

REGISTERED COMPANY NUMBER: 06652160 (England and Wales)

REGISTERED CHARITY NUMBER: 1126122



## **Ecological Continuity Trust**

### **Trustees' Report and Financial Statements Year Ended 31st December 2023**

Grosvenor Tax Practice Limited  
7 Larksfield Road  
Kingscourt  
Stroud  
Gloucestershire  
GL5 3PL

# **ECOLOGICAL CONTINUITY TRUST**

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# ECOLOGICAL CONTINUITY TRUST

## Report of the Trustees for the year ended 31 December 2023

The trustees who are also directors of the charity for the purposes of the Companies Act 2006, present their report with the financial statements of the charity for the year ended 31 December 2023. The trustees have adopted the provisions of Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) (effective 1 January 2019).

### **The Ecological Continuity Trust**

The Ecological Continuity Trust is the only organisation working to safeguard the future of the UK's strategic network of long-term ecological experiments (LTEs). Many ecological processes operate over timescales of decades. As the effects of environmental change on ecosystems are often slow to emerge, long-term studies are essential to characterise and understand these changes. Certain questions in ecology can only be answered by setting up an LTE and allowing it to run for many years.

LTEs involve experimental manipulation combined with monitoring and these have been the focus of the ECT during its first fifteen years. LTEs provide greater insight into how ecosystems are likely to respond to environmental changes than monitoring alone. An experimental approach allows researchers to investigate cause and effect, to test the effectiveness of management regimes and to manipulate environmental variables beyond those currently prevailing, allowing the investigation of future scenarios. Long-term ecological experiments provide a unique platform for such studies, investigating the effects of, and interactions between environmental changes, such as air pollution, grazing management, and climate change on ecosystems. LTEs allow us to understand and predict future scenarios for ecosystems in the face of environmental change. The role that LTEs play in enabling society to understand and mitigate (where possible) the consequences of climate change on ecosystems is now more important than ever.

During 2023, ECT in close collaboration with the British Ecological Society (BES) brought together landowners, policymakers and the major UK NGOs that are undertaking or considering landscape-scale projects. The aim was to build a coordinated community to provide guidance, promote best practice and where appropriate initiate long-term experimental and monitoring studies for evidence-generating landscape-scale projects. For the ECT this landscape-scale initiative is additional to its existing primary mission to support the UK's existing LTE network. The initiative also embraces support for selected long-term monitoring studies (LTMs), such as the Environmental Change Network sites, and the creation of LTE/LTM hubs to add significant scale values to the scientific outputs of LTEs.

The landscape-scale project should increase societal understanding of the values and need for long-term ecological studies and thus broaden the User Group community. ECT has already established a significant number of new end-user contacts and landscape-scale practitioners as

# ECOLOGICAL CONTINUITY TRUST

## Report of the Trustees for the year ended 31 December 2023

a result of this new work. It should also enhance public perception of the importance of the ECT as a charity requiring funds and donations.

The ECT's Corporate Plan 'Securing Long-term Experiments for the Future' sets out a strategic framework for our activities and operations for the decade 2020-2030 and this remained unchanged in 2023. It is available to download from ECT's website at:

<https://www.ecologicalcontinuitytrust.org/strategy>.

In light of the charity's improved financial circumstances in 2023 - due to competitively-won external grants - the development of a three-year Strategic Plan for the period 2024-2026 was initiated in November 2023 that supports the aspirations of our ten-year Corporate Plan. This will be finalised at the beginning of 2024.

### Overall Purpose

To ensure that the ecological evidence available to inform land management decisions is supported by studies that are conducted over a long enough time to:

- include representative and extreme weather conditions;
- allow for ecological processes that operate slowly - sometimes over decades;
- capture infrequent stochastic events such as epidemic disease or severe drought.

### Specific Objectives of the ECT

1. Support the integrity and maintenance of existing long-term ecological experimental platforms (LTEs) and new research initiatives that make use of these LTEs.
2. Maintain a register of LTEs and add new LTEs that emerge.
3. Facilitate the establishment of a landscape-scale management community to guide best practice around long-term monitoring of ecological changes and processes, thereby providing evidence to establish sustainability metrics.
4. Facilitate the establishment of new LTEs and monitoring (LTM) studies as LTE/LTM research hubs within landscape-scale initiatives where the scientific need is identified and enable their use as research platforms by a wide variety of researchers.
5. Build a network of LTE/LTM users and stakeholders (the User Group) to promote and integrate knowledge exchange and innovative scientific and practical outputs from LTEs/LTMs.
6. Help place experimental ecology at the heart of evidence-based policymaking and sustainable land use, leading to environmental and social wellbeing.
7. Communicate the science and impact of LTEs/LTMs to a wide audience of stakeholders beyond the ecological research community.

# ECOLOGICAL CONTINUITY TRUST

Report of the Trustees  
for the year ended 31 December 2023

## The ECT's Key Roles

1. **Finance** – brokering major funding, especially for repair, replacement or new experimental facilities on LTEs; providing a stopgap in emergencies for existing LTEs, funding LTE data archiving, LTE interpretation boards and outreach material for wider society; providing small grants to facilitate the use of LTEs by the ecological community and support essential maintenance/repair work at LTEs.
2. **Advocacy and Engagement with Science Policy** - championing the case for LTEs/LTMs in the ecological research community, with Government/Research Councils and within host institutions, highlighting the rich LTE resource that the UK possesses; building partnerships with organisations in the scientific and conservation sectors, to help put experimental ecology at the heart of evidence based policymaking, sustainable land management and education.
3. **Moral Support** – supporting researchers and trying to ensure continuity of leadership and institutional support for existing LTEs/LTMs; providing a web-based resource promoting our sites for use as research platforms by the wider community.
4. **Intellectual** – identifying research gaps in the LTE network and advocating the filling of these gaps and that the suite of existing LTEs is greater than the sum of its parts; maintaining a network of key stakeholders.
5. **Communication** – explaining the science and impact of LTEs/LTMs by harnessing innovative new digital technologies such as webinars and virtual reality and developing impact case studies.

