

REGISTERED COMPANY NUMBER: 06652160 (England and Wales)

REGISTERED CHARITY NUMBER: 1126122



## **Ecological Continuity Trust**

### **Trustees' Report and Financial Statements Year Ended 31st December 2024**

Grosvenor Tax Practice Limited  
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# **ECOLOGICAL CONTINUITY TRUST**

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# ECOLOGICAL CONTINUITY TRUST

## Report of the Trustees

for the year ended 31 December 2024

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 2024. 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 (ECT) continues to be 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.

LTEs involve experimental manipulation combined with monitoring and these have been the focus of the ECT since its establishment in 2008. 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. They are 'time machines' enabling us both to look backwards to see where we have come from, and forwards to see where we might be heading. 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 2024, the ECT continued to develop the landscape-scale project that was initiated in 2023, in close collaboration with the British Ecological Society (BES). This is now formally titled *Resilient Landscapes and Seas for Nature, People and Climate*. The vision is to enable the creation of large-scale land, freshwater, coastal and marine systems which deliver a more sustainable and resilient future for nature, people and climate. The aim of the project is to build a more cohesive community around landscape-scale transformation in partnership with the principal policy and non-governmental organisations within the UK. The landscape-scale project 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. For the ECT, this landscape-scale project is *additional* to its existing primary mission to support the UK's existing LTE network.

Amongst many deliverables, this partnership should increase societal understanding of the values and need for long-term ecological studies and thus broaden the User Group community. It should also enhance public perception of the importance of the ECT as a charity requiring funds and donations.

## **New Three-year Strategic Plan**

Recent fundraising success has enabled the ECT to produce a new Strategic Plan this year. Covering the period 2024 -2026, the Plan sets out the following three key goals for the next three years:

1. Advance LTE science to widen its relevance to the most pressing problems facing the UK's ecosystems.
2. Enhance the communication of LTE science to the widest possible scientific and public audience.
3. Improve the long-term archiving and preservation of LTE datasets, materials and samples.

The new Strategic Plan is available in both hardcopy and on the ECT's website at:

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

## **Overall Purpose of the ECT**

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 project network to guide best practice and long-term monitoring of ecological changes and processes to provide 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 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 well-being.

7. Communicate the science and impact of LTEs/LTMs to a wide audience of stakeholders beyond the ecological research community.

## **The ECT's Key Roles**

1. **Finance** – brokering linked major funding, especially for repair, replacement or new experimental facilities on LTEs; providing a stopgap in emergencies for existing LTEs; funding LTE data archiving; funding LTE interpretation boards and outreach material for wider society; awarding small grants to facilitate the use of LTEs by the ecological community and to contribute to 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; 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 (succession planning) 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; maintaining a network of key stakeholders.

5. **Communication** – explaining the science and impact of LTEs/LTMs by harnessing 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 2024, our activities to forward our public benefit were as follows:

### **Safeguard and Support the UK's Resource of LTEs**

This remains the ECT's primary mission.

At 31 December 2024, the ECT national register of currently active LTEs was 37 experiments across 38 different sites covering all four countries of the UK. During 2024, a second LTE in Northern Ireland was added to the register - the AFBI Loughgall agroforestry LTE, now in its fourth decade of continuous operation. A map showing all the currently active LTEs on the register is available on our website at:

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

During 2024, ECT worked hard behind the scenes to assist with succession planning at two LTEs whose lead researchers were approaching retirement. New research leaders and teams have now been installed for the Wicken Fen Vision LTE in Cambridgeshire and the Lady Park Wood LTE in Gloucestershire, which have been running for 18 years and 81 years respectively.

## **Communicating the ECT Mission to Society**

The importance and value of long-term field ecology to society was promoted significantly by our Executive Director and our dedicated part-time Communications Officer, mainly through published articles and digital platforms. Our social media presence grew steadily and by the end of 2024 we registered 1938 followers on X (formerly Twitter) and 286 on Instagram. By 31 December 2024 we also garnered 406 LinkedIn followers, 110 subscribers on YouTube and established two new social media accounts on the Threads and Bluesky platforms, achieving 227 and 70 followers respectively. Our Communications Officer issued regular updates, invitations to events, links to interesting articles and the latest news to all our social media followers. The Charity is maintaining a watching brief on current changes in social media platforms to help ensure that we can follow where our audience is going and understand its thinking.

