between their lives and food, farming and the countryside.

Many children (and adults) have little appreciation of the complicated journey of food from farm to fork. This results in little knowledge of what farms do and how important they are to our lives, and that our actions and choices can have an impact on our health. Understanding the real value of food (including the time, energy, knowledge and skill it takes to grow crops and rear animals) and how much all of us depend on farmers and farmers depend on nature is critical in understanding how interconnected the world is. All of our programmes are designed to enable children to explore these connections to a greater or lesser extent; and curiosity and confidence help to support this exploration.

Over 82% of teachers said that their pupils had a better understanding of where food comes from as a result of taking part in one of our programmes. For Farm in a Box, where the children have not yet visited a farm, 94% of teachers tell us that the activities enabled the children to be better prepared for a real farm visit.

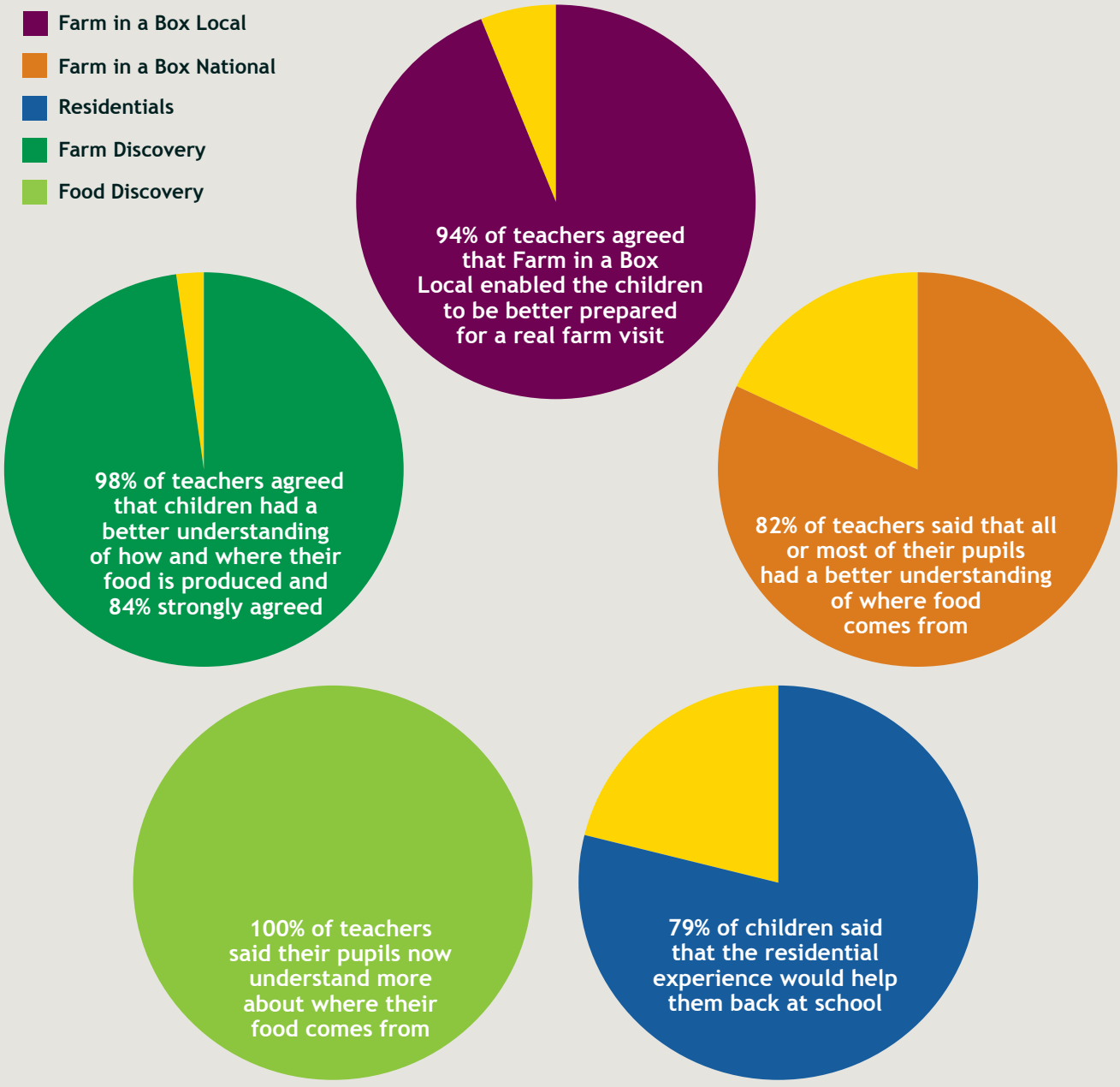
The connections children make are not necessarily all about food and farming, but more a general connection to the natural world and how they can find this in their own lives.

Theory of Change
Pupil Outcomes

Intermediate Outcomes

- ...have a better understanding of how to interact with the natural world around them
- ...feel more curious about the world, particularly food, farming and the countryside
- ...are excited to use/discuss what they have learnt
- ...are more able to make connections between their lives and food, farming and the countryside
- ... feel supported and more confident to try new things

Country Trust Programmes



Supporting Teachers

The Country Trust aims for teachers who work with us to place a greater value on real world learning experiences for their pupils and, longer term, to gain confidence in offering broader, pupil-led opportunities.

Over the year we have delivered a small number of formal Continuing Professional Development training sessions for teachers, both in person and online. However, throughout all our programmes we aim to model real-world learning experiences and show the benefits of pupil-led learning.

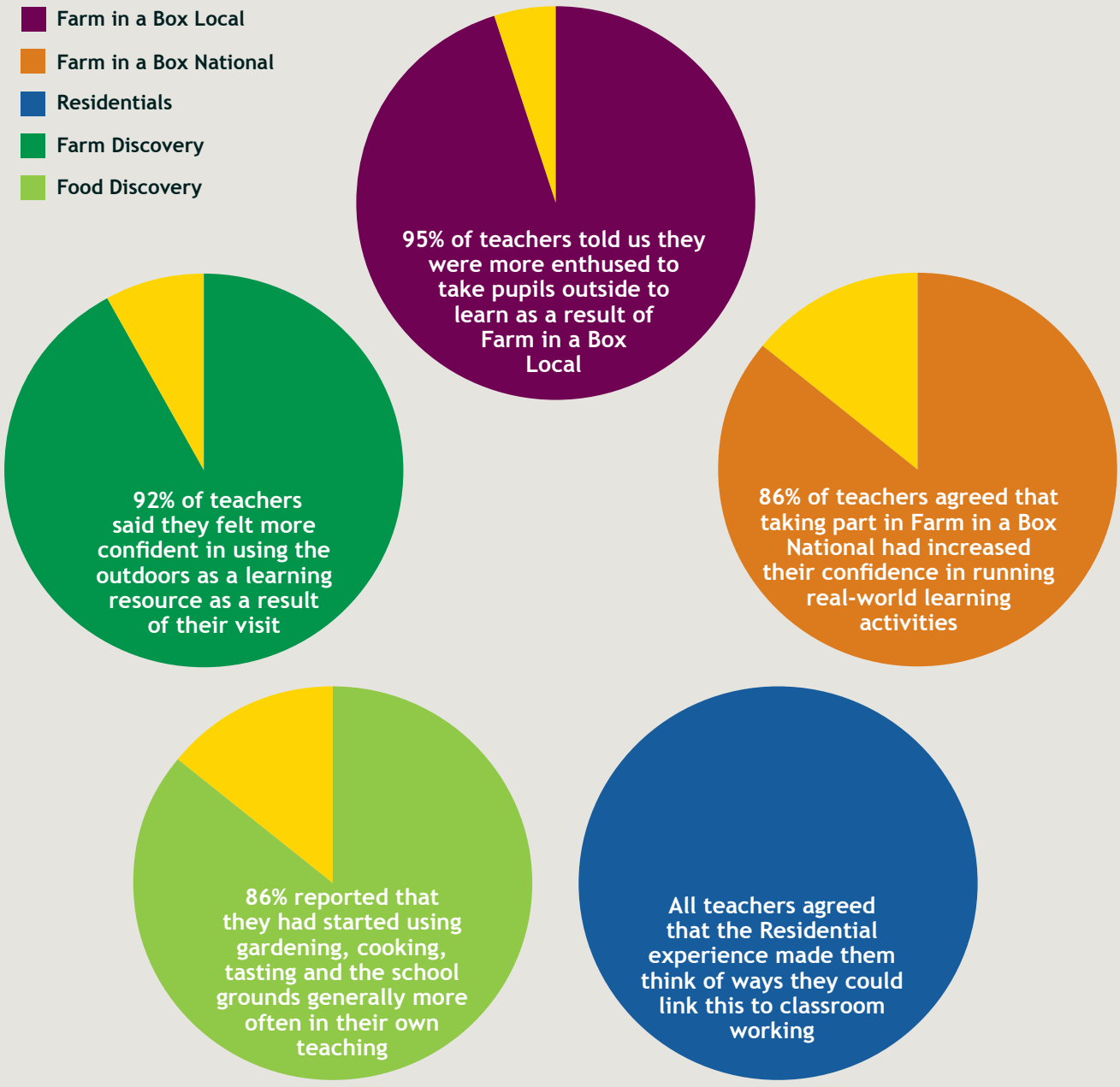
90%-100% of teachers (depending on the programme) told us that they wanted to take their pupils outside to learn more often as a result of working with us, with 90% saying that they felt more confident in doing this because of Country Trust input. Over 96% of the teachers we worked with told us that they use elements of whichever programme they had received in their general classroom teaching. This ranged from using the class's shared experiences to using particular techniques and tools in their own practice to referring back to the programme in a variety of other subjects.

Theory of Change
Teacher Outcomes

Intermediate Outcomes

...place greater value on real-world learning experiences

Country Trust Programmes



Our Programmes - Farm Discovery

Visits to real working farms and estates are central to all Country Trust programmes. Every year, we work with incredible farmers and estate managers to welcome thousands of disadvantaged children out into the countryside, to gain in-depth, hands-on experiences of food and farming. Working closely with our farmer hosts, group leaders and teachers, we tailor our Farm Discovery visits carefully to the needs of the class or group, providing engaging, immersive learning activities, empowering them to be curious, confident and find connections. We introduce children to crops and livestock, encourage them to question and explore food production and roles in agriculture and discover a new world that is intimately connected with their lives. Currently visits play a powerful role in supporting wellbeing too with many children not having been out on any sort of visit for two years.

The difference we make

(analysis of 93 feedback forms – 82% return rate - from academic year 2020-21)

Curiosity

- All teachers agreed that the children's enjoyment of the day increased their interest in learning with 96% strongly agreeing, 20 teachers (22%) mentioned enjoyment in their unprompted feedback alongside what their children had learnt.
- All teachers agreed that reluctant learners had the opportunity to engage with 93% strongly agreeing.

Confidence

- All teachers agreed that children have gained confidence in being outdoors and in the countryside with 95% strongly agreeing.
- 98% of teachers reported that they felt more confident in using the outdoors as a learning resource as a result of their visit.

Connections

- 98% of teachers agreed that children had a better understanding of how and where their food is produced and 84% strongly agreed. NB: not all of our farm visits focus on food production.

Organisation and delivery

- 100% of Mainstream and 100% SEN teachers rated the communication and information received prior to the visit as very good or excellent.
- 100% of Mainstream and 100% SEN teachers rated the organisation and delivery on the day of the visit as very good or excellent.
- 100% of Mainstream and 100% SEN teachers rated the Health and Safety on the visit as very good or excellent.

Our feedback

“Everything was absolutely perfect, from being met on arrival, to being waved off” Ashley School

“We have had an amazing day. It has been extremely well organised and felt very safe. The day was tailored to our schools needs. Highly recommend.” Cottingley Academy

”So safe - very glad to be outdoors learning.” St Anne’s Primary

“Brilliant! Children learnt life lessons and enjoyed new experiences! The children are going home with lots of new information.” Middleton St Mary’s

‘What are the mushrooms? What do they do?’ Lime Academy Parnwell

“See that cow? We made butter from milk from a cow like that.” St Helen’s Primary

“The one who can’t concentrate at school has been entranced.” Cottingley primary

“This is an experience our children would never usually get to have, living in the middle of Lowestoft with lots of children having no transport to get to the countryside.” Poplars Primary

“Great opportunity for class that the majority of have never before been to a farm or seen these animals. Has brought conversation and interest out of children who are otherwise quiet/uninterested. Also opportunity for lots of new information and knowledge.” GYPA

“What an experience - picking apples and drinking juice – brilliant”
Child from Middleton St Mary’s

Myatt Garden Primary, Lewisham

On 14th July 2021 27 Year 1 children from Myatt Garden Primary, Lewisham visited Torry Hill Farm. The children ran through the meadow and played tug of war. They found the remains of a hare and discussed what it had been eaten by - they found some buzzard poo nearby - quite the poo detectives! **They were fascinated to learn about the nature on the farm and how the farmer encourages it.** They had a tour of the farmyard and met the cows and learnt about their care and their purpose on the farm. They took turns to look at the beehives and learnt about how honey is made and how the farmer carefully looks after them. They visited the cherry orchard and stopped to pick cedar cones and look at the different trees. They loved picking cherries and were allowed to fill punnets to take home.

"These trips benefit the children so much, most of whom have never been to a farm in the countryside before. Thank you to The Country Trust for organising and providing funding for these essential learning experiences which engage hard to reach children and families, and give even the most reluctant of learners a renewed interest in our curriculum, enrich their vocabulary and give them more of a sense of purpose in their writing." - Teacher

"I am highly impressed with these trips and the children came back buzzing with excitement, using new vocabulary and with a renewed interest in our learning which had fed into their writing as well as our learning in science. Thank you so much!" - Teacher

Our Programmes - Food Discovery

Our Food Discovery programmes fully immerse children in all aspects of growing, cooking, tasting and even selling food. Pupils learn how to prepare soil and how to plant, nurture and harvest seasonal vegetables and herbs. With our help, schools link Food Discovery to key curriculum ideas and discussion about the environment and the wider world. They are introduced to new and varied healthy foods and are given the opportunity to taste, to smell and to explore food in a safe, encouraging space. The children are introduced to cheap, healthy recipes and learn how to cook them, using the crops they have grown and other simple, nutritious ingredients. They visit local farms to see crops grown on a commercial scale, run a Playground market, where they use maths in a real-world context, and finally, prepare a Harvest Feast to be enjoyed with family, friends and farmers.

The difference we make

(analysis of feedback from 13 of 17 schools and 286 pupils who answered before and after questions - from academic year 2020-21)

Curiosity

- 100% of teachers reported that their pupils wanted to talk to each other about what they were learning
- 97% of teachers rated the programme as excellent in terms of pupil enjoyment (with 54% referring to it specifically in their feedback)
- 93% of teachers thought their pupils now felt more interested in farming and the countryside/natural world
- 80% of teachers reported that their pupils were talking to their families about what they had done in Food Discovery

Confidence

- 77% of children (from 337 responses) said they had done something for the first time in gardening sessions.
- 72% of children said they had tasted something new during Food Discovery.
- 100% of teachers said their pupils were able to try new things in a supported scaffolded way
- 60% teachers said that taking part in Food Discovery had influenced their delivery, the majority reported now using gardening, cooking, tasting and the school grounds generally more often in their teaching
- 25% of children said their family made some of the Food Discovery recipes.
- 39% are helping at home with cooking sometimes as a result of Food Discovery.

Connections

- 100% of teachers said their pupils now understand more about where their food comes from
- 86.6% of teachers thought their pupils now wanted to spend more time in the natural world

Organisation and delivery

- 98.4% teachers rated the programme as excellent in terms of management and organisation
- 100% rated the programme as excellent in terms of Health and Safety.

Our feedback

“Fantastic as always! The children have gained so much from FD. Thank you!” Will Turnpenny, Magdalen Gates

“This has been my favourite part of the year” child North Denes

“This links with our topic ‘Sow, grow and farm’ so it’s been invaluable. We will be expanding on the seasonality of food.” E Aitchison, Unity Primary Academy

“They are so different out here, they are learning in such a different way, I just love it and you see another side of them” Teacher, Unity Primary Academy, reported on Coordinator Session report

“So much can be taught outside. I’m going to use this growing area a lot next year to touch on different aspects of the curriculum - as they are quite a practical cohort.” Teacher, St Christophers

“Gained an interest in food origins and production and they want to know more!” Ms Rosiak, Brunswick Park Primary

“They have discovered a passion for the outdoors and nature, many of them have gone on to plant things at home as a result of the project.” Emma Alexander, Moreland Primary school

“self-esteem has improved, I can always refer back to the cooking and gardening sessions to provide children an image of what they ‘can do’ to act as a foundation of what they will be able to do with new activities.” Yumma Raihanna, St Paul’s Catholic Primary

Magdalen Gates Primary, Norwich

Despite lockdown, Year 4 students from Magdalen Gates Primary, Norwich enjoyed an Introduction session, a Food Quiz, x2 Cookery and x4 Gardening sessions during the school year 2020-21. **They learnt how to prepare the ingredients and cook a stir fry, Moroccan cous cous, pesto pasta with peas and beans (grown themselves), roast garlic and rosemary potatoes (also grown themselves) and lots more for the harvest feast.**

They prepared the soil, planted seeds and tended to swiss chard, chickpeas, peas and broad beans and developed the confidence to taste lots of raw, fresh herbs, fruit and vegetables. They watched clips of chickpeas being grown at scale on Countryfile and discussed different crops grown in the UK and what they need to grow. They planted their own chickpeas (given to them by an East Anglian chickpea farmer) to take home to grow, before tasting two different types of hummus and discussing what herbs had been added to each and how the flavour had been changed. They took part in nature art activities and painted coloured stones as markers for their beds and helped to revamp neglected areas of their school with plants. They enjoyed mindfulness activities and took the time to listen to the sounds, smells and feel of nature around them. Feedback has been excellent:

“This kind of activity is incredibly important for these children, learning where their food comes from and tasting and growing healthy food. We really need to focus on recovery for children post covid, not just academically but emotional and physical recovery” - Headteacher

“A young girl whose parents are on a low income, there’s many siblings and she just doesn’t get as much nurture as she needs. Food Discovery has benefited her dramatically because she’d never even tasted raw vegetables before! She loved every aspect of the course.” Michelle Humphreys, Magdalen Gates Primary

Our Programmes - Countryside Residentials

We have over 25 years' experience of enabling children from disadvantaged areas of London, Yorkshire and Lancashire - many of whom would never leave the area where they live and go to school - to discover the wonders of the countryside. A typical trip will involve a two to four-night stay at a hostel or bunk barn, and children will explore forests, farms, rivers and the seaside. Schools integrate the residential into the children's learning and personal development, and they eat well, learning and playing outside together. Natural habitats, managed landscapes and heritage attractions provide an exciting context for geography, science and history.

