



**Country
Trust**

Connecting children with
the land that sustains us all

**Annual Report
& Accounts 2024**

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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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Executive Summary

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

Our Programmes

In 2023/24:

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

Our Influence

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

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



Impact Themes Across Programmes

Our Impact

Our 2023-4 Impact Report is [available here](#).

Impact on Children:

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

Impact on Teachers:

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

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

-Post-residential thank you letter, Yorkshire

Impact:

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

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

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

Meeting Need and Demand

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

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

Key Challenges

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



Responding to Challenge

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

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

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



About us: Our Programmes



Farm Discovery

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



Countryside Residentials

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



Food Discovery

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

Farm in a Box

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



Sustaining Impact

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



Residential in a Box

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



Farm in a Bag

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



Plant Your Pants Soil Health campaign

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

Core Values:



We believe you grow by learning from others



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



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

Aspirational values:



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

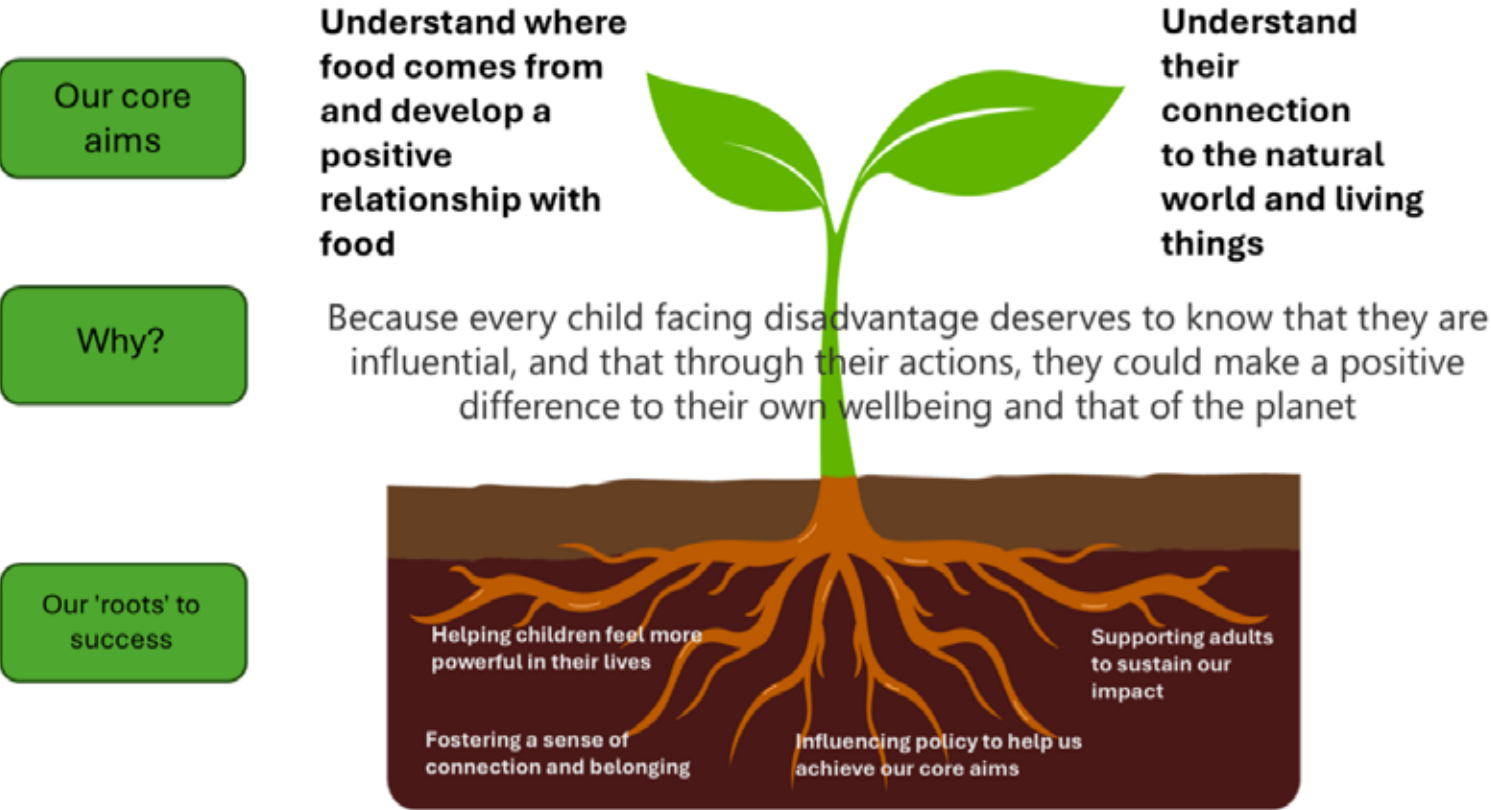


We aspire to be child-centred, no matter what our role is

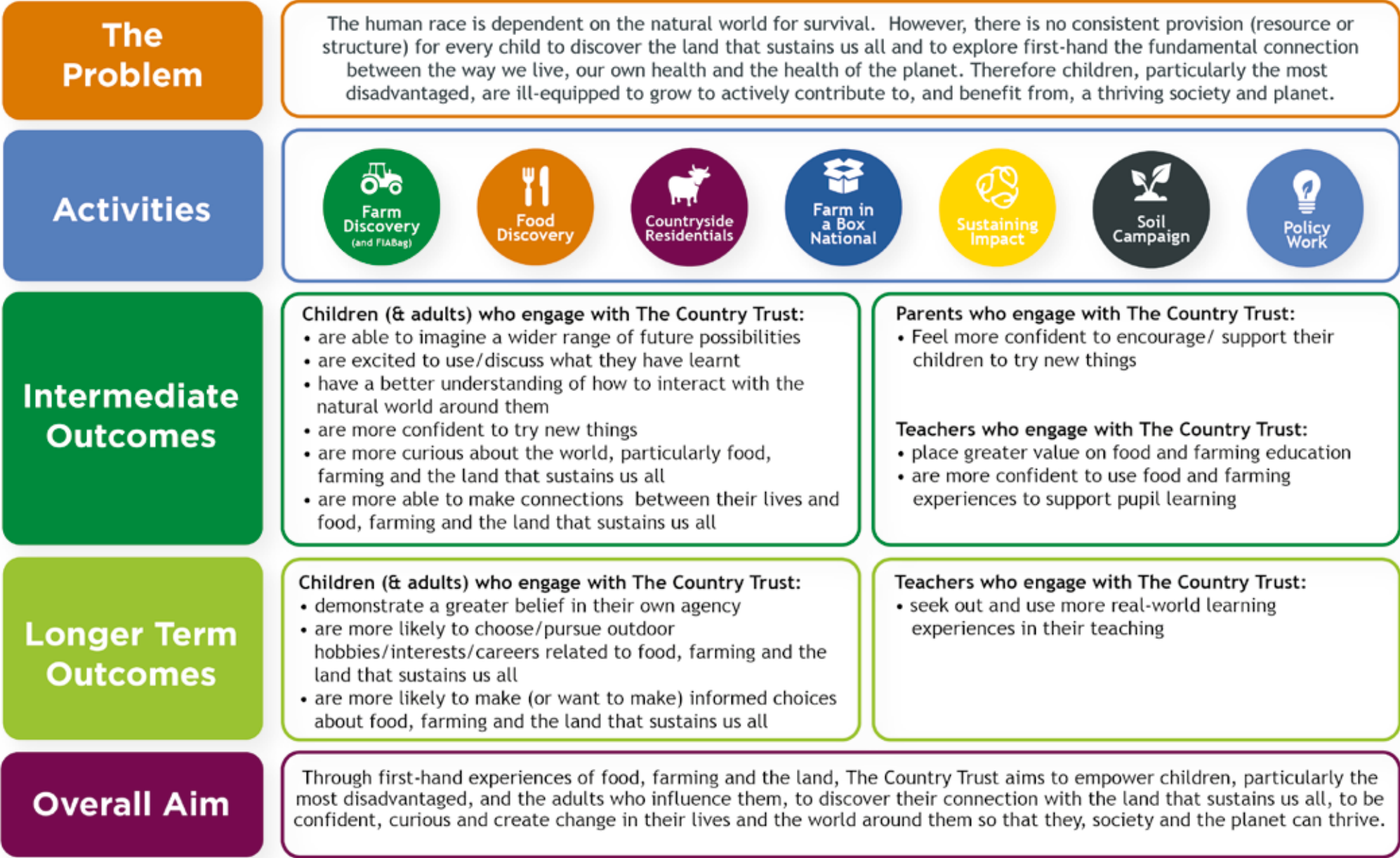
Theory of Change

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

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



Theory of Change



Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

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

Activities

How the Charity’s activities deliver public benefit

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

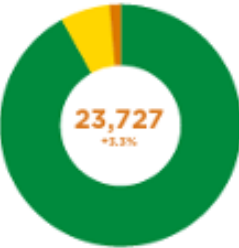
- Every child should have the opportunity to visit a real working farm, to discover through first-hand experience where their food comes from.
- Every child should have the chance to discover connections between the food they eat, their own health and the health of the planet.
- Every child should have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