Two new interpretation boards were funded and installed by ECT this year, at Palace Leas LTE at Newcastle University's Cockle Park Experimental Farm, and at the Lena Ward plots at Aston Rowant National Nature Reserve in Oxfordshire. The board content was prepared by our Communications Officer and the design contracted to Landmark Ltd. These boards provide context and understanding for visitors to the experiments and include QR codes linking directly to the ECT website. An information leaflet for the Glen Finglas LTE in Scotland was also produced in partnership with the Woodland Trust for the public to take away from the welcome cabin at the entrance to the glen. Other boards are planned and are in various stages of drafting and design.

The ECT produced a new 6½-minute [docushort film](#) on LTEs and ECT's role in supporting/championing them. This film was launched at the *NewScientist Live* event in London in October – the first time ECT has participated in this event – at which our work was showcased to 25,000 visitors over three days from our exhibition stand. This film has received widespread acclaim both for its quality and its message to society on the value of long-term ecological experiments, and can be viewed on our YouTube channel via the link above.

In partnership with Rothamsted Research, ECT produced its fourth Virtual Reality (VR) tour of an LTE this year, filming in 360 degrees at the North Wyke Farm Platform in Devon in July. The completed VR experience for North Wyke was launched via our VR headsets at the BES2024 Annual Meeting in Liverpool in December. Earlier in the year at the *NewScientist Live* event referenced above, we showcased all our three previous VR tours of LTEs to the 25,000 visitors attending the three-day event, and also to delegates visiting our stand at the annual BIFOR conference held in Birmingham in June.

In partnership with the Royal Society of Biology (RSB) and Rothamsted Research, ECT hosted a spring visit to the Park Grass LTE for 25 RSB members. Feedback from those attending was very positive and the value of this classic long-term experiment was clearly appreciated by a delegate who prepared a [blog article](#) on the visit for the ECT website.

In partnership with Natural England and Loughborough University, ECT organised an event including a speaker programme for the 50th anniversary celebration of the Ainsdale Dune Slacks long-term grazing experiment in West Lancashire, with 40 invited guests on 3 October. The role of

the ECT in this celebratory event highlighted the importance of the charity as a *unique* champion of LTEs. An article relating the proceedings of the event has been published in the latest issue of the *Sand Dune & Shingle Network* newsletter with links on the ECT website.

### **Provision of Small Grants to LTEs**

A new strategic partnership was established in 2024 with the Ramble Worldwide Outdoor Trust (RWOT) who have agreed (under a formal MoU) to co-fund ECT's small grants scheme with up to £3k per annum for the next five years (2024-2028).

The ECT issued **eight** small grants in 2024 to different LTEs on our register to enhance their value to society. These were:

£3543 to Catalina Estrada at Imperial College for refurbishment of plot fencing at the Nash's Field experiment (second instalment).

£3000 co-funded by RWOT to Andreas Heinemeyer at the University of York for consumables related to the comparative analysis of peat cores from the Moor House Hard Hill LTE.

£3000 co-funded by RWOT to Nina Overtoom at the University of York towards the costs of equipment maintenance/replacement at the Cors Fochno climate change LTE in mid-Wales.

£2404 to Rob Graham at Scotland's Rural College (SRUC) for maintenance of the Tulloch Agroecology LTE.

£2038 to Robin Pakeman at the James Hutton Institute for plot fencing maintenance costs at the Glen Finglas LTE in Scotland.

£3000 co-funded by RWOT to Alex Armstrong at the University of Birmingham gas flux analyser repairs at the BIFoR-FACE LTE in Staffordshire.

£3000 co-funded by RWOT to Elena Arrigoni at RBG Kew for maintenance work at the re-purposed Thursley Common experiment (APRI project) in Surrey.

£750 to Fanni Tanka (PhD student) at Loughborough University for travel and consumables to carry out PhD-related research at the Ainsdale Dune Slacks LTE in west Lancashire.