The difference we make

(analysis of feedback from 6 residentials and 3 run as a series of day visits - from academic year 2020-21)

Curiosity

- 100% teachers either agreed or strongly agreed that the pupils responded well to the activities that were provided.
- 75% referenced the particular value of CT staff to their overall enjoyment
- 100% of teachers said some or most pupils now feel more interested in farming and the countryside/ natural world (50% said 'some' as they don't feel that the interest follows some children home)
- Pupil feedback - 'what was the coolest thing you learnt' was almost all farm and countryside focused.

Confidence

- 100% teachers either agreed or strongly agreed that the pupils' confidence improved
- 100% of teachers agreed that most pupils had been able to try new things in a supported way
- 100% teachers either agreed or strongly agreed that the teachers and other staff attending benefitted from the residential
- 100% teachers either agreed or strongly agreed that they would like to take their pupils outside for learning activities more often
- Pupil feedback - favourite things relating to confidence rated most highly- doing 'something scary', 'trying a new thing' 'sense of achievement'

Connections

- 100% teachers either agreed or strongly agreed that the Residential had made them think of ways that they could link the residential back to classroom working

Organisation and delivery

- 100% said they would recommend a CT Residential
- 100%* of teachers rated the visit as very good or good for Organisation, Health and Safety, Support from CT Coordinator and Accommodation.
- 100% of Mainstream and 100% SEN teachers rated the organisation and delivery on the day of the visit as very good or excellent.
- 100% of Mainstream and 100% SEN teachers rated the Health and Safety on the visit as very good or excellent.

Our Programmes - Countryside Residentials

Our feedback

“It benefited all of the children. They were ‘buzzing’ every day and when we came back. Even now they’re still so enthusiastic when we talk about the trip and all say they want to go back! Some are talking about visiting Burnsall, others want to go back to do Pony Trekking - even those who cried at first! None of our children had spent a night away from parents and the majority had never been to the countryside and loved being outside surrounded by nature. They all absorbed all of the facts and learning from Lee & Chris.’”

“Great life experience, out of London, confidence and independence.”

“It has benefitted with their wide experiences lots of them had never been to the countryside. They also grew in confidence and showed great resilience.”

“Pupils will have benefited greatly from the idea of staying away from home, gaining more independence, taking part in activities that they haven’t done before and might have thought they never would have. This visit would have taught a lot of children the value of the countryside and the world that is out there.”

“It has given them a sense of fun and normality in what has been a challenging year for them (COVID).”

“‘Using more opportunities for outdoor learning, knowing that students are more independent than what I thought” Teachers view on their own learning

“I thought I wouldn’t be able to walk three miles, but I did!” Child

“I thought the trip would be boring, but it was incredible” Child

St Anne's Primary, Keighley

On 7-9th July Year 6 children from St Anne's Primary, Keighley went on their Country Trust Residential to the Yorkshire Dales. The children travelled by minibus to Malham where they explored Janet's Foss and Goredale Scar. They had lunch on the village green before taking the short walk to Malham Cove. After exploring they made the journey to Halton Gill Bunk Barn and settled in, before going on a walk along the valley and River Skirfare. **Lots of the children had never walked so far and were incredibly proud of themselves!**

On the second day the children visited Linton falls and took a walk along the River Wharfe. **They had lunch on the riverside and listened to the bird sounds and running water and did nature spotting. In the afternoon they visited Kilnsey Trout Farm, followed a nature trail and were delighted to meet the alpacas and goats, spot red squirrels, help feed the hens, learn about the resident bees and feed the large rainbow trout!**

After the farm they took a well-earned rest with an ice-cream on Grassington village green. On the last day the children took a tour of Ingleton cave at White Scar Caves- most of them hadn't been into a cave before and though it was met with some nervousness, the children overcame their fears. Finally, they took the historic Settle-Carlisle train back home from Ribblehead.

Our Programmes - Farm in a Box Local

We surveyed our teachers during lockdown to find out what they felt was going to be needed as and when their pupils returned to school. Their priorities were clear - maths and literacy, but also emotional and physical wellbeing, language and communication, social skills, and time outdoors. We knew that farm visits could provide so much of the inspiration and opportunity that children desperately needed but that they would be a step too far for many schools for a while. And so, using a simple model from the Mulago Foundation to help us focus in on what we are really good at, what will have maximum impact for our beneficiaries and what will strengthen us for the future, we created a new programme called Farm in a Box.

The programme is farm- centred but designed to be delivered in school and helps children make connections between their lives and farming, enhancing the impact of a farm visit when it comes. For our Farm in a Box Local, our Coordinators work with the teachers and a farmer to create a tailored programme from a menu of activities, investigations and challenges focused on the chosen farm. Farmers star in an introductory video and a Zoom call at the end of the day. Language, communication and well-being are woven through. Our Farm in a Box Local Explorer Box presents farm-centred activities for EYFS and children with SEN/D, who love the accessible, multi-sensory nature of the Boxes. Evidence suggests that, for disadvantaged children, teachers are key to sustaining the impact of interventions like those offered by The Country Trust . We have been able to design Farm in a Box to strengthen this area of our practice through providing extension activities and continued contact with the farm and the Coordinator.

"The FIAB idea is absolutely a gem of an idea. It prepares young people to access the countryside and makes the direct link between learning at home/school and life on a farm. The box we received is truly brilliant."

Andrew Heywood,
Durham Trinity Primary

The difference we make

(analysis of teacher feedback forms from 186 boxes, a return rate of 55% representing over 5000 pupils, and 1760 pupil feedback forms returned (about a third of participants))

Pupils' Curiosity

- 98% of teachers agreed or strongly agreed that those pupils who often are perceived to be 'reluctant learners' engaged with the activities.
- 99% agreed or strongly agreed that pupils' interest in learning increased through their enjoyment of the activities.
- 10% reported (unprompted responses) that the observation tools learnt through FIAB meant that children were more curious and engaged with their own environments.

Pupils' Confidence

- 35% of teachers, in open comments, mentioned an impact on language and communication and always in connection with how excited the children were about what they were learning and doing.
- 86% of children said that they had done something for the first-time during Farm in a Box.

Pupils' Connections

- 86% agreement from teachers that Farm in a Box enabled their pupils to make a connection with a local farm despite not actually leaving their school.
- 94% of teachers agreed that Farm in a Box enabled the children to be better prepared for a real farm visit. Over 460 children wrote exactly what it was they were looking forward to seeing when they got.

Organisation and delivery

- 97% of teachers gave the communication and planning a score of 5 or 6 (out of 6)
- 98% scored the health and safety support with a 5 or a 6
- 94% of teachers gave a score of 5 or 6 for the contents of the Box
- 93% of teachers gave a score of 5 or 6 for the ease of delivering the activities
- 92% scored the pitch and level of the video with a 5 or a 6.

Teachers' Confidence

- 95% of teachers (169 out of 178) told us that they were more enthused to do take their pupils outside to learn as a result of Farm in a Box. From the remaining 9 teachers, 3 stated that they already took their pupils outside as a priority in their learning.
- 90% of teachers said they were more confident in taking their pupils outside to learn.
- 99% of teachers said they would be drawing on Farm in a Box in their future teaching.

Our feedback

"These children have so little enrichment in their lives that something as magical as this is so beneficial and as it is so hands-on they all benefited greatly. This has been a very challenging term and a big thank you because FIAB bought brightness into their lives…Thank you!" Sue Leach, Valley Primary

"By the time children are referred to us, they have usually faced significant barriers to learning, often resulting in them becoming disengaged with education and suffering with poor self-image. Opportunities like this are incredibly valuable in harnessing children's curiosity and re-engaging them in learning about the world around us. Farm in a Box enabled all of our pupils to feel successful in their learning and helped to foster a positive and resilient attitude towards challenge." Abby Steele, GUST School Ashington

Our Programmes - Farm in a Box Online

Created in response to demand arising from Lockdown 3 in January 2021, FIAB Online is a pack of multi-sensory and farm-centred activities (with video content) designed for home learning and the classroom. The resources are sent to individual teachers by our Coordinator by email. We worked closely with teachers to ensure the elements of this programme are easily accessible for ALL children and make no assumptions about resources available at home or in school.

The programme includes video content enabling children to make virtual visits to several Country Trust farms across the country. They meet our amazing host farmers and their animals, see what they are growing and lots more. After the video the children take part in a quiz to see what they have discovered and can choose from a series of investigations, challenges, and hands-on activities from topics ‘Birds and Bird song’, ‘Food from Farms’ and ‘Signs of Life’. Feedback for this programme is very positive, however teachers were clear that there some children didn’t engage with home learning at all and so our numbers represent resources sent out rather than necessarily children actually participating. Farm in a Box Online remains a resource we can send quickly to schools if visits are cancelled at the last minute as a result of Covid.

The difference we make

Curiosity

- 100% teachers agreed that the children's enjoyment of the experience increased their interest in learning, and all agreed with this statement, with 16 (48%) strongly agreeing.
- 100% teachers agreed that reluctant learners had had opportunities to engage, with 13 (39%) strongly agreeing.

Confidence

- 97% agreed or strongly agreed that following the programme their children would be better prepared for a farm visit.

Connections

- 100% teachers agreed that their pupils had been able to make connections between their world and the farmers world.
- 96% teachers said they would use the experience in future teaching

Our feedback

"We adapted the activities slightly, but the resources were fantastic and the children really enjoyed exploring everything." Kingsdown School

"Even the boys who are often reluctant to learn were the first to want to go outside and build a nest and had fun in the process" Cottingley Primary Academy

"They were very engaged in talking about what the farmers do, where they work, what they look after, what lives around them in the wild and why farmers are important." The Beeches Community Primary School

"I will use the Make a Nest and Sounds Around Me activities as a basis for discussion, when I introduce children to life cycle of a bird and their habitats. Treasure Hunters and Story Tellers for future writing units (I loved this!)." St Lawrence's Catholic Primary

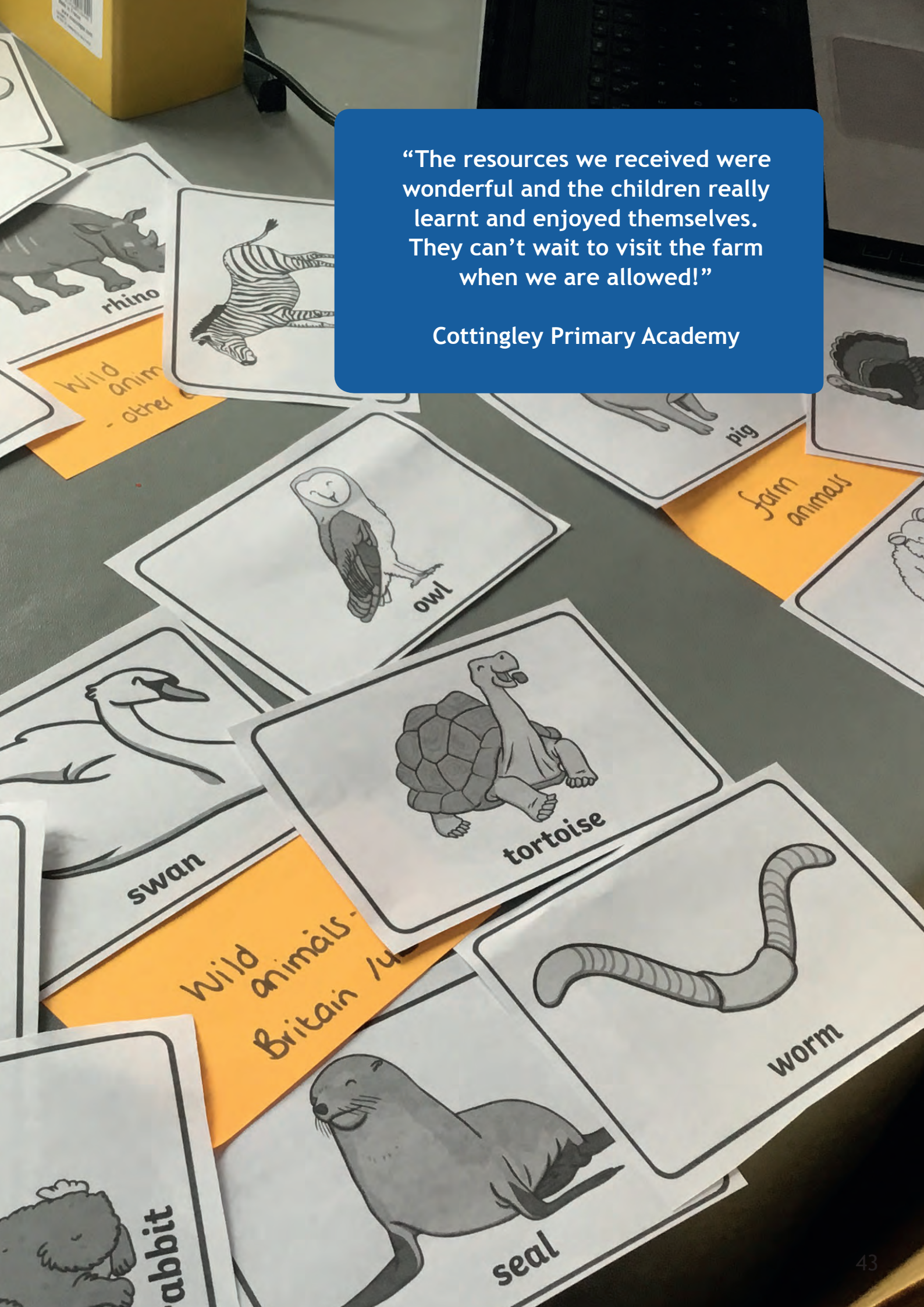
Case Study - Farm in a Box Online

St Lawrence's Catholic Primary, Newcastle

On 25th February 2021 30 Year 5 children from St Lawrence's Catholic Primary school, Newcastle took part in a Farm in a Box Online. The children watched the farm video and then answered questions on what they'd seen. They discussed the plants shown and thought about the food that those crops went into and what they had eaten that week. **The teacher loved doing the 'Treasure Hunters and Story Tellers' activity with the children and is keen to use it in future writing units.**

The children enjoyed getting outside and collecting 'treasure' to use, naming and describing what they'd found. They then had to choose one and begin to tell a story about it, using descriptive words. They discussed the birds that they see in their gardens, parks and on the way to school and loved becoming a bird, gathering materials and making their own nests. Finally, they took time to be quiet and still and listen to the nature around them.

"I thoroughly enjoyed taking part in FIAB online. The resources were very well prepared and easy to provide to children, so they could take part in activities at home. The children, who engaged regularly with home learning, benefited most from this experience. I am keen to repeat the activities once we are back in school with others. The children particularly enjoyed exploring the wildlife in their local area and I was wowed by some fantastic drawings of birds I'd received. Thank you for your support!" Teacher



"The resources we received were wonderful and the children really learnt and enjoyed themselves. They can't wait to visit the farm when we are allowed!"

Cottingley Primary Academy

Our Programmes - Farm in a Box National

Funded by:

Warburtons Family Bakers

Covid19 caused the cancellation of the 2020 Discover Warburtons Wheat Country Trust Farm Discovery programme, but also proved to be the spur to the most ambitious pilot project we have undertaken to date. Warburtons agreed that the funds already donated for the cancelled 2020 programme could be used by The Country Trust to develop a pilot Farm in a Box programme to be delivered at scale for around 100 schools, alongside the 2021 Discover Warburton's Wheat farm visits. When it became apparent in early 2021 that a summer farm visit programme was unlikely to be possible, The Country Trust proposed that the 2021 funds be used to increase the scale of our ambition for the pilot to 400 Boxes, reaching over 10,000 children from areas of persistent disadvantage where we do not have a presence on the ground.

The activities were differentiated for Early Years / Special Educational Needs, Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2. Teachers registered online in May, choosing which of the Boxes they wanted for their class (we were also able to accommodate mixed ability classes which emerged as a need), and one of two weeks in June for delivery. Every school that took part was also invited to join an hour-long live Zoom session with a farmer growing wheat for Warburtons. The live sessions were designed and scripted to give children the opportunity to 'meet' a real farmer, and a Warburtons Food Scientist, ask questions and be interactive. Over 3000 children took part in the live sessions with an age range of 3-11 (plus some older children with SEN/D).

The difference we make

(analysis of feedback from 67 teachers/76 Boxes, return rate of 19%)

Curiosity

- 91% said that all or most of their pupils had wanted to talk to each other about what they were learning
- 88% reported in open text responses that their pupils had benefited from or particularly enjoyed the interactive/sensory nature of the Box

Confidence

- 93% of pupils said they had done something for the first time
- 93% of teachers said that their pupils had been able to try new things in a supported or scaffolded way (gradually decreasing support)
- As a result of this Farm in a Box, 84% of teachers said they felt more confident in running 'real-world' learning activities and 90% said they wanted to take their pupils outside for learning activities more often

Connections

- 82% of teachers said that all or most of their pupils better understood where food comes from

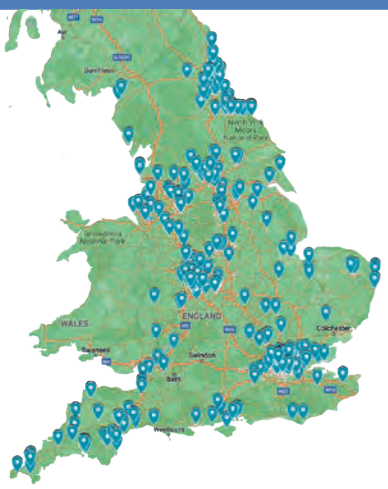
Organisation and delivery

- 97% said the Box and its contents were good or very good
- 98% said the instructions on how to use the resources were good or very good
- 95.5 % said the activities were easy to use

Our Programmes - Farm in a Box National

In partnership with:

HISCOX



The complexities of global warming and the role that we can all play in taking action on climate change are challenging to understand for everyone. To help support Key Stage 2 pupils grasp this difficult subject, we developed Climate Action Farm in a Box in partnership with The Hiscox Foundation. The Box explored the subject through the lens of food and farming, bringing to life the impact of global warming on the food we eat, and how our food choices can contribute to climate change.

The Box was timed to arrive in schools during the UN Conference on Climate Change (COP26) in Glasgow. There were 10 hands-on activities in the Box and nearly all the resources needed to complete the activities were included. The activities were carefully sequenced so each new activity builds upon previous learning. To assist each activity 10 short films were produced, these were fronted and narrated by children aged between 7-11 years.

1000 Boxes were delivered to 620 schools across the first two weeks of November 2021, supporting c. 26,000 children in areas of the highest deprivation around the country.

Teachers and pupils were also invited to attend (virtually) a LIVE session, enabling children to meet and interact with a range of interesting people involved in farming and food production who are taking action for the climate. 247 classes attended this LIVE session on 12th November 2021.

