



**Country
Trust**

Connecting children with
the land that sustains us all

**Annual Report
& Accounts 2023**

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Trustees:

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

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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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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

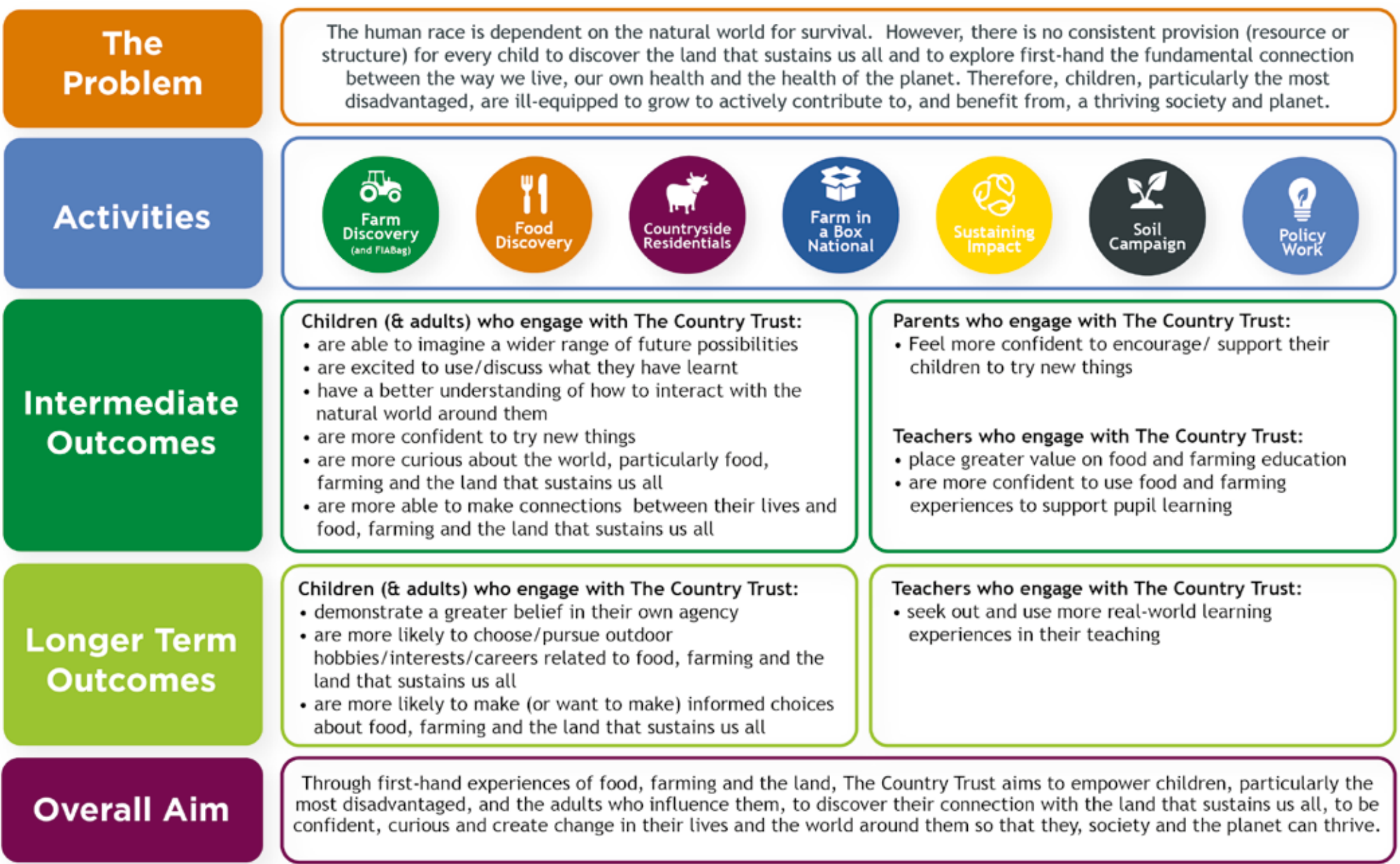
Poverty is deepening in the UK and we felt it was important to include the following line when we revised our Theory of Change.

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.