The demand for the ECT's small grants surpassed its dedicated continuity fund budget by July of this reporting year, and the scheme was therefore closed temporarily to new applications for the remainder of 2024.

### **Resilient Landscapes and Seas Initiative**

In close partnership with the British Ecological Society (BES), we hosted an invitation-only stakeholders/policy workshop on landscape-scale transformation and restoration and living laboratories at the BES headquarters in London on 25 January 2024. 40 of the UK's major landowners/NGOs/policy organisations attended the workshop. The following overall vision emerged from this workshop: *"To enable the creation of large-scale land, freshwater and coastal/marine systems which deliver a more sustainable and resilient future for our climate, people and nature."* A detailed report of proceedings is available on the ECT website at:

<https://www.ecologicalcontinuitytrust.org/s/Second-Landscapes-Workshop-25-January-FINAL-REPORT.pdf>

The ECT hosted a very successful exhibition stand at the BES-led *Resilient Landscapes* science symposium held at the University of Birmingham on 24-25 June 2024 under the auspices of the developing landscapes partnership. The symposium attracted over 170 delegates representing the majority of the UK's environmental policymakers, NGOs and large landowners/managers who are involved with or have an interest in landscape-scale initiatives. ECT's VR tour of a landscape-scale LTE (Plynlimon Catchments) was made available to delegates from our stand.

The ECT will play a key role in 2025 in helping to properly establish this landscape-scale initiative with a secretariat including staff to support meetings and events coordination.

### **Promoting the Value and Importance of Long-term Ecological Studies with the British Ecological Society (BES)**

ECT attended the BES's Annual Meeting in Liverpool in December 2024, hosting another very successful exhibition stand to help communicate our mission and science to BES's 1500+ delegates. The Trust's Executive Director and Communications Officer were kept busy providing a considerable number of visitors with details of the ECT's mission and achievements with over 200 of the different ECT and LTE information flyers taken. The fourth in our series of virtual reality headset 'tours', this time of Rothamsted Research's North Wyke Farm Platform LTE in Devon, was highly acclaimed by the 120+ individuals who used it from our exhibition stand.

The charity contributed the following four articles to the BES's quarterly membership magazine in 2024, which has a readership of several thousand:

*"Long-term experiments essential for our future"*, March 2024 by George Peterken.

*"Living laboratories: landscape-scale transformation and restoration"*, June 2024 by Ben Sykes

*"Outcomes from the Resilient Landscapes for People, Nature & Climate symposium"*, September 2024 by Ben Sykes.

*"Long-term experiments as platforms for all"*, December 2024 by Ken Thompson, ECT Trustee.

### **Newsletters, Blogs and Website Development**

ECT produced **six** newsletters throughout 2024, which can be viewed on the ECT's website at: <https://www.ecologicalcontinuitytrust.org/newsletter-archive>.

Two blog articles were published this year, which can also be viewed on the ECT's website at: <https://www.ecologicalcontinuitytrust.org/blog>

A new webpage was published for the Wicken Fen Vision LTE and can be viewed here: <https://www.ecologicalcontinuitytrust.org/wicken-fen>. Further new dedicated site pages were under development towards the end of this reporting year for the recently registered SRUC Tulloch agroecology rotation LTE and the Loughgall agroforestry LTE. These will be completed in early 2025. ECT also began a major overhaul and re-design of its SquareSpace website which will be completed in 2025 with assistance from an external contractor.



## **LTE International Databases**

Data from several LTEs are deposited in international databases, adding to the wider ‘remote’ usage of these important long-term experiments.

## **Webinars**

The ECT hosted the following series of webinars in 2024, which attracted several new members to join our core audience. Recordings of all these webinars can be viewed on ECT’s YouTube channel at: [https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCjcaas\\_6y9rD0lulNsxGEXw](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCjcaas_6y9rD0lulNsxGEXw)

- Jon Storkey, Rothamsted Research  
*The world-famous Park Grass experiment still delivering new science after 168 years*  
(15 March 2024)
- Julie Ewald, Game & Wildlife Conservation Trust (GWCT)  
*Ecological impacts of farming changes in arable ecosystems in a 56-year-long study in Sussex*  
(23 May 2024)
- Robin Pakeman, James Hutton Institute  
*Latest results from Glen Finglas long-term grazing experiment*  
(22 November 2024)

## **Volunteer Pool**

The ECT’s ‘Volunteer Pool’ grew to 43 members by the end of 2024. 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.