Our feedback

“We are creating a School Action Plan as a result of Climate Action Farm in a Box.” Heron Park Academy

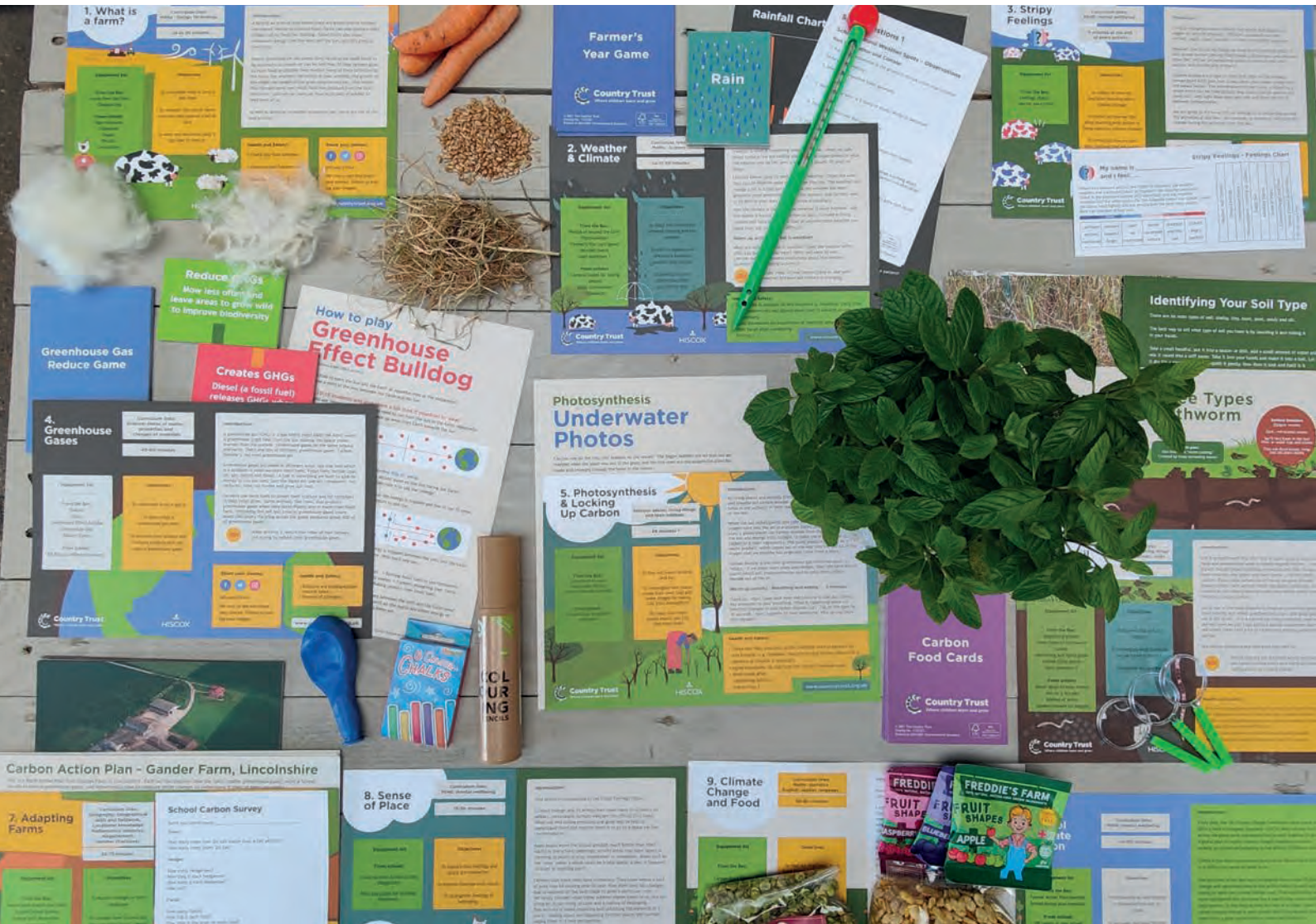
“I love farm in a box. It makes the outside world real within the school environment.” Our Lady of Victories Catholic School

“Increased knowledge of climate change and farming and why it is relevant to them.” Teacher in Scunthorpe

“It makes what children think impossible, possible.” Heron Park Academy

“I feel it will give all students a greater understanding of how we can help the environment.” Broadfield Primary school

“All of the activities learnt us new and exciting things.” - Pupil



Our feedback

“The video was good and engaged the children, they were able to use lots of connections to the science topic on plants and animals.” Ashwater Primary School

“The activity cards for the teachers were great. Simple to follow and easy to match up with the children’s learning. Just what teachers look for! Thank you” St Joseph’s Catholic School

“Farm in a box is an excellent resource. It takes out the thought process that goes into planning a session that some teachers may feel less confident about delivering. With everything there in one box with associated resources the sessions were easily delivered and accessed by all.” Our Lady of Victories Catholic School

“Willingness to try new things – some children had already decided that they didn’t like brown bread, but then liked it when they tried it.” Our Lady’s Catholic Primary School

“I think the awareness it has given them of where their food has come from and its connection with the natural world is invaluable and will be an important factor in helping them develop a concern for the environment the welfare of which, of course, is imperative for their own and future generations’ life chances ...” Isaac Newton Academy

“All the different activities in Farm in a Box have also helped them realise how interconnected things are.” St Patrick’s Catholic Primary School

“The box also offered the children the opportunity to see careers linked to science.” Bewley Primary School

“Almost all of my pupils live in tower blocks or flats with little or no garden. They have learned valuable facts and skills participating in the activities in the Farm in a Box.”

Ivybridge Primary School

Case Studies - Farm in a Box National

A teacher from Ark Primary School, Ilford told us..

[Because of Covid] The children haven't learnt all the important real-life lessons they acquire from just being out and about. We haven't taken them anywhere at all.

Particularly for the younger children, I think they've missed out on gaining confidence, they're not as independent because they've been at home more. They haven't had the sensory experiences of seeing and touching and smelling and hearing things .

The [Farm in a Box] introductory video was really good. They loved watching that. And that set a lovely context… They loved it, it was quite short, there was sort of music and lots of visuals and, and little sort of cartoony diagrams, showing things clearly, it was quite varied.

The children certainly had a lot of fun. They loved trying to grind down the corn, and they love trying the bread. And I think it's given them a better understanding because, for many children, I guess they think bread grows on trees or something. So I think it has certainly made them more aware of the different processes. I think it was in the introductory video that it explained about corn, how it goes to the barn, then processed in a factory, then goes to the shops and bakeries. So I think it helps them have a clearer understanding of where it came from and a better appreciation of the natural world and a love for the environment. Because obviously, [food] is not made in a factory or a box, it's come from a plant. So I think that all has been very helpful and very good.

I was totally impressed with all of it, it was so well thought through. I mean, everything was there, everything was so clear and easy just to pick up and teach from even if you haven't really had much of a chance to look at it.

A teacher from St Patrick's School, Workington told us...

"What we did find was, Farm in a Box opened up children's minds to try different kinds of foods. And we've got a couple of children who are really quite picky eaters, to be honest with you, but they are actually now willing to try.

It's the progress that we've actually started in September, but I think it's actually helped in the past few weeks [during the FIAB activities] seeing where food comes from.

They've been asking lots of questions, which is really great for reception about food and about taste. I've had lots of conversations about different kinds of foods and how they grow. And that links with how important the weather is and the climate is for the kinds of foods that you can grow. We are Reception and I was quite pleased with the reaction.

They all wondered about the different kinds of things he (the farmer) did on the farm, and the kinds of machinery that he had, **it kind of widened their worlds, that's their curiosity, to widen their world, and to make them aware that these things out there exist.**

So that was the curiosity and the feeling the different textures that they felt in the field activity. They're really curious about that. They're curious about why bees do the waggle dance.

We've got children trying food that they wouldn't have tried before and curious about where it comes from. So I take that as a win. One parent has actually mentioned that their child is now trying lots of foods that they weren't trying before."

make:
bomb
Method

Policy

The Country Trust is speaking up to ensure food, farming and countryside opportunities and experiences are available to ALL children, especially persistently disadvantaged children. We know these opportunities offer the right balance of emotional, physical, social and educational development that will benefit children and are vitally important for the future of British agriculture, and for people and planet to thrive.

That's why we want to see educational access to farms established as a stand-alone public good, worthy of public support in its own right, alongside other 'public goods' such as clean air, clean water etc. in the new Environmental Land Management Scheme. We have both led the charge, supported by 26 organisations and individuals, and lent our voice to others, for example Sustain, in their work to achieve this change.

And why, together with the Food Education Network, we are pushing for better and more food and agriculture education. After all, how we eat determines how the world is used and how we live. A key part of this is backing the 'Eat and Learn' recommendations in the National Food Strategy as part of the Food Education Network. We are asking Government to work across departments and take a creative approach to ensure we achieve the much-needed shift in food culture to create a sustainable, resilient food system that supports people to live healthy lives. We believe food and farming education is a vital thread that should be running through key strategies on health, education, agriculture and sustainability and climate change.

And why we are working to establish food, farming and countryside opportunities as part of a fair education for all children, ensuring no child's future is limited by their socio-economic background, making the most of the opportunities our membership of the Fair Education Alliance presents. We support the call for a Nature Premium, as government funded, statutory requirement for schools to take children regularly into nature.

Amplifying our message and strengthening the case for support

Plans for the future

Strategic direction

The Country Trust has recently finalised a 5 year plan, with a refreshed vision, mission, Theory of Change, and a new ambition to substantially increase the number of children we reach.

The Plan has a new emphasis on measuring the difference we make and working with and through others. Covid 19 has proved to be a catalyst for change and we have developed new programmes which we hope will underpin our growth and impact. We also have a new sense of urgency as, not only have disadvantaged children been worst affected by Covid in terms of their educational development and their mental and physical fitness, but the number of children living in poverty has risen sharply as a result of the pandemic. We recognise that there is a need for many more farmers and growers to step forward to meet the demand and the need for farm-centred education, at a time when there is no guarantee that government support for educational access to farms will continue. There is also a need for teachers, particularly those working in disadvantaged areas, to be supported to access opportunities and experiences and to sustain the impact.

The pillars of our new Plan are:

Growth

5 year ambition - 120,000 children p.a. from disadvantaged backgrounds should be participating in our programmes or activities we facilitate.

• Up to a third in our core, face to face programmes. The majority of those participating in our face-to-face core programmes will be from the most persistently disadvantaged areas of the country.

Diversification

- A third through centralised provision (new models such as Farm in a Box National)
- A third through partnerships/franchise/network models

We will have established programmes to develop the capability of teachers, farmers and potentially parents too, with a particular focus on sustaining the impact of our activities.

Influence

We will focus our effort on those policies that support our mission.
Opportunities and experiences, in particular food, farming and countryside opportunities will be recognised as a vital part of every child's education.

Impact and Evaluation

We will know the relative impact of each of our programmes and this will be clearly presented to teachers and funders.
Our evaluation framework may be being used by others.
We will have published the first research into the long-term impact of farm visits and how different contexts/approaches can influence that impact.

Infrastructure

We will have the organisational structure to support and sustain the Plan. This is particularly important for IT.

Plans for the future

Reimagining Residentials

We have seen children flourish thanks to extended quality time spent in the countryside, experiencing so many aspects of rural Suffolk, Norfolk and Yorkshire. However, our residential programme has developed organically and to a certain extent opportunistically over the last 27 years, and we now have a strong understanding of the moments that create the greatest impact. We want to embrace this learning and take bold steps towards ensuring that we make most effective use of a Country Trust residential to achieve our outcomes including enabling children to experience the Farm to Fork story.

Our objectives for reimagined Residentials moving forward are:

- **To be able to offer more residentials.**
- **To be able to continue to offer a competitively low price so that schools and pupils are easily able to imagine accessing them.**
- **To be able to closely link each aspect of our residentials with the Theory of Change work CT has done this year and to our evaluation and impact framework.**
- **To be able to better support teachers and parents to ensure wrap around value and sustained impact.**

Fundraising Performance

Income increased by 76.7% and expenditure increased by 75.1% in comparison to 2020 (to £992,527 and £966,950) as a result of an encouraging increase in activity levels after the impact of the pandemic throughout 2020. 50.4% of our income was unrestricted. £212,725 of donated income received in 2021 was deferred to 2022. A proportion of this relates to activity deferred because of the impact of Covid-19, the remainder is deferred because it relates to the planned delivery of activity in the spring and summer terms.

Covid further delayed our plans for investing our legacy income in support of our broader charitable objectives. However, our reserves position (fundamentally comprised of legacy income) gave us the confidence and the capacity to:

- Begin to grow our team of self-employed contractors in line with our 5 Year Plan
- Offer Farm in a Box to some schools in preparation for their farm visit, or as an alternative when visits were cancelled at short notice as a result of Covid.
- Offer more transport subsidies than ever before (relative to the scale of our visit programme) where the cost of coach travel was a barrier to participation.
- Continue to innovate around Farm in a Box
- Continue to review our existing programmes and train the team to ensure we kept pace with Covid-19 guidance.

Controls

Financial management consists of the monthly preparation of management accounts that are distributed to all Trustees for review. Monthly forecasting enables Trustees to view the financial landscape ahead. Our mid-year review was mostly undertaken in September to ensure that we had as much understanding as possible of our operating context.

CEO or Assistant Director authorisation is required for all payments; all payments made by the Charity over £5000 require dual authorisation with an authorised Trustee signatory. The charity had a successful Independent Examination (IE) in 2020 and Trustees chose an IE again for 2021.

The Charity has not yet implemented plans to start using a cash management platform for our unrestricted reserves owing to a lack of staff capacity and the continued very low level of interest rates during the year.

Reserves policy

Trustees continued to operate a RAG approach to assessing reserves with a green zone between 4 and 6 months of operating reserves. Based on 2021 expenditure, this would indicate a reserves level of between approximately £322,316 and £483,475. Based on our 2022 expenditure budget, this would indicate reserves of between £600,000 and £900,000.

Overall reserves rose slightly from £747,141 to £772,718, within this unrestricted reserves decreased slightly from £727,076 to £686,314 including designated reserves, though a significant use of reserves had been planned pre-Covid (see ‘Performance’ above). At a time when more and more children are being left behind, made so much worse by the pandemic, we have launched an ambitious and urgent 5 Year Plan to connect many thousands more children with the land that sustains us all. We have therefore embarked on a material expansion, using some of our reserves as a foundation but also substantially increasing our fundraising. Our plans will result in a significant budget deficit but we have mechanisms in place to reduce the deficit should our monitoring indicate any cause for concern and our medium term intention is of course to return to at least a break even budget.

Fundraising Performance

The Board has adopted the Charity Governance Code and is working through the seven principles to ensure good governance.

Legal and ethical fundraising remains a key objective of the Trustees, and they take their responsibilities with regard to proper fundraising practice very seriously. They are guided by the Charity Commission's Charity fundraising: a guide to trustee duties (CC20 updated in 2016)) as well as the updated Charity Governance Code, and the Guidance Note from the Fundraising Regulator on New Reporting Requirements published October 2018 and updated in 2020, and the Covid fundraising guidance issued during 2021. The Country Trust is registered with the Fundraising Regulator and complies with the Code of Fundraising Practice.

In 2021, approximately 72% of our income came from charitable trusts and foundations, 13% from companies, 10% from individual donors (including legacies), and 5% from service users, primarily schools in the form of the balance of the cost of residential visits after our subsidy has been applied, or as a contribution from schools towards the cost of Food Discovery programmes. Service delivery was much reduced in 2021 because of the impact of Covid on programmes.

Donors to The Country Trust can be assured that:

- Fundraising activity is included within the Trust's Risk Register, which is reviewed at each Board meeting; a senior member of staff directly involved with fundraising is present at every Board meeting.

- The Charity does not make use of professional fundraisers or commercial participators.

- The Charity complies with the Fundraising Regulator's voluntary regulation scheme.

- All fundraising is carried out by employed staff, managed by the CEO or Senior Managers who report to the CEO, or very occasionally by named volunteers working closely with the employed staff on our behalf, primarily networking with peers and friends. Some volunteers will fundraise in aid of The Country Trust and the Charity provides support for them on its website.

- The Charity did not receive any complaints about fundraising activities carried out by The Charity or someone acting on The Charity's behalf but recognises it could improve the visibility of how to complain on its website.

- The Charity respects the privacy of the public, including the need to take special care with vulnerable people. Any mailing or emailing for fundraising purposes is in accordance with GDPR preferences. Public fundraising is through online fundraising platforms, or through static collection goblets and is carried out in accordance with the Code of Fundraising Practice. The Charity undertakes very little face to face fundraising and what is done is primarily by invitation.

The Charity will comply with requests issued by the Fundraising Preference Service. The Charity strives to maintain GDPR compliance and has registered with the ICO.

Fundraising Performance

Principal funding sources

As described above the Charity continues to derive most of its funding from grant making trusts. We continued to sustain a significant percentage of funding within multi-year agreements.

We are very grateful indeed for the support received from all our funders, and mention here those who have given permission for their support to be acknowledged in this report ;

Aldgate and Allhallows Foundation, Ardian UK and the Ardian Foundation, The Ashden Trust, Bruno Schroder Trust, The CLA Charitable Trust, Lance Coates Charitable Trust, Ernest Cook Trust, The Girdlers' Company, WA Handley Trust, The Hiscox Foundation, A Hume Country Clothing and Outfitters, The Joicey Trust, Sir James Knott Trust, The Lund Trust, The Mercers' Company, The Rank Foundation, The Rothschild Foundation, The Steel Charitable Trust, The Bernard Sunley Charitable Foundation, Felix Thornley Cobbold Agricultural Trust, Warburtons Ltd, Westminster Foundation, The Garfield Weston Foundation, The Wheler Foundation.

Although once again, we were unable to hold any events for our supporters to see our work at first hand during the year, the Charity continued to be shielded from the worst effects of Covid-19 on fundraising as it does not have a large public facing income stream, nor does it rely on trading income. The Trustees would like to particularly thank those Foundations, companies and individuals who provided extra funds during the year in recognition of the challenges we faced, as well as those who have continued to support us at a time when their own resources have been hard hit and demands have escalated. Particular thanks to the Bernard Sunley Foundation for their substantial gift to mark their 60th Anniversary. Thanks are also due to the Charity's President and Vice Presidents for their support in identifying and making introductions to potential new funding sources.

Transport costs

Requests for transport subsidies as a proportion of the number of farm visits delivered were significantly higher in 2021 than in 2019 as schools in the areas hardest hit by Covid were desperate to arrange visits for their children but were unable to ask parents for contributions. After adjusting for the lack of Warburton's visits where all schools are eligible for a transport subsidy and taking into account the difference in the overall number of visits between the two years, claims were almost double.

Structure, Governance and Management

Structure

The Country Trust was founded in 1978 and is registered with the Charity Commission under Charity Number 1122103. The Board of Trustees, President, Board of Vice Presidents, Chief Executive Officer, senior staff members and professional advisers are listed on page 1.

On the 23rd November 2007 the Country Trust was incorporated; it became a company limited by guarantee and not having share capital. On the 1st January 2008, the Charity commenced trading as an incorporated Charity. The Company number is 6436266 and the registered address is shown on page 1.

Governing document

The Charity is governed by the Memorandum and Articles of Association of the Country Trust Ltd.