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

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

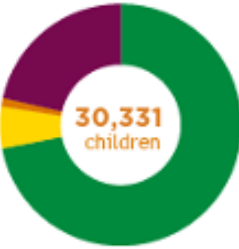
We are in the unique position of being able to provide programmes which support teachers to engage children with learning, and support physical, emotional and social wellbeing. We can build food knowledge and food confidence, provide access to food and farming related climate learning and enable children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

Our reach in 2023/4



Over 23,700 children on farm visits:

- Farm Discovery: 21,804
- Food Discovery: 1,576
- Residentials: 347



Over 30,000 children engaging with our core programmes:

- Farm Discovery: 21,804
- Food Discovery: 1,696
- Residentials: 347
- Farm in a Box: 6484



Over 150,000 hours of engagement:

- Farm Discovery: 87,216 (4hrs per child)
- Food Discovery: 24,592 (14.5hrs per child)
- Residentials: 12,492 (36hrs per child)
- Farm in a Box: 25,936 (4hrs per child)

568

Total number of schools we have worked with across our core programmes

On average,
44.5%

of children in the schools we work with, meet EVER6 FSM* criteria (The National average is 25.9%)

This year,
33,516

participants are estimated to have taken part in our soil health campaign 'Plant your Pants'

*Have been entitled to free school meals at any time during the last 6 years



How we work

How we work

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

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

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

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



Our Operating Context

The Impact of Poverty

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

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

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

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

Disadvantaged children also face difficult home environments, including overcrowded living conditions, limited access to technology, and housing instability. These factors contribute to chronic stress and emotional distress,

making it harder for them to focus on their education.

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

Access to green space, nature and farming

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

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

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

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



Who We Support

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

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

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

- A specialist SEND or SEMH school.
- An alternative provider of education, including;
 - Pupil Referral Units for primary-age children
 - Local Authority hospital and outreach departments.
- School with high percentage of children receiving Service Pupil Premium
- A group or organisation supporting disadvantaged primary children outside of formal education e.g.
- A holiday activity programme for Pupil Premium children of primary age. A group supporting refugee / asylum seeker children / families.
- A group supporting vulnerable families.
- A group supporting Looked After Children.
- A group supporting Young Carers.

Where we work

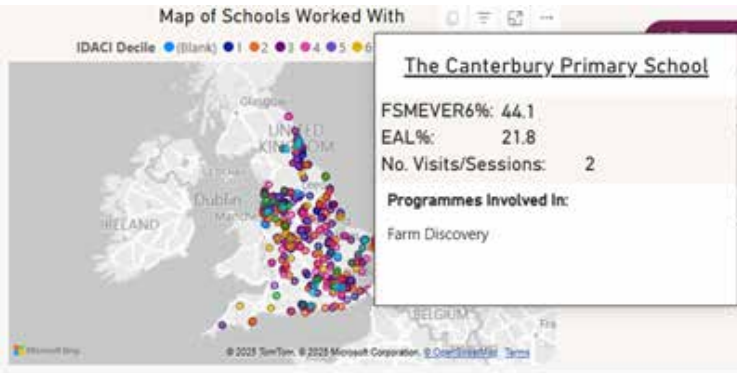
Our Farm, Food and Residential Coordinators are located across England and North Wales delivering hands-on, real-world food and farm experiences. During 2024 our team increased in size slightly and as we now have a well-established team, where funding allowed, Coordinators delivered more visits.

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

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



Map showing locations of delivery team across our core programmes.