## **LTE User Group**

The ECT’s LTE User Group comprises academic ecologists, research students, policymakers, ecological consultants, environmental non-governmental organisations, landowners, and industrialists. Its membership grew during 2024 to 280 members from 261 at the beginning of the year.

## **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 2024, the following selected publications from LTEs were notable:

**RainDrop:** E. Fenollosa, P. Fernandes, A. Hector, H. King, C. S. Lawson, J. Jackson & R. Salguero-Gómez. (2024) Differential responses of community-level functional traits to mid- and late-season experimental drought in a temperate grassland. *Journal of Ecology* **112**: 2292-2306.

**BIFoR-FACE:** Norby, R.J., Loader, N.J., Mayoral, C., Ullah, S., Curioni, G., Smith, A.R., Reay, M.K., van Wijngaarden, K., Amjad, M.S., Brettle, D., Crockatt, M.E., Denny, G., Grzesik, R.T., Hamilton, R.L., Hart, K.M., Hartley, I.P., Jones, A.G., Kourmouli, A., Larsen, J.R., Shi, Z., Thomas, R.M. & MacKenzie, A.R. (2024) Enhanced woody biomass production in a mature temperate forest under elevated CO<sub>2</sub>. *Nature Climate Change* [Available online at: <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41558-024-02090-3>].

**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>]

**North Wyke Farm Platform, Moor House Hard Hill, Palace Leas, Park Grass:** Marshall, C.A.M., Wade, K., Kendall, I.S., Porcher, H., Poffley, J., Bladon, A.J., Dicks, L.V. & Treweek, J. (2024) England's statutory biodiversity metric enhances plant, but not bird nor butterfly, biodiversity. *Journal of Applied Ecology* **61**(8): 1918-1931. [Available online at: <https://doi.org/10.1111/1365-2664.14697>]

**Plynlimon Catchments:** Forest, N. & Wentworth, J. (2024). POSTNote: Enhanced rock weathering: Potential UK greenhouse gas removal. UK Parliament. [Available online at: <https://doi.org/10.58248/PN726>]

**Thursley Common:** Kowal, J., Pino-Bodas, R., Arrigoni, E., Delhaye, G., Suz, L.M., Duckett, J.G., Bidartondo, M.I. & Pressel, S. (2024) Assessing above and belowground recovery from ammonium sulfate addition and wildfire in a lowland heath: mycorrhizal fungi as potential indicators. *Restoration Ecology* **32**(3) e14096. [Available online at: <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/rec.14096>]

**Peatland-ES-UK:** Liu, B., Heinemeyer, A., Marchant, R. & Mills, R.T.E. (2024) Exploring optimal sampling strategy of testate amoebae as hydrological bioindicators in UK upland peatlands. *Journal of Environmental Management* **370**: 122959. [Available online at: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jenvman.2024.122959>].

## Funding and Staff

From January to July 2024 the Charity operated with 2.0 FTE paid staff. From August to December 2024, this increased to 2.1 FTE with the Trust's Fundraising Manager taking on an additional role of managing the ECT's accounts that required an additional half-day per week. The ECT also draws on the in-kind expertise of 13 Trustees.

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

from other external foundations. Over the course of 2024, ECT has been able to transform each BES £1 into £6 secured from elsewhere.

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 2024 grants budget being fully committed and over-subscribed, as detailed above.

It remains challenging for ECT to project income any further than 3-4 years into the future, largely because the Trust is 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 £130-£180kpa. Under the direction of the ECT's Executive Director, Ben Sykes, the administration of the Trust ran smoothly and efficiently throughout 2024. The ECT's 2024 financial accounts were managed efficiently by the Trust's Fundraising and Finance Manager, Tim Rowland.