Governing Body

The structure of the Charity consists of a Board of Trustees and a Chief Executive supported by a Senior Leadership Team. The Board of Trustees is a self-appointing body and includes a good gender balance and a range of experience. Several Trustees have direct experience of our services either as teachers or active farmer hosts. Trustees with the relevant experience have particularly responsibility for Finance and Safeguarding and during 2021, for strategic planning. The Chief Executive reports directly to the Chair of Trustees and is responsible for the day-to-day running of the Charity. The Charity is very fortunate to be supported by a President and Vice Presidents who are an advisory, networking and fundraising resource.

Recruitment and training of Trustees

Trustees are recruited as and when required through advertising, personal recommendation and through the recommendation of third-party advisors according to the Board's specifications concerning eligibility, personal competence, and specialist skills. Potential candidates are invited to apply and are interviewed by the Chair and at least one other Trustee. Successful applicants are co-opted to join the Board until their appointment is confirmed. The Chair of Trustees Anne Bufton-McCoy stepped down at the start of 2021 and Steve Bell was appointed as Chair. Trustees were encouraged to undertake training during 2021, however external formal training courses only resumed later in the year as a result of the pandemic.

Organisational management

The Charity's Trustees are legally responsible for the overall management and control of the Charity. The Board of Trustees meets at least four times a year to discuss and implement strategic issues, monitor income and expenditure, monitor risk, review and approve policies and approve annual budgets. There were more meetings in 2021 to progress strategic planning. The day to day running of the Charity is delegated to the Chief Executive, the Senior Leadership Team, staff and sessional staff, who report to the Board monthly and quarterly.

Risk management

The Board of Trustees is responsible for the management of risks associated with the activities of the Charity. The Board refers to the Charity's Risk Register at each meeting which is prepared and updated by the Chief Executive.

The top 6 major risks identified and monitored in 2021 were:

- Public Health Emergency – mitigated by: continued close monitoring of Government guidance, regular reviews of our health and safety and safeguarding guidance and training of our delivery team, open channels of communication with teachers and farmers.
- Education Funding cuts –mitigated by: continued focus on measuring and reporting on the relevance of our work including a new Impact Framework, working to influence policy, adapting our fundraising.
- Poor governance by the Board (key during CV19)– mitigated by: regular Board meetings, sub committees for finance and strategy, key decisions checked with external professionals eg insurers, accountants, funders.
- Major loss of farms to host visits – mitigated by: regular communication with hosts plus training webinar, active role in influencing agricultural policy re educational access, active recruitment of new hosts.
- Unsatisfactory fundraising – mitigated by: Annual budgets include risk analysis, monthly financial reports show progress against budget, 'new' spend is brought to the Board, detailed Mid-Year Review, active communication with our funders, new product development.
- Serious cyber security attack – mitigated by: moving to an inhouse team of two fulltime IT staff, new IT helpdesk, training, ongoing watch on cyber security issues, cloud storage across the organisation.

Risk Assessments are prepared by staff and self-employed sessional contractors for all activities led by the Charity. As a result of recommendations arising from our regular reviews of Health and Safety, the Charity now ensures that all our active host farmers have a Risk Assessment in place for Country Trust visits. These Risk Assessments are prepared, owned and managed by the host farmer but where required, support for the process including signposting to external industry guidance, is provided by the Charity. The Charity receives the help of professional advisors for risks associated with health and safety, safeguarding and employment practice. All our health and safety and safeguarding practices and processes were reviewed again in time for the start of the new academic year in the light of Covid-19 to ensure we were operating safely.

The Board of Trustees also has in place key controls for use by the Charity, such as formal agendas for meetings, comprehensive strategic planning and monthly management accounting, established lines of reporting, formal written policies and a review schedule, clear authorisation levels for all payments and a safeguarding policy which provides guidance for all on best safe practice for adults within an organisation working with children.

Structure, Governance and Management

Openness and accountability

We strive to involve participants in programme design and the comprehensive feedback gathered from stakeholders during the year is constantly used to inform practice. Our annual evaluation reports are published online and publicised through social media and printed materials. We made some progress in making opportunities to listen to children's voices in 2021 and have plans to continue this and understand the priorities of the communities we serve in 2022.

We adopted a new Position Statement at the end of 2021:

The Country Trust connects children with the land that sustains us all. We aim to foster an understanding of farming, food production and countryside management in all its many guises and raise awareness of the way in which we are all participants in agriculture through the food that we eat.

Country Trust visits and activities are structured to support the National Curriculum, personal development and wellbeing. Our carefully planned opportunities and experiences are designed to empower children to be curious, confident and create change in their lives and the world around them so that they, and society can thrive.

We do not consider ourselves to be a charity that campaigns for or against any particular form of farming or land management. However:

- **We do seek to influence policy makers where this makes it more likely that we will achieve our mission. For example, for educational access to farms to be supported as a standalone public good, and for food and farming education to be a vital part of education, health, wellbeing, sustainability and food strategies.**

- **In the context of the climate emergency and rapid loss of biodiversity, we design our programmes to help children to understand the unique responsibilities that farmers and land managers have for soil health and biodiversity, stewardship of non-renewable resources and locking up carbon.**

Our intention is that children will be in a better position to make informed decisions, understanding that their choices matter, and may be influential in the future shape of farming and the countryside.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

We want our team and our programmes to better the reflect the amazing diversity of the children and the communities we serve and continue to take steps towards this. We have worked hard to try and promote recruitment opportunities through a wide range of networks and are exploring when and how we can support people to join us who may not have the formal qualifications or experience that we have required in the past. Diversity was the theme of our Annual Conference in February 2021 and working groups which arose from the conference continue to make progress. We are excited about the connections, creativity and inspiration that this is unlocking.

GDPR

We use our database to extend our compliance with the GDPR regulations – subscription to Newsletters will now allow for double opt in as well as providing the usual ability to unsubscribe. We have implemented processes to remove data relating to recruitment for unsuccessful applicants after a specified time period.

Cybersecurity

The IT Team is now staffed by two full-time employees. This has allowed us to step up activities relating to cybersecurity. All CT staff are now required to undertake Cybersecurity training from the UK's National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC). The CT is part of pilot monitoring programmes run by the NCSC to combat Mail and Web fraud. It is our intention to work towards the NCSC's 'Cyber Essentials' certification. There were no serious issues in 2021.

Safeguarding

Government guidance is clear that all organisations working with children, young people, families, parents and carers have particular responsibilities. At The Country Trust we recognise that the welfare of all children is paramount and that all children, regardless of ability or culture, have equal rights of protection. We have a duty of care when they are in our charge, and we will do everything we can to provide a safe and caring environment whilst they attend our activities. Our policy for child safeguarding is on our website and is reviewed annually by our Board of Trustees. The Country Trust is a member of SAFEcic, an umbrella organisation providing safeguarding training, advice and standards. All staff, volunteers and Trustees undertake safeguarding training and undergo DBS checks where this is permitted for their role.
Safeguarding is reviewed at the quarterly Board meetings. There was one safeguarding concern raised within 2021 relating to school staffing ratios. Trustees have continued to keep their safeguarding training up to date and keep abreast of any significant changes.

Health and Safety

Our health and safety policy can be found on our website and is reviewed every two years. Following the last review, and a review of our policy in practice undertaken by Trustees, we strengthened our practice through making it a requirement that every active farmer host has an up-to-date Risk Assessment. Safeguarding, and Health and Safety reports of all disclosures, accidents, incidents and near misses and subsequent actions taken are brought to every Board meeting, preserving the appropriate confidentiality. 'Lessons learned' are shared with all staff/contractors as part of ongoing learning. Guidance for our delivery team was provided on the latest Covid requirements/best practice before the start of the autumn term and they receive regular updates as appropriate. Pre-visits to farms are mandatory for schools in order that proper Covid and other planning can be undertaken including understanding the particular needs of the children.

The Trustees would like to thank everyone involved with The Country Trust – farmers, teachers, funders, our delivery team, staff, volunteers and everyone who has provided such magnificent support and encouragement during another challenging year.

Statement of compliance with prevailing laws and regulations

The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the accounting policies set out in notes to the accounts and comply with the charity's governing document, the Charities Act 2011 and Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland published in October 2019.

This report has been prepared in accordance with the provisions applicable to companies entitled to the small companies' exemption.

Approved by the Board of Trustees on _____14th April 2022_____

Signed on its behalf by _____Steve Bell _____

Steve Bell, Chair of Trustees

Accounts

The Country Trust

Independent Examiner's Report to the trustees of The Country Trust ("the Company")

I report to the charity trustees on my examination of the accounts of the charitable company for the year ended 31 December 2021 which are set out on pages 77 to 93.

Responsibilities and basis of report

As the charity trustees of the charitable company (and also its directors for the purposes of company law) you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Companies Act 2006 ('the 2006 Act').

Having satisfied myself that the accounts of the charitable company are not required to be audited under Part 16 of the 2006 Act and are eligible for independent examination, I report in respect of my examination of your charity's accounts as carried out under section 145 of the Charities Act 2011 ('the 2011 Act'). In carrying out my examination I have followed the Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the 2011 Act.

Independent examiner's statement

Since the Company's gross income exceeded £250,000 your examiner must be a member of a body listed in section 145 of the 2011 Act. I confirm that I am qualified to undertake the examination because I am a member of The Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales, which is one of the listed bodies.

I have completed my examination. I confirm that no matters have come to my attention in connection with the examination giving me cause to believe:

1. accounting records were not kept in respect of the charitable company as required by section 386 of the 2006 Act; or
2. the accounts do not accord with those records; or
3. the accounts do not comply with the accounting requirements of section 396 of the 2006 Act other than any requirement that the accounts give a 'true and fair view' which is not a matter considered as part of an independent examination; or
4. the accounts have not been prepared in accordance with the methods and principles of the Statement of Recommended Practice for accounting and reporting by charities applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102).

I have no concerns and have come across no other matters in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn in this report in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

Colin Andrew Barker FCA
146 New London Road
Chelmsford
Essex
CM2 0AW

Date:.....14th April 2022.....

The Country Trust

Statement of Financial Activities for the Year Ended 31 December 2021
(Including Income and Expenditure Account and Other Comprehensive Income)

	Note	Unrestricted funds £	Restricted funds £	Total 2021 £	Total 2020 £
Income and Endowments from:					
Donations and legacies	3	500,698	451,179	951,877	546,572
Charitable activities	4	-	40,532	40,532	14,382
Investment income	5	118	-	118	832
Total income		500,816	491,711	992,527	561,786
Expenditure on:					
Raising funds		80,274	-	80,274	92,344
Charitable activities	6	386,412	500,264	886,676	459,833
Total expenditure		466,686	500,264	966,950	552,177
Net income/(expenditure)		34,130	(8,553)	25,577	9,609
Transfers between funds		(74,892)	74,892	-	-
Net movement in funds		(40,762)	66,339	25,577	9,609
Reconciliation of funds					
Total funds brought forward		727,076	20,065	747,141	737,532
Total funds carried forward	17	686,314	86,404	772,718	747,141

All of the charity's activities derive from continuing operations during the above two periods.

The Country Trust

(Registration number: 6436266)
Balance Sheet as at 31 December 2021

	Note	2021 £	2020 £
Fixed assets	12	4,938	3,760
Current assets			
Debtors	13	24,988	29,984
Cash at bank and in hand	14	1,016,619	1,282,306
		1,041,607	1,312,290
Creditors: Amounts falling due within one year	15	(273,827)	(568,909)
Net current assets		767,780	743,381
Net assets		772,718	747,141
Funds of the charity:			
Restricted		86,404	20,065
Unrestricted funds			
General funds		686,314	577,076
Designated Funds		-	150,000
Total unrestricted funds		686,314	727,076
Total funds	17	772,718	747,141

For the financial year ending 31 December 2021 the charity was entitled to exemption from audit under section 477 of the Companies Act 2006 relating to small companies.

Directors' responsibilities:

- The members have not required the charity to obtain an audit of its accounts for the year in question in accordance with section 476; and
- The directors acknowledge their responsibilities for complying with the requirements of the Act with respect to accounting records and the preparation of accounts.

These financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the special provisions relating to companies subject to the small companies regime within Part 15 of the Companies Act 2006.

The financial statements on pages 77 to 93 were approved by the trustees, and authorised for issue on ..... and signed on their behalf by:

.....
S D Bell BA (Hons)
Trustee

The Country Trust

Statement of Cash Flows for the Year Ended 31 December 2021

	Note	2021 £	2020 £
Cash flows from operating activities			
Net cash income		25,577	9,609
Adjustments to cash flows from non-cash items			
Depreciation		1,400	1,254
Investment income	5	(118)	(832)
		26,859	10,031
Working capital adjustments			
Decrease in debtors	13	4,996	1,021
Increase in creditors	15	9,785	6,223
(Decrease)/increase in deferred income		(304,867)	385,556
Net cash flows from operating activities		(263,227)	402,831
Cash flows from investing activities			
Interest receivable and similar income	5	118	832
Purchase of tangible fixed assets	12	(2,578)	(236)
Net cash flows from investing activities		(2,460)	596
Net (decrease)/increase in cash and cash equivalents		(265,687)	403,427
Cash and cash equivalents at 1 January		1,282,306	878,879
Cash and cash equivalents at 31 December		1,016,619	1,282,306

All of the cash flows are derived from continuing operations during the above two periods.

1 Charity status

The charity is limited by guarantee, incorporated in England & Wales, and consequently does not have share capital. Each of the trustees is liable to contribute an amount not exceeding £1 towards the assets of the charity in the event of liquidation.

2 Accounting policies

Summary of significant accounting policies and key accounting estimates
The principal accounting policies applied in the preparation of these financial statements are set out below. These policies have been consistently applied to all the years presented, unless otherwise stated.

Statement of compliance
The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice (applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102)) (issued in October 2019) - (Charities SORP (FRS 102)), the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) and the Companies Act 2006.

Basis of preparation
The Country Trust meets the definition of a public benefit entity under FRS 102. Assets and liabilities are initially recognised at historical cost or transaction value unless otherwise stated in the relevant accounting policy notes.

Going concern
The trustees consider that there are no material uncertainties about the charity's ability to continue as a going concern nor any significant areas of uncertainty that affect the carrying value of assets held by the charity.

Income and endowments
All income is recognised once the charity has entitlement to the income, it is probable that the income will be received and the amount of the income receivable can be measured reliably.

Donations and legacies

All donated income and grants receivable are included in income on receipt except where the donor requires that the sum is to be treated as income in future accounting periods, in which case it is deferred. Where a donor has specified that a donation should be used for a particular purpose this is treated as restricted income.

Grants receivable

Grants are recognised when the charity has an entitlement to the funds and any conditions linked to the grants have been met. Where performance conditions are attached to the grant and are yet to be met, the income is recognised as a liability and included on the balance sheet as deferred income to be released.

Deferred income

Deferred income represents grants and service fees received in respect of visits and activities taking place after the year end. It also represents unrestricted income where that income relates to future periods.

Investment income

Interest received is accounted for when the interest is credited on the Bank deposit accounts.

Charitable activities

Income from charitable activities arises from educational visits and activities where schools or other partners fund all or a proportion of the costs incurred.

Expenditure

All expenditure is accounted for on an accruals basis and includes VAT as the charity is not VAT registered. Governance costs are associated with the governance arrangements of the charity. Where expenditure is apportioned between charitable activities and support costs, this is done based on the portion that is applicable to the direct provision of educational visits and activities or the administration of the charity. In the case of staff costs, this is based on the time spent on charitable activities or administration.

Raising funds

These are costs incurred in attracting voluntary income, the management of investments and those incurred in trading activities that raise funds.

Charitable activities

Charitable activities comprise costs incurred in carrying out educational visits and activities to farms, estates and the wider countryside, and in schools.

Governance costs

These include the costs attributable to the charity's compliance with constitutional and statutory requirements, including audit, strategic management and trustees's meetings and reimbursed expenses.

Taxation

The charity is considered to pass the tests set out in Paragraph 1 Schedule 6 of the Finance Act 2010 and therefore it meets the definition of a charitable company for UK corporation tax purposes. Accordingly, the charity is potentially exempt from taxation in respect of income or capital gains received within categories covered by Chapter 3 Part 11 of the Corporation Tax Act 2010 or Section 256 of the Taxation of Chargeable Gains Act 1992, to the extent that such income or gains are applied exclusively to charitable purposes.

Tangible fixed assets

Individual fixed assets costing a significant amount are initially recorded at cost, less any subsequent accumulated depreciation and subsequent accumulated impairment losses.

Depreciation and amortisation
Depreciation is provided on tangible fixed assets so as to write off the cost or valuation, less any estimated residual value, over their expected useful economic life as follows:

Asset class	Depreciation method and rate
Office equipment & software	25% reducing balance

Trade debtors
Trade and other debtors are recognised at the settlement amount due.

Cash and cash equivalents
Cash and cash equivalents comprise cash on hand and call deposits, and other short-term highly liquid investments that are readily convertible to a known amount of cash and are subject to an insignificant risk of change in value.

Trade creditors
Creditors are recognised at their settlement amount.

Fund structure
Unrestricted income funds are general funds that are available for use at the trustees's discretion in furtherance of the objectives of the charity.

Designated funds are funds set aside by the trustees out of unrestricted funds for specific future purposes or projects.

Restricted income funds are those donated or received for use in a particular area or for specific purposes, the use of which is restricted to that area or purpose.

Pensions and other post retirement obligations
The charity operates a defined contribution pension scheme which is a pension plan under which fixed contributions are paid into a pension fund and the charity has no legal or constructive obligation to pay further contributions even if the fund does not hold sufficient assets to pay all employees the benefits relating to employee service in the current and prior periods.

Contributions to defined contribution plans are recognised in the Statement of Financial Activities when they are due. If contribution payments exceed the contribution due for service, the excess is recognised as a prepayment.

Financial instruments

Classification

The charitable company only holds basic financial instruments as defined in FRS 102. The financial assets and financial liabilities of the charitable company and their measurement basis are as follows:

Financial assets - trade and other debtors are basic financial instruments and are debt instruments measured at amortised cost. Prepayments are not financial instruments.

Cash at bank - is classified as a basic financial instrument and is measured at face value.

Financial liabilities - trade creditors, accruals and other creditors are financial instruments, and are measured at amortised cost. Taxation and social security are not included in the financial instruments disclosure definition. Deferred income is not deemed to be a financial liability, as the cash settlement has already taken place and there is an obligation to deliver services rather than cash or another financial instrument.