## Activities and Achievements - How the Public Benefitted

The Trustees have complied with the duty in section 17 of the Charities Act 2011 to have due regard to public benefit guidance published by the Commission. In 2023, our activities to forward our public benefit were as follows, noting that ECT's primary mission to safeguard and support the UK's LTE resource remained unchanged:

### Communicating the ECT Mission to Society

The importance and value of long-term field ecology to society was promoted significantly by our dedicated part-time Communications Officer, mainly through digital platforms. Our social media presence grew steadily and by the end of 2023 we had an impressive 1982 followers on X (formerly Twitter), 321 LinkedIn followers and a growing number of followers on YouTube, Instagram and Threads. Our Communications Officer issued regular updates, invitations to events, links to interesting articles and the latest news to all our social media followers. Our formal quarterly newsletters were shared across all our platforms.

The ECT funded an interpretation board at the Aston Rowant LTE in the Chilterns that was designed by our Communications Officer to provide context and understanding of the experiment to the public as they walk past the different treatment plots. Other boards and also a leaflet are currently planned for the Glen Finglas, Palace Leas and Newborough Warren experiments and are in various stages of drafting and design. These will be installed at the LTEs in 2024.

## ECOLOGICAL CONTINUITY TRUST

Report of the Trustees  
for the year ended 31 December 2023

### Small Grants to Support LTEs

The ECT issued seven grants to LTEs during this reporting year to enhance their value to society as follows:

- £1745 to Sylvia Toet at the University of York towards the costs of sustaining annual vegetation measurements at the **Cors Fochno** climate change experiment in mid-Wales. Costs included infrastructure maintenance, greenhouse gas measurement training and soil microbial sampling.
- £3000 to Scott Hayward at the University of Birmingham towards the costs of species-level identification of the insect sample archive taken from the **BIFoR-FACE** climate change experiment in Staffordshire. Samples are being processed for DNA barcoding as part of the UK-wide BIOSCAN project run by the Sanger Institute.
- £3000 to Roberto Salguero-Gómez at the University of Oxford towards the costs of consumables for tracking plant community resilience using phenocams and artificial intelligence (AI) at the **RainDrop** long-term drought experiment at Wytham Woods.
- £3848 to Andreas Heinemeyer at the University of York towards the costs of replacement water table depth loggers and battery pack renewal at the **Peatland-ES-UK** long-term heather moorland management experiment in Yorkshire and Lancashire.
- £750 to Sophie Mills at the University of Birmingham to support her work on pollen analysis using novel Artificial Intelligence at the **BIFoR-FACE** long-term CO<sub>2</sub> elevation experiment.
- £3000 to Konstans Wells at Swansea University for consumables costs associated with comparing the gut microbiome-parasite health status of grazing animals on different grasslands at the **Rowden Plots** land drainage experiment in Devon.
- £5000 to Catalina Estrada at Imperial College towards repairs to the fencing surrounding the grazing exclosures at the **Nash's Field** long-term grassland grazing and fertilisation experiment in Berkshire.

The grant award to Sophie Mills at Birmingham resulted in a very informative [blog article](#) for the ECT website, following her presentation of results at a major overseas conference. The use of artificial intelligence in this project also attracted journalistic interest from the USA, giving ECT significant profile at the time.

### Landscape-scale Experiments and Living Laboratories Initiative

In close partnership with the British Ecological Society (BES), ECT hosted an invitation-only workshop in London on 21 June 2023 which brought together 40 of the UK's major landowners with interests in landscape-scale transformation and management. The main purpose of the workshop was to connect stakeholders and begin discussions around best practice for the design and implementation of landscape-scale experiments, living laboratories and "wholescapes" (landscapes, coastal zones and seascapes). A formal [report of the proceedings](#) was published via the ECT website and can be fully cited. By the end of this reporting year, five stakeholder partners had stepped forward to assist both ECT and BES in planning a second workshop scheduled for 25 January 2024. The partners were the National Trust (NT), the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF-UK), the Woodland Trust (WT), Natural England (NE), the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) and the UK Centre for Ecology and Hydrology (UKCEH).

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### Promoting the Value and Importance of LTEs With the BES

At the BES's Annual Meeting in Belfast in December 2023 attended by over 1500 delegates, the ECT hosted a very successful exhibition stand. The Trust's CEO and Communications Officer were kept busy providing a considerable number of visitors with details of the ECT's mission and achievements. The third in our series of virtual reality headset 'tours' - for the Plynlimon Catchments LTE in mid-Wales - was made available from the stand and highly acclaimed by the 60 individuals who used it.

Through the BES's quarterly magazine *The Niche* which is circulated to the Society's entire membership, ECT contributed the following one-page articles authored by either ECT staff, trustees or invited guest writers:

*"[The perspective of time - why we need long-term experiments in a crisis](#)"* – Jonathan Silvertown (Spring issue).

*"[Missed opportunities in long-term ecological research](#)"* – Jeffrey Duckett (Summer issue).