During 2024 our Executive Director cultivated ECT's engagement with the following strategic partners, many of whom were engaged through the *Resilient Landscapes and Seas* initiative: British Society of Soil Science (BSSS), Pasture for Life (Pfl), the National Biodiversity Network (NBN), the National Trust, Natural England, the Woodland Trust, the Ramble Worldwide Outdoor Trust (RWOT), Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC), RBG Kew at Wakehurst, WWF-UK, Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB), the Game and Wildlife Conservation Trust (GWCT), the Wildlife Trusts, the Country Land and Business Association (CLA), the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM) and the Royal Society of Biology (RSB).

Our dedicated part-time Communications Officer, Danae Dodge, has helped significantly with administrative work 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. Our Communications Officer has achieved a considerable boost to our audiences and followers using various digital platforms and also performs a role as the charity's main link with the Royal Society of Biology.

## **Governance**

Full Board of Trustees meetings took place online quarterly in January, April, July and October in 2024, 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, an Ordinary Trustee and Executive Director, met monthly throughout 2024, 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 2024.

Following the July 2024 AGM, Ordinary Trustees Bridget Emmett and Kadmiel Maseyk were elected for a second five-year term, whilst Chas Holt retired to leave an unfilled vacant position

on the Board at 31 December 2024. Kadmiel Maseyk was also appointed as new Honorary Treasurer from 1 August 2024, after Jeff Duckett stepped back from this role to become an Ordinary Trustee.

All of the ECT's governance policies are available to view on request. and our volunteering policy is available in the public domain via our website 'Opportunities' page at the following link:

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

## Plans for the Future

The Charity's plans for the next 12 months are governed by our new three-year Strategic Plan 2024-2026, available to view on our website: <https://www.ecologicalcontinuitytrust.org/strategy>. The Plan details three key goals and the following is a summary of the activities ECT will prioritise under these goals in 2025:

- ECT will collaborate closely with the BES and UKCEH to secure funding for a small secretariat for the developing *Resilient Landscapes and Seas* partnership which will include an ECT-based post for meetings and events coordination. This will continue and enhance the community-building work we have already started with major UK landowners, land managers and policymakers. It includes our ambition to afford the employment of our Communications Officer (Danae Dodge) full-time from her current part-time position.
- The Charity will contract an established archiving company to undertake the long-term storage of irreplaceable LTE physical materials and samples, and offer data digitisation services where they may still be necessary. This will help to secure LTE materials and data for future generations of ecologists to use.
- We will continue to build upon our pioneering work with Virtual Reality (VR) to plan and deliver at least two new VR headset experiences for selected LTEs in 2025.
- ECT will re-design and re-launch the charity's website within the constraints of our existing SquareSpace Content Management System (CMS), with the assistance of an external contractor who is a SquareSpace specialist.
- 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 ECT will prioritise necessary future interventions to safeguard at-risk LTEs that have existing or potential ongoing scientific value.
- Support for existing and new LTEs will remain a core activity of the ECT. We will explore the establishment of a new multidisciplinary pilot LTE at the landscape-scale with a chosen landowner and other key stakeholders. Any 'new' unregistered LTEs to emerge into view in 2025 will be reviewed using the ECT's established criteria for registration, with special attention to be given to under-represented habitats on our national register (for example, coastal saltmarsh, marine and Atlantic 'rainforest'). 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.

- Subject to the availability of suitable funding, the Charity intends to develop a series of published infographics and case studies 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 43 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 continue to maintain important existing strategic relationships with partners such as the BES, BSSS and Ramble Worldwide Outdoor Trust. We will also develop new partnerships with relevant organisations and land managers, focusing in 2025 on nascent relationships with Pasture for Life (PfL) and the Field Studies Council (FSC) in particular. The Charity will also be investing significant time in further developing the relationships begun with the numerous partners under the *Resilient Landscapes and Seas* initiative. These are:
  - National Trust, Natural England, Woodland Trust, UK Centre for Ecology and Hydrology (UKCEH), Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC), WWF-UK, Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB), Game and Wildlife Conservation Trust (GWCT), the Wildlife Trusts, Country Land and Business Association (CLA), Zoological Society of London (ZSL) and the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM).
- The Trust will continue to employ Tim Rowland, our part-time Fundraising and Finance Manager who continues to be effective in bringing new funds to the Trust.