3 Income from donations and legacies

	Unrestricted funds £	Restricted funds £	Total 2021 £
Donations	63,695	49,669	113,364
Legacies	96,000	-	96,000
Charitable Trusts and grant making bodies	340,368	401,510	741,878
Job retention scheme grant	635	-	635
	500,698	451,179	951,877

	Unrestricted funds £	Restricted funds £	Total 2020 £
Donations	69,348	24,561	93,909
Charitable Trusts and grant making bodies	296,667	136,909	433,576
Job retention scheme grant	11,797	7,290	19,087
	377,812	168,760	546,572

4 Income from charitable activities

	Unrestricted funds £	Restricted funds £	Total 2021 £
Countryside Discovery Residential Visits	-	31,332	31,332
Food Discovery	-	4,200	4,200
Farm Visits	-	5,000	5,000
	-	40,532	40,532

	Unrestricted funds £	Restricted funds £	Total 2020 £
Countryside Discovery Residential Visits	-	5,308	5,308
Food Discovery	-	9,074	9,074
	-	14,382	14,382

5 Investment income

	Unrestricted funds £	Restricted funds £	Total 2021 £
Interest receivable on bank deposits	118	-	118
	118	-	118

	Unrestricted funds £	Restricted funds £	Total 2020 £
Interest receivable on bank deposits	832	-	832
	832	-	832

6 Expenditure on charitable activities

	Note	Unrestricted funds £	Restricted £	Total 2021 £	Total 2020 £
Programmes - Transport		-	22,213	22,213	3,147
Programmes - Accommodation		52	24,628	24,680	3,705
Expenses relating to visits and activities		141	106,921	107,062	10,169
Self-employed contractors		100,695	301,764	402,459	227,677
Staff mileage, accommodation and expenses		-	24,758	24,758	13,290
Volunteer mileage, accommodation and expenses		-	439	439	27
Staff costs		-	-	-	20,959
Allocated support costs	7	281,994	19,541	301,535	178,099
Governance costs	7	3,530	-	3,530	2,760
		386,412	500,264	886,676	459,833

The expenditure analysed above includes governance costs of £3,530 (2020 - £2,760) which relate directly to charitable activities. See note 7 for further details.

Approximately 32% of transport costs relate to transport subsidies and the remainder are the cost of transport for residential visits.

All Country Trust programmes were brought to a halt in March 2020 as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. Activity resumed at a greatly reduced level in September 2020.

7 Analysis of governance and support costs

Allocated support costs

	Unrestricted funds £	Restricted £	Total 2021 £	Total 2020 £
Staff costs	197,019	-	197,019	106,270
Staff mileage, accommodation and expenses	5,681	-	5,681	3,900
Volunteer mileage, accommodation and expenses	104	-	104	76
Office costs	26,426	-	26,426	21,205
Computer and website costs	3,845	1,014	4,859	2,114
Promotion and publicity	9,673	-	9,673	5,570
Insurance	5,193	-	5,193	3,875
Recruitment and training	3,433	4,057	7,490	9,452
Subscriptions and sundry costs	2,512	70	2,582	2,586
Bank charges	192	-	192	120
Legal and professional fees	36	-	36	1,582
Annual conference	13,323	-	13,323	18,715
Trustee expenses	100	-	100	360
Depreciation	1,401	-	1,401	1,254
Consultancy	13,056	14,400	27,456	1,020
	281,994	19,541	301,535	178,099

Governance costs

	Total 2021 £	Total 2020 £
Independent examiner fees		
Examination of the financial statements	1,600	1,560
Other fees paid to examiners	1,930	1,200
	3,530	2,760

8 Net incoming/outgoing resources

Net incoming resources for the year include:

	2021 £	2020 £
Fees payable to independent examiner	3,530	2,760
Depreciation of fixed assets	1,401	1,254

9 Trustees remuneration and expenses

No trustees, nor any persons connected with them, have received any remuneration from the charity during the year.

No trustees have received any other benefits from the charity during the year.

During the year, no trustees were reimbursed for travel expenses (2020: £132 to 1 trustee).

10 Staff costs

The aggregate payroll costs were as follows:

	2021 £	2020 £
Staff costs during the year were:		
Wages and salaries	254,141	201,372
Social security costs	17,710	13,941
Pension costs	5,442	4,260
	277,293	219,573

The monthly average number of persons (including senior management team) employed by the charity during the year expressed by head count was as follows:

	2021 No	2020 No
Charitable activities	1	1
Support and administration	9	8
	10	9

The average number of persons employed by the charity during the year expressed as full time equivalents was 7.1 (2020: 6.1).

10 (2020 - 9) of the above employees participated in the Defined Contribution Pension Schemes.

No employee received emoluments of more than £60,000 during the year.

The total employee benefits of the key management personnel of the charity were £67,634 (2020 - £66,980).

11 Taxation

The charity is a registered charity and is therefore exempt from taxation.

12 Tangible fixed assets

	Office equipment & software £	Total £
Cost		
At 1 January 2021	9,896	9,896
Additions	2,578	2,578
At 31 December 2021	12,474	12,474
Depreciation		
At 1 January 2021	6,136	6,136
Charge for the year	1,400	1,400
At 31 December 2021	7,536	7,536
Net book value		
At 31 December 2021	4,938	4,938
At 31 December 2020	3,760	3,760

13 Debtors

	2021 £	2020 £
Trade debtors	1,100	-
Prepayments	23,809	29,757
Accrued income	79	227
	24,988	29,984

14 Cash and cash equivalents

	2021	2020
	£	£
Cash at bank	1,016,619	1,282,306

15 Creditors: amounts falling due within one year

	2021	2020
	£	£
Trade creditors	22,508	16,518
Other taxation and social security	8,297	4,556
Other creditors	6,491	7,374
Accruals	3,697	2,760
Deferred income	232,834	537,701
	273,827	568,909

	2021	2020
	£	£
Deferred income at 1 January 2021	537,701	152,143
Resources deferred in the period	225,061	537,701
Amounts released from previous periods	(529,928)	(152,143)
Deferred income at year end	232,834	537,701

16 Pension and other schemes

Defined contribution pension scheme

The charity operates a defined contribution pension scheme. The pension cost charge for the year represents contributions payable by the charity to the scheme and amounted to £5,442 (2020 - £4,260).

17 Funds

Current year:

	Balance at 1 January 2021 £	Incoming resources £	Resources expended £	Transfers £	Balance at 31 December 2021 £
Unrestricted funds					
General	577,076	500,816	(432,340)	40,762	686,314
Designated funds					
i) Risk assessment	10,000	-	(820)	(9,180)	-
ii) Corporate fundraiser	120,000	-	(20,200)	(99,800)	-
iii) Strategic planning and innovation	20,000	-	(13,326)	(6,674)	-
	150,000	-	(34,346)	(115,654)	-
Total Unrestricted	727,076	500,816	(466,686)	(74,892)	686,314
Restricted					
a) Residential	-	76,554	(73,355)	(1,521)	1,678
b) Food discovery	18,522	139,532	(63,681)	(9,647)	84,726
c) Farm visits	-	275,625	(363,228)	87,603	-
d) Country Trust Hampshire	1,543	-	-	(1,543)	-
Total restricted	20,065	491,711	(500,264)	74,892	86,404
Total funds	747,141	992,527	(966,950)	-	772,718

Prior year:

	Balance at 1 January 2020 £	Incoming resources £	Resources expended £	Transfers £	Balance at 31 December 2020 £
Unrestricted funds					
General	596,519	378,644	(330,417)	(67,670)	577,076
Designated funds					
i) Risk assessment	10,000	-	-	-	10,000
ii) Corporate fundraiser	120,000	-	-	-	120,000
iii) Strategic planning and innovation	-	-	-	20,000	20,000
	130,000	-	-	20,000	150,000
Total unrestricted funds	726,519	378,644	(330,417)	(47,670)	727,076
Restricted					
a) Residential	-	15,186	(16,063)	877	-
b) Food discovery	11,013	56,830	(49,321)	-	18,522
c) Farm visits	-	107,387	(154,180)	46,793	-
d) Country Trust Hampshire	-	3,739	(2,196)	-	1,543
Total restricted funds	11,013	183,142	(221,760)	47,670	20,065
Total funds	737,532	561,786	(552,177)	-	747,141

The specific purposes for which the funds are to be applied are as follows:

Restricted funds:
a) Funds to subsidise the cost of Countryside Discovery Residential visits enabling disadvantaged primary age children to experience food, farming and the countryside.
b) For teaching disadvantaged primary school children to grow & cook fresh produce, explore local farms, run playground markets & a harvest feast, and to train teachers in relevant elements of Learning Outside the Classroom.
c) Funds relating to the provision of Farm and Countryside Discovery educational day visits bringing the working countryside to life for primary school children from disadvantaged areas, and now the Farm in a Box programme bringing farm centred, hands on, experiential learning into schools, groups and homes.
d) Provides for Farm and Countryside Discovery educational visits for primary school children to working farms and estates specifically in Hampshire and the surrounding counties.

Designated funds:
i) The Trustees designated £10,000 from unrestricted funds for completing a host farm risk assessment process.
ii) £120,000 was designated to fund a corporate fundraising role for three years.
iii) £20,000 has been designated by the trustees to fund strategic planning and innovation.

During the year, amounts were transferred out of each restricted fund to account for core cost recovery. An additional amount was transferred into the Farm Visits restricted fund from unrestricted funds to eliminate the deficit. The Country Trust Hampshire activity is to be included under Farm Discovery going forward, so the balance has been transferred.

The remaining balances of the three designated funds were transferred to unrestricted as the trustees consider that these amounts no longer apply to the charity's current circumstances.

18 Analysis of net assets between funds

Current year:

	Unrestricted funds £	Designated funds £	Restricted £	Total funds at 31/12/2021 £
Tangible fixed assets	4,938	-	-	4,938
Current assets	603,207	150,000	288,400	1,041,607
Current liabilities	(71,831)	-	(201,996)	(273,827)
Total net assets	536,314	150,000	86,404	772,718

Prior year:

	Unrestricted funds £	Designated funds £	Restricted £	Total funds at 31/12/2020 £
Tangible fixed assets	3,760	-	-	3,760
Current assets	861,623	150,000	300,667	1,312,290
Current liabilities	(288,307)	-	(280,602)	(568,909)
Total net assets	577,076	150,000	20,065	747,141

19 Related party transactions

There were no related party transactions in the year.

20 Prior year Statement of Financial Activities

	Note	Unrestricted £	Restricted £	Total 2020 £
Income and Endowments from:				
Donations and legacies	3	377,812	168,760	546,572
Charitable activities	4	-	14,382	14,382
Investment income	5	832	-	832
Total income		378,644	183,142	561,786
Expenditure on:				
Raising funds		92,344	-	92,344
Charitable activities	6	238,073	221,760	459,833
Total expenditure		330,417	221,760	552,177
Net income/(expenditure)		48,227	(38,618)	9,609
Transfers between funds		(47,670)	47,670	-
Net movement in funds		557	9,052	9,609
Reconciliation of funds				
Total funds brought forward		726,519	11,013	737,532
Total funds carried forward	17	727,076	20,065	747,141

Country Trust

To support our work visit:
www.countrytrust.org.uk

Registered charity no. 1122103

Head office: Moulsham Mill, Parkway, Chelmsford, Essex. CM2 7PX

President: The Duke of Westminster

Registered with FUNDRAISING REGULATOR

ico. Information Commissioner's Office

THE COUNTRY TRUST

England & Wales - Charity number 1122103

Accounts

Country Trust

Where children learn and grow

Annual Report and Accounts 2020

> “Thank you so much for giving the children this opportunity. Their awe, wonder and joy has been amazing to see. They will remember this trip forever! Please can we come back in the Spring?!”
>
> Teacher, Cottingley Primary, first farm visit after schools returned in September

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The Country Trust

President	The Duke of Westminster
Vice Presidents:	Sir Henry Aubrey-Fletcher Bt Sir Nicholas Bacon Bt Lord Boswell of Aynho DL W Butterfield Earl of Carnarvon J M Carr-Ellison J Knappett B Ed NPQH J Compton Lord Dear QPM T. Fanshawe W J Henderson DL M Kendall W Kendall DL D Laing MA RIBA Hon. John Leigh-Pemberton Hon G E Lopes L V Lyle MA PGCE M Maclay DL H R Oliver-Bellasis FRAgS Dame Fiona Reynolds DBE E P Serjeant I N Tegner CA FRSA F Weston MA (Cantab)
Trustees:	The Trustees who served the charity during the year were as follows M A Bufton-McCoy B Phil, Cert Ed (Chair) (resigned January 2021) S D Bell BA (Hons) (Vice Chairman, appointed Chairman January 2021) J Brown BSc (Hons) PGCE T C M Fawcett BSc (Hons) R J Frossell G M H Mills DL N. Partheeban BVM&S BSc(Hons) PGCert(DHH) PIAGrM R.Ani.Tech. FRSA MRCVS (appointed September 2020) J P Serjeant BA (Hons) ACA (resigned December 2020) A J Stafford MA (Oxon)
Chief Executive:	J D Attenborough MA (Cantab) FRSA
Assistant Director:	D Thompson BSc (Hons) (resigned October 2020)
Registered address:	Moulsham Mill, Parkway, Chelmsford CM2 7PX Tel:01258 608363
Bankers:	CAF Bank Ltd. 25 Kings Hill Ave, Kings Hill, West Malling, Kent ME19
Auditors:	Edmund Carr LLP 146 New London Road, Chelmsford, Essex, CM2 0AW
Lawyers:	Wrigleys Solicitors LLP 19 Cookridge Street, Leeds LS2 3AG

The impact of Covid-19

On schools

All schools closed in March 2020 other than for vulnerable children and children with keyworker parents/ carers. Teachers had to reinvent the way education was provided and try to ensure vulnerable children were safe and fed.

On the disadvantaged

Covid-19 hit the poorest communities hardest, the impact of the pandemic was exacerbated by underlying social, economic and health inequalities. The huge disparity in access to everything from education to sufficient good food, to green space to technology became very apparent. Unemployment doubled. It is suggested that without significant and long-lasting interventions the harmful impact of lost learning on the most disadvantaged children will be irreversible.

On The Country Trust

All our programmes were put on hold from mid-March to July 2020. Though schools opened in September, and a small amount of activity resumed, 18,000 children in all missed out on Farm Discovery visits, over 800 children missed their Countryside Discovery Residential visits and we were only able to deliver just under half of our Food Discovery sessions reaching 1,150 children. However, Covid also prompted innovation and we supported some schools/groups during lockdown and launched a significant new programme.

Strategy refresh

Changing: We are in the process of developing our new Strategic Plan 2021-23 and we have redefined the Trust's core mission and primary role. Education remains vital, but we now aim to place more emphasis on social change, using high quality food, farming and countryside opportunities and experiences to empower children to create change in their lives and in the world around them, working towards a more equal, inclusive, cohesive and healthy society. We will ensure we listen to those with lived experience of persistent disadvantage in order to shape our programme design and delivery. We will continue to strive to be an organisation that supports equality, diversity and inclusion.

Achievements 2020

Mission

- During lockdown we provided individually tailored food and farming resources to teachers
- We provided bespoke resources for Barnardo's Foster Families and Young Carers.
- We worked with teachers to develop, trial and rollout a new Country Trust programme, Farm in a Box (FIAB), with 2,161 children enjoying a full Farm in a Box day in school by December.
- In September we successfully adapted our Farm Discovery visits to Covid conditions and held two webinars for our farmer hosts and teachers.13 visits for 328 children took place in the autumn term. 1,123 children visited farms before March 2020.
- Our Food Discovery programme started in 28 schools, for over 1,150 children in 43 classes.
- We led the call for public education to be rewarded as a public good in the debate around the Agriculture Bill.
- We published evaluation reports in September and an interim report for FIAB in December.
- We joined the National Outdoors for All Working Group, The Fair Education Alliance and Sustain.

Workforce

- We created a Country Trust Self Employed Support Scheme to bridge gaps in Government provision as our majority-self-employed regional team are critical to delivering our mission and we could not risk losing them. We utilised the Job Retention Scheme for employed staff.
- We appointed a new trustee, Navaratnam Partheeban.

Summary finances

- Income decreased by 30.9% but expenditure decreased by 33.2% in comparison to 2019 as a result of a significant reduction in activity levels, leaving us with a breakeven+ position.

Farm in a Box | an act of resilience

We have always designed our programmes to build children's resilience - resilient children with the capacity to recover quickly from difficulties are more likely to thrive. In Spring 2020 we found that we too needed to demonstrate resilience.

> "We cannot change the wind but we can adjust the sails." Aristole

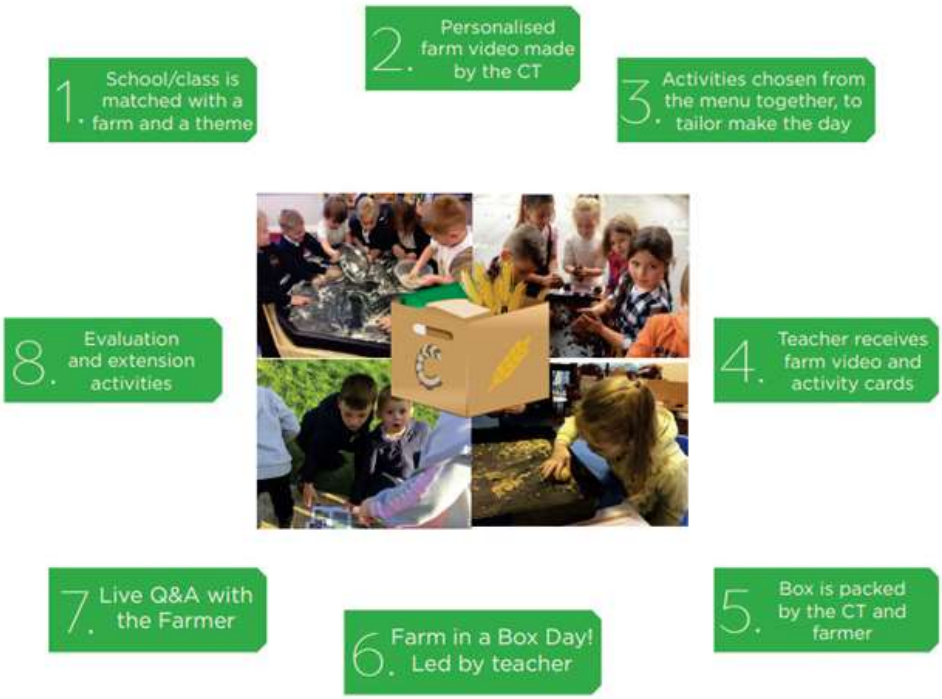
How Farm in a Box came about

How could we help when schools couldn't visit farms and we couldn't go into schools?

The idea of Farm in a box emerged, we decided it must:

1. Be a safe, farm-centred event, easy for teachers to deliver and extend in school
2. Address teacher/child priorities
3. Build relationships between children and farming/farmers
4. Provide meaningful, multi-sensory hands on experiences
5. Provide opportunities to try new things, be challenged and succeed
6. Allow farmers to share their story
7. Link to a child's lived reality - food I know and eat, where I live - to farming and the countryside
8. Be deliverable mostly outside
9. Enhance/strengthen our farm visit programme
10. Help children to develop agency
11. Build happy memories
12. Reflect our values

How Farm in a Box works



Our mission

The Country Trust's mission is to focus on disadvantaged children, children who have now suffered disproportionately as a result of Covid-19, compounding the challenges they already faced. Our programmes encompass children from low-income families, schools and groups providing for children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEN/D), young carers, and vulnerable and refugee children. We are also asked by schools and other organisations to work with vulnerable parents and families.

> **"We must not accept any child growing up in poverty or starting school with a 90% chance of leaving without the basic requirements to succeed as an adult."** Anne Longfield, final speech as Children's Commissioner.