*"[Landscape-scale long-term ecological experiments](#)"* – Bridget Emmett and Ben Sykes (Autumn issue).

*"[Long-term experiments essential for our future](#)"* – Rob Marrs (Winter issue).

### ECT Newsletter

ECT again produced quarterly newsletters throughout 2023, which can be viewed on the ECT's website at: <https://www.ecologicalcontinuitytrust.org/newsletter-archive>. By the end of the reporting year, it was clear that the increasing amount of content in the charity's newsletters would necessitate a change of frequency in 2024 to six two-monthly issues.

### Biology Week Event and Article in *The Biologist*

Under our strategic partnership with the Royal Society of Biology (RSB), the ECT hosted a free webinar as part of the RSB's *Biology Week* programme of events on 18 October 2023. The event introduced the ECT and then focussed on four of the long-term ecological field experiments on our national register, one from each of the four home nations.

The charity authored a major four-page [feature article](#) on LTEs titled "*In it for the long-run*" that was published in the Spring 2023 issue of the RSB's member magazine *The Biologist*.

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### Recent Scientific Publications From LTEs

The LTEs on ECT's register have an impressive record of scientific publications. Comprehensive bibliographies are maintained on the individual webpages for each LTE on our register. During 2023, the following selected publications from LTEs were notable:

**Wardlow Hay Cop:** Taylor, C.R., England, L.C., Keane, J. B., Davies, J.A.C., Leake, J.R., Hartley, I.P., Smart, S.M., Janes-Bassett, V. & Phoenix, G.K. (2024). Elevated CO<sub>2</sub> interacts with nutrient inputs to restructure plant communities in phosphorus-limited grasslands. *Global Change Biology* **30**(1): e17104. [Available online at: <https://doi.org/10.1111/gcb.17104>]

**Thursley Common:** Duckett, J.G., Andrew, E., Kowal, J. & Pressel, S. (2023) Fires, drought, extinction and regeneration. *Field Bryology* **129**: 19-34.

**Peatland-ES-UK:** Heinemeyer, A. (2023) Protecting our peatlands - full summary of ten years studying moorland management as part of Peatland-ES-UK: heather burning compared to mowing or uncut approaches. White Rose Consortium University of York. [Available online at: [https://eprints.whiterose.ac.uk/195299/11/3547\\_university\\_of\\_york\\_report\\_FULL\\_SUMMARY\\_FINAL.pdf](https://eprints.whiterose.ac.uk/195299/11/3547_university_of_york_report_FULL_SUMMARY_FINAL.pdf)].

Heinemeyer, A., David, T. & Pateman, R. (2023) Restoration of heather-dominated blanket bog vegetation for biodiversity, carbon storage, greenhouse gas emissions and water regulation: comparing burning to alternative mowing and uncut management. Final 10-year Report to the Peatland-ES-UK Project Advisory Group. White Rose Research Online. [Available online at: <https://doi.org/10.15124/yao-2wtg-kb53>].

**BIFoR-FACE** : Rabbai, A., Wendt, D.E., Curioni, G., Quick, S.E., MacKenzie, A.R., Hannah, D.M., Kettridge, N., Ullah, S., Hart, K.M., Krause, S. (2023). Soil moisture and temperature dynamics in juvenile and mature forest as a result of tree growth, hydrometeorological forcings, and drought. *Hydrological Processes* **37** (6): e14919. [Available online at: <https://doi.org/10.1002/hyp.14919>].

**Bamford Edge:** Alday, J.G., Cox, E.S., Santana, V.M., Lee, H., Ghorbani, J., Milligan, G., McAllister, H.A., Le Duc, M.G. and Marrs, R.H (2023). Recovery of upland acid grasslands after successful *Pteridium aquilinum* control: Long-term effectiveness of cutting, repeated herbicide treatment and bruising. *Journal of Environmental Management* **342**, 118273. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jenvman.2023.118273>

### LTE Results in International Databases

Data from several LTEs are deposited in international databases, which adds to the wider 'remote' usage of their results. The charity remains vigilant for LTE datasets that are vulnerable to loss and seeks to work with partners to help ensure safe, long-term digital data curation.

### ECT Webinars

The ECT hosted the following series of webinars in 2023, which attracted several new members to join our core audience. The charity continues to hold webinars every two months on average and recordings of all these webinars can be viewed on ECT's YouTube channel at:



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[https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCjcaas\\_6y9rD0luINsxGEXw](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCjcaas_6y9rD0luINsxGEXw)

- John Langley-Randall, ADAS  
*“Mob Grazing and Soil Health”*  
(14 November 2023)
- Jack Cosby and Alan Radbourne, UK Centre for Ecology and Hydrology  
*“Plynlimon Catchments Long-term Experiment in mid-Wales”*  
(15 September 2023)
- Raj Whitlock, University of Liverpool  
*“Thirty Years of Research at Buxton Climate Change Impacts Laboratory (BCCIL)”*  
(30 June 2023)
- Christine Watson and Rob Graham, Scotland’s Rural College  
*“32 Years of Research at SRUC Tulloch Agroecology LTE”*  
(14 April 2023)
- Mara Lawniczak and Lyndall Pereira, BIOSCAN Initiative Sanger Institute  
*“BIOSCAN Flying Insect Diversity by DNA Sequencing”*  
(10 February 2023)

### ECT Website Development and Reach

The charity developed a new LTE site webpage for the [Plynlimon Catchments](#) experiment in mid-Wales, together with a new ‘[Opportunities](#)’ page to aid in our recruitment of volunteers and in attracting future trustees. Alongside other regular updates to our website, these changes helped to increase overall visits to the ECT website by 10% compared with 2022.