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.

## FINANCIAL REVIEW

### Financial Position

On 31st December 2024, ECT had funds of £65,895 comprised of £46,610 unrestricted and £19,285 restricted funds. Expenditure during the year was £144,817 and income £157,340. 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 2024, 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 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.

# **ECOLOGICAL CONTINUITY TRUST**

## **Report of the Trustees for the year ended 31 December 2024**

### **REFERENCE AND ADMINISTRATIVE DETAILS**

**Registered Charity number**

1126122

**Registered Company number**

06652160 (England and Wales)

**Registered office**

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

### **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 (Retired July 2024)  
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

# ECOLOGICAL CONTINUITY TRUST

## Report of the Trustees for the year ended 31 December 2024

### 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 .....12/06/2025.....and  
Signed on its behalf by:



.....  
J R B Tallwin - 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 2024.

**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: .....13/66/2025.....

# ECOLOGICAL CONTINUITY TRUST

## Statement of Financial Activities for the year ended 31 December 2024

		Unrestricted funds £	Restricted fund £	31.12.24 Total funds £	31.12.23 Total funds £
	Notes				
<b>INCOME AND ENDOWMENTS FROM</b>					
Donations and legacies		144,543	11,000	155,543	81,987
Investment income	2	1,797	-	1,797	1,109
<b>Total</b>		<u>146,340</u>	<u>11,000</u>	<u>157,340</u>	<u>83,096</u>
 <b>EXPENDITURE ON</b>					
Raising funds		20,119	-	20,119	16,130
<b>Charitable activities</b>					
Experiments		23,085	2,661	25,746	24,162
Outreach		94,376	-	94,376	65,806
Other		4,576	-	4,576	3,803
<b>Total</b>		<u>142,156</u>	<u>2,661</u>	<u>144,817</u>	<u>109,901</u>
 <b>NET INCOME/(EXPENDITURE)</b>		 4,184	 8,339	 12,523	 (26,805)
 <b>RECONCILIATION OF FUNDS</b>					
Total funds brought forward		42,426	10,946	53,372	80,177
 <b>TOTAL FUNDS CARRIED FORWARD</b>		 <u>46,610</u>	 <u>19,285</u>	 <u>65,895</u>	 <u>53,372</u>

The notes form part of these financial statements

**ECOLOGICAL CONTINUITY TRUST**

**Balance Sheet  
31 December 2024**

		Unrestricted funds £	Restricted fund £	31.12.24 Total funds £	31.12.23 Total funds £
	Notes				
<b>CURRENT ASSETS</b>					
Debtors	5	25,000	-	25,000	25,000
Cash at bank		24,768	19,285	44,053	30,399
		<u>49,768</u>	<u>19,285</u>	<u>69,053</u>	<u>55,399</u>
<b>CREDITORS</b>					
Amounts falling due within one year	6	(3,158)	-	(3,158)	(2,027)
		<u>46,610</u>	<u>19,285</u>	<u>65,895</u>	<u>53,372</u>
<b>NET CURRENT ASSETS</b>					
		<u>46,610</u>	<u>19,285</u>	<u>65,895</u>	<u>53,372</u>
<b>TOTAL ASSETS LESS CURRENT LIABILITIES</b>		<u>46,610</u>	<u>19,285</u>	<u>65,895</u>	<u>53,372</u>
<b>NET ASSETS</b>		<u>46,610</u>	<u>19,285</u>	<u>65,895</u>	<u>53,372</u>
<b>FUNDS</b>	7				
Unrestricted funds				46,610	42,426
Restricted funds				19,285	10,946
<b>TOTAL FUNDS</b>				<u>65,895</u>	<u>53,372</u>

The charitable company is entitled to exemption from audit under Section 477 of the Companies Act 2006 for the year ended 31 December 2024.