There is compelling evidence demonstrating the negative impact of poverty on child development and subsequent opportunities to live a full life and thrive. On average, these children will have poorer health, score worse on tests of cognitive, social and behavioural development, go on to do less well in education, have lower self-esteem as adolescents and be more likely to become involved in crime or delinquent behaviour[2].

There were 4.2 million children living in poverty in 2019.

The Child Poverty Action Group defines child poverty as applying to those children lacking ***'the resources to obtain the types of diet, participate in the activities, and have the living conditions and amenities that are customary...in the societies to which they belong.'***[2]

The impact of Covid-19

A dramatic increase in the number of children living in poverty, particularly affecting families who were already in or close to the poverty line[1].

- The educational attainment gap between disadvantaged pupils and their peers has stopped closing for the first time in a decade[3] and is likely to have been exacerbated by the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic.

- 2.3 million children are living with risk because of a vulnerable family background[3]. Socio-emotional issues in children will have been amplified during lockdown if their home environment is stressful and the family is struggling,[4] further hampering children's ability to learn and grow.

- Poverty of opportunity and experience has been exacerbated by school closures. To help us identify these children in areas of deprivation, but also in wealthier areas where outcomes for disadvantaged children are notably worse[5], we currently use eligibility for Free School Meals (FSM) as our measure. We predominantly focus on primary schools with a greater than average percentage (23%) of eligible children[6]. New data on the disadvantage gap[7], the Vulnerability Index from the Office of the Children's Commissioner[8] and the Index of Multiple Deprivation[9] will also inform our focus.

Towards equality of opportunity

We can't solve all the problems and challenges these children face, but we can help to address poverty of opportunity, bringing rich opportunities and experiences - vital for developing emotional, intellectual and social skills and for building self-confidence and self-esteem - to children who lead limited and sometimes chaotic lives.

"What children need is very simple. They need someone to go places with, somebody to talk with, to open their eyes, to create some new environments and plan experiences. Sadly, too many children lack this basic opportunity. They then turn to teachers as their most significant route to learning"[10]

[1]Anne Longfield https://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/2021/02/17/building-back-better-reaching-englands-left-behind-children/
[2]http://www.cpag.org.uk/content/what-is-poverty
[3]Anne Longfield, former Children's Commissioner for England

Our programmes and how we made a difference

Our programmes

With the vital support of around 300 farmers and landowners, we help disadvantaged children to learn and grow through:

- day visits to real working farms - Farm Discovery.
- our growing suite of Farm in a Box programmes.
- residential visits to the countryside - Countryside Discovery.
- programmes running through all or part of a school year exploring every aspect of growing, cooking and even selling food - Food Discovery.

Our outcomes

We are developing a new impact framework in 2021 as part of our strategy refresh.

This is the difference we want to make across all our programmes:

- Children, their parent helpers and teachers are more knowledgeable and more aware of food, farming and the countryside.
- Children are better able to make informed decisions about the food that they eat.
- Children are more engaged with formal education as a result of increased ‘real world’ and interactive learning experiences.
- More teachers see the potential of the countryside as a learning resource and feel more confident to use it to enhance their teaching.
- Children have more opportunities to develop and display non-cognitive skills, to experience patience, wonder and success.
- Children feel more responsible for their own and the wider environment.
- Children feel more at home in the countryside and greenspace.
- More farmers are able to share their love and passion for what they do.

"We brought two children from a behaviour provision with us today who don't usually get to do school trips. They really enjoyed the experience and really benefited from being in nature. Being outdoors really calms them." Scunthorpe Primary School

"From an inner city setting, our children need these stimulating experiences in the countryside. Having the space and freedom to explore in a safe, natural environment is so important."
Teacher, Canning Street Primary School

"It really matched with the current learning going on in the classroom, so it was nice that the children were able to actively participate with their prior knowledge as well as be amazed at the things they learnt."
St Marks Primary

All our Coordinators have experience in primary education and many are trained teachers. They work with teachers to make sure each visit has maximum impact drawing on what the farm has to offer and what the class is currently focusing on in school. Most schools return year after year and the visit has become an integral part of the way they deliver their curriculum. Since Covid-19 the value of our programmes for wellbeing, communication skills, personal and social development has been increasingly recognised. 13 Farm Discovery visits took place in the autumn term of 2020, a fraction of our usual programme but intensely joyful for all involved.

Academic year 2019-20

NB: This Trustees' report is for the calendar year 2020, however we evaluate our programmes in line with the academic year.

September 2019 - March 2020:181 visits for 4,721 children from around 78 schools, including 9 SEN/D groups as well as 4 family groups and 10 Young Carers groups.
September-December 2020: 13 farm visits for 328 children.
March - August 2020: Cancelled 443 visits for 12,317 children (72% of our planned programme) as well farm visits associated with our Food Discovery and Countryside Discovery Residentials – 1,650 children.

We were able to undertake the following activity during the lockdown period:
- 280 packs (step by step activity cards, seeds and compost) to support practical outdoor activities for children distributed through Young Carers & Barnardo's.
- A new concept - Farm in a Box - was developed and successfully piloted.

We were able to:
- Evaluate the quality of the Farm Discovery visits that were able to take place.
- Determine the impact that they had on the children and families who took part.
- Assess whether teachers feel more confident in using the outdoors as a learning resource and what impact it had on their teaching.
- Start to understand the initial impact of the alternative provision we have been developing for schools and groups whilst they are unable to attend a farm visit in terms of quality, impact and reach.

The difference we made

Teacher agreement at 95%+ (90%+ **strong** agreement in bold)

- **A Farm Discovery visit was an opportunity children would not normally have.**
- **Children's enjoyment of the day increased their learning.**
- **Reluctant learners had the opportunity to engage.**
- Coming on a visit had increased the children's confidence in being outdoors and in the countryside.
- Children have a better understanding of where their food comes from.
- **Teachers had been given the opportunity to link their visit to an area of the curriculum they were studying.**
- **Teachers felt more confident in using the outdoors as a learning resource as a result of their visit.**

Our visits were rated 'very good' or 'excellent' by 98%+ of teachers for:
- Communication and information received prior to the visit.
- Organisation and delivery.
- Health and safety.

Chart to show the popularity of curriculum subjects on a farm visit

> "The children loved the video, seeing Farmer Michael in his field and finding out what he was doing that morning. It brought the farm alive and now the children really want to visit the farm." Teacher

> "The whole day was brilliant, totally worth doing. The children loved it and we've received lots of positive comments from parents, who heard from the children how much fun they had doing FIAB. We (school) want to do Farm in a Box every year and get different activities each time!" Teacher

> "I had never tried half the vegetables that you gave us" Pupil

> "I really enjoyed the Sense of Place activity because I got to explore different spots and find my calming place." Pupil

Learning

Farm in a Box was developed in response to the Covid pandemic but has proved so successful that it now forms part of all three of our programmes. Early signs are that demand will be strong.

> **“We have recently discussed the desperate need to get our children out in the world to help extend their environment and support their learning.”**
>
> Teacher enquiring about our programmes

The design of Farm in a Box means that we spend more time talking to teachers and our farmers, getting to know their priorities, and this is influencing how we approach our Farm Discovery programme.

Farm in a Box Online

A simplified, slimmed down version of FIAB was developed in January 2021 in response to the third lockdown and is tailored to be easily delivered both in schools and to children home-schooling. We are excited about the potential these new programmes and other versions now in development, offer us in terms of reach.

The difference we made:

As of December 2020, we had delivered 67 boxes to 2,161 children. We asked every teacher and child to provide structured feedback and as a result can confidently say that we can:

- Support teachers to deliver a high quality, impactful, farm-centred event in school. With wide ranging curriculum outcomes and personal and social benefits too.
- Help children create connections and build relationships with farmers, farming and the wider world, before they visit a farm.

What we have learnt from children and teachers so far

Please see full report at: Farm_in_A_Box_report_December_2020_(1).pdf (countrytrust.org.uk)

Food Discovery | a year long programme of cooking, growing and exploration

Operating under strict Covid protocols and in PPE, in Autumn 2020 our Coordinators adapted growing and cooking sessions really successfully. Children loved harvesting crops planted before lockdown, planting new seeds and were amazed at the results of their cotton underpants test – buried a year ago! Finding just the elastic remaining, one boy called out excitedly ***'Does that mean we've got healthy soil?!'***

> "Some learnt that they actually could do things like cut vegetables and try new foods."
>
> Abu Monaem, Tiverton

> "That child sitting there is the boy who has the food fears! Look at him smelling and squeezing the veg – It's unbelievable! I was really apprehensive about letting him stay in the lesson as he usually become hysterical!" Teacher to Coordinator

A Year 5 child from St Christopher's said,

> "I really enjoy coming to school and doing the Country Trust gardening because I live in a flat and can't grow much. At home, I have planted some seeds in pots so we can grow things but it's nice to come and work on the growing beds in school with my friends."

> "We are confident that children who have learnt to cook and grow through Food Discovery, and some parents who have been involved too, will have been able to put their skills to good use during the current crisis, with positive benefits for their health and wellbeing."
>
> Stuart Allen, Head Teacher, Mile Cross

Academic year 2019-20

NB: The Trustees' report is for the calendar year 2020, however we evaluate our programmes in line with the academic year.

1,150 pupils in 43 classes from 28 schools started a Food Discovery programme in the 2019-20 academic year. However, in all, just fewer than half of the sessions scheduled were delivered.

Programme model	Sessions scheduled	Sessions delivered
Standard	399	188
Taster	20	9
Carousel	18	10
CPD	4	1
	TOTAL 441	**208**

Programmes came to a halt just before the end of term, when we would normally collect feedback forms. As a result, only 54% of teacher feedback forms were returned. However, our task with the 114 forms that were returned was to:

- Evaluate the quality of the programme, by using the limited available quantitative data and by analysing the qualitative data thematically.
- Determine the impact the programme has on the children and, where applicable or possible, their parents, mainly through using the qualitative data.
- Assess whether teachers' classroom practice is influenced by Food Discovery.

The difference we made

All teachers agreed:

- Their pupils are more engaged with classroom learning as a result of taking part in Food Discovery.
- Food Discovery helps close the gap for pupils in receipt of pupil premium.
- Children are better able to make informed decisions about the food they eat as a result of Food Discovery.

Qualitative feedback

- Food Discovery provides important opportunities for children to:
    - become familiar with different foods, especially fruit and vegetables, laying the foundations for food confidence.
    - experience awe and wonder in nature and to learn to nurture and care for different things.
- 30% of pupils start Food Discovery with strong feelings against trying new food, but teachers reported pupils were happy to try food in Food Discovery sessions and beyond.
- Food Discovery supports non-cognitive skills such as teamwork, emotional literacy and the benefit of new experiences.

Teachers:

- Food Discovery increases their confidence in taking pupils outside to learn.
- 76% of session feedback forms from teachers identified curriculum links that were going to be made beyond Food Discovery, from English (sequence, recount, verbs, adjectives) and Maths (weights and measurement) to Science (the digestive system).

Countryside Discovery Residential visits

an extended stay immersed in the countryside

> **“New friendships developed, children who hadn’t mixed previously more familiar with each other. Children are already talking about the fears they faced in the activities and how they overcame them.”**
>
> Teacher Harbinger Primary School

Academic year 2019/20

NB: The Trustees' report is for the calendar year 2020, however we evaluate our programmes in line with the academic year.

September 2019 - March 2020: 11 residentials took place for 273 children.
April-December 2020: Cancelled - 22 visits for c.633 children (66% of our planned programme).

The difference we made

Frustratingly the lockdown period came at a time when we intended to trial a different method of gathering data with the aim of significantly increasing the return rate of feedback forms from both pupils and teachers. The last residential that took place in Norfolk before lockdown started to trial this new approach and the results from the teachers and pupils are analysed in this report. It should be noted that the findings in this year's report are therefore based on a very small sample size.

Our 2019-2020 evaluation report aims to:

- Evaluate the quality of the Countryside Discovery residential programme that we were able to deliver.
- Determine the impact the programme has on children and teaching staff.
- Make recommendations for the future.

All teachers agreed that:

- the children had enjoyed their visit, with 80% strongly agreeing.
- residentials widened children's experiences and built self-esteem, with pony trekking and the zipwire featuring most regularly in the children's feedback of things they did for the first time on the residential.
- residentials improved children's wellbeing and that the residential had met their expectations fully.
- residentials helped build relationships between the children and those needs had been met fully.
- residentials enabled children to have fun. Enjoyment is acknowledged as a key component of learning.
- residentials help foster children's independence and the residential had met that need fully.
- the residential had extended their children's vocabulary.

All teachers rated our on-site organisation and the quality of our activities as either 'Excellent' or 'Very good'.

Our evaluation methodology

Farm Discovery: We continued to analyse both quantitative and qualitative feedback, using a light touch thematic approach and the NatCen framework* for the latter.

Farm in a Box: We include short before and after surveys for children, a teacher survey and where possible a feedback telephone call.

Food Discovery: We seek feedback from teachers at the start of, and on completion of the programme, and seek feedback after every session. We survey the knowledge and attitudes of pupils at the start of each programme and on completion to assess the impact of Food Discovery.

Residentials: We use Survey Monkey to gather feedback before and after visits and we gather structured feedback from children during the visits.

Full reports are available at http://www.countrytrust.org.uk/what-we-do/evaluating-our-effectiveness
*http://www.natcen.ac.uk/our-expertise/methods-expertise/qualitative/framework/

Working with others

Farmer host/teacher workshops

We had intended to continue our successful series of farmer/teacher workshops in other areas of the country in 2020 but took these online in September and November instead. It was a great chance to discuss safety concerns with our farmer hosts and excite them about the difference they could make by welcoming children back. Knowing how much pressure teachers are under we were keen to show that programmes were not only safe, and very easy to engage with, but brought very real benefits matching their own priorities for their children. We were delighted that CLA President Mark Bridgeman and Education Specialists Professor Mick Waters, and Alistair Bryce-Clegg spoke for us at these events.

> **“Every child should have the basics; experiencing the power of the weather, seeing a bird on the wing, the beauty of the flower opening, the dawning of the day. Those are the basics. I think what the Country Trust does is absolutely essential. ”**
>
> Professor Mick Waters

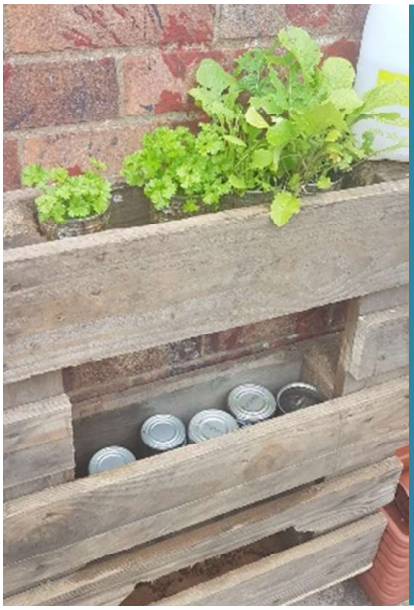
Volunteers

The Country Trust relies heavily on the support and dedication of over 900 volunteers who donated hundreds of hours of their time in 2020 towards hosting and supporting Farm Discovery visits, Countryside Discovery Residentials, Food Discovery, Farm in a Box, our IT provision, design work and more. The Board of Trustees would like to take this opportunity to thank all the volunteers for their commitment and support, without which the Trust could not accomplish its work.

Partnerships

Charities

We have been able to add value to the programmes of other organisations who support the most vulnerable in our society including Barnardo’s and Young Carer groups. 280 Grow for it! packs, produced by members of our Farm and Food Discovery teams were distributed to Young Carers groups in North Lincolnshire, North East Lincolnshire, Stockport and Wrexham, complete with seeds and compost packs. Virtual packs were sent to Bury Young Carers and Young Carers through Lincolnshire County Council.



> **“A family we support have limited garden space and your garden project inspired them to upcycle a pallet to make a wall mountable plant holder! I love it! It has meant that mum who uses a wheelchair has been able to do the project with her 2 sons who are carers. ”** Wellbeing and Young Carers Team

Corporate

This should have been the third full year of our 'Discover Wheat' partnership with Warburtons Ltd and Openfield Agriculture Ltd but very sadly the 55 planned visits fell victim to school closures in the summer term. Unspent funds have been carried forward into 2021 to facilitate the development of an exciting new version of Farm in a Box at scale – focused on discovering wheat of course!

Networks

We are members of the CLA (Country Land and Business Association), NCVO (National Council for Voluntary Organisations) and ACEVO (Association for Chief Executives of Voluntary Organisations).
We are members of LEAF (Linking Environment and Farming) and we continue to be part of the core partner group of Countryside Classroom and attend partnership meetings. We were delighted with the response to the Home Education Hub launched by Countryside Classroom in response to school closures.

We are very pleased to have been accepted as members of the Fair Education Alliance and Sustain during 2020 and are already benefiting from the networks and the focus on issues that are central to our mission. The CEO takes part in the Access to Farms Network, we have joined the National Outdoors for All Working Group, we are supporting the CPRE's work following the Glover Review, FSE's Nature Premium campaign and Teach the Future's climate change curriculum campaign.

Policy

We remain committed to trying to influence policy in support of food, farming and countryside education and worked with Lord Curry and Lord Boswell on a proposed amendment to the Agriculture Bill, with the help and advice of the CLA policy team and the Defra Future Farming team too. When the amendment was tabled by Lord Curry and debated, 19 Peers spoke up in support of it and the importance of educational access to farms.

We wrote to Lord Gardiner (a letter signed by 9 other organisations including the CLA, Sustain and the Soil Association) to ask him to follow through on his assertion that educational access is vital and therefore provided for within the Bill already. Our request to government is as follows:

a. financial support for educational access (time, training, and if required support and infrastructure) within ELMs should stand alone and be independent of any other environmental benefit in order that as many farmers as possible can participate.

b. support for public engagement with food, farming, and the countryside should be woven through all three tiers of ELMs showing progression of delivery between the tiers.

c. the quality and impact of educational visits should be evaluated and aligned with other priority strategies such as the National Food Strategy, the Educational Inspection Framework, the 25 Year Environment Plan, the PHE Strategy 20-25.

We were very pleased with the announcement (Feb 21) that educational access payments are now included in both the Mid and Higher Tier agreements and are working to encourage DEFRA to continue to widen access to payments.

Select committees: we submitted evidence to two select committees, on food and education.

National Food Strategy: we responded to the consultation and have had follow up meetings with the Defra Team.

In the midst of Covid-19 we haven't forgotten climate change and were thrilled to be awarded a grant by the HCD Memorial Fund to develop and deliver a programme of 20 climate change related farm visits (summer 2021). We think UK farming offers a unique opportunity for children to get first-hand experience of both the impact of climate change and the only industry which can take steps to both reduce emissions and also lock up carbon.

Financial Review

Performance

Income decreased by 30.9% and expenditure decreased by 33.2% in comparison to 2019 (to £561,786 and £552,177) as a result of a significant decrease in activity levels. 67.4% of our income was unrestricted. An unprecedented £498.7k of donated income received in 2020 was deferred to 2021, resulting in total deferred income of £537.7k (including residentials deposits). Around 50% of this relates to activity deferred because of the impact of Covid-19, the remainder is deferred because it relates to the planned delivery of activity in the spring and summer terms.