### ECT Volunteers

The ECT’s ‘Volunteer Pool’ grew to 38 members by the end of 2023. Volunteers provide an additional resource to LTEs to assist with, for example, site maintenance and where particular skills are available with monitoring floral and faunal compositions of plots. A particular example of very valuable volunteer participation in 2023 was a week-long detailed monitoring of trees at the Lady Park Wood LTE in Gloucestershire.

### LTE User Group

The ECT’s LTE User Group comprises academic ecologists, research students, policymakers, ecological consultants, environmental non-governmental organisations, landowners and industrialists, and grew during 2023 to 261 members from 235 at the beginning of the year. This represents a growth of 11%.

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Report of the Trustees  
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## Funding and Staff

Throughout 2023 the ECT continued to operate with 2.0FTEs and the in-kind expertise of 13 Trustees (our constitutional maximum).

The British Ecological Society (BES) endorsed its support for the ECT with a new grant for the period 2024 to 2026 at £25,000 per annum. BES funding is a very positive endorsement of the value and credibility of the ECT and has almost certainly provided vital leverage in securing additional core funds from other external foundations, such as the Aspen Trust.

The AmazonSmile Foundation donated a total of £35.40 to ECT during 2023, derived through qualifying purchases from Amazon customers who supported the ECT in this way. However, this source of funding ceased in 2023.

Obtaining project funding is crucial to the support of ECT's Small Grants Scheme. Several external funders consider this an ineligible use of their grant funds, and it is therefore very difficult to secure funding for this purpose, even though ecologists consider this to be one of the most important things that the Trust does for them. This is reflected in our 2023 small grants budget being fully committed at £16.8k, as detailed above. The majority of our private donations, which are generally modest but unrestricted, go towards supporting the Small Grants Scheme.

It remains challenging for ECT to project income any further than 3-4 years into the future, largely because the Trust remains entirely dependent upon two income streams – competitively-won grant funding and private donations. We have a clear view of the annual income ECT requires to sustain and steadily grow its current capacity. This is between £100-£150kpa. Under the direction of the ECT's Executive Director, Ben Sykes, the administration of the Trust ran smoothly and efficiently throughout 2023.

During 2023, our Executive Director cultivated the ECT's engagement with the following strategic partners: the BES, the National Trust, the National Biodiversity Network (NBN), the Royal Society of Biology (RSB), the British Society of Soil Science (BSSS), the Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC) and the Ramble Worldwide Outdoor Trust. The latter is especially notable in that ECT is close to agreeing a *Memorandum of Understanding* between our two Trusts that will enable the Ramble Worldwide Outdoor Trust to contribute financially to the ECT's Small Grants Scheme.

ECT's dedicated 0.5FTE Communications Officer, Danae Dodge, has helped significantly with administrative work during 2023 including updating the Trust's website, developing new LTE webpages, working on LTE Interpretation Boards, preparing our quarterly newsletter and managing our social media channels on a day-to-day basis.

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Report of the Trustees  
for the year ended 31 December 2023

## Governance

Full Board of Trustees meetings took place online quarterly in January, April, July and October in 2023, with our Annual General Meeting taking place alongside the July gathering. The Board's remit is to focus on strategic issues. The Executive Committee comprising the ECT's Chairman, Deputy Chairman, Honorary Treasurer, Honorary Secretary and Executive Director, met monthly throughout 2023, overseeing the day-to-day and month-to-month operations of the Trust. On behalf of the Executive Committee, the Director reported to the Board at its four quarterly meetings in 2023.

The ECT implemented a policy on the use of volunteers at our registered LTEs in 2023. All our policies are available to view on request, and our approach to recruiting volunteers can be viewed on our website 'Opportunities' page at the following link:

<https://www.ecologicalcontinuitytrust.org/opportunities>.

## Plans for the Future

The next three years of ECT activities will be governed by our new Strategic Plan 2024-2026, currently in an advance drafting stage with a view to launch in early 2024. The following plans are reflected in the current draft.

The ECT has begun a major new initiative around design and best practice for landscape-scale projects across the UK. We are collaborating closely with the BES and additional partners on a second workshop to be held on 25 January 2024 and to then bring together major UK landowners and land managers for a more comprehensive symposium in June 2024.

There remains an ambition to afford the employment of our Communications Officer (Danae Dodge) full-time from her current part-time position. This will provide the additional capacity to deliver further LTE interpretation boards, virtual reality projects, citizen science activities, LTE Open Days/site visits and website enhancements. Moving forward on this will be dependent upon securing competitively-won grants for core costs.

The ECT also has a longer-term ambition to employ an 'Events Officer' to further expand the activities reported above. The Trust will continue to employ Tim Rowland, our 0.5FTE Fundraising Manager and Budget Manager, who continues to be effective in bringing new funds to the Trust.

Depending upon funding availability, grant resources will remain focused on LTEs, but also on supporting selected long-term monitoring studies (LTMs) that add scale values to LTEs. The Trust will prioritise necessary future interventions to safeguard at risk sites.

ECT will continue to build upon its pioneering work with Virtual Reality (VR) to plan and deliver one new VR headset experience (our fourth) for a selected LTE in 2024. This will be presented for the first time to a public audience at the BES Annual Meeting in Liverpool in December 2024.

