

Community Environmental Trust

Charity No. 1144788

Company No. 03907328

Trustees' Report and Unaudited Accounts

31 March 2025

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# TRUSTEES and DIRECTORS' ANNUAL REPORT AND ACCOUNTS

## Reference and Administrative information

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Charity name:	Community Environmental Trust
Charity registration number:	1144788
Company registration number:	3907328
Registered Office and operational address:	1 Whittle Croft Castle Vale Birmingham B35 6DN
Charity contact details:	Tel: 0121 747 3579 E-mail: <a href="mailto:info@environmentaltrust.org.uk">info@environmentaltrust.org.uk</a> Website: <a href="http://www.enviromentaltrust.org.uk">www.enviromentaltrust.org.uk</a>
Bankers:	Lloyds Bank PLC 207 High St Erdington Birmingham West Midlands B23 6SZ

## **Board of Trustees**

Lynne Witkamp – Chair (Director)	Troy Yeomans – Vice-Chair (Director)
Karen Frost – Trustee	Alison Wilkes – Trustee
Mary McManus -Trustee	

The Community Environmental Trust (CET) is the leading environmental charity within Castle Vale, working successfully for over 25 years empowering communities to protect and enhance their environment, its wildlife and habitat by delivering outdoor educational activities and providing volunteering opportunities. Through this the organisation continues to bring relevant matters to the attention of the public, media, politicians and Government agencies alike.

## Overview 2024-2025

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The year 2024–2025 was marked by exciting developments and transitions for the organisation, including the arrival of new staff members who joined at the end of 2023. However, it was also a period of significant challenge.

We faced two major issues. The first was prolonged staff absences due to serious health conditions, medical procedures, mental health needs, and family-related caring responsibilities (including terminal illness). This placed considerable pressure on the organisation, as the remaining team had to absorb additional responsibilities to ensure continuity of delivery and ongoing support for our service users. Consequently, there was less time available to apply for further funding, secure additional commissioned work, and engage in essential networking.

The second challenge was the loss of major school contracts, which had been our main source of unrestricted income. Real-terms funding per pupil decreased due to inflation and rising operational costs, leading schools to make substantial budget cuts. As a result, three of our main contracts withdrew from externally commissioned programmes, including our Forest School interventions.

From a management perspective, this year also brought new learning, particularly around managing part-time and term-time-only staff, as we had previously employed four full-time workers. This required the development and implementation of new policies, procedures, and systems to ensure smooth organisational operations.

On a more positive note, the organisation embarked on new projects and initiatives, including a partnership with the National Trust, RSPB, WWF, and The Co-op (Nature Neighbourhoods), a food-growing initiative supported by BOSF and Winson Green Prison (Community Growers), and a new collaboration with a well-established organisation (Open Door) from a neighbouring housing estate (Firs and Bromford). We also repurposed our community garden to deliver two new interventions that responded to community needs: the creation of an outdoor stay-and-play area for families with children under five, and a much-needed and well-received sensory garden to support the learning of SEND young people.

Overall, despite the difficulties faced during the year, the organisation has demonstrated resilience—adapting to changing circumstances, creating new projects and initiatives to meet emerging needs, diversifying our offer, and continuing to engage positively with the community.

This year also marked an important leadership transition, as our Chair of 20 years, John Biddle, stepped down from his role. John has been a steadfast source of guidance, stability, and encouragement throughout two decades of growth and change. We are deeply grateful for his long-standing commitment and invaluable support, which have helped shape the organisation into what it is today. We extend our sincere thanks and warmest wishes to him for the future.

## Aims and Objectives

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### MAIN AREAS OF SERVICE PROVISION

1. Maintenance and creation of wildlife habitat in local urban green spaces.
2. Raising environmental awareness by providing activities and advice on environmental issues.
3. Providing opportunities for volunteering and training.

These services were designed to fit into the following categories:

**Environmental Education:** Includes schools, local communities and other professionals (CET has been particularly strong in delivering environmental education by establishing and maintaining positive links with local schools).

**Neighbourhood Management:** Improving the quality of life for residents by encouraging and supporting sustainable regeneration and development plans.

**Community Development:** Participation of residents in the care of their environment, enabling them to gain new skills and experiences.

## Objectives

- The conservation, protection and improvement of the physical and natural environment for the public's benefit.
- To further benefit the residents of Birmingham without distinction of sex, sexual orientation, race, religion, or political and other opinions. To advance the education in relation to the above and to provide facilities in the interest of social welfare, for recreation and leisure time occupation, with the objective of improving the conditions of life for the residents.
- The advancement of using the environment as an educational tool, including but not exclusively for local children from local schools and young adults aged 18 – 25.
- The promotion of good health by providing or assisting in the provision of organised outdoor activities.
- Where it is for the protection of the environment, to provide or carry out maintenance or improvement of: Community Garden and any other public amenity

## Structure, Governance and Management

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### Governing Document

The charity is a charitable company limited by guarantee, incorporated on 14<sup>th</sup> January 2000 and registered as a charity on 24<sup>th</sup> November 2011.

It is governed by Articles of Association, which were amended following approval by the members of the AGM on 7<sup>th</sup> November 2011. In the event of the company being wound up the members are required to contribute an amount not exceeding £1.

## **Recruitment and Appointment of Trustees**

*The management of the Trust is vested in the Trustees who are elected by the membership and act in a voluntary capacity. In compliance with the Articles of Association at the next Annual General Meeting, which must be held no more than 15 months after the previous one, officers (Chair, Vice-Chair, Treasurer) will be stepping down by rotation. All will be eligible to offer themselves for re-election.*

*All Trustees are required to sign a Registration of Trustees and a Trustees' Code of Conduct. Business and conservation skills are well represented among the Trustees. To maintain this broad skills mix, the CET Board of Trustees undertakes an annual review of its effectiveness. If skill gaps are identified, new Trustees are sought by open advertisement, or individuals are approached to offer themselves for election.*

*Board meetings are held every 6-8 weeks to keep the Trustees fully informed of the progress of the projects and to ensure that staff are provided with support and strategic direction.*

CET's Annual General Meeting (AGM) was held on 24 February 2025 and included board nominations and re-elections. John Biddle, our long-standing Chair, resigned after 20 years on the board. Lynne Witkamp was nominated and elected as the new Chair, and Troy Yeomans, who recently joined the Board of Trustees, was nominated and elected as Vice-Chair. All current board members were also confirmed in their roles, ensuring continuity of leadership and governance. In addition, a local Castle Vale resident and Chair of the Castle Vale Allotments, Adam Fletcher, was nominated and elected as a Trustee but resigned later in the year due to personal and health circumstances.

The AGM reaffirmed the board's strong commitment to the organisation's mission and goals, and members expressed their enthusiasm for continuing their work in the year ahead.

Our aim is to keep strengthening and broadening the Board's cross-functional skills. The addition of Troy and Adam supports this goal: they bring business and strategic insight, and local knowledge and HR experience to the organisation, respectively. CET will also continue

to seek a Treasurer who can work closely with the Project Manager on the charity's financial management on a more regular basis.

## **Risk Management**

The Trustees actively review the major risks that the Charity faces when preparing and updating the strategic plan, however, detailed considerations of risk are delegated to the Project Manager. Risks are identified and assessed, and controls are established throughout the year, but a formal review of the charity's risk management processes is undertaken on an annual basis.

Risk is managed under the headings of financial sustainability, operations, governance and compliance with law and regulation. The charity has developed systems to monitor and control these risks to mitigate any impact they may present in future.

The investment policy is to hold most of its investments in a low-risk interest savings account. The reserves policy is to maintain a balance on unrestricted funds which equates to at least three months of unrestricted payments to cover emergencies that may arise from time to time.

Chair, Vice-Chair and Project Manager exercise careful control of costs by setting an annual budget and periodically reviewing progress against it.