We were unable to continue to implement our plans for investing our legacy income in support of our broader charitable objectives in 2020 in the way that we had anticipated. However, our reserves position (fundamentally comprised of legacy income) gave us the confidence and the capacity to:

- support our team of self-employed contractors before government support became available, and for those who were not eligible,
- support schools and groups working with disadvantaged children.
- innovate to create a new programme, Farm in a Box, to review our existing programmes, and train the team to ensure we complied with Covid-19 guidance.

We designated reserves in 2020 to support our health and safety work and our Corporate Fundraiser. The former has been deferred until 2021 and our Corporate Fundraiser was furloughed for much of 2020.

Controls

Financial management consists of the monthly preparation of management accounts that are distributed to all Trustees for review. Monthly forecasting enables Trustees to view the financial landscape ahead. From April, a **Covid Sub Committee** met regularly to support immediate decision making, and the frequency of Board meetings also increased. Our mid-year review came in two phases – June and September, to allow for greater visibility of our operating context.

CEO or Assistant Director authorisation is required for all payments; all payments made by the Charity over £5,000 require dual authorisation with an authorised Trustee signatory. The charity had a successful Independent Examination (IE) in 2019 and Trustees chose an IE again for 2020.
The Charity will be using a cash management platform in 2021 in order to better manage our unrestricted reserves.

Reserves policy

Trustees moved to a RAG approach to assessing reserves with a green zone between 4 and 6 months of operating reserves.

Expenditure was very low in 2020 and so we have calculated our operating reserves on the basis of our 2021 expenditure budget - £1,283,898. This would indicate that the reserves green zone would be between approximately £428k - £642k. Year end projections for December 2021 currently indicate reserves of 4 months. In 2020 overall reserves rose slightly from £737,532 to £747,141 of which unrestricted reserves rose slightly from £726,519 to £727, 076 including designated reserves, though a significant use of reserves had been planned pre-Covid (see 'Performance' above). Plans to use these additional funds to bring the working countryside alive for significantly more children experiencing disadvantage through a carefully planned, stepped and sustainable expansion of our activities are included in the Budget for 2021 and will form part of our next Strategic Plan 2021-2023. They include investing in new delivery team members, new programmes and new programme management resource.

Designated reserves: The Board approved a sum of £150k to be designated in the following way and for the following purposes.

1. Completion of our Host Farm Risk Assessment process with all our farmer hosts in 2021- £10,000.
2. Funding the Corporate Fundraising role for three years until the income stream is established -£40,000 p.a. x 3 years £120,000.
3. Funding strategic planning and innovation - £20k x 1 year £2021.

Fundraising practice and performance

The Board has adopted the Charity Governance Code and is working through the seven principles to ensure good governance. Legal and ethical fundraising remains a key objective of the Trustees, and they take their responsibilities with regard to proper fundraising practice very seriously. They are guided by the Charity Commission's ***Charity fundraising: a guide to trustee duties (CC20 updated in 2016))*** as well as the updated Charity ***Governance Code***, and the ***Guidance Note from the Fundraising Regulator on New Reporting Requirements published October 2018*** and updated in 2020. The Country Trust is registered with the Fundraising Regulator and complies with the ***Code of Fundraising Practice***.

In 2020, approximately 66% of our income came from charitable trusts and foundations, 11.4% from companies, 11.1% from individual donors, and 11.3% c from service users, primarily schools in the form of the balance of the cost of residential visits after our subsidy has been applied, or as a contribution from schools towards the cost of Food Discovery programmes.

Donors to The Country Trust can be assured that:

- Fundraising activity is included within the Trust's Risk Register, which is reviewed at each Board meeting; a senior member of staff directly involved with fundraising is present at every Board meeting.
- The Charity does not make use of professional fundraisers or commercial participators.
- The Charity complies with the Fundraising Regulator's voluntary regulation scheme.
- All fundraising is carried out by employed staff, managed by the CEO or Senior Managers who report to the CEO, or very occasionally by named volunteers working closely with the employed staff on our behalf, primarily networking with peers and friends. Some volunteers will fundraise in aid of The Country Trust and the Charity provides support for them on its website.
- The Charity did not receive any complaints about fundraising activities carried out by The Charity or someone acting on The Charity's behalf but recognises it could improve the visibility of how to complain on its website.
- The Charity respects the privacy of the public, including the need to take special care with vulnerable people. Any mailing or emailing for fundraising purposes is in accordance with GDPR preferences. Public fundraising is through online fundraising platforms, or through static collection goblets and is carried out in accordance with the Code of Fundraising Practice. The Charity undertakes very little face to face fundraising and what is done is primarily by invitation.

The Charity will comply with requests issued by the Fundraising Preference Service. The Charity strives to maintain GDPR compliance and has registered with the ICO.

Principal funding sources

As described above the Charity continues to derive most of its funding from grant making trusts. A target within the current Strategic Plan is to increase the percentage of funding committed for more than one year, to support longer term planning. This continues to grow and in 2020 totalled over £350k p.a including a very significant new 5-year funding award from the Westminster Foundation.

We would like to acknowledge the support received from all our funders, but mention specifically; **Aldgate and Allhallows Foundation, Ardian UK and the Ardian Foundation, The Ashden Trust, Lance Coates Charitable Trust, The Dulverton Trust, WA Handley Trust, The Joicey Trust, Sir James Knott Trust, The Lund Trust, The Mercers' Company, The Rothschild Foundation, The Bernard Sunley Charitable Foundation, Warburtons Ltd, Westminster Foundation, The Garfield Weston Foundation, The CLA Charitable Trust, The Girdlers' Company, The Rank Foundation, BBC Children in Need.**
Although we were unable to hold any events for our supporters to see our work at first hand during the year, the Charity was shielded from the worst effects of Covid-19 on fundraising as it does not have a large public facing income stream, nor does it rely on trading income. The Trustees would like to particularly thank

those Foundations, companies and individuals who provided extra funds during the year in recognition of the challenges we faced, as well as those who have continued to support us at a time when their own resources have been hard hit and demands have escalated. Thanks are also due to the Charity's President and Vice Presidents for their support in identifying and making introductions to potential new funding sources.

Transport costs

Transport subsidies were not required in 2020 because of the closure of schools in March. Any funds given for that purpose have been carried forward into 2021. We are grateful to all our funders for their understanding.

Structure, Governance and Management

How the Charity's activities deliver public benefit

The Trustees are confident that the activities of the Trust fulfil the requirements set out in the Charity Commission's guidance on Charities and Public Benefit, to which they have had due regard. Most of the Charity's activities focus on the education of children experiencing disadvantage, whether economic, social or educational and are undertaken to further the charitable objectives of the Trust for the public benefit.

Feedback from children, teachers and parents suggests that the Trust is achieving its goal of helping to improve the life chances of the children who take part in our programmes by increasing their engagement with education and broadening their knowledge of the world and the opportunities that could be open to them. We are currently engaged in a project with ImpactEd to refresh our Theory of Change and draw up a new framework to enable us to identify and measure the impact of our programmes.

Structure

The Country Trust was founded in 1978 and is registered with the Charity Commission under Charity Number 1122103. The Board of Trustees, President, Board of Vice Presidents, Chief Executive Officer, senior staff members and professional advisers are listed on page 1.

On the 23rd November 2007 the Country Trust was incorporated; it became a company limited by guarantee and not having share capital. On the 1st January 2008, the Charity commenced trading as an incorporated Charity. The Company number is 6436266 and the registered address is shown on page 1.

Governing document

The Charity is governed by the Memorandum and Articles of Association of the Country Trust Ltd.

Governing Body

The structure of the Charity consists of a Board of Trustees and a Chief Executive supported by a Senior Leadership Team. The Board of Trustees is a self-appointing body and includes a good gender balance and a range of experience. Several Trustees have direct experience of our services either as teachers or active farmer hosts. Navaratnam Partheeban joined the Board in September 2020 and brings significant experience of working to increase diversity and inclusion in agriculture and related activities. The Chief Executive reports directly to the Chair of Trustees and is responsible for the day-to-day running of the Charity. The Charity is very fortunate to be supported by a President and Vice Presidents who are an advisory, networking and fundraising resource.

Recruitment and training of Trustees

Trustees are recruited as and when required through advertising, personal recommendation and through the recommendation of third-party advisors according to the Board's specifications concerning eligibility, personal competence, and specialist skills. Potential candidates are invited to apply and are interviewed by the Chair and at least one other Trustee. Successful applicants are co-opted to join the Board until their appointment is confirmed. Trustees serve a maximum of 3 x 4 years and one Trustee (James Serjeant) resigned and one Trustee (Navaratnam Partheeban) was appointed during 2020. The Trustees would like to record their grateful thanks to James, grandson of the Charity's Founder, for his long service. Although technically Anne Bufton McCoy stepped down in 2021, the Trustees would like to take the opportunity now to thank Anne for her wonderful commitment and service as Trustee and then Chair of The Country Trust. Training and induction for new Trustees was in place during 2020, however formal training courses were postponed by our usual providers as a result of the pandemic. In the interim new Trustees were signposted to The Charity Commission's 'The Essential Trustee' and The Country Trust's Trustee Induction handbook.

Openness and accountability

We strive to involve participants in programme design and the comprehensive feedback gathered from stakeholders during the year is constantly used to inform practice. Our annual evaluation reports are published online and publicised through social media and printed materials. We recognise that this is an area where we could make significant improvements however and we will be working to create ways to listen to children's voices and understand the priorities of the communities we serve in 2021.

Organisational management

The Charity's Trustees are legally responsible for the overall management and control of the Charity. The Board of Trustees meets at least four times a year to discuss and implement strategic issues, monitor income and expenditure, monitor risk, review and approve policies and approve annual budgets. There were many more meetings in 2020 as a result of the pandemic. The day to day running of the Charity is delegated to the Chief Executive, the Senior Leadership Team, staff and sessional staff, and reports to the Board monthly and quarterly. The Country Trust Hampshire has now been fully integrated into The Country Trust.

Risk management

The Board of Trustees is responsible for the management of risks associated with the activities of the Charity. The Board refers to the Charity's Risk Register at each meeting which is prepared and updated by the Chief Executive.

The top 8 major risks identified and monitored in 2020 were:

- **Health and Safety** – mitigated by an active policy implemented by a dedicated senior lead, regular training, immediate reporting, quarterly reporting to the Board, membership of the Access to Farms Group responsible for the Industry Code of Practice.

- **Safeguarding** – mitigated by an active policy implemented by a Lead and Deputy senior lead. Training for all, external checks, immediate reporting, quarterly reporting to the Board, membership of SAFEcic.

- **Public Health Emergency** – mitigated by: Crisis Sub Committee supporting work across our programmes, our workforce and our finances.

- **Education Funding cuts** –mitigated by: increased focus on measuring and reporting on the relevance of our work, working to influence policy, adapting our fundraising.

- **Poor governance by the Board** (key during CV19)– mitigated by: Crisis sub-committee 'always on' and more Board meetings, financial scenario planning, work on succession planning, key decisions checked with external professionals eg insurers, accountants, funders.

- **Major loss of farms to host visits** – mitigated by: regular communication with hosts plus training webinar, active role in influencing agricultural policy re educational access, active recruitment of new hosts.

- **Unsatisfactory fundraising** – mitigated by: Annual budgets include risk analysis, monthly financial reports show progress against budget, 'new' spend is brought to the Board, detailed Mid-Year Review, active communication with our funders, new product development.

- **Serious cyber security attack** – mitigated by: Expert IT volunteer regularly reviewing our practices and providing support, ongoing watch on cyber security issues, cloud storage across the organisation. Outstanding in 2020 – full cyber security review, planned for 2021.

The Board of Trustees also has in place key controls for use by the Charity, such as formal agendas for meetings, comprehensive strategic planning and monthly management accounting, established lines of reporting, formal written policies and a review schedule, clear authorisation levels for all payments and a safeguarding policy which provides guidance for all on best safe practice for adults within an organisation working with children.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

We want our team and our programmes to better the reflect the amazing diversity of the children and the communities we serve and have made the first steps towards this. Working with our new Trustee Navaratnam Partheeban we reviewed our recruitment materials, the language we use, the skills and experience we ask for and where we advertise. Diversity was chosen as the theme of our Annual Conference in February 2021 and working groups are now underway to look at everything from training to programme design. We are already excited about the connections, creativity and inspiration that this is unlocking.

GDPR and Cybersecurity

We have continued to strive to remain compliant with GDPR. All new contacts, donors and supporters are asked for their communication preferences which are recorded and implemented. Mailings and e-mailings include the opportunity for people to unsubscribe. Privacy policies are available on our website http://www.countrytrust.org.uk/privacy-policy

A complete cybersecurity review is pending but our Expert Volunteer IT Consultant Martin Stevens monitors the security systems we have in place. No serious issues were noted in 2020.

Safeguarding

Government guidance is clear that all organisations working with children, young people, families, parents and carers have particular responsibilities. At The Country Trust we recognise that the welfare of all children is paramount and that all children, regardless of ability or culture, have equal rights of protection. We have a duty of care when they are in our charge and we will do everything we can to provide a safe and caring environment whilst they attend our activities. Our policy for child safeguarding can be found on our website and is reviewed annually by our Board of Trustees. The Country Trust is a member of SAFEcic, an umbrella organisation providing safeguarding training, advice and standards. All staff, volunteers and Trustees undertake safeguarding training and undergo DBS checks where this is permitted for their role. Safeguarding has continued to be reviewed at the quarterly Board meetings. There were no safeguarding concerns raised within 2020. Trustees have continued to keep their safeguarding training up to date and keep abreast of any significant changes.

Health and Safety

The Charity receives the help of professional advisors for risks associated with health and safety, safeguarding and employment practice. Risk Assessments are prepared by staff and self-employed sessional contractors for all activities led by the Charity. All our health and safety and safeguarding practices and processes were reviewed in the light of Covid-19 to determine when and how we could operate safely. Our health and safety policy can be found on our website and is reviewed every two years. Following the last review, and a review of our policy in practice undertaken by Trustees, the Charity is undertaking a major piece of work to ensure that all our host farmers have a Risk Assessment in place for Country Trust visits. These Risk Assessments are prepared, owned and managed by the host farmer but where required, support for the process including signposting to external industry guidance, is provided by the Charity. we are part way through the planned process of implementing some significant changes to strengthen our

practice. A programme related to farmer host Risk Assessments was stalled by Covid at just beyond the halfway point. Safeguarding, and Health and Safety reports of all disclosures, accidents, incidents and near misses and subsequent actions taken are brought to every Board meeting, preserving the appropriate confidentiality. 'Lessons learned' are shared with all staff/contractors as part of ongoing learning. Training for all of our delivery team was provided on new practices before the start of the autumn term and was made available to our host farmers too via a webinar and via our Coordinators. Pre-visits to farms were made mandatory for schools in order that proper Covid planning could be undertaken.

Strategy and plans for the future

Strategic Plan

2021-23 will be a new Strategic Plan period for the Charity, and with the added shake-up of the pandemic we are using the opportunity to completely review our vision and mission, our theory of change, and from this, the design of our programmes and the outcomes framework we use to measure our performance.

Our current strategic objectives are

- **We will be providing transformative opportunities to more, disadvantaged children.**
- **We will have forged more, powerful partnerships greatly enhancing our ability to achieve our mission**
- **We will have enhanced the impact and quality of our work, our relevance and our effectiveness.**
- **We will value and invest in the people who make The Country Trust possible.**
- **We will have increased and diversified our funding streams and made them more resilient**

2021-23 Plan – emerging themes

- A continued focus on those children with limited opportunities to learn, grow and thrive, particularly those experiencing persistent disadvantage.
- A focus on the ways in which food, farming and countryside opportunities can help to improve the life chances of those children.
- An ambition to scale our work in line with the significant need exacerbated by Covid-19.
- A much greater emphasis on partnerships in order that we achieve the appropriate scale.
- A continued commitment to our newest area of work, policy.
- A heightened commitment to listening and learning in order to ensure inclusion, relevance and quality
- Food and farming will remain central to our work and so our relationship with the farming community will continue to be of vital importance.

Statement of compliance with prevailing laws and regulations

The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the accounting policies set out in notes to the accounts and comply with the charity's governing document, the Charities Act 2011 and Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland published in October 2019.
This report has been prepared in accordance with the provisions applicable to companies entitled to the small companies' exemption.
Approved by the Board of Trustees on 25th March 2021 and signed on its behalf by:

S Bell

.....

S D Bell BA (Hons)
Chair of Trustees

The Country Trust

Independent Examiner's Report to the trustees of The Country Trust ("the Company")

I report to the charity trustees on my examination of the accounts of the charitable company for the year ended 31 December 2020 which are set out on pages 24 to 40.

Respective responsibilities of trustees and examiner

As the charity trustees of the charitable company (and also its directors for the purposes of company law) you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Companies Act 2006 ('the 2006 Act').

Having satisfied myself that the accounts of the charitable company are not required to be audited under Part 16 of the 2006 Act and are eligible for independent examination, I report in respect of my examination of your charity's accounts as carried out under section 145 of the Charities Act 2011 ('the 2011 Act'). In carrying out my examination I have followed the Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the 2011 Act.

Independent examiner's statement

Since the Company's gross income exceeded £250,000 your examiner must be a member of a body listed in section 145 of the 2011 Act. I confirm that I am qualified to undertake the examination because I am a member of The Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales, which is one of the listed bodies.

I have completed my examination. I confirm that no matters have come to my attention in connection with the examination giving me cause to believe:

1. accounting records were not kept in respect of the charitable company as required by section 386 of the 2006 Act; or
2. the accounts do not accord with those records; or
3. the accounts do not comply with the accounting requirements of section 396 of the 2006 Act other than any requirement that the accounts give a 'true and fair view' which is not a matter considered as part of an independent examination; or
4. the accounts have not been prepared in accordance with the methods and principles of the Statement of Recommended Practice for accounting and reporting by charities applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102).

I have no concerns and have come across no other matters in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn in this report in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

C Barker

Colin Andrew Barker FCA
146 New London Road
Chelmsford
Essex
CM2 0AW

Date: 29 April 2021

The Country Trust

Statement of Financial Activities for the Year Ended 31 December 2020 (Including Income and Expenditure Account and Other Comprehensive Income)

	Note	Unrestricted funds General funds £	Designated funds £	Restricted £	Total 2020 £	Total 2019 £
Income and Endowments from:						
Donations and legacies	3	377,812	-	168,760	546,572	699,946
Charitable activities	4	-	-	14,382	14,382	111,846
Investment income	5	832	-	-	832	1,327
Total income		378,644	-	183,142	561,786	813,119
Expenditure on:						
Charitable activities	6	330,417	-	221,760	552,177	826,138
Total expenditure		330,417	-	221,760	552,177	826,138
Net income/(expenditure)		48,227	-	(38,618)	9,609	(13,019)
Transfers between funds		(67,670)	20,000	47,670	-	-
Net movement in funds		(19,443)	20,000	9,052	9,609	(13,019)
Reconciliation of funds						
Total funds brought forward		596,519	130,000	11,013	737,532	750,551
Total funds carried forward	17	577,076	150,000	20,065	747,141	737,532

All of the charity's activities derive from continuing operations during the above two periods.