Country Trust

Theory of Change



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.*



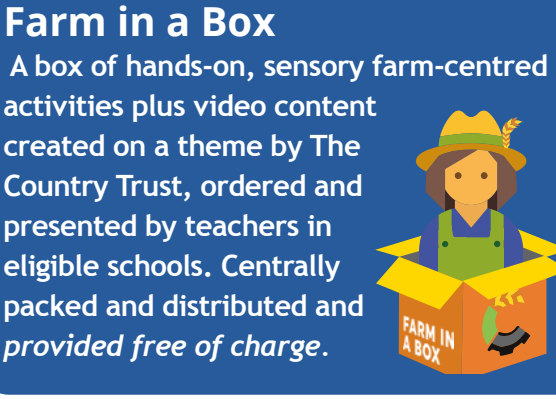
Countryside Residentials

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.



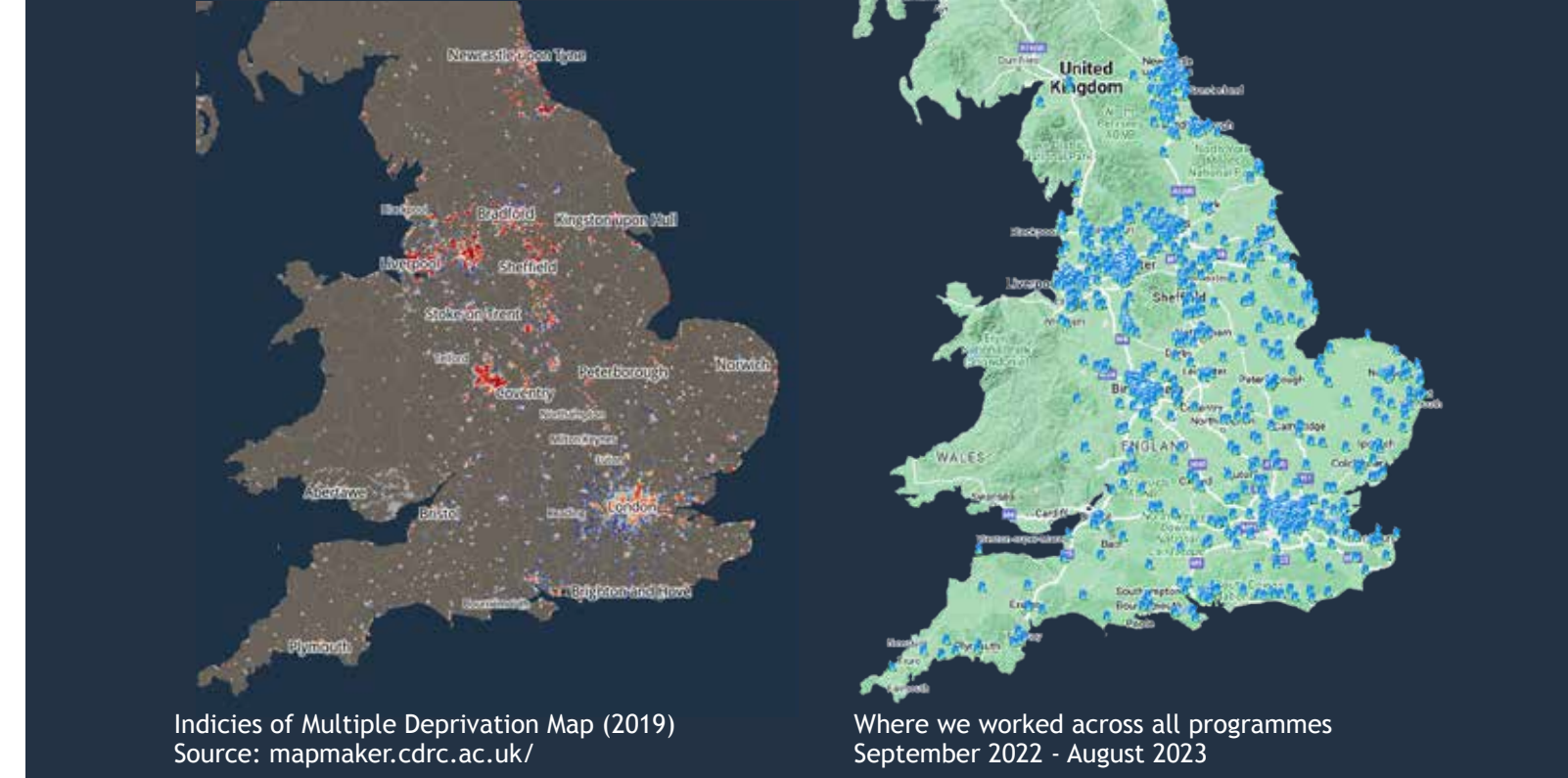
How we support our participants

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.



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 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.”