## **Management Structure**

### **Project Manager**

The Project Manager's role is to ensure the long-term continuation and growth of the services provided by the Trust, as well as the successful delivery of environmental projects. They oversee the overall management of the Trust, undertaking a wide range of responsibilities, including fundraising, budget management, attending networking meetings, administrative work, and overseeing the organisation's strategic development and partnerships. The Project Manager is also responsible for CET's payroll and invoicing operations, bookkeeping, maintaining financial records, producing financial forecasts, and creating budget reports every 6–8 weeks. In addition, they generate income by providing

consultancy support to other organisations and by delivering environmental, educational, and conservation projects.

### **Project Coordinator**

The Project Coordinator's role changed due to health-related adjustments. As their working hours were reduced, some of their responsibilities were also scaled back. Their main focus remained on delivering Forest School sessions and coordinating and arranging work experience placements.

### **Community Garden Volunteer Coordinator**

The Community Garden Volunteer Coordinator oversees and facilitates volunteer sessions in the community garden. The role includes managing volunteer groups, supporting food-growing activities, and ensuring the ongoing maintenance and development of the garden as a vital community resource.

### **Youth and Environment Officer**

The Youth and Environment Officer acts as a liaison between the charity and children and families in the community. The role focuses on engaging young people in environmental activities, promoting sustainability, and offering outdoor educational opportunities. The officer also works with families with children under five, providing outdoor provision with a special focus on SEND inclusion.

### **Forest School Practitioner**

An additional Forest School Practitioner was appointed to strengthen our outdoor learning programmes. This role supports the delivery of Forest School activities, fostering children's development through nature-based learning and outdoor play—an integral part of our educational offer.

### **Paddle Instructor**

The Paddle Instructor delivers water-based activities and manages the paddle hub established in Minworth. The hub offers kayaking and bell boating sessions that encourage physical activity, outdoor adventure, and environmental education. Sessions

are tailored to suit a variety of groups, including over 50s, children and young people, families, and youth and school groups.

## PROJECTS - Activities for Public Benefit

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### *EDUCATION (Services delivered to schools)*

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#### **FOREST SCHOOLS**

*Forest Schools (FS) is an innovative educational approach of playing and learning that uses the environment as a tool to develop children's personal, social and emotional skills. This includes engaging with children with additional support needs, particularly learners who demonstrate antisocial behaviour and/or other learning or socialising difficulties (ASD, ADHD).*

*Children, under the supervision of a qualified FS Practitioner, visit local woodland or stay on school grounds on a regular basis (1 or 2 hours a week) over an extended period (minimum of 6 weeks to a maximum of 32). Through small achievable tasks in a stimulating environment, children are encouraged to be independent and enabled to build self-esteem and develop social and behaviour management skills.*

*Forest School offers freedom to explore independently, which is vital if children are to learn to take responsibility for themselves and others. It also allows time to revisit past areas and experiences, to reflect upon and consolidate their learning. Forest school sessions are mainly child-led, but activities are tailored to individual learning styles and linked to the school's curriculum.*

*The benefits of Forest Schools are the natural environment provides a wealth of opportunity and resources to expand children's/young people's learning, whilst building a sense of independence, high self-esteem and teamwork skills. It provides a stimulating experience where children can self-explore and use multiple senses, helping to develop children's physical capabilities as well as learning acceptable boundaries of behaviour.*

*All practitioners (and volunteers participating in the project) have current, enhanced DBS certificates. Practitioners also hold outdoor First Aid.*

Despite the challenges faced that year, CET continued delivering Forest School sessions, offering a total of 14 sessions per week across 5 different educational institutions between April and July 24. CET continued to rely on freelance support for the delivery of the sessions in Bamford. While this support was invaluable, it also left us feeling somewhat disconnected from the project. Not having direct input in session delivery, and being unable to take photographs, resulted in missed opportunities to celebrate the children's progress and share their experiences with the wider community.

Overall, CET engaged with a total of 501 children during that period.

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
am	Castle Vale Nursery Bramford	Castle Vale Nursery Chivenor Primary	Castle Vale Nursery	Chivenor Primary	
pm	Castle Vale Nursery High Meadow Community School Bramford	Castle Vale Nursery Chivenor Primary Bramford	High Meadow Community School	Oasis Academy Short Heath	

Forest Schools and after-school sessions		
April 24 – July 24	Frequency	Beneficiaries
High Meadow	2	180
Chivenor	3	90
Oasis Academy Short Heath	1	36
Castle Vale Nursery	5	60
Bramford Primary	3	135
<b>Total</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>501</b>

The new academic year began in September 2024, and it was with great sadness that we had to say goodbye to several schools, including Castle Vale Nursery, Oasis Academy, High Meadow, and Bramford Primary. This had a significant impact on our unrestricted income. For most of these schools, we had been delivering sessions consistently since 2014, and the Forest School programme had become embedded in their curriculum. Their decision to discontinue was not a reflection of our delivery, but rather the result of budget restrictions that forced them to reduce external services.

However, we maintained delivery at Chivenor Primary—the school where the Forest School programme was first piloted in 2007—and we welcomed two new schools into our portfolio: Cudworth and Spring Hill Special School. As a result, the total number of sessions delivered between September 2024 and March 2025 was 5 per week, much lower than the 15 provided in the previous academic year. Despite this reduction, engagement remained strong, with a total of 243 children benefiting from the Forest School programme.

The new academic year also brought challenges that we needed to navigate. One member of staff went on long-term leave due to major kidney surgery, and another Forest School practitioner was away for nearly two months due to family matters. This impacted our overall delivery and placed pressure on the team, who had to readjust their schedules and responsibilities to ensure sessions continued.

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
am					
pm	Chivenor	Chivenor	Spring Hill	Cudworth	
After-school				Cudworth	

Forest Schools and after-school sessions		
September 24 – March 25	Frequency	Beneficiaries
Chivenor	2	96
Cudworth FS	1	72
Cudworth After-school	1	60
Spring Hill	1	12
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>243</b>

## TRAINING AND VOLUNTEERING

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### COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND CONSERVATION

*The Community Engagement and Conservation programme aims to engage with members of the community, residents and other organisations to transform their local area through conservation sessions. The focus is on the Castle Vale Conservation Area, the largest area of informal public open space in Castle Vale. Tasks would help to restore heritage and improve the quality, access and security of Castle Vale Conservation Area and other urban open spaces, whilst also reconnecting local people with their landscape. In addition, the improvements will make a significant contribution to the local environment by promoting and increasing biodiversity.*

*Additionally, the project also aims to improve people's mental and physical well-being (Social Prescribing), increase and promote diversity (outdoor events and workshops) and inspire future generations (formal/informal training)*

Since the Community Engagement and Conservation Officer post came to an end in October 2023, following a three-year fixed-term contract, no new officer has been appointed. In the interim, sessions were moved to the garden, expanding the range of activities offered throughout the year and incorporating maintenance, construction, and wildlife gardening into the existing programme.

However, after nearly a year without an officer in post, both the community and CET recognised that several areas required urgent attention, particularly concerning access and safety. Sections of the site had become overgrown, paths were increasingly inaccessible, and there was a general sense that the area was becoming neglected. Although occasional Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) volunteering days with local businesses helped address isolated issues, they were not sufficient to meet the site's ongoing maintenance needs.

As a result, conservation sessions were reinstated in September 2024 when CET was approached by two enthusiastic young people seeking practical experience in conservation. With their support, weekly conservation sessions resumed every Tuesday.

Our presence on site quickly attracted additional volunteers and renewed community interest. One of our regular volunteers, a well-known local resident who walked his dog in the area three times a day, played a key role in increasing visibility. His involvement encouraged regular Conservation Area users to stop and talk with us, further strengthening our visibility and connections with the community.

Improvements to access, health, and safety became noticeable week by week. Being consistently on site enabled us to build strong relationships with local residents, and our work programme was shaped directly by their feedback. Regular walkers often stopped to offer comments, congratulate the team on progress, and highlight areas in need of attention.