## **ECOLOGICAL CONTINUITY TRUST**

### **Report of the Trustees for the year ended 31 December 2023**

Subject to the availability of suitable funding, the Charity intends to develop a series of published infographics that help demonstrate the impact and value of LTEs and Landscape scale projects.

The Trust will support and continue to grow its 'Volunteer Pool' from its current 38 members, so that ECT has a human resource available which may be drawn upon to assist with free maintenance work or citizen science activities at any of the LTEs on our register.

The ECT will explore the potential for an Ecological Archives Centre where data and physical materials from LTEs can be secured for future generations of ecologists to access and use.

The ECT will continue to build new strategic relationships with relevant organisations and land managers, focusing in 2024 on our nascent relationship with the Ramble Worldwide Outdoor Trust and on renewing our relationship with the British Society of Soil Science (BSSS) following numerous changes at its executive level. We will aim to build upon recent dialogue with both Pasture for Life and the Field Studies Council, in addition to maintaining our more mature and established partnerships with the BES, Royal Society of Biology, National Trust, Natural England and the NBN Trust.

Support for existing and new LTEs will remain a core activity of the ECT. Any 'new' unregistered LTEs to emerge into view in 2024 will be reviewed using the ECT's established criteria for registration. Once registered, 'new' LTEs will become eligible for our small grants scheme and benefit from, amongst other things, ECT's free profile-raising activities. Promotion of the value of LTEs and selected LTMs to stakeholders and wider society will continue to be a key objective of the Executive Director, who will also work to continue expanding our LTE User Group and oversee the Charity's potential new venture into landscape-scale LTEs in 2024 and beyond.

A close working relationship with the BES will continue to be maintained through two-monthly meetings, helping to facilitate ECT communications with the wider ecological community. The ECT will work closely with the BES, universities, and research institutes to ensure that both the research and the educational potential of the UK's LTEs is realised.

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for the year ended 31 December 2023

## FINANCIAL REVIEW

### Financial position

On 31st December 2023, ECT had funds of £53,372 comprised of £42,426 unrestricted and £10,946 restricted funds expenditure during the year was £109,901 and income £83,096. The ECT remains a going concern. ECT is in a strong position to continue to be a catalyst and co-ordinating organisation that has a much bigger impact than its turnover suggests. We can identify other activities that we have enabled partner organisations to deliver, but we do not know the attendant costs.

### Reserves

The Trustees have agreed a policy that 3 months operating reserve is desirable. Current unrestricted funds are larger than required to satisfy this, but our fundraising is extremely dependent on occasional relatively large donations and longer cover is highly desirable for stability and continuity of service.

### Exemption from Audit

For the period ending 31 December 2023, the company was entitled to exemption from audit under section 477 of the Companies Act 2006 relating to small companies. The members have not required the company to obtain an audit of its accounts for the year in question in accordance with section 476. The directors acknowledge their responsibilities for complying with the requirements of the Act with respect to accounting records and the preparation of accounts. These accounts have been prepared in accordance with the provisions applicable to companies subject to the small companies' regime.

### Independent Examiner

The trustees have appointed Tony Jones of Grosvenor Tax Practice Ltd to carry out the examination of these accounts. The trustees recommend that he remain in office until further notice.

## Structure, Governance and Management

### Governing document

The Ecological Continuity Trust (ECT) is incorporated as a company limited by guarantee and governed by Memorandum and Articles.

### The Board of Trustees

The Trustees were appointed for their relevant leadership, ecological knowledge, charity governance and administrative experience. They met four times during the period of this report. When a new Trustee is required, for example when an existing Trustee retires, the position will be openly advertised. New Trustees will be given appropriate induction and information about the role of trustees and their responsibilities under the Charities Acts. The ECT's Board of Trustees reflects broad representation by stakeholders in the ECT's objectives.

### Risk management

The trustees have a duty to identify and review the risks to which the charity is exposed and to ensure appropriate controls are in place to provide reasonable assurance against fraud and error. The Trustees considered the risks to the charity during the course of the year and took appropriate

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steps to mitigate them as far as possible. The British Ecological Society's support provides endorsement of ECT's reputation and the value of its work, giving confidence to other funders. The ECT is the champion of long-term ecological experiments, therefore persistence is one of our goals and our modest funds are managed to achieve this, while enabling funding opportunities to be exploited to advance our goal of establishing new long-term experiments and sustaining existing ones.

### **REFERENCE AND ADMINISTRATIVE DETAILS**

#### **Registered Company number**

06652160 (England and Wales)

#### **Registered Charity number**

1126122

#### **Registered office**

Dr Robin Buxton  
Manor House  
Little Wittenham  
Abingdon  
Oxfordshire  
OX14 4RA

## ECOLOGICAL CONTINUITY TRUST

Report of the Trustees  
for the year ended 31 December 2023

### STRUCTURE, GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

#### Trustees:

Dr A J Birkett Researcher & Science Engagement Professional  
Dr R D Buxton Ecologist  
Dr S J Clarke Conservationist  
Professor J G Duckett Retired  
Professor B A Emmett Ecologist  
Professor K W T Goulding Agricultural Research Scientist  
C A Holt Ecologist  
Dr K Maseyk Ecologist  
Professor J W Silvertown University Lecturer  
Dr C J Stevens Scientist  
Dr D A Stone Scientist  
J R B Tallowin Research Biologist  
Dr K Thompson Retired University Lecturer

#### Company Secretary

Dr R D Buxton

#### Independent Examiner

Mr A T Jones  
Grosvenor Tax Practice Limited  
7 Larksfield Road  
Kingscourt  
Stroud  
Gloucestershire GL5 3PL

### REFERENCE AND ADMINISTRATIVE DETAILS

Executive Director:

Ben Sykes (appointed 1st March 2018)

Bank: CAF Bank, West Malling, Kent ME19 4JQ

Website: <http://www.ecologicalcontinuitytrust.org>

Contact: Dr Robin Buxton,  
Manor House,  
Little Wittenham,  
Abingdon, OX14 4RA.