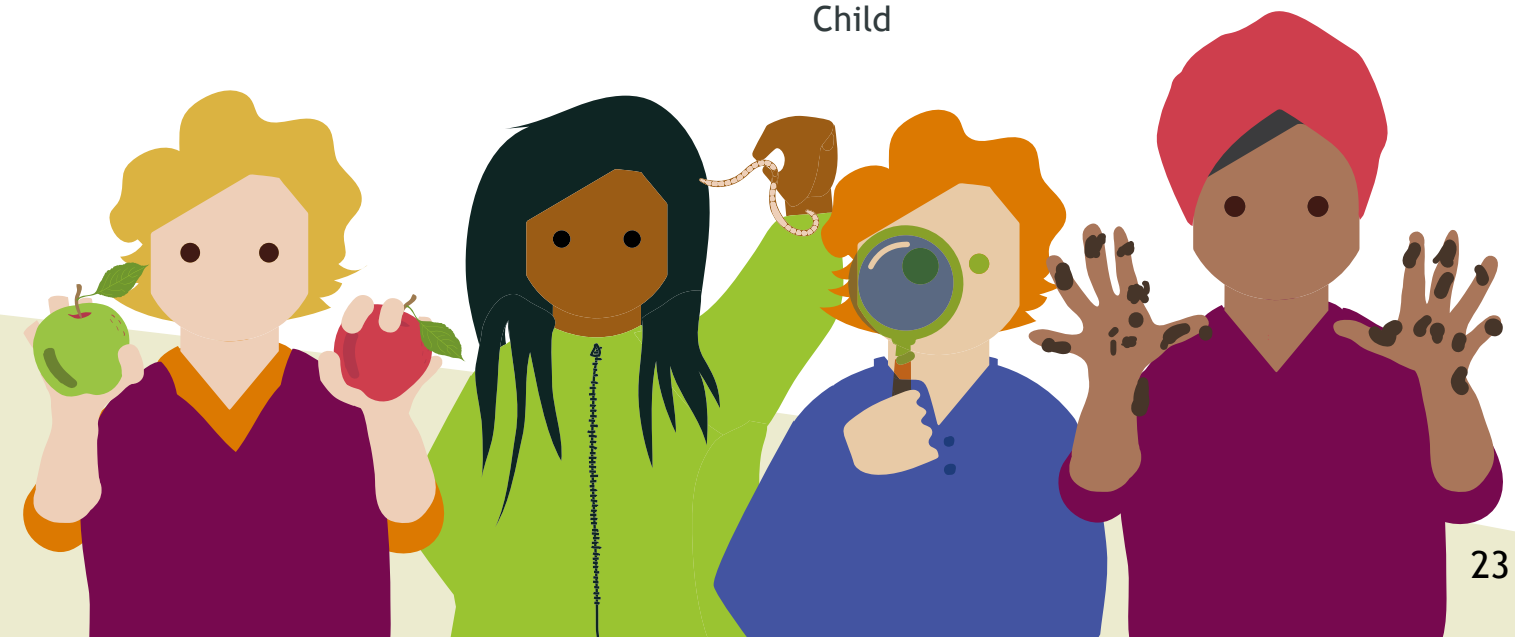
Session report

“I enjoyed learning that nature has natural treasures, so you don’t have to have money to see nice things.”

Child

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



Our impact at a glance

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

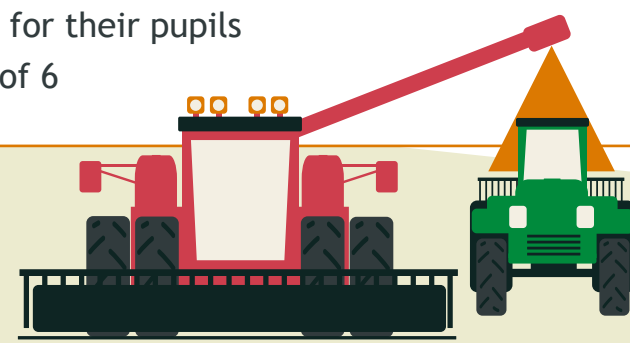
The impact of the pandemic on school life means that in 2023 many teachers (and children, and their parents) had little or no experience of school visits before coming on a Country Trust visit.

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:

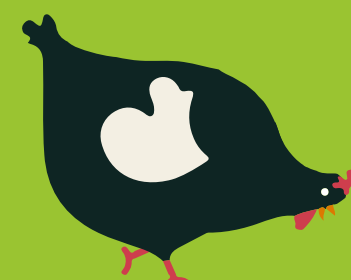
- Average FSMEver6 of the school settings was over **40%**.
- An estimated **26,270** children reached with Autumn Box, **9,950** of these also experienced the Spring Box
- **60%** of settings provided feedback in autumn and **45%** in spring

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.