Between September 24 and March 25, CET delivered 27 conservation sessions, totalling 365 volunteer hours. The work focused on improving access and safety by cutting back vegetation, widening and clearing paths, and carrying out essential tree work. The group also completed improvements around the pond, repaired fencing, built and installed a new gate, and created a brand-new notice board for the entrance to the Conservation Area—significantly enhancing communication with visitors.

## **INTERNSHIP PROGRAMME – GLOBAL TRAINING**

*The CET internship programme is the result of an agreement between the charity and Global Training, a Spanish company funded by the Basque Government. The purpose of the programme is to provide a work placement of approximately 6 months for Spanish graduates. The programme is aimed at cross-border cooperation between Spain and the UK to provide an excellent chance of work experience abroad. Successful candidates are granted a scholarship for the duration of the placement.*

The work experience volunteering programme started in January 24 and lasted until July 24. In the reporting period, our charity hosted two interns who played an instrumental role in supporting various aspects of our projects and operations.

The Project Assistant Intern supported the delivery of multiple projects, activities, and events. They co-led volunteers during gardening sessions, adult nature walks, forest school sessions, and environmental outdoor activities for young people during the school holidays.

They also assisted in the delivery of Back to Nature sessions and bellboating activities. When not supporting frontline projects, they worked closely with the Project Manager, attending meetings and helping prepare project materials and resources.

The Admin and Finance Intern supported the Project Manager with financial and administrative tasks and carried out a variety of essential office duties. Their responsibilities included updating cashbooks, helping prepare financial updates and cashflow charts, managing telephone enquiries, handling email correspondence, liaising with contractors, and maintaining organised filing systems. In addition, they actively contributed to project delivery by assisting with sustainability sessions at Saathi House, workshops and events at BCU, and by leading on the unification and standardisation of our marketing materials—including posters and social media content. They were versatile, enthusiastic, and always willing to take on new tasks or offer support where needed.

It was with great sadness that we said goodbye to such dedicated and valued team members. Their friendly personalities and commitment to their roles made them extremely popular with staff and service users alike. As in previous years, the interns' contributions were highly beneficial to the organisation and provided invaluable practical experience for the candidates hosted by the Trust.

In November 2024, our partners at Global Training informed us that the Basque Government would only be funding one candidate going forward. In December, we received the application for the new intern. After a successful interview, a new Project Assistant Intern was selected and began the programme at the end of February 2025.

## ***COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT (Projects and Activities provided to a wider audience)***

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### **VALE YOUTH GREEN ACTION (VYGA)**

*VYGA is an environmental youth provision for children/young people aged 8-12 which runs during the school holidays, including school half-terms and summer play schemes. Programmes are made up of projects, workshops, environmental/outdoor and educational activities and trips.*

*VYGA encourages the older members to get involved in assisting and leading the younger members in activities by incorporating their ideas when designing and producing the holiday play-scheme programmes and funding-bid applications. They are part of VYGA's Young Leaders Scheme. The project also has a group of experienced regular volunteers who support the delivery of activities. All volunteers hold current enhanced DBS certificates.*

*This project encourages the utilisation of local green spaces and resources in a sustainable way to provide opportunities for play, gaining environmental and practical knowledge/skills and it encourages an active and healthy lifestyle.*

Our newly appointed Youth and Environment Officer settled quickly into her role and brought a fresh perspective to the programme. She added her own stamp to the way activities were delivered, introducing a more tailored and thoughtful approach based on the needs of the children.

During the Easter Holiday Programme, six activities were offered—three of which took place in March and were included in last year's report. In addition, three further sessions were successfully organised and delivered during the May half-term. Activities ranged from local trips to planting, exploring the Conservation area or environmental crafts, each designed to help children learn through play, build confidence outdoors, and develop a positive relationship with the natural world.

<b>VYGA</b>	<b>Number of beneficiaries</b>	<b>Charge</b>
<b>EASTER HOLIDAYS 2024</b>		
Fun in the Community Garden	<b>8</b>	<b>£4</b>
Ranger session in the Conservation Area	<b>10</b>	<b>£4</b>
Activities in the Secret garden	<b>11</b>	<b>£4</b>
<b>MAY HALF TERM 2024</b>		
Trip to Sutton Park	<b>15</b>	<b>£4</b>
Den building and exploring the Conservation Area	<b>14</b>	<b>£4</b>
Gardening and exploring the Secret garden	<b>12</b>	<b>£4</b>

In summer 2024, CET offered a lively programme of activities for children over a four-week period. A total of eleven sessions were planned, including Monday trips, conservation work with the BCC Ranger Service on Wednesdays, and hands-on activities at the allotments and the Secret Garden on Fridays. The programme was designed to offer local children a fun, active, and educational summer that encouraged teamwork, outdoor exploration, and a deeper connection with nature.

The start of the summer brought an unexpected setback when our minibus was broken into at the beginning of July, leaving us without transport for the entire programme. With little time to spare, the planned trips were reimagined as local activities, making use of nearby green spaces and community facilities. Later in the programme, several sessions had to be cancelled due to personal circumstances affecting the CET officer delivering the activities.

Even with these challenges, the programme remained strong. Children continued to attend, and families appreciated having affordable, engaging opportunities available close to home. The atmosphere throughout the summer was one of resilience, creativity, and genuine enjoyment.

Across all activities, a total of 76 children took part. The programme also raised £380, which were reinvested into other youth initiatives, helping to ensure that more children in the community can enjoy similar opportunities in the months and years ahead.

VYGA	Number of beneficiaries	Charge
Pon dipping at Plantsbrook	13	£5
Ranger session: minibeasts	12	£5
Green fingers	12	£5
Conservation Area	10	£5
Ranger session: path clearance	14	£5
Games and bird feeders	15	£5
	Cancelled	-
	Cancelled	-
	Cancelled	-

	<b>Cancelled</b>	<b>-</b>
	<b>Cancelled</b>	<b>-</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>£380</b>

A further three activities were delivered during the October and February half-term breaks. These followed the same successful format of previous holiday schemes, offering a variety of outdoor, creative, and nature-based activities across three different local settings. This approach continued to give young people a sense of ownership over their environment, encouraging them to explore, make active decisions, and play a meaningful role in shaping and improving their local spaces.

<b>Half-Term October 2024</b>		
<b>Secret garden</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>£5</b>
<b>Conservation</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>£5</b>
<b>Allotments</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>£5</b>
<b>February Half-Term 2025</b>		
<b>Various activities at the Conservation Area at CET Community Garden</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>£5</b>
	<b>12</b>	<b>£5</b>
	<b>12</b>	<b>£5</b>

## **DUKE OF EDINBURGH (DofE)**

*Duke of Edinburgh is a youth award programme aimed at young people aged 14-25. As part of the programme, they must complete different sections that involve helping the community/environment, becoming fitter, developing new skills, planning, training for and completing an expedition. The award is about setting personal challenges and pushing personal boundaries.*

The group met at the end of March 2024 to complete their Gold practice expedition. Although the expedition did not unfold exactly as planned—due to an unfortunate incident involving a CET staff member—the group was still able to continue thanks to the unwavering support of parents, DofE staff, and Chase Training (the organisation delivering the expedition on behalf of CET). Their commitment, along with the determination and resilience of the young participants, ensured that the practice expedition could go ahead successfully.

In response to the incident, CET Trustees and the Project Manager worked diligently and carefully to put appropriate measures in place, ensuring that steps were taken to avoid similar incidents in the future.

The Gold qualifying expedition was originally scheduled for the end of May. Although the dates were chosen by the young people themselves, changing work and college commitments made it impossible for any of them to participate. As this was the final step required for them to achieve their Gold Award, the group agreed to postpone the expedition first to September, and then again to the following year. As of the end of March 2025, no new date has yet been agreed.

In February, DofE contacted CET regarding the renewal of our licence, which was due to expire on 31 December 2025. They requested clarification, as re-licensing can only proceed if a designated DofE Manager is in place, and we had not yet been able to appoint one. This marked an important point of reflection for CET as we considered the future direction of our involvement with the Award.