Number of employees: 3

Approved by order of the board of trustees on 3 August 2024 and  
signed on its behalf by:

.....  
Trustee

**Independent Examiner's Report to the Trustees of  
Ecological Continuity Trust**

**Independent examiner's report to the trustees of Ecological Continuity Trust ('the Company')**

I report to the charity trustees on my examination of the accounts of the Company for the year ended 31 December 2023.

**Responsibilities and basis of report**

As the charity's trustees of the Company (and also its directors for the purposes of company law) you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Companies Act 2006 ('the 2006 Act').

Having satisfied myself that the accounts of the Company are not required to be audited under Part 16 of the 2006 Act and are eligible for independent examination, I report in respect of my examination of your charity's accounts as carried out under Section 145 of the Charities Act 2011 ('the 2011 Act'). In carrying out my examination I have followed the Directions given by the Charity Commission under Section 145(5) (b) of the 2011 Act.

**Independent examiner's statement**

I have completed my examination. I confirm that no matters have come to my attention in connection with the examination giving me cause to believe:

1. accounting records were not kept in respect of the Company as required by Section 386 of the 2006 Act; or
2. the accounts do not accord with those records; or
3. the accounts do not comply with the accounting requirements of Section 396 of the 2006 Act other than any requirement that the accounts give a true and fair view which is not a matter considered as part of an independent examination; or
4. the accounts have not been prepared in accordance with the methods and principles of the Statement of Recommended Practice for accounting and reporting by charities (applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102)).

I have no concerns and have come across no other matters in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn in this report in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.



Mr A T Jones

Grosvenor Tax Practice Limited  
7 Larksfield Road  
Kingscourt  
Stroud  
Gloucestershire  
GL5 3PL

Date: .....4/8/2024.....



**ECOLOGICAL CONTINUITY TRUST**

**Statement of Financial Activities  
for the year ended 31 December 2023**

		Unrestricted funds £	Restricted fund £	31.12.23 Total funds £	31.12.22 Total funds £
	Notes				
<b>INCOME AND ENDOWMENTS FROM</b>					
Donations and legacies		79,487	2,500	81,987	89,263
Investment income	2	<u>1,109</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>1,109</u>	<u>196</u>
<b>Total</b>		<u>80,596</u>	<u>2,500</u>	<u>83,096</u>	<u>89,459</u>
 <b>EXPENDITURE ON</b>					
Raising funds		16,130	-	16,130	12,364
<b>Charitable activities</b>					
Experiments		20,108	4,054	24,162	13,530
Outreach		65,806	-	65,806	61,252
Other		<u>3,803</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>3,803</u>	<u>10,462</u>
<b>Total</b>		<u>105,847</u>	<u>4,054</u>	<u>109,901</u>	<u>97,608</u>
 <b>NET INCOME/(EXPENDITURE)</b>		(25,251)	(1,554)	(26,805)	(8,149)
 <b>RECONCILIATION OF FUNDS</b>					
Total funds brought forward		<u>67,677</u>	<u>12,500</u>	<u>80,177</u>	<u>88,326</u>
 <b>TOTAL FUNDS CARRIED FORWARD</b>		<u><u>42,426</u></u>	<u><u>10,946</u></u>	<u><u>53,372</u></u>	<u><u>80,177</u></u>

# ECOLOGICAL CONTINUITY TRUST

## Balance Sheet 31 December 2023

	Notes	Unrestricted funds £	Restricted fund £	31.12.23 Total funds £	31.12.22 Total funds £
<b>CURRENT ASSETS</b>					
Debtors	5	25,000	-	25,000	25,000
Cash at bank		<u>19,453</u>	<u>10,946</u>	<u>30,399</u>	<u>57,200</u>
		44,453	10,946	55,399	82,200
<b>CREDITORS</b>					
Amounts falling due within one year	6	(2,027)	-	(2,027)	(2,023)
		<u>42,426</u>	<u>10,946</u>	<u>53,372</u>	<u>80,177</u>
<b>NET CURRENT ASSETS</b>					
		<u>42,426</u>	<u>10,946</u>	<u>53,372</u>	<u>80,177</u>
<b>TOTAL ASSETS LESS CURRENT LIABILITIES</b>					
		<u>42,426</u>	<u>10,946</u>	<u>53,372</u>	<u>80,177</u>
<b>NET ASSETS</b>					
		<u>42,426</u>	<u>10,946</u>	<u>53,372</u>	<u>80,177</u>
<b>FUNDS</b>	7				
Unrestricted funds				42,426	67,677
Restricted funds				<u>10,946</u>	<u>12,500</u>
<b>TOTAL FUNDS</b>				<u>53,372</u>	<u>80,177</u>

The charitable company is entitled to exemption from audit under Section 477 of the Companies Act 2006 for the year ended 31 December 2023.

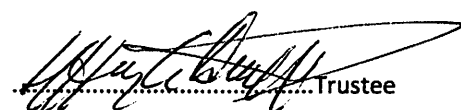
The members have not required the company to obtain an audit of its financial statements for the year ended 31 December 2023 in accordance with Section 476 of the Companies Act 2006.