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



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;

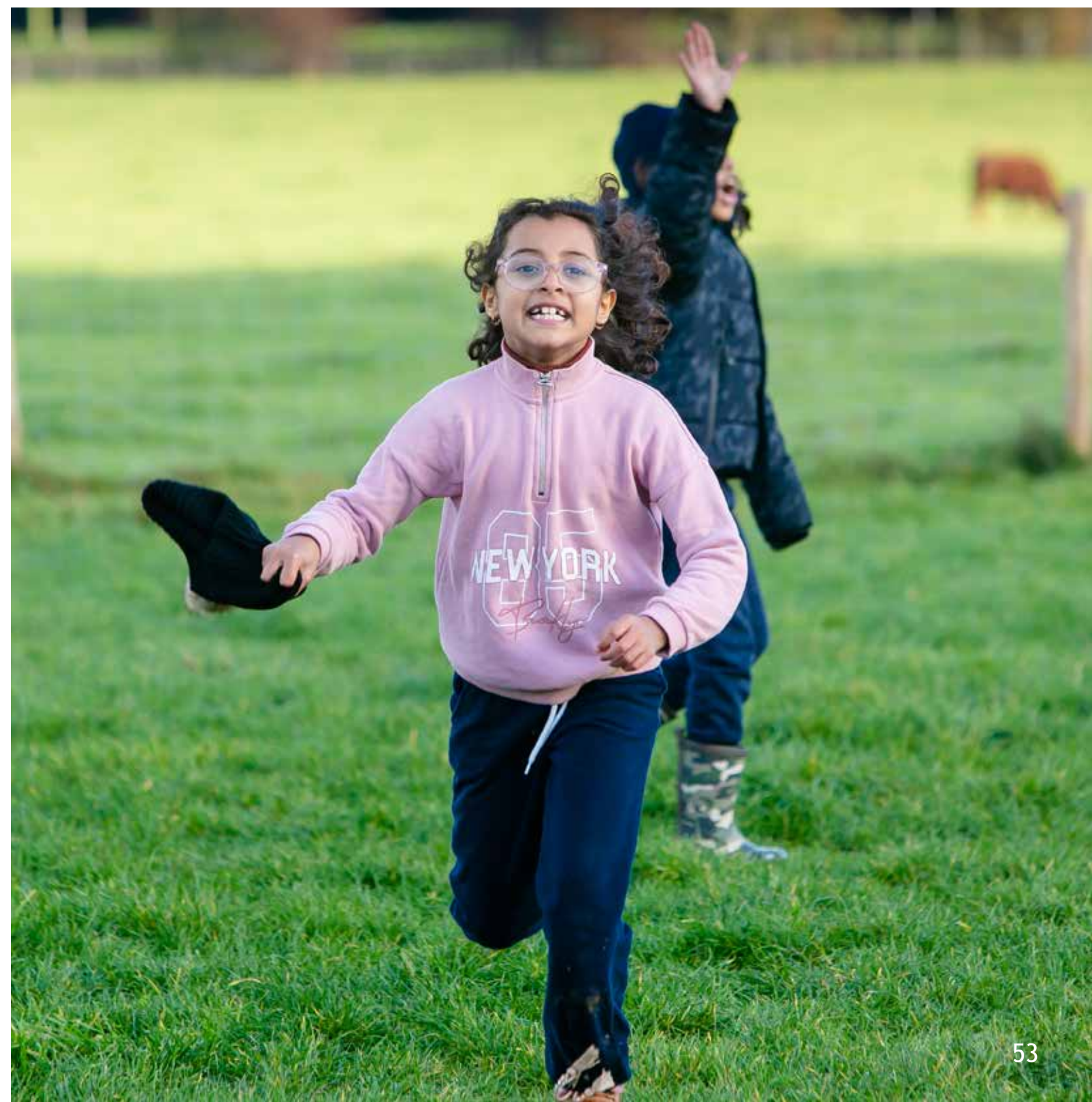
AGCO Foundation, Aldgate and Allhallows Foundation, Ardian UK and the Ardian Foundation, Barbour Foundation, BASF, British Gypsum, Bruno Schroder Trust, Catherine Cookson Charitable Trust, The CLA Charitable Trust, The Clarkson Foundation, Lance Coates Charitable Trust, Ernest Cook Trust, Darlington 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.



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.



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.