## **BACK TO NATURE**

*Back to Nature are outdoor environmental sessions aimed at families with under-fives. The project uses CET's Community Garden, where children have the freedom to explore using their senses and families bond and reconnect with nature. This space has been created to ensure a safe and engaging environment to play and promote early childhood development through outdoor exploration and social interaction.*

In February 2024 work started to repurpose a section of the garden and convert it into an Outdoor Stay and Play area, with outdoor features to climb and a mud kitchen, amongst other things. Since March 2024, weekly *Back to Nature* sessions have been delivered in collaboration with Spurgeons.

At first, attendance was modest, which allowed the officer to design and deliver tailored, season-related activities. These included planting potatoes and sunflowers, minibeast hunts, making log pets, clay snails, seed balls and elder wands. From May onwards, interest and attendance grew significantly, so we adapted our delivery approach to better meet participants' needs. Sessions became more child-led, with the Youth and Environment

Officer encouraging active play that helped develop children's fine and gross motor skills, teamwork, confidence, and communication. Between May and September, attendance increased to an average of 30 participants per session, demonstrating strong and growing community engagement.

In August, we introduced a short summer programme for families and increased sessions from one to two per week, running every Wednesday and Friday morning, with Spurgeons continuing to support delivery one day per week. After the summer, sessions returned to one per week due to a planned reduction in staff hours. Although numbers dipped slightly in September, attendance has remained steady as families became more comfortable being outdoors regardless of the weather.

Families have consistently provided very positive feedback. They particularly enjoy being outdoors and appreciate the freedom to explore the different areas of the garden. The mud kitchen remains one of the most popular spaces, keeping children engaged for long periods. The sensory garden has also proven to be a valuable resource for all families, especially those with SEND children. These sessions have also created opportunities for parents to connect with one another, share experiences, and build supportive relationships.

## **WELLBEING WALKS**

*The programme consists of regular, guided walks held every Wednesday within the Castle Vale Conservation Area. These walks are open to the local community and are designed to support both mental and physical wellbeing through gentle, accessible exercise in a natural setting. Participants are encouraged to move at a comfortable pace while enjoying the benefits of spending time outdoors, including reduced stress, improved mood, and increased social connection.*

A total of 40 Wellbeing Walks were held during the year. The walks provide an opportunity for participants to engage with local green spaces, fostering a sense of belonging and a stronger connection to the natural environment. Due to staffing challenges, the walks were led by an experienced walker who was originally referred to CET by local link workers through the green social prescribing programme. During 2023–24, this individual developed the confidence and skills needed to take on a leadership role and began leading

the walks independently at the start of 2024. CET continues to support the group by providing access to the community garden and refreshments after each walk. As a result, the group has become both independent and sustainable. On occasions, CET officers have joined the walks to enhance the experience by providing binoculars and facilitating birdwatching activities, tree planting, or litter-picking sessions during the walks.

## **NATURE NEIGHBOURHOODS**

*CET was approached in October 2023 to get involved with the National Trust, RSPB and WWF in a new initiative called Nature Neighbourhoods. 18 community organisations across the UK were chosen to create a Nature Neighbourhood Plan that will help mobilise their community and lead positive change for people and nature. The action local plan, which will be presented in September 2025, will be delivered locally, co-designed with the local community and key stakeholder, and will address community priorities.*

The Nature Neighbourhood Project has provided several training and networking opportunities organised by the partnership. Between April 2024 and March, CET attended nine cohort meetings and eight one-to-one meetings with the Nature Neighbourhoods England Project Officer. CET also took part in six one-to-one meetings with Hope for the Future, which helped provide the necessary tools and support to successfully liaise with local authorities. In addition, CET benefited from specialised training in Co-design and co-creative workshops, Volunteering, Equality, diversity and Inclusion (EDI), Organisational and partnership strengthening, and Collaboration with local authorities.

Our participation in the project is benefiting both CET and our local community in a number of meaningful ways. One of the main benefits since the start of the project has been its role in helping us refocus and maintain momentum on our priority areas and projects. The involvement and support of renowned national charities have strengthened our reputation, increased our visibility, and created new opportunities for collaboration. Through cohort meetings, CET has gained inspirational stories, shared learning, and practical knowledge, which we are actively passing on to staff members and partners. Our involvement has also led to a reputation boost and the development of corporate social responsibility (CSR) opportunities, delivering tangible benefits for the local

environment and wildlife. In addition, NN has helped unlock further funding opportunities and provided access to expert advice and support.

The local community is directly benefiting from projects and interventions that are partly funded through NN. More broadly, the focus on Nature Neighbourhoods has led to visible improvements in our local area while also empowering residents and increasing community participation. The project has helped spark conversations about the environment, encouraged people to spend more time outdoors, and created opportunities for the community to help shape the future of their green spaces.

Lastly, since January 2025, we have run regular consultation sessions every Wednesday to better understand how people use and engage with local green spaces, with a particular focus on the Castle Vale Conservation Area. Recognising that not all residents are aware of the conservation area or its location, these sessions have been delivered in a range of accessible locations across the estate. This approach has enabled us to reach a broader cross-section of the community, gather diverse perspectives, and raise awareness of the green space. The feedback collected through these consultations, alongside insights gathered from events, activities, and engagement sessions delivered throughout the year, will feed directly into a co-design session that will take place in May 2025. This session will be a key milestone in the development of the Castle Vale Nature Neighbourhood Plan, which will be presented in September 2025.

## **COMMUNITY GARDEN**

*The Community Garden is situated in the Castle Vale Allotments. The aim of this project is to increase local community's accessibility to gardening activities in a safe and friendly environment.*

*It allows community groups to have access to the site to learn how to grow vegetables, it enables a wide range of educational-based activities, helps to reduce social isolation and brings together different generations in an inspirational environment where knowledge can be shared and utilised.*

In February, the charity undertook an exciting repurposing of the Community Garden,

following the vision of the Youth and Environment Officer. Over the next few months, the garden was transformed into two new, distinct areas: a sensory garden co-designed with Spring Hill High School, and an outdoor Stay & Play area co-created with Spurgeons. In addition, the existing grow space was redesigned by CET's Community Garden Volunteer Coordinator to make it more functional and efficient.

Regular gardening and food-growing sessions began in April and continued until October. Volunteers attended sessions on Tuesdays and Thursdays, allowing them to participate in enjoyable, healthy and social activities in a safe outdoor environment, while developing their knowledge and skills in growing food and plants. Their work also helped maintain and further develop the garden.

The number of participants increased gradually as we approached the summer months, and so did the variety of weekly activities. These ranged from building creative features in the garden to undertaking woodwork repairs, planting and enhancing the existing edible forest garden, propagating plants, and designing water systems for the polytunnel. We also received significant support from plot holders, who helped build a grow cage, insulate the log cabin—enabling more groups to use the outdoor space during the winter months—and even install a solar panel.

In the summer, over 100 plug plants grown at Winson Green Prison were delivered to our garden. This was part of the Growing Project, a partnership between Winson Green Prison, the Royal Horticultural Society and Birmingham Open Spaces Forum (BOSF). CET's Community Garden was selected as one of the preferred pilot grow sites. The vegetables were planted by CET volunteers and other members of the community, and the food grown through this project was donated to the local food bank and pantry shop.

The site also benefited from the support of Bureau Veritas, whose team spent a day in the garden clearing overgrown areas, improving the polytunnel and repairing several garden features.

Finally, the garden hosted a series of workshops and events, which are detailed in the events section of this report.