The trustees acknowledge their responsibilities for

- ensuring that the charitable company keeps accounting records that comply with Sections 386 and 387 of the Companies Act 2006 and
- preparing financial statements which give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the charitable company as at the end of each financial year and of its surplus or deficit for each financial year in accordance with the requirements of Sections 394 and 395 and which otherwise comply with the requirements of the Companies Act 2006 relating to financial statements, so far as applicable to the charitable company.

These financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the provisions applicable to charitable companies subject to the small companies regime.

The financial statements were approved by the Board of Trustees and authorised for issue on 3 August 2024 and were signed on its behalf by:

 Trustee

## ECOLOGICAL CONTINUITY TRUST

### Notes to the Financial Statements for the year ended 31 December 2023

#### 1. ACCOUNTING POLICIES

##### **Basis of preparing the financial statements**

The financial statements of the charitable company, which is a public benefit entity under FRS 102, have been prepared in accordance with the Charities SORP (FRS 102) 'Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) (effective 1 January 2019)', Financial Reporting Standard 102 'The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland' and the Companies Act 2006. The financial statements have been prepared under the historical cost convention.

The charitable company has taken advantage of the following disclosure exemptions in preparing these financial statements, as permitted by FRS 102 'The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland':

- the requirements of Section 7 Statement of Cash Flows;
- the requirement of paragraph 3.17(d);
- the requirement of paragraph 33.7.

##### **Income**

All income is recognised in the Statement of Financial Activities once the charity has entitlement to the funds, it is probable that the income will be received and the amount can be measured reliably.

##### **Expenditure**

Liabilities are recognised as expenditure as soon as there is a legal or constructive obligation committing the charity to that expenditure, it is probable that a transfer of economic benefits will be required in settlement and the amount of the obligation can be measured reliably. Expenditure is accounted for on an accruals basis and has been classified under headings that aggregate all cost related to the category. Where costs cannot be directly attributed to particular headings they have been allocated to activities on a basis consistent with the use of resources.

Grants offered subject to conditions which have not been met at the year end date are noted as a commitment but not accrued as expenditure.

##### **Taxation**

The charity is exempt from corporation tax on its charitable activities.

##### **Fund accounting**

Unrestricted funds can be used in accordance with the charitable objectives at the discretion of the trustees.

Restricted funds can only be used for particular restricted purposes within the objects of the Charitable Trustcharity. Restrictions arise when specified by the donor or when funds are raised for particular restricted purposes.

Further explanation of the nature and purpose of each fund is included in the notes to the financial statements.

##### **Pension costs and other post-retirement benefits**

The charitable company operates a defined contribution pension scheme. Contributions payable to the charitable company's pension scheme are charged to the Statement of Financial Activities in the period to which they relate.

# ECOLOGICAL CONTINUITY TRUST

## Notes to the Financial Statements - continued for the year ended 31 December 2023

### 2. INVESTMENT INCOME

	31.12.23	31.12.22
	£	£
Deposit account interest	<u>1,109</u>	<u>196</u>

### 3. TRUSTEES' REMUNERATION AND BENEFITS

None of the trustees received any remuneration or benefits from the charity or any related entity.

#### Trustees' expenses

The charity has a policy of meeting trustees' and other volunteers' travel expenses incurred in carrying out their duties. Five trustees claimed travel expenses during the reporting period and the Treasurer used personal accounts to pay various costs and was reimbursed.

### 4. COMPARATIVES FOR THE STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES

	Unrestricted funds £	Restricted fund £	Total funds £
<b>INCOME AND ENDOWMENTS FROM</b>			
Donations and legacies	76,763	12,500	89,263
Investment income	<u>196</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>196</u>
<b>Total</b>	<u>76,959</u>	<u>12,500</u>	<u>89,459</u>
<b>EXPENDITURE ON</b>			
Raising funds	12,364	-	12,364
<b>Charitable activities</b>			
Experiments	13,530	-	13,530
Outreach	61,252	-	61,252
Other	<u>10,462</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>10,462</u>
<b>Total</b>	<u>97,608</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>97,608</u>
<b>NET INCOME/(EXPENDITURE)</b>	(20,649)	12,500	(8,149)
Transfers between funds	<u>45,360</u>	<u>(45,360)</u>	<u>-</u>
<b>Net movement in funds</b>	24,711	(32,860)	(8,149)
<b>RECONCILIATION OF FUNDS</b>			
Total funds brought forward	<u>42,966</u>	<u>45,360</u>	<u>88,326</u>
<b>TOTAL FUNDS CARRIED FORWARD</b>	<u>67,677</u>	<u>12,500</u>	<u>80,177</u>

**ECOLOGICAL CONTINUITY TRUST**

**Notes to the Financial Statements - continued  
for the year ended 31 December 2023**

**5. DEBTORS: AMOUNTS FALLING DUE WITHIN ONE YEAR**

	31.12.23	31.12.22
	£	£
Other debtors	<u>25,000</u>	<u>25,000</u>

**6. CREDITORS: AMOUNTS FALLING DUE WITHIN ONE YEAR**

	31.12.23	31.12.22
	£	£
Accrued expenses	<u>2,027</u>	<u>2,023</u>

**7. MOVEMENT IN FUNDS**

	At 1.1.23	Net movement in funds	At
	£	£	31.12.23 £
<b>Unrestricted funds</b>			
General fund	67,677	(35,251)	32,426
Designated Fund	<u>-</u>	<u>10,000</u>	<u>10,000</u>
	67,677	(25,251)	42,426
<b>Restricted funds</b>			
Restricted Fund	12,500	(1,554)	10,946
	<u>12,500</u>	<u>(1,554)</u>	<u>10,946</u>
<b>TOTAL FUNDS</b>	<u>80,177</u>	<u>(26,805)</u>	<u>53,372</u>