The Country Trust	
Independent Auditor's Report to the Members of The Country Trust	
<p>Opinion on other matter prescribed by the Companies Act 2006</p> <p>In our opinion, based on the work undertaken in the course of the audit:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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. <p>Matters on which we are required to report by exception</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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. <p>Responsibilities of trustees</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>Auditor responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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:</p>	

The Country Trust	
Independent Auditor's Report to the Members of The Country Trust	
<p>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;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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. <p>We assessed the susceptibility of the company's financial statements to material misstatement, including obtaining an understanding of how fraud might occur by;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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. <p>To address the risk of fraud through management bias and override of controls, we:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Performed analytical procedures to identify any unusual or unexpected relationships. Tested journal entries to identify unusual transactions. <p>In response to the risk of irregularities and non-compliance with laws and regulations, we designed procedures which included, but were not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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. <p>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.</p> <p>As part of an audit in accordance with ISAs (UK), we exercise professional judgement and maintain professional scepticism throughout the audit. We also:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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	<u>6,115</u>	<u>5,258</u>
Current assets			
Debtors	13	105,564	124,856
Cash at bank and in hand	14	<u>907,158</u>	<u>856,882</u>
		1,012,722	981,738
Creditors: Amounts falling due within one year	15	<u>(487,378)</u>	<u>(404,756)</u>
Net current assets		<u>525,344</u>	<u>576,982</u>
Net assets		<u>531,459</u>	<u>582,240</u>
Funds of the charitable company:			
Restricted		28,248	23,206
Unrestricted funds			
General funds		<u>503,211</u>	<u>559,034</u>
Total funds	16	<u>531,459</u>	<u>582,240</u>

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	<u>(16,631)</u>	<u>(3,259)</u>
		(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		<u>103,690</u>	<u>106,952</u>
Net cash flows from operating activities		<u>36,269</u>	<u>(161,217)</u>
Cash flows from investing activities			
Interest receivable and similar income	5	16,631	3,259
Purchase of tangible fixed assets	12	<u>(2,624)</u>	<u>(1,779)</u>
Net cash flows from investing activities		<u>14,007</u>	<u>1,480</u>
Net increase/(decrease) in cash and cash equivalents		50,276	(159,737)
Cash and cash equivalents at 1 January		<u>856,882</u>	<u>1,016,619</u>
Cash and cash equivalents at 31 December		<u>907,158</u>	<u>856,882</u>

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.

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.

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

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.

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

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

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

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

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.

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

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	2,905	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

	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

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

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:

The Country Trust

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

	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

The Country Trust

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

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

The Country Trust

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

16 Funds					
<i>Current year:</i>					
	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	<u>23,206</u>	<u>800,552</u>	<u>(932,130)</u>	<u>136,620</u>	<u>28,248</u>
Total funds	<u>582,240</u>	<u>1,379,887</u>	<u>(1,430,668)</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>531,459</u>

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.

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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	<u>86,404</u>	<u>662,464</u>	<u>(818,825)</u>	<u>93,163</u>	<u>23,206</u>
Total funds	<u>772,718</u>	<u>1,206,639</u>	<u>(1,397,117)</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>582,240</u>

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

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	<u>503,211</u>	<u>28,248</u>	<u>531,459</u>

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	<u>559,034</u>	<u>23,206</u>	<u>582,240</u>

The Country Trust

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

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		<u>544,175</u>	<u>662,464</u>	<u>1,206,639</u>
Expenditure on:				
Raising funds		107,475	-	107,475
Charitable activities	6	470,817	818,825	1,289,642
Total expenditure		<u>578,292</u>	<u>818,825</u>	<u>1,397,117</u>
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		<u>686,314</u>	<u>86,404</u>	<u>772,718</u>
Total funds carried forward	16	<u>559,034</u>	<u>23,206</u>	<u>582,240</u>

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

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.

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

	2023 £	2022 £
<i>Donations and legacies</i>		
Donations and legacies	458,123	236,882
Grants, including capital grants	760,040	793,192
Donated services and facilities	1,370	78,050
	<u>1,219,533</u>	<u>1,108,124</u>
	£	£
<i>Charitable activities</i>		
Countryside Discovery Residential Visits	121,067	87,080
Food Discovery	22,206	7,616
Farm Visits	-	360
	<u>143,273</u>	<u>95,056</u>
	£	£
<i>Charitable activities</i>		
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 & Distribution	23,964	52,647
Auditors' remuneration	6,636	6,000
	<u>1,311,510</u>	<u>1,289,642</u>

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Country Trust

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