## **COMMUNITY ORCHARD**

*CET's Community Orchard is managed in partnership with the Castle Vale Allotments and supported by Fruit & Nut Village. The orchard is located in the Castle Vale Allotments and it is split into three different areas. 29 fruit trees, including apple, pear, plum, damson and cherry, have been grown successfully on site.*

Dr. Rob Tilling, Fruit & Nut Village, delivered winter and summer fruit tree pruning workshop at the Community Orchard. Summer pruning took place on the 25<sup>th</sup> of June. Dr Tilling taught residents and plot holders how to care for and manage stone fruit trees and how to maintain fruit tree shapes to encourage fruiting wood. In January, the winter pruning focused on building structure, encouraging vigorous growth and renewal of pome fruits (mainly apples and pears). In addition to the pruning workshops, a fruit tree planting event was organised on the 10<sup>th</sup> of March to expand the existing orchard and introduce a wider variety of tree species, including soft-pitted fruit and nut trees. A total of 10 new trees were planted in Area 6 and the green amenity area by the entrance of the allotments.

These initiatives aimed to provide practical learning opportunities for individuals interested in maintaining and expanding local orchards and promoting environmental sustainability through the introduction of diverse tree species.

The workshops were well-received, with a high level of interest and engagement from the community. A majority of attendees were from nearby allotment sites, highlighting the relevance and appeal of the workshops for local gardeners and allotment holders.

## **CONSERVATION AREA and MEADOWS**

*Castle Vale Conservation Area (CVCA) is the largest area of informal public open space in Castle Vale. It is situated to the southeast of Castle Vale, around the allotments and the stable's paddocks. The existing landscape consists of rough grassland with substantial woodland planting, fencing, a pond, a path system and seats.*

*Castle Vale Meadows are at the centre of the Conservation Area. They were created in 2013 as a result of a successful partnership with Birmingham City Council, Birmingham and Black Country Wildlife Trust (Nature Improvement Area Staff) and the University of Wolverhampton. The area used to be an unused, former paddock and it was transformed into a magnificent meadow using green hay from two 'donor' sites, Eades Meadow and Draycote Meadows, both Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) creating 9.7 acres of 2 new-species rich meadows.*

*CVCA is owned by Birmingham City Council. However, the site has mainly been managed by CET, which informs and seeks permission from BCC before carrying out any activities. CET's practical conservation management days complement BCC service plans for the area.*

CET is continuing its work to protect the Conservation Area and to utilise it as part of its project programmes.

The Conservation Area continued to benefit greatly from the generosity and dedication of corporate volunteers. Last year, we were fortunate to receive valuable support from 2 corporate volunteer groups. Their contributions have supported the maintenance and enhancement our green spaces.

**Kuehne Nagel** (10/12/24): a small but mighty team of volunteers helped with the management of our seasonal pond by helping to remove and cut down overgrown reeds that had overtaken the pond and was limiting visibility. They also tackled brambles around the pond and cut back overgrown vegetation. As a result, we had a more open space for new species to thrive, a healthier aquatic ecosystem and more attractive landscape.

**Climate Action** (23/01/25): A large group of volunteers helped improve access and safety along an existing path that had become inaccessible due to overgrown vegetation and uneven ground. Overgrown brambles, dog rose and willow were cut back, moss was scraped off the paved surface, and the informal path was resurfaced with bark. This work has restored the use of a well-known and much-loved part of the Conservation Area.

## **CASTLE VALE STABLES**

*CET signed in 2016 a Head of Terms to lease the Castle Vale Stables and paddock land for 15 years to protect the land and ensure it remains paddock and green land. Since then, CET has been providing support to the Castle Vale Stables with administrative and financial tasks, including managing the expectations of the horse owners, managing the number of horses/ponies on the land, dealing with health and safety, insurance, horticultural maintenance and payment of business rates, utility bills and repairs. Castle Vale Pony Owners Association continues looking after the horses and managing the run of the stables.*

CET continues to maintain a strong and productive partnership with the stables, supporting some of the administrative tasks and working collaboratively on a range of initiatives aimed at achieving shared goals of community development, such as facilitating the move of horse manure from the stables to the allotments or opening up paths within the Conservation Area to ensure safe and smooth rides.

## **CET PADDLE HUB (Minworth)**

*Minworth Bell Boating Hub is part of a wider project called Paddle Sport in Birmingham (PSiB), which is trying to create several community paddle hubs across the West Midlands Combined Authority with the aim to provide regular, sustainable and thriving paddle sports to different communities in deprived areas and with low opportunities in water sports activities.*

CET's Paddle Sport Officer was on sick leave from 8 April 2024 to 14 May 2024. During this period, the Project Manager covered the existing paddle sport sessions, which included bellboat sessions with Spring Hill High School every Thursday and over-50s and home-schoolers on Fridays, in addition to a bellboat taster session with Minworth Primary School. Following this period, the Paddle Instructor undertook a phased return, initially working reduced hours and days for the first three weeks, during which he focused solely on

administrative tasks. Over the subsequent three weeks, he supervised sessions, before returning to unsupervised session delivery. In June and July, the officer continued delivering sessions for Spring Hill High School and expanded the programme offered to over-50 participants.

Participant numbers grew steadily, with the morning Friday sessions proving particularly popular. In addition, CET worked with Minworth School again in July, successfully engaging the entire school in paddle activities over two days.

Two weekend sessions were also delivered in June and July to encourage people to try kayaking along the canal, each attracting an average of 40 participants per day.

The summer programme offered by CET provided a combination of free and paid sessions. Funded wellbeing bellboat sessions for over-50s were delivered on Tuesday Fridays. 3 slots of free “Come and Try Kayaking” sessions were offered on Tuesdays and Kayak skills courses, priced at £3, took place on Wednesdays and Thursdays from 4:00–5:00 pm, while free kayak mini-expeditions were held on Thursdays from 6:30–8:00 pm, led by our paddle instructor volunteers, including Ian.

Lastly, in October, CET ran the highly successful Water Festival, which is described in more detail in the events section.

## PROJECTS – Other work

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### *COMMISSIONED WORK*

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#### **OPEN DOOR – GREEN CONNECTING**

In October, CET started the Green Connecting initiative in Bromford, grounded in the principles of mobilising the local community to engage with nature, strengthening their connection to green spaces, and creating inclusive social environments. The work took place across four sites—Church Garden, Peace Garden, Ambridge House, and Bromford Pocket Park—although the project focused primarily on the Pocket Park, which was co-designed with the local community in partnership with the National Trust. CET has signed a one-year contract with Open Door to deliver sessions, interventions, and initiatives one day per week.

Building on successful experiences in Castle Vale and aligning community needs with sustainable practices, CET has worked closely with several existing groups that have been directly involved in shaping the future of the park.

Twelve people from Bromford, including partners and residents, visited our community garden for inspiration and later took part in discussions to adapt and implement similar models and initiatives locally. Between October and December, CET introduced weekly Friday gardening sessions for adults; attendance was modest but steady, helping us maintain and prepare the garden for winter. Alongside this, CET also worked with Worth Unlimited to facilitate outdoor sessions for young people.

In the new year, the focus shifted as CET began supporting Cosy Club, an existing but previously inconsistent group for families with young children. Although attendance was initially low, the group has grown steadily, with interest increasing significantly following the Open Door Easter event where we trialled outdoor equipment and activities previously used in Castle Vale.

At the same time, we carried out an extensive community consultation up to April to understand residents' use of green spaces, their needs, barriers, and aspirations. In addition, two co-design workshops were delivered with Cosy Club and the Worth Unlimited Youth Group.

## **RE-FUTURE COLLECTIVE**

CET delivered 8 sessions between April 24 and March 25. The sessions were aimed at young people from the Waterworks estate in Ladywood (ArtPad), adults referred via social prescribing (Forms of Clouds) and young asylum children living with their families on temporary accommodation at the Collective Hotel in Hagley Road. The work carried out included environmental workshops, environmental art and trips to art galleries.

## **BIRMINGHAM CITY UNIVERSITY**

CET strengthened its partnership with Birmingham City University by delivering a series of sessions and participating in events throughout the year as part of Graduate+ Week and Sustainability Week. These activities aimed to increase student and staff engagement

through practical activities, such as basket weaving, while also raising awareness of wildlife on campus.