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



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



Farming

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

Global Risk

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



Climate Change

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

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

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

-Natural England 2024

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



Education 2024 summary

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

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

Teacher Recruitment and Retention Challenges

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

Socio-Economic Disparities

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



School Infrastructure

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

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

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

Our impact at a glance

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

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

Farm Discovery

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

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

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

- Teacher

Impact on Children- Farm Discovery

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

Our impact at a glance

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

Impact on Teachers- Farm Discovery

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



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

Child

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

Child

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

Child

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

Coordinator's session report

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

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

Our impact at a glance

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

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



Case Study: Horizon Academy

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



Our impact at a glance

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

Food Discovery

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

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

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

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

- Teacher

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

- Teacher



Impact on Children- Food Discovery

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

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



Our impact at a glance

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

Impact on teachers - Food Discovery

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



Impact on parents - Food Discovery

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

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

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

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

Child

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

Child

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

Child

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

Child

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

Child

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

Child



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

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

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

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

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

helped Dad keep the momentum of supporting him with his eating.”

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



Countryside Discovery Residentials

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

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

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

“The activities are next level’ Lansbury Lawrence Teacher”

Impact on teachers:

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

Impact on children:

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

“I learnt about plants and animals like cows. I learnt their poo has lots of nutrition and helps the soil.’ - child”

“‘I found out that you could make paint with onion skin.’ - child”

“‘I learnt that we should pinch stinging nettles so they don’t sting us.’ -child”



Farm in a Box

Farm in a Bag

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

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

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

The difference we make - Farm in a Box

Impact on Children:

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

Impact on teachers:

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

Farm in a Bag

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

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

Residential in a Box

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

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

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

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

Soil Campaign- Plant Your Pants!

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

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

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

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

“ I never realised soil was so important! ”

Child

“ I've never been allowed to dig in the dirt before. ”

Child



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

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

Child

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

Child

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

Child

“ If we didn't have soil we would be dead. ”

Child

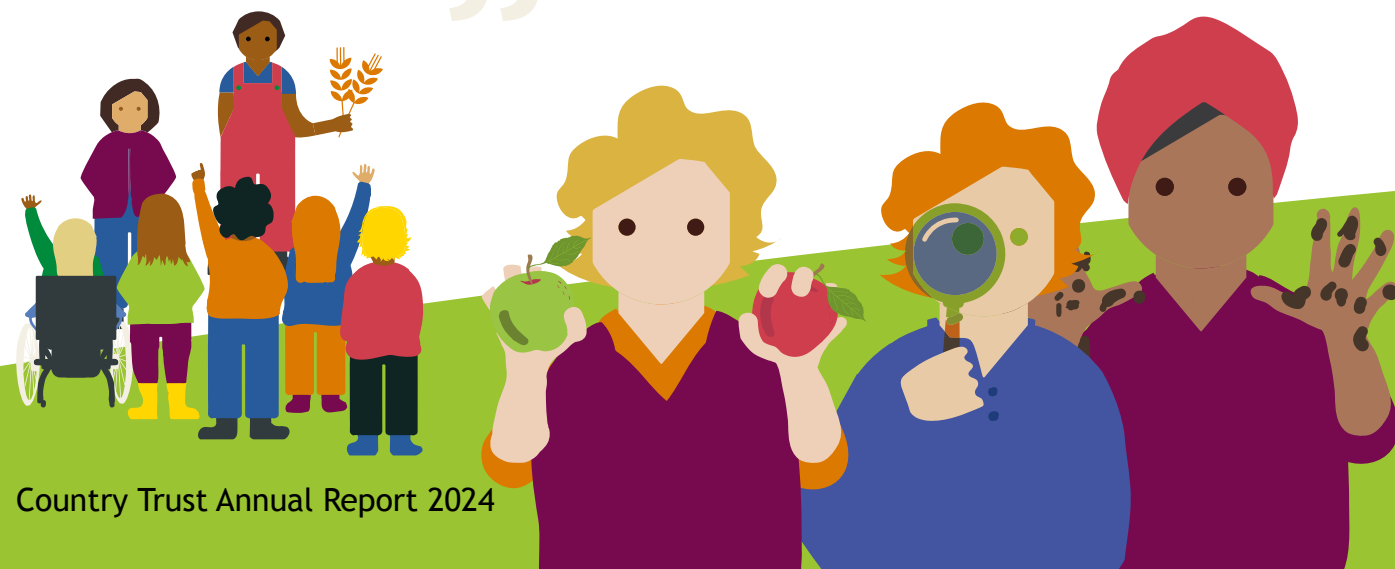
Our policy work

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

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

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

Farmer host



Farming in Protected Landscapes

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

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

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

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

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



Reaching Diverse Communities with FiPL

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

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

Engaging Non-School Groups

Beyond schools, we have collaborated with:

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

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

High Weald AONB

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

Forest of Bowland AONB

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

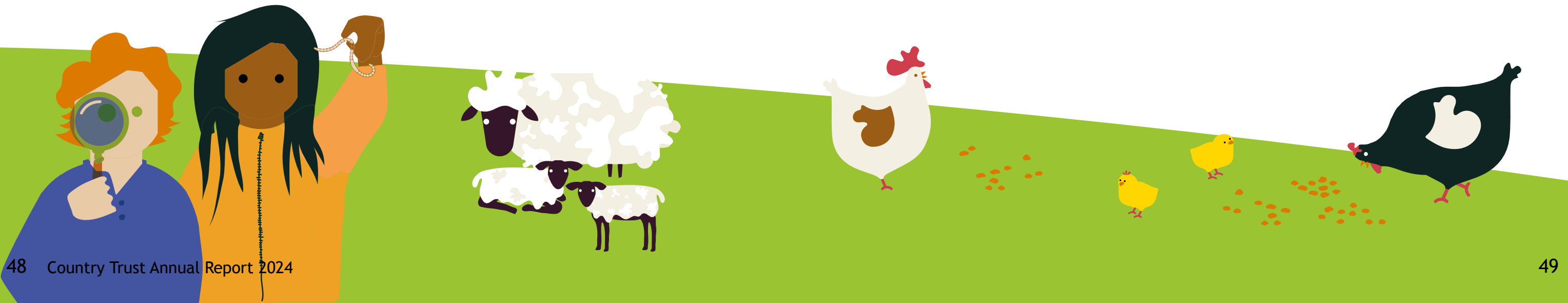
“ I actually thought it was going to be rubbish, but it turned out to be the best day of my life. - Pupil ”

Suffolk Coasts and Heaths National Park

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

Norfolk Broads National Park

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



Strategic direction

Our 5 Year Plan

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

The 5 pillars of the Plan are:

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



Next steps with our Strategic Plan

2025 will be year 4 of our 5 Year Plan.

Our aims are:

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



Fundraising

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

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

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

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

Controls

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

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

Reserves policy

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

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

Fundraising

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

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

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

Donors to The Country Trust can be assured that:

- Fundraising activity is included within the Trust's Risk Register, which is reviewed at each Board meeting; a senior member of staff directly involved with fundraising is present at every Board meeting.
- The Charity does not currently make use of professional fundraisers or commercial participators.
- The Charity complies with the Fundraising Regulator's voluntary regulation scheme.

- All fundraising is carried out by employed staff, managed by the CEO or Senior Managers who report to the CEO, or very occasionally by named volunteers working closely with the employed staff on our behalf, primarily networking with peers and friends. Some volunteers will fundraise in aid of The Country Trust through fundraising platforms and the Charity provides support for them on its website.
- The Charity did not receive any complaints about fundraising activities carried out by The Charity or someone acting on The Charity's behalf. We will be ensuring that our current website refresh includes raising the visibility of how to complain.
- The Charity respects the privacy of the public, including the need to take special care with vulnerable people. Any mailing or emailing for fundraising purposes is in accordance with GDPR preferences. Public fundraising is through online fundraising platforms, or through static collection goblets and is carried out in accordance with the Code of Fundraising Practice. The Charity undertakes very little face to face fundraising and what is done is events based and primarily by invitation.
- The Charity will comply with requests issued by the Fundraising Preference Service.
- The Charity strives to maintain GDPR compliance and is registered with the ICO.