Net movement in funds, included in the above are as follows:

	Incoming resources	Resources expended	Movement in funds
	£	£	£
<b>Unrestricted funds</b>			
General fund	70,596	(105,847)	(35,251)
Designated Fund	<u>10,000</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>10,000</u>
	80,596	(105,847)	(25,251)
<b>Restricted funds</b>			
Restricted Fund	2,500	(4,054)	(1,554)
	<u>2,500</u>	<u>(4,054)</u>	<u>(1,554)</u>
<b>TOTAL FUNDS</b>	<u>83,096</u>	<u>(109,901)</u>	<u>(26,805)</u>

**ECOLOGICAL CONTINUITY TRUST**

**Notes to the Financial Statements - continued  
for the year ended 31 December 2023**

**7. MOVEMENT IN FUNDS - continued**

**Comparatives for movement in funds**

	At 1.1.22 £	Net movement in funds £	Transfers between funds £	At 31.12.22 £
<b>Unrestricted funds</b>				
General fund	42,966	(20,649)	45,360	67,677
<b>Restricted funds</b>				
Restricted Fund	45,360	12,500	(45,360)	12,500
	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
<b>TOTAL FUNDS</b>	<u>88,326</u>	<u>(8,149)</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>80,177</u>

Comparative net movement in funds, included in the above are as follows:

	Incoming resources £	Resources expended £	Movement in funds £
<b>Unrestricted funds</b>			
General fund	76,959	(97,608)	(20,649)
<b>Restricted funds</b>			
Restricted Fund	12,500	-	12,500
	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
<b>TOTAL FUNDS</b>	<u>89,459</u>	<u>(97,608)</u>	<u>(8,149)</u>

A current year 12 months and prior year 12 months combined position is as follows:

	At 1.1.22 £	Net movement in funds £	Transfers between funds £	At 31.12.23 £
<b>Unrestricted funds</b>				
General fund	42,966	(55,900)	45,360	32,426
Designated Fund	-	10,000	-	10,000
	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
	42,966	(45,900)	45,360	42,426
<b>Restricted funds</b>				
Restricted Fund	45,360	10,946	(45,360)	10,946
	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
<b>TOTAL FUNDS</b>	<u>88,326</u>	<u>(34,954)</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>53,372</u>

# ECOLOGICAL CONTINUITY TRUST

## Notes to the Financial Statements - continued for the year ended 31 December 2023

### 7. MOVEMENT IN FUNDS - continued

A current year 12 months and prior year 12 months combined net movement in funds, included in the above are as follows:

	Incoming resources £	Resources expended £	Movement in funds £
<b>Unrestricted funds</b>			
General fund	147,555	(203,455)	(55,900)
Designated Fund	<u>10,000</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>10,000</u>
	157,555	(203,455)	(45,900)
<b>Restricted funds</b>			
Restricted Fund	15,000	(4,054)	10,946
	<u>          </u>	<u>          </u>	<u>          </u>
<b>TOTAL FUNDS</b>	<u><u>172,555</u></u>	<u><u>(207,509)</u></u>	<u><u>(34,954)</u></u>

### 8. RELATED PARTY DISCLOSURES

Robin Buxton is a trustee of the Patsy Wood Trust, the Grit Howe Charitable Trust and The Sylva Foundation. Stewart Clarke is a trustee of British Ecological Society, which gives grants to ECT. Carly Stevens is an employee of Lancaster University which has received grants from ECT. No trustee, their family, or any organisation they are associated with has benefitted financially from the ECT.

**ECOLOGICAL CONTINUITY TRUST**

**Detailed Statement of Financial Activities  
for the year ended 31 December 2023**

	31.12.23 £	31.12.22 £
<b>INCOME AND ENDOWMENTS</b>		
<b>Donations and legacies</b>		
Donations	81,987	89,263
<b>Investment income</b>		
Deposit account interest	<u>1,109</u>	<u>196</u>
<b>Total incoming resources</b>	83,096	89,459
<b>EXPENDITURE</b>		
<b>Raising donations and legacies</b>		
Wages	14,717	11,198
Pensions	<u>1,413</u>	<u>1,166</u>
	16,130	12,364
<b>Charitable activities</b>		
Wages	53,569	41,453
Pensions	5,648	4,182
IT & website costs	1,282	722
Hosting meetings & conference fees	2,288	11,435
Outreach travel expenses	2,996	2,634
Sundries	23	826
Grants to institutions	<u>24,162</u>	<u>13,530</u>
	89,968	74,782
<b>Support costs</b>		
<b>Management</b>		
Wages	-	5,979
Pensions	-	397
Insurance	632	670
Sundries	<u>1,044</u>	<u>375</u>
	1,676	7,421
<b>Finance</b>		
Bank charges	223	-
<b>Governance costs</b>		
Sundries	704	641
Accountancy and legal fees	<u>1,200</u>	<u>2,400</u>
	<u>1,904</u>	<u>3,041</u>
<b>Total resources expended</b>	<u>109,901</u>	<u>97,608</u>
<b>Net expenditure</b>	<u><u>(26,805)</u></u>	<u><u>(8,149)</u></u>