Last year, the focus was on hedgehogs, as BCU registered as a Hedgehog-Friendly Campus. To support this initiative, CET delivered two practical workshops where participants made hedgehog boxes and a minibeast hotel, which were subsequently installed across the two main campuses. In total, CET delivered five sessions over the course of the year.

## **SAATHI HOUSE**

Between May 2024 and February 2025, CET delivered a series of biweekly interactive environmental education workshops aimed at educating, inspiring, and empowering women from Saathi House to take action against climate change and contribute positively to environmental protection and enhancement.

The two-hour sessions combined theory and practical skills, equipping participants with the knowledge and tools needed to integrate sustainable living practices into their daily lives. Workshop themes included sustainable living, waste reduction, food waste management, energy and water conservation, and biodiversity and green spaces. CET worked with two different cohorts, each consisting of approximately 30 participants.

In addition, CET participated in a film commissioned by the funders to raise awareness of this work: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jNSIR63qnmA>

## **PARTNERSHIP WORK**

- CET has been regularly supported by Birmingham City Council Ranger Service in a range of capacities, particularly in delivering youth engagement activities on Wednesdays during half-term holidays, as well as in the consultation and delivery of the Green Adoption Scheme. We are supporting and enhancing each other's offer. This partnership has given us the opportunity to start promoting and enhancing other green spaces in Castle Vale.
- The Project Manager has continued to support Birmingham Open Spaces Forum in her capacity as Treasurer and Trustee

- Regular meetings are held with local Castle Vale partners including Pioneer Group, Compass-Support, Spitfire Services and Castle Vale Allotments.
- CET has continued to build strong, sustainable partnerships with local companies, including Bureau Veritas, I.M. Properties, Flomatik, Eley Hawl Ltd, and Kuehne + Nagel, each of which has played an important role in supporting our mission and projects throughout the year. Additionally, CET established a new partnership with The Fort Shopping Centre, thanks to the connections and enthusiasm of their Destination Manager, Troy Yeomans. CET first met Troy at a networking event, and he has since become not only an advocate and supporter of our work but also a Trustee.
- New engagement:
  - St Gerard's Primary School: On the 31<sup>st</sup> of March we supported the delivery of their Lent Sponsored Walk which gave us the opportunity to bring 180 children around the Conservation Area for two hours. The positive engagement has resulted in a contract from September 2025 (Delivery of Forest School Sessions).
  - Youth Justice Service (future collaboration programme between both organisations which will involve youth offenders helping out in the garden and Conservation Area), Disability Youth Network led by Access Sport, BeeZee Families free award-winning healthy lifestyle programmes for the whole family. We shared information about our programmes and identifying suitable activities that promote regular, gentle exercise and engagement for the families they support.

## ***TRAINING***

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The Project Manager completed their MBA apprenticeship at Aston University, funded by the West Midlands Combined Authority via the Levy, in February 2025, graduating with distinction.

## ***COMMUNITY EVENTS***

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- **Horticultural workshop** (21.05.24) - Sponsored by Birmingham Open Spaces Forum and the Royal Horticultural Society. CET hosted the session in the Community Garden which was organised as part of the 'Prison Project'. Friends from various different gardening groups learnt skills and tips from Darren Rudge of Rudge Wood Horticulture CIC. How to propagate cuttings, good seed planting technique and easy ways to make natural, nutritious fertiliser from comfrey or nettles.
- **Big Lunch** (06.06.24): Organised at the Community Garden in partnership with Compass Support. The big lunch is an annual community event celebrated at a national level to bring communities together and join in for a few hours of community, friendship and fun. The event provided an opportunity for residents to share food, conversations, ideas and skills. Compass-Support provided lunch and CET officers delivered two engaging gardening activities for attendees. Over 30 people attended.
- **Great Green Big Week** (10<sup>th</sup>- 14<sup>th</sup> June): CET delivered a programme of activities to support environmental action and raise awareness about the pollution crisis at a local level. Throughout the week, community members took part in a range of practical and educational events designed to encourage people to connect with nature and take positive action in their local area. Activities included:
  - Bird identification and counting along the canal, combined with litter picking from the bellboat
  - Vegetable planting and a major tidy-up at the Community Garden
  - A ranger-led walk exploring the meadow and its biodiversity
  - A pop-up café in the Conservation Area, creating a welcoming space for residents to connect with each other and with nature
  - Project Wagtail 'Walk & Talk' and litter picking session, engaging volunteers in tackling local pollution while learning more about the project's aims

These activities strengthened local engagement, encouraged positive environmental action, and highlighted achievable ways the community can help protect and enhance their local green spaces.
- **Sutton Park Bioblitz** (28.06.25): CET supported pond dipping activities at Sutton Park, working with over 100 children from 6 different primary schools.
- **Water Festival** (05.10.24). CET hosted a boat racing event that was organised across seven different hubs in Birmingham. Twelve teams of eight people took part (96

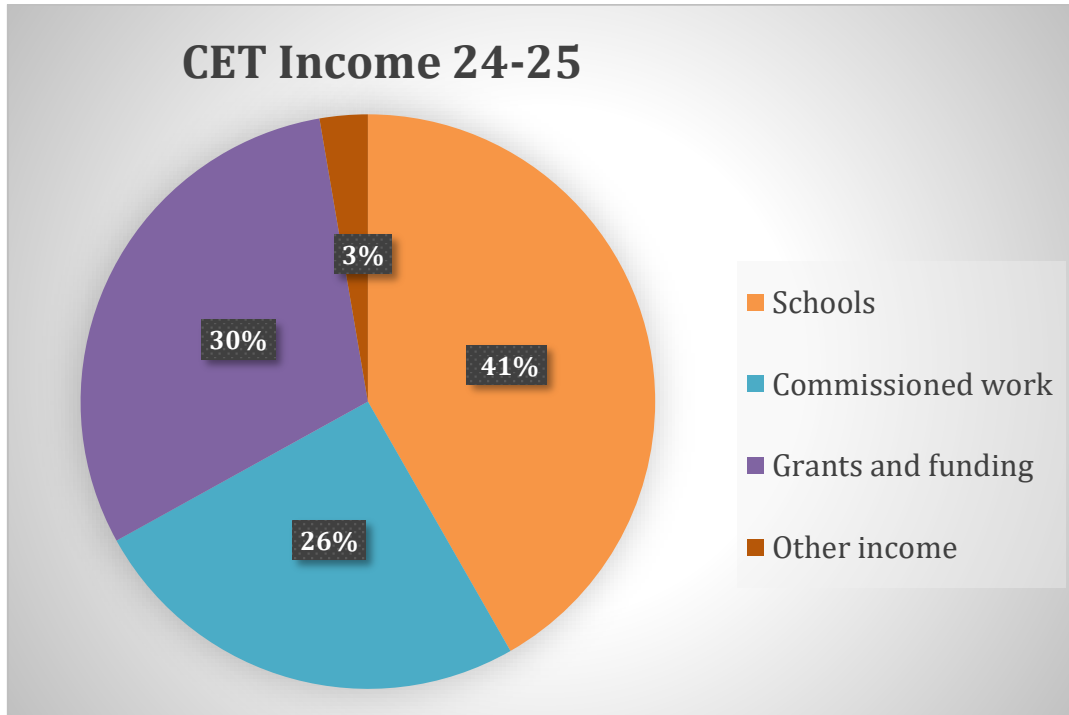
participants), with an additional 60 attendees joining on the day. We received invaluable support from volunteers, local residents, The Boat Inn, and partner organisations including the Canal & River Trust, StreetGames, Paddle UK, and Access Sport. Alongside the boat races, we also offered “come & try” kayak sessions and a range of environmental craft activities. At 11am, we were joined by Emma Wiggs, a triple Paralympic gold medallist and twelve-time World Champion paracanoeist, who shared her insights and experiences with participants.