Fundraising

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

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

29th May 1961 Charitable Trust, AIM Foundation, AGCO Foundation, Aldgate and Allhallows Foundation, Anguish Educational Fund, Ardian UK and the Ardian Foundation, Aurora Trust, Barbour Foundation, Bayfield Charitable Trust, BASF, British Gypsum, Bruno Schroder Trust, The Barratt Family Charitable Trust, Carr-Ellison Charitable Trust, Chadacre Agricultural Trust, Catherine Cookson Charitable Trust, The CLA Charitable Trust, The Clarkson Foundation, De Brito, DCR Allen Charitable Trust, D'Oyly Carte Charitable Trust, Dulverton Trust, Earl of Fitzwilliam Charitable Trust, Lance Coates Charitable Trust, Ernest Cook Trust, Essex Community Foundation, Darlington Building Society, Doves Farm, Farming in Protected Landscapes Scheme, Fenwick, Frontier Agriculture UK, George F White, The Girdlers' Company, The Hadrian Trust (2025 donation), WA Handley Trust, Forbes Charitable Foundation, The Hiscox Foundation, A Hume Country Clothing and Outfitters, Four Winds Trust, Gerald Palmer Eling, Impax Asset Management, The Joicey Trust, Gransden Show, Hedley Foundation, Adrian Swire CT, Sir James Knott Trust, Sir James Roll Charitable Trust, John Lewis Golden Jubilee Trust, Julia Rausing Trust, John and Pamela Salter Trust, Laura Capel Charitable Trust, Lady Hind Trust, The Lund Trust, Lujenna Educational Trust, Lycetts Insurers and Financial Services, Manydown Charitable Trust, The Mercers' Company, Merchant Taylor Foundation, Muckle LLP Community Fund, Mr & Mrs Rackham Charitable

Trust, NFU, Nineveh Charitable Trust, Northumberland Freemasons Charitable Trust, Northumberland Estates, Northumbrian Water, Norwich Freeman's Charity, Pilkington Charities, The Farmers Company Charitable Fund, PF Charitable Trust, Oxbury Bank, Omex Ltd, Leach Fourteenth Trust, The Rank Foundation, Reece Foundation, Ridley Family Charity, Riverford Organic Foods, The Rothschild Foundation, Royal Society of Chemistry, Rural Solutions, Ryecroft Glenton, The Shears Foundation, The Bacon Charitable Trust, The Dumbreck Charity, The Bernard Sunley Charitable Foundation, South of England Agricultural Society, Squires Foundation, Felix Thornley Cobbold Agricultural Trust, Troy Asset Management, Thomas's Foundation, Tesco Community Grants, Tyne and Wear Community Foundation, Warburtons Ltd, Westminster Foundation, The Garfield Weston Foundation, The Wheler Foundation, Sovereign Healthcare Foundation, Steel Charitable Trust, St Nicholas Education Trust, Suffolk Community Foundation, Yorkshire Agricultural Society, The Verney Foundation.

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



Structure, Governance and Management

Structure

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

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

Governing document

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

Governing Body

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

Recruitment and training of Trustees

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

Organisational management

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

Structure, Governance and Management

Risk management

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

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

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

- Legal and regulatory compliance- as above, plus new contracts were developed for all our self employed delivery team.

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

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



Structure, Governance and Management

Openness and accountability

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



This is our Position Statement:

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

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

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

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

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

Structure, Governance and Management

GDPR

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

Cybersecurity

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

Safeguarding

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

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

Health and Safety

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

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

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

Statement of compliance with prevailing laws and regulations

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

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

Approved by the Board of Trustees on17 May 2025..... and signed on its behalf by:

M A Bufton McCoy
.....
Anne Bufton McCoy

A Stafford
.....
Andrew Stafford

The Country Trust

Trustees Report

Statement of trustees' responsibilities

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

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

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

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

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

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

Opinion

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

In our opinion the financial statements:

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

Basis for opinion

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

Conclusions relating to going concern

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

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

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

Other information

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

We have nothing to report in this regard.

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

Opinion on other matter prescribed by the Companies Act 2006

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

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

Matters on which we are required to report by exception

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

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

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

Responsibilities of trustees

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

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

Auditor responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Use of our report

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

S Morrell

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

146 New London Road
Chelmsford
Essex
CM2 0AW

Date: 30 May 2025

The Country Trust

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

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

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

The Country Trust

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

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

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

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

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

Statement of Cash Flows for the Year Ended 31 December 2024

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

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

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

1 Charitable company status

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

2 Accounting policies

Summary of significant accounting policies and key accounting estimates

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

Statement of compliance

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

Basis of preparation

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

Going concern

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

Income and endowments

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

Donations and legacies

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

Grants receivable

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

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

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 2024

Depreciation and amortisation

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

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

Trade debtors

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

Cash and cash equivalents

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

Trade creditors

Creditors are recognised at their settlement amount.