The members have not required the company to obtain an audit of its financial statements for the year ended 31 December 2024 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 ..... and were signed on its behalf by:

12/06/2025



Trustee

J.R.B. TALLOWIN

The notes form part of these financial statements

## ECOLOGICAL CONTINUITY TRUST

### Notes to the Financial Statements for the year ended 31 December 2024

#### 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 2024

### 2. INVESTMENT INCOME

	31.12.24	31.12.23
	£	£
Deposit account interest	<u>1,797</u>	<u>1,109</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	79,487	2,500	81,987
Investment income	<u>1,109</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>1,109</u>
<b>Total</b>	<u>80,596</u>	<u>2,500</u>	<u>83,096</u>
<b>EXPENDITURE ON</b>			
Raising funds	16,130	-	16,130
<b>Charitable activities</b>			
Experiments	20,108	4,054	24,162
Outreach	65,806	-	65,806
Other	<u>3,803</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>3,803</u>
<b>Total</b>	<u>105,847</u>	<u>4,054</u>	<u>109,901</u>
<b>NET INCOME/(EXPENDITURE)</b>	(25,251)	(1,554)	(26,805)
<b>RECONCILIATION OF FUNDS</b>			
Total funds brought forward	67,677	12,500	80,177
<b>TOTAL FUNDS CARRIED FORWARD</b>	<u>42,426</u>	<u>10,946</u>	<u>53,372</u>

**ECOLOGICAL CONTINUITY TRUST**

**Notes to the Financial Statements - continued  
for the year ended 31 December 2024**

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

	31.12.24	31.12.23
	£	£
Other debtors	25,000	25,000
	<u>25,000</u>	<u>25,000</u>

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

	31.12.24	31.12.23
	£	£
Accrued expenses	3,158	2,027
	<u>3,158</u>	<u>2,027</u>

**7. MOVEMENT IN FUNDS**

	At 1.1.24	Net movement in funds	At 31.12.24
	£	£	£
<b>Unrestricted funds</b>			
General fund	32,426	4,184	36,610
Designated Fund	10,000	-	10,000
	<u>42,426</u>	<u>4,184</u>	<u>46,610</u>
<b>Restricted funds</b>			
Restricted Fund	10,946	8,339	19,285
	<u>10,946</u>	<u>8,339</u>	<u>19,285</u>
<b>TOTAL FUNDS</b>	<u>53,372</u>	<u>12,523</u>	<u>65,895</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	136,740	(132,556)	4,184
Designated Fund	9,600	(9,600)	-
	<u>146,340</u>	<u>(142,156)</u>	<u>4,184</u>
<b>Restricted funds</b>			
Restricted Fund	11,000	(2,661)	8,339
	<u>11,000</u>	<u>(2,661)</u>	<u>8,339</u>
<b>TOTAL FUNDS</b>	<u>157,340</u>	<u>(144,817)</u>	<u>12,523</u>

ECOLOGICAL CONTINUITY TRUST

Notes to the Financial Statements - continued  
for the year ended 31 December 2024

7. MOVEMENT IN FUNDS - continued

Comparatives for 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	-	10,000	10,000
	<u>67,677</u>	<u>(25,251)</u>	<u>42,426</u>
<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>

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	70,596	(105,847)	(35,251)
Designated Fund	10,000	-	10,000
	<u>80,596</u>	<u>(105,847)</u>	<u>(25,251)</u>
<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>

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

	At 1.1.23 £	Net movement in funds £	At 31.12.24 £
<b>Unrestricted funds</b>			
General fund	67,677	(31,067)	36,610
Designated Fund	-	10,000	10,000
	<u>67,677</u>	<u>(21,067)</u>	<u>46,610</u>
<b>Restricted funds</b>			
Restricted Fund	12,500	6,785	19,285
	<u>12,500</u>	<u>6,785</u>	<u>19,285</u>
<b>TOTAL FUNDS</b>	<u>80,177</u>	<u>(14,282)</u>	<u>65,895</u>

# ECOLOGICAL CONTINUITY TRUST

## Notes to the Financial Statements - continued for the year ended 31 December 2024

### 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	207,336	(238,403)	(31,067)
Designated Fund	19,600	(9,600)	10,000
	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
	226,936	(248,003)	(21,067)
<b>Restricted funds</b>			
Restricted Fund	13,500	(6,715)	6,785
	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
<b>TOTAL FUNDS</b>	<u>240,436</u>	<u>(254,718)</u>	<u>(14,282)</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.