- **Xmas decoration (12/12/24):** Our annual Christmas Decoration Workshop took place at the Castle Vale Stadium. As in previous years, trustees and volunteers provided invaluable support with both the preparation and delivery of the event. More than 50 people attended and took part in a wide range of festive activities, including crafting willow wreaths and stars, creating bay leaf rosettes, making mini Christmas trees, wooden reindeer, and wildlife-friendly reindeer food. All items were made using natural materials sourced locally by CET staff and generously donated by residents and a local company, Special Branch. In addition, Eley Hawk Ltd sponsored a Christmas tree for each wooden shield decorated by participants and made a financial donation to CET in support of the event.
- **Night Paddle for families in need: (16.12.24)** In partnership with The Boat Inn and Compass Support, we delivered a fun Christmas Bellboat Trip just after dark on the Minworth Canal. It was a closed invitation event, targeting those most in need of a joyful time in the winter months. The families enjoyed a boat ride with illuminations, and adults dressed up as elves to entertain them. Followed by a refreshments provided by The Boat Inn and a bag of sweet and goodies donated by residents.

## Financial review

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Last year’s income was distributed across three main sources: income generated from schools (41% of total income), grants and funding (30%), and commissioned work (26%). The remaining 3% was generated through miscellaneous income.



#### Income from Schools

Forest Schools remained the largest single source of income during the reporting period. CET received £16,932 in unrestricted funds from participating schools. This represents a significant decrease compared to the previous year, when income from schools was reported as just over £75.

#### Grants and Funding

The charity benefited from substantial grant funding, which was critical in supporting our operations and enabling the delivery of key projects. Total grant income for the year was £12,310, representing 30% of the charity's total income. Similarly, there has been a major decrease compared to last year's, which was under 70K. Funding was received from the following organisations:

- £560 from British Canoeing to contribute towards training and upskilling staff and volunteers
- £6,250 from the National Trust for the delivery of the Nature Neighbourhood Project
- £2,500 from Birmingham Airport to create and accessible growing space, carry out improvements in the outdoor education classroom and deliver environmental

sessions.

- £2,000 from Brum Breathes for the delivery of the Green Adoption Scheme pilot
- £1,000 from Access Sport to deliver Bellboat sessions for Spring Hill Special Needs College

In addition, CET continued to benefit from a small number of grants received in the previous financial year.

### **Commissioned Work**

In addition to grant-funded activity, the charity undertook commissioned work, providing services and specialist expertise to partner organisations and generating over £10 in income, approximately half of the amount generated in the previous year. Breakdown as it follows:

- £1,110.24 for the delivery of eco-workshops for Re-Future
- £2,100 for Green Connecting sessions delivered one day per week in the neighbouring Bromford housing estate
- £1,050 from Compass Support, EBN, and Worth Unlimited for the delivery of kayaking and Bellboating sessions during the school holidays
- £910 from Birmingham City University for participation in *Graduate+ Week* and delivery of workshops
- £150 from Upcycle for the delivery of a Christmas decoration workshop
- £2,450 for mentoring sessions delivered in East Birmingham as part of the *Level Up* project
- £2,950 for the delivery of sustainable living workshops at Saathi House and participation in the funder's promotional video

### **Miscellaneous Income**

The remaining 2% of total income (£1,095.20) was generated through miscellaneous sources, including donations (£415), volunteer data submissions to the Birmingham Open Spaces Forum (£50), and income from youth activity delivery (£600.20).

### **Year-on-Year Income Reduction**

When compared with the previous financial year, it is important to highlight the significant reduction in overall income, which decreased from approximately £167,000 to £41,000.

The two main challenges contributing to this reduction, as outlined in the Overview of the Year at the beginning of this report, were:

- The loss of major school contracts due to reduced funding per pupil, driven by inflation and rising operational costs
- Prolonged staff absences resulting from physical and mental health conditions, medical procedures, and family-related caring responsibilities

These challenges placed considerable pressure on the organisation and staff team, significantly reducing capacity for essential networking activity and grant application development. Despite this, CET has been able to continue operating due to strong reserves and savings. Income diversification has also supported the financial viability of the Trust, and CET will continue to apply this operating model to achieve a balanced approach to income generation.

However, the Trustees recognise the importance of identifying new ways to expand and refine the Trust's offer, alongside developing additional income-generating opportunities that remain aligned with our mission.

With this in mind, Trustees will meet in April to discuss and agree a new financial strategy for CET, which will also include strengthening partnerships with local businesses, securing sponsorships, offering joint initiatives, and creating mutually beneficial opportunities that will enhance both, financial support and community engagement.

### *Reserves policy*

It is the charity's policy to ensure that the reserves account holds enough money to ensure that the charity remains financially secure, capable of meeting its obligations and maintaining its operations for at least three months. The reserves should also cover any redundancy cost if funding difficulties arise.

At the end of March 2024, the account held £42,028.05. The reserves policy is reviewed periodically to ensure it aligns with the charity's current financial position and operational needs. Reserves levels will be adjusted in the future as perceptions of risks and other factors change, e.g. school budget cuts, reduction of commissioned work.

## Funds held as a Custodian Trustee

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CET does not hold funds as a Custodian Trustee.

## Future

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With the continued support and oversight of the Trustees, CET remains committed to securing a sustainable future that both empowers individuals to protect and enhance green spaces and strengthens the Trust's long-term financial resilience. In light of the challenges experienced during the reporting period, a renewed focus has been placed on financial sustainability to ensure CET can continue to deliver meaningful impact while operating within its resources.

Over the coming year, CET aims to consolidate and grow its educational and youth programmes, with a particular emphasis on initiatives that empower young people to take positive action in environmental conservation. The Trust will also continue to strengthen its work with volunteers, particularly within the community garden and local conservation areas, supporting environmental stewardship while delivering positive outcomes for physical health, mental wellbeing, and social connection.

CET will further develop inclusive provision for home-educated children, young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), and families. This will include expanding accessible outdoor learning opportunities, tailored environmental education sessions, and family-based activities that encourage intergenerational engagement with nature. These programmes will promote wellbeing, resilience, and confidence, while enabling participants to develop a deeper understanding of the natural environment and the importance of its protection.

In addition, CET will actively seek to expand and deepen strategic partnerships with like-minded organisations, funders, and stakeholders. By working collaboratively, CET aims to diversify income streams, extend its reach, and enhance the effectiveness of its activities. Through this work, CET will continue to deliver measurable environmental benefits

alongside improved wellbeing outcomes, ensuring the organisation remains resilient, adaptable, and well-positioned to serve its communities in the years ahead.

Independent Examiner's Report to the trustees of Community Environmental Trust

I report to the charity trustees on my examination of the financial statements of Community Environmental Trust for the year ended 31 March 2025.

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 financial statements in accordance with the requirements of the Companies Act 2006 ('the 2006 Act).

Having satisfied myself that the financial statements of the Charity 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 financial statements 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 can confirm that no material matters have come to my attention in connection with the examination giving me cause to believe:

- accounting records were not kept in accordance with section 386 of the 2006 Act ; or
- the financial statements do not accord with those records; or
- the financial statements do not comply with the accounting requirements under section 396 of the 2006 Act other than any requirement that the financial statements give a 'true and fair' view which is not a matter considered as part of an independent examination; or
- the financial statements 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 financial statements to be reached.