Fund structure

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

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

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

Pensions and other post retirement obligations

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

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

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

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

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

4 Income from charitable activities

	Unrestricted funds	Restricted funds	Total
	£	£	2024
Countryside Discovery Residential Visits	-	68,237	68,237
Food Discovery	-	21,539	21,539
	-	89,776	89,776
	Unrestricted funds	Restricted funds	Total
	£	£	2023
Countryside Discovery Residential Visits	-	121,067	121,067
Food Discovery	-	22,206	22,206
	-	143,273	143,273

5 Investment income

	Unrestricted funds	Restricted funds	Total
	£	£	2024
Interest receivable on bank deposits	21,718	-	21,718
	21,718	-	21,718
	Unrestricted funds	Restricted funds	Total
	£	£	2023
Interest receivable on bank deposits	16,631	-	16,631
	16,631	-	16,631

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

6 Expenditure on charitable activities

	Activity undertaken directly £	Activity support costs £	2024 £
Countryside Discovery Residential Visits	147,044	75,266	222,310
Food Discovery	183,856	84,639	268,495
Farm Visits	517,093	271,812	788,905
Farm in a Box	44,805	28,124	72,929
Soil	41,726	21,358	63,084
	934,524	481,199	1,415,723
	Activity undertaken directly £	Activity support costs £	2023 £
Countryside Discovery Residential Visits	193,948	79,054	273,002
Food Discovery	178,296	72,674	250,970
Farm Visits	440,639	179,605	620,244
Farm in a Box	70,494	30,104	100,598
Soil	47,383	19,313	66,696
	930,760	380,750	1,311,510

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

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

7 Analysis of governance and support costs

Support costs allocated to charitable activities

	Governance costs £	Staff costs £	Administration costs £	Total 2024 £
Countryside Discovery Residential Visits	1,532	52,192	21,542	75,266
Food Discovery	1,718	58,695	24,226	84,639
Farm Visits	5,350	183,564	82,898	271,812
Farm in a Box	470	15,901	11,753	28,124
Soil	410	14,828	6,120	21,358
	9,480	325,180	146,539	481,199
	Governance costs £	Staff costs £	Administration costs £	Total 2023 £
Countryside Discovery Residential Visits	1,383	51,739	25,941	79,063
Food Discovery	1,271	47,568	23,850	72,689
Farm Visits	3,141	117,530	58,928	179,599
Farm in a Box	502	18,794	10,793	30,089
Soil	339	12,636	6,335	19,310
	6,636	248,267	125,847	380,750

Governance costs

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

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

8 Net incoming/outgoing resources

Net outgoing resources for the year include:

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

9 Trustees remuneration and expenses

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

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

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

10 Staff costs

The aggregate payroll costs were as follows:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

11 Taxation

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

12 Tangible fixed assets

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

The Country Trust

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

13 Debtors

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

14 Cash and cash equivalents

	2024 £	2023 £
Cash at bank	<u>749,951</u>	<u>907,158</u>

15 Creditors: amounts falling due within one year

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

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

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

The Country Trust

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

16 Funds

Current year:

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

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

Restricted funds:

- Funds to subsidise the cost of Countryside Discovery Residential visits enabling disadvantaged primary age children to experience food, farming and the countryside.
- 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.
- 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.
- This fund is to support children and educators so that they can have a farm-centred experience without leaving their school grounds or location.
- Fund for our new Soil Health Campaign – Plant Your Pants. It's a public engagement campaign to help everyone think differently about the earth beneath our feet and to discover how it supports all our lives.

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

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

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

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

17 Analysis of net assets between funds

<i>Current year:</i>	Unrestricted funds £	Restricted funds £	Total funds at 31/12/2024 £
Tangible fixed assets	9,000	-	9,000
Current assets	525,745	428,352	954,097
Current liabilities	<u>(50,381)</u>	<u>(382,190)</u>	<u>(432,571)</u>
Total net assets	<u><u>484,364</u></u>	<u><u>46,162</u></u>	<u><u>530,526</u></u>
<i>Prior year:</i>	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	<u>(178,773)</u>	<u>(308,605)</u>	<u>(487,378)</u>
Total net assets	<u><u>503,211</u></u>	<u><u>28,248</u></u>	<u><u>531,459</u></u>

The Country Trust

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

18 Prior year Statement of Financial Activities

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



**Country
Trust**

To support our work visit:
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