The Country Trust

(Registration number: 6436266)
Balance Sheet as at 31 December 2020

	Note	2020 £	2019 £
Fixed assets	12	3,760	4,778
Current assets			
Debtors	13	29,984	31,005
Cash at bank and in hand	14	1,282,306	878,879
		1,312,290	909,884
Creditors: Amounts falling due within one year	15	(568,909)	(177,130)
Net current assets		743,381	732,754
Net assets		747,141	737,532
Funds of the charity:			
Restricted		20,065	11,013
Unrestricted funds			
General funds		577,076	596,519
Designated Funds		150,000	130,000
Total unrestricted funds		727,076	726,519
Total funds	17	747,141	737,532

For the financial year ending 31 December 2020 the charity was entitled to exemption from audit under section 477 of the Companies Act 2006 relating to small companies.

Directors' responsibilities:

- The members have not required the charity to obtain an audit of its accounts for the year in question in accordance with section 476; and
- The directors acknowledge their responsibilities for complying with the requirements of the Act with respect to accounting records and the preparation of accounts.

The accounts are prepared in accordance with the provisions applicable to companies subject to the small companies regime.

The financial statements on pages 24 to 40 were approved by the trustees, and authorised for issue on .25 March 2021. and signed on their behalf by:

S Bell

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S D Bell BA (Hons)

Trustee

The Country Trust

Statement of Cash Flows for the Year Ended 31 December 2020

	Note	2020 £	2019 £
Cash flows from operating activities			
Net cash income/(expenditure)		9,609	(13,019)
Adjustments to cash flows from non-cash items			
Depreciation		1,254	1,593
Investment income	5	(832)	(1,327)
		10,031	(12,753)
Working capital adjustments			
Decrease in debtors	13	1,021	2,189
Increase/(decrease) in creditors	15	6,223	(10,050)
Increase in deferred income		385,556	10,492
Net cash flows from operating activities		402,831	(10,122)
Cash flows from investing activities			
Interest receivable and similar income	5	832	1,327
Purchase of tangible fixed assets	12	(236)	-
Net cash flows from investing activities		596	1,327
Net increase/(decrease) in cash and cash equivalents		403,427	(8,795)
Cash and cash equivalents at 1 January		878,879	887,674
Cash and cash equivalents at 31 December		1,282,306	878,879

All of the cash flows are derived from continuing operations during the above two periods.

1 Charity status

The charity is limited by guarantee, incorporated in England & Wales, and consequently does not have share capital. Each of the trustees is liable to contribute an amount not exceeding £1 towards the assets of the charity in the event of liquidation.

2 Accounting policies

Summary of significant accounting policies and key accounting estimates
The principal accounting policies applied in the preparation of these financial statements are set out below. These policies have been consistently applied to all the years presented, unless otherwise stated.

Statement of compliance
The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) (effective 1 January 2015) - (Charities SORP (FRS 102)), the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102). They also comply with the Companies Act 2006 and Charities Act 2011.

Basis of preparation
The Country Trust meets the definition of a public benefit entity under FRS 102. Assets and liabilities are initially recognised at historical cost or transaction value unless otherwise stated in the relevant accounting policy notes.

Going concern
The trustees have considered the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic in their assessment of the charitable company's ability to prepare the accounts as a going concern. Because of the uncertainties surrounding the effects of the economic slowdown it is difficult to predict the impact on the charititable company and its service users, but having taken all the factors into account, the trustees are of the opinion that the charitable company has sufficient resources to continue trading for the next 12 months from the date of signing these accounts.

Income and endowments
All income is recognised once the charity has entitlement to the income, it is probable that the income will be received and the amount of the income receivable can be measured reliably.

Donations and legacies

All donated income and grants receivable are included in income on receipt except where the donor requires that the sum is to be treated as income in future accounting periods, in which case it is deferred. Where a donor has specified that a donation should be used for a particular purpose this is treated as restricted income.

Grants receivable

Grants are recognised when the charity has an entitlement to the funds and any conditions linked to the grants have been met. Where performance conditions are attached to the grant and are yet to be met, the income is recognised as a liability and included on the balance sheet as deferred income to be released.

Deferred income

Deferred income represents grants and service fees received in respect of visits and activities taking place after the year end. It also represents unrestricted income where that income relates to future periods.

Investment income

Interest received is accounted for when the interest is credited on the Bank deposit accounts.

Charitable activities

Income from charitable activities arises from educational visits and activities where schools or other partners fund all or a proportion of the costs incurred.

Expenditure

All expenditure is accounted for on an accruals basis and includes VAT as the charity is not VAT registered. Governance costs are associated with the governance arrangements of the charity. Where expenditure is apportioned between charitable activities and support costs, this is done based on the portion that is applicable to the direct provision of educational visits and activities or the administration of the charity. In the case of staff costs, this is based on the time spent on charitable activities or administration.

Charitable activities

Charitable activities comprise costs incurred in carrying out educational visits and activities to farms, estates and the wider countryside, and in schools.

Governance costs

These include the costs attributable to the charity's compliance with constitutional and statutory requirements, including audit, strategic management and trustees's meetings and reimbursed expenses.

Taxation

The charity is considered to pass the tests set out in Paragraph 1 Schedule 6 of the Finance Act 2010 and therefore it meets the definition of a charitable company for UK corporation tax purposes. Accordingly, the charity is potentially exempt from taxation in respect of income or capital gains received within categories covered by Chapter 3 Part 11 of the Corporation Tax Act 2010 or Section 256 of the Taxation of Chargeable Gains Act 1992, to the extent that such income or gains are applied exclusively to charitable purposes.

Tangible fixed assets

Individual fixed assets costing a significant amount are initially recorded at cost, less any subsequent accumulated depreciation and subsequent accumulated impairment losses.

Depreciation and amortisation
Depreciation is provided on tangible fixed assets so as to write off the cost or valuation, less any estimated residual value, over their expected useful economic life as follows:

Asset class	Depreciation method and rate
Office equipment & software	25% straight-line

Trade debtors
Trade and other debtors are recognised at the settlement amount due.

Cash and cash equivalents
Cash and cash equivalents comprise cash on hand and call deposits, and other short-term highly liquid investments that are readily convertible to a known amount of cash and are subject to an insignificant risk of change in value.

Trade creditors
Creditors are recognised at their settlement amount.

Fund structure
Unrestricted income funds are general funds that are available for use at the trustees's discretion in furtherance of the objectives of the charity.

Designated funds are funds set aside by the trustees out of unrestricted funds for specific future purposes or projects.

Restricted income funds are those donated or received for use in a particular area or for specific purposes, the use of which is restricted to that area or purpose.

Pensions and other post retirement obligations
The charity operates a defined contribution pension scheme which is a pension plan under which fixed contributions are paid into a pension fund and the charity has no legal or constructive obligation to pay further contributions even if the fund does not hold sufficient assets to pay all employees the benefits relating to employee service in the current and prior periods.

Contributions to defined contribution plans are recognised in the Statement of Financial Activities when they are due. If contribution payments exceed the contribution due for service, the excess is recognised as a prepayment.

Financial instruments

Classification

The charitable company only holds basic financial instruments as defined in FRS 102. The financial assets and financial liabilities of the charitable company and their measurement basis are as follows:

Financial assets - trade and other debtors are basic financial instruments and are debt instruments measured at amortised cost. Prepayments are not financial instruments.

Cash at bank - is classified as a basic financial instrument and is measured at face value.

Financial liabilities - trade creditors, accruals and other creditors are financial instruments, and are measured at amortised cost. Taxation and social security are not included in the financial instruments disclosure definition. Deferred income is not deemed to be a financial liability, as the cash settlement has already taken place and there is an obligation to deliver services rather than cash or another financial instrument.

3 Income from donations and legacies

	Unrestricted funds £	Restricted funds £	Total 2020 £
Donations	69,348	24,561	93,909
Charitable Trusts and grant making bodies	296,667	136,909	433,576
Job retention scheme grant	11,797	7,290	19,087
	377,812	168,760	546,572

	Unrestricted funds £	Restricted funds £	Total 2019 £
Donations	108,882	74,826	183,708
Legacies	100,000	-	100,000
Charitable Trusts and grant making bodies	200,768	215,470	416,238
	409,650	290,296	699,946

4 Income from charitable activities

	Unrestricted funds £	Restricted funds £	Total 2020 £
Countryside Discovery Residential Visits	-	5,308	5,308
Food Discovery	-	9,074	9,074
	-	14,382	14,382

	Unrestricted funds £	Restricted funds £	Total 2019 £
Countryside Discovery Residential Visits	-	87,990	87,990
Food Discovery	-	18,670	18,670
Farm Visits	-	5,186	5,186
	-	111,846	111,846

5 Investment income

	Unrestricted funds £	Restricted funds £	Total 2020 £
Interest receivable on bank deposits	832	-	832
	832	-	832

	Unrestricted funds £	Restricted funds £	Total 2019 £
Interest receivable on bank deposits	1,327	-	1,327
	1,327	-	1,327

6 Expenditure on charitable activities

	Note	Unrestricted funds £	Restricted £	Total 2020 £	Total 2019 £
Programmes - Transport		-	3,147	3,147	56,643
Programmes - Accommodation		-	3,705	3,705	73,794
Expenses relating to visits and activities		-	10,169	10,169	29,455
Self-employed contractors		66,031	161,646	227,677	320,562
Staff mileage, accommodation and expenses		-	13,290	13,290	49,972
Volunteer mileage, accommodation and expenses		-	27	27	2,348
Staff costs		-	20,959	20,959	24,866
Allocated support costs	7	261,626	8,817	270,443	265,738
Governance costs	7	2,760	-	2,760	2,760
		330,417	221,760	552,177	826,138

The expenditure analysed above includes governance costs of £2,760 (2019 - £2,760) which relate directly to charitable activities. See note 7 for further details.

Approximately 32% of transport costs relate to transport subsidies and the remainder are the cost of transport for residential visits.

All Country Trust programmes were brought to a halt in March 2020 as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. Activity resumed at a greatly reduced level in September.

7 Analysis of governance and support costs

Allocated support costs

	Unrestricted funds £	Restricted £	Total 2020 £	Total 2019 £
Staff costs	198,614	-	198,614	185,189
Staff mileage, accommodation and expenses	3,900	-	3,900	11,900
Volunteer mileage, accommodation and expenses	76	-	76	587
Office costs	21,183	22	21,205	26,302
Computer and website costs	2,114	-	2,114	1,485
Advertising and publicity	5,570	-	5,570	9,999
Insurance	3,875	-	3,875	3,101
Recruitment and training	657	8,795	9,452	5,811
Subscriptions and sundry costs	2,586	-	2,586	1,806
Bank charges	120	-	120	374
Legal and professional fees	2,602	-	2,602	2,053
Annual conference	18,715	-	18,715	14,693
Trustee expenses	360	-	360	845
Depreciation	1,254	-	1,254	1,593
	261,626	8,817	270,443	265,738

Governance costs

	Total 2020 £	Total 2019 £
Independent examiner fees		
Examination of the financial statements	1,560	1,560
Other fees paid to examiners	1,200	1,200
	2,760	2,760

8 Net incoming/outgoing resources

Net incoming/(outgoing) resources for the year include:

	2020 £	2019 £
Fees payable to independent examiner	2,760	2,760
Depreciation of fixed assets	1,254	1,593

9 Trustees remuneration and expenses

No trustees, nor any persons connected with them, have received any remuneration from the charity during the year.

No trustees have received any other benefits from the charity during the year.

During the year, 1 trustee was reimbursed for reasonable travel expenses totalling £132 (2019: £624 to 2 trustees).

10 Staff costs

The aggregate payroll costs were as follows:

	2020 £	2019 £
Staff costs during the year were:		
Wages and salaries	201,372	191,635
Social security costs	13,941	14,421
Pension costs	4,260	3,999
	219,573	210,055

The monthly average number of persons (including senior management team) employed by the charity during the year expressed by head count was as follows:

	2020 No	2019 No
Charitable activities	1	1
Support and administration	8	7
	9	8

The average number of persons employed by the charity during the year expressed as full time equivalents was 6.1 (2019: 5.1).

9 (2019 - 8) of the above employees participated in the Defined Contribution Pension Schemes.

Contributions to the employee pension schemes for the year totalled £4,260 (2019 - £3,999).

No employee received emoluments of more than £60,000 during the year.

The total employee benefits of the key management personnel of the charity were £66,980 (2019 - £68,152).

11 Taxation

The charity is a registered charity and is therefore exempt from taxation.

12 Tangible fixed assets

	Office equipment & software £	Total £
Cost		
At 1 January 2020	9,660	9,660
Additions	236	236
At 31 December 2020	9,896	9,896
Depreciation		
At 1 January 2020	4,882	4,882
Charge for the year	1,254	1,254
At 31 December 2020	6,136	6,136
Net book value		
At 31 December 2020	3,760	3,760
At 31 December 2019	4,778	4,778

13 Debtors

	2020 £	2019 £
Trade debtors	-	14,838
Prepayments	29,757	15,853
Accrued income	227	314
	29,984	31,005

14 Cash and cash equivalents

	2020	2019
	£	£
Cash at bank	1,282,306	878,879

15 Creditors: amounts falling due within one year

	2020	2019
	£	£
Trade creditors	16,518	17,202
Other taxation and social security	4,556	3,517
Other creditors	7,374	704
Accruals	2,760	3,562
Deferred income	537,701	152,145
	568,909	177,130

	2020	2019
	£	£
Deferred income at 1 January 2020	152,143	141,653
Resources deferred in the period	537,701	152,143
Amounts released from previous periods	(152,143)	(141,653)
Deferred income at year end	537,701	152,143

The deferred income relates to performance related grants and grants for activities that are due to take place in future periods.

16 Pension and other schemes

Defined contribution pension scheme

The charity operates a defined contribution pension scheme. The pension cost charge for the year represents contributions payable by the charity to the scheme and amounted to £4,260 (2019 - £3,999).

17 Funds

Current year:

	Balance at 01/01/2020 £	Incoming resources £	Resources expended £	Transfers £	Balance at 31/12/2020 £
Unrestricted funds					
General	596,519	378,644	(330,417)	(67,670)	577,076
Designated funds					
i) Risk assessment	10,000	-	-	-	10,000
ii) Corporate fundraiser	120,000	-	-	-	120,000
iii) Strategic planning and innovation	-	-	-	20,000	20,000
	130,000	-	-	20,000	150,000
Total Unrestricted	726,519	378,644	(330,417)	(47,670)	727,076
Restricted					
a) Residential	-	15,186	(16,063)	877	-
b) Food discovery	11,013	56,830	(49,321)	-	18,522
c) Farm visits	-	107,387	(154,180)	46,793	-
d) Country Trust Hampshire	-	3,739	(2,196)	-	1,543
Total restricted	11,013	183,142	(221,760)	47,670	20,065
Total funds	737,532	561,786	(552,177)	-	747,141

Prior year:

	Balance at 01/01/2019 £	Incoming resources £	Resources expended £	Transfers £	Balance at 31/12/2019 £
Unrestricted funds					
General	703,891	410,977	(284,709)	(233,640)	596,519
Designated funds					
i) Risk assessment	-	-	-	10,000	10,000
ii) Corporate fundraiser	-	-	-	120,000	120,000
	-	-	-	130,000	130,000
Total unrestricted	703,891	410,977	(284,709)	(103,640)	726,519
Restricted					
a) Residential	19,108	121,190	(163,869)	23,571	-
b) Food discovery	22,693	107,240	(108,367)	(10,553)	11,013
c) Farm visits	-	149,924	(227,675)	77,751	-
d) Country Trust Hampshire	4,859	23,788	(41,518)	12,871	-
Total restricted	46,660	402,142	(541,429)	103,640	11,013
Total funds	750,551	813,119	(826,138)	-	737,532

The specific purposes for which the funds are to be applied are as follows:

Restricted funds:
a) Funds to subsidise the cost of Countryside Discovery Residential visits enabling disadvantaged primary age children to experience food, farming and the countryside.
b) For teaching disadvantaged primary school children to grow & cook fresh produce, explore local farms, run playground markets & a harvest feast, and to train teachers in relevant elements of Learning Outside the Classroom.
c) Funds relating to the provision of Farm and Countryside Discovery educational day visits bringing the working countryside to life for primary school children from disadvantaged areas, and now the Farm in a Box programme bringing farm centred, hands on, experiential learning into schools, groups and homes.
d) Provides for Farm and Countryside Discovery educational visits for primary school children to working farms and estates specifically in Hampshire and the surrounding counties.

Designated funds:
i) The Trustees designated £10,000 from unrestricted funds for completing a host farm risk assessment process.
ii) £120,000 was designated to fund a corporate fundraising role for three years.
iii) £20,000 has been designated by the trustees to fund strategic planning and innovation.

The transfers from unrestricted are made to eliminate the negative restricted fund balances. This year there has also been a transfer of £20,000 to designated funds.

18 Analysis of net assets between funds

Current year:

	Unrestricted funds £	Designated funds £	Restricted £	Total funds at 31/12/2020 £
Tangible fixed assets	3,760	-	-	3,760
Current assets	881,623	130,000	300,667	1,312,290
Current liabilities	(288,307)	-	(280,602)	(568,909)
Total net assets	597,076	130,000	20,065	747,141

Prior year:

	Unrestricted funds £	Designated funds £	Restricted £	Total funds at 31/12/2019 £
Tangible fixed assets	4,778	-	-	4,778
Current assets	632,436	130,000	147,448	909,884
Current liabilities	(40,695)	-	(136,435)	(177,130)
Total net assets	596,519	130,000	11,013	737,532

19 Related party transactions

There were no related party transactions in the year.

20 Prior year Statement of Financial Activities

	Note	Unrestricted funds General funds £	Designated funds £	Restricted £	Total 2019 £
Income and Endowments from:					
Donations and legacies	3	409,650	-	290,296	699,946
Charitable activities	4	-	-	111,846	111,846
Investment income	5	1,327	-	-	1,327
Total income		410,977	-	402,142	813,119
Expenditure on:					
Charitable activities	6	284,709	-	541,429	826,138
Total expenditure		284,709	-	541,429	826,138
Net income/(expenditure)		126,268	-	(139,287)	(13,019)
Transfers between funds		(233,640)	130,000	103,640	-
Net movement in funds		(107,372)	130,000	(35,647)	(13,019)
Reconciliation of funds					
Total funds brought forward		703,891	-	46,660	750,551
Total funds carried forward	17	596,519	130,000	11,013	737,532

Country Trust

Where children learn and grow

The Country Trust is a registered charity no. 1122103 and is a company limited by guarantee registered in England no. 6436266
Registered address and head office: Moulsham Mill, Parkway, Chelmsford, Essex CM2 7PX
President: The Duke of Westminster