Andy Hopkins  
BVSC  
Latham House  
33-34 Paradise Street  
Birmingham

B1 2AJ  
31 March 2025

Community Environmental Trust  
Statement of Financial Activities  
for the year ended 31 March 2025

		Unrestricted funds 2025 £	Restricted funds 2025 £	Total funds 2025 £	Total funds 2024 £
	Notes				
Income and endowments from:					
Donations and legacies	4	611	-	611	7,856
Charitable activities	5	41,543	29,806	71,349	158,334
Investments	6	1,570	-	1,570	1,325
Total		43,724	29,806	73,530	167,515
Expenditure on:					
Charitable activities	7	3,652	378	4,030	27,209
Other	8	83,811	26,806	110,617	104,756
Total		87,463	27,184	114,647	131,965
Net gains on investments		-	-	-	-
Net (expenditure)/income	9	(43,739)	2,622	(41,117)	35,550
Transfers between funds		-	-	-	-
Net (expenditure)/income before other gains/(losses)		(43,739)	2,622	(41,117)	35,550
Other gains and losses					
Net movement in funds		(43,739)	2,622	(41,117)	35,550
Reconciliation of funds:					
Total funds brought forward		168,720	-	168,720	133,168
Total funds carried forward		124,981	2,622	127,603	168,720

Community Environmental Trust  
Summary Income and Expenditure Account  
for the year ended 31 March 2025

	2025 £	2024 £
Income	71,960	166,190
Interest and investment income	1,570	1,325
Gross income for the year	<u>73,530</u>	<u>167,515</u>
Expenditure	114,477	131,792
Depreciation and charges for impairment of fixed assets	170	170
Total expenditure for the year	<u>114,647</u>	<u>131,962</u>
Net (expenditure)/income before tax for the year	(41,117)	35,553
Net (expenditure )/income for the year	<u>(41,117)</u>	<u>35,553</u>

Community Environmental Trust

Balance Sheet

at 31 March 2025

Company No. 03907328	Notes	2025 £	2024 £
Fixed assets			
Tangible assets	11	338	508
		<u>338</u>	<u>508</u>
Current assets			
Debtors	12	4,986	1,795
Cash at bank and in hand		125,291	195,439
		<u>130,277</u>	<u>197,234</u>
Creditors: Amount falling due within one year	13	(3,012)	(29,024)
Net current assets		<u>127,265</u>	<u>168,210</u>
Total assets less current liabilities		<u>127,603</u>	<u>168,718</u>
Net assets excluding pension asset or liability		<u>127,603</u>	<u>168,718</u>
Total net assets		<u><u>127,603</u></u>	<u><u>168,720</u></u>
The funds of the charity			
Restricted funds	14		
Restricted income funds		2,622	-
		<u>2,622</u>	<u>-</u>
Unrestricted funds	14		
General funds		124,981	168,720
		<u>124,981</u>	<u>168,720</u>
Reserves	14		
Total funds		<u><u>127,603</u></u>	<u><u>168,720</u></u>

These accounts have been prepared in accordance with the special provisions of Part 15 of the Companies Act 2006 relating to small companies.

For the year ended 31 March 2025 the company was entitled to exemption under section 477 of the Companies Act 2006 relating to small companies.

The members have not required the company to obtain an audit in accordance with section 476 of the Companies Act 2006.

The directors acknowledge their responsibilities for complying with the requirements of the Companies Act 2006 with respect to accounting records and the preparation of accounts.

Approved by the board on 31 March 2025

And signed on its behalf by:

*Troy Yeomans*

T. Yeomans

Trustee

31 March 2025

## 1 Accounting policies

### Basis of preparation

The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) (effective 1 January 2015) - (Charities SORP (FRS 102)), the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) and the Companies Act 2006.

### Fund accounting

Unrestricted funds	These are available for use at the discretion of the trustees in furtherance of the general objects of the charity.
Designated funds	These are unrestricted funds earmarked by the trustees for particular purposes.
Revaluation funds	These are unrestricted funds which include a revaluation reserve representing the restatement of investment assets at their market values.
Restricted funds	These are available for use subject to restrictions imposed by the donor or through terms of an appeal.

### Income

Recognition of income	Income is included in the Statement of Financial Activities (SoFA) when the charity becomes entitled to, and virtually certain to receive, the income and the amount of the income can be measured with sufficient reliability.
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Income with related expenditure	Where income has related expenditure the income and related expenditure is reported gross in the SoFA.
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Donations and legacies	Voluntary income received by way of grants, donations and gifts is included in the the SoFA when receivable and only when the Charity has unconditional entitlement to the income.
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Tax reclaims on donations and gifts	Income from tax reclaims is included in the SoFA at the same time as the gift/donation to which it relates.
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Donated services and facilities	These are only included in income (with an equivalent amount in expenditure) where the benefit to the Charity is reasonably quantifiable, measurable and material.
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Volunteer help	The value of any volunteer help received is not included in the accounts.
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Investment income	This is included in the accounts when receivable.
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Gains/(losses) on revaluation of fixed assets	This includes any gain or loss resulting from revaluing investments to market value at the end of the year.
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Gains/(losses) on investment assets	This includes any gain or loss on the sale of investments.
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#### Expenditure

Recognition of expenditure	Expenditure is recognised on an accruals basis. Expenditure includes any VAT which cannot be fully recovered, and is reported as part of the expenditure to which it relates.
Expenditure on raising funds	These comprise the costs associated with attracting voluntary income, fundraising trading costs and investment management costs.
Expenditure on charitable activities	These comprise the costs incurred by the Charity in the delivery of its activities and services in the furtherance of its objects, including the making of grants and governance costs.
Grants payable	All grant expenditure is accounted for on an actual paid basis plus an accrual for grants that have been approved by the trustees at the end of the year but not yet paid.
Governance costs	These include those costs associated with meeting the constitutional and statutory requirements of the Charity, including any audit/independent examination fees, costs linked to the strategic management of the Charity, together with a share of other administration costs.
Other expenditure	These are support costs not allocated to a particular activity.

#### Taxation

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

#### Tangible fixed assets and depreciation

Depreciation is provided at the following annual rates in order to write off each asset over its estimated useful life:

Plant and Machinery	25% Straight Line
Computer Equipment	25% Straight Line

#### Trade and other debtors

Trade and other debtors are recognised at the settlement amount due after any trade discount offered. Prepayments are valued at the amount prepaid net of any trade discounts due.

#### Trade and other creditors

Short term creditors are measured at the transaction price. Other creditors and provisions are recognised where the charity has a present obligation resulting from a past event that will probably result in the transfer of funds to a third party and the amount due to settle the obligation can be measured or estimated reliably. Creditors and provisions are normally recognised at their settlement amount after allowing for any trade discounts due.

#### Pension costs

The charity operates a defined contribution plan for its employees. A defined contribution plan is a pension plan under which the company pays fixed contributions into a separate entity. Once the contributions have been paid the company has no further payments obligations. The contributions are recognised as expenses when they fall due. Amounts not paid are shown in accruals in the balance sheet. The assets of the plan are held separately from the company in independently administered funds.

## 2 Company status

The company is a private company limited by guarantee and consequently does not have share capital.

3 Statement of Financial Activities - prior year

	Unrestricted funds 2024 £	Restricted funds 2024 £	Total funds 2024 £
Income and endowments from:			
Donations and legacies	7,856	-	7,856
Charitable activities	138,966	19,368	158,334
Investments	1,325	-	1,325
Total	<u>148,147</u>	<u>19,368</u>	<u>167,515</u>
Expenditure on:			
Charitable activities	112,488	19,368	131,856
Other	106	-	106
Total	<u>112,594</u>	<u>19,368</u>	<u>131,962</u>
Net income	<u>35,553</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>35,553</u>
Net income before other gains/(losses)	35,553	-	35,553
Other gains and losses:			
Net movement in funds	<u>35,553</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>35,553</u>
Reconciliation of funds:			
Total funds brought forward	133,168	-	133,168
Total funds carried forward	<u>168,721</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>168,721</u>

4 Income from donations and legacies

	Unrestricted £	Total 2025 £	Total 2024 £
Donations	611	611	7,856
	<u>611</u>	<u>611</u>	<u>7,856</u>

5 Income from charitable activities

	Unrestricted £	Restricted £	Total 2025 £	Total 2024 £
Services - Project Income	39,194	-	39,194	153,280
Grants receivable	2,349	29,806	32,155	5,054
	<u>41,543</u>	<u>29,806</u>	<u>71,349</u>	<u>158,334</u>

6 Income from investments

	Unrestricted	Total 2025	Total 2024
	£	£	£
Bank interest	1,570	1,570	1,325
	<u>1,570</u>	<u>1,570</u>	<u>1,325</u>

7 Expenditure on charitable activities

	Unrestricted	Restricted	Total 2025	Total 2024
	£	£	£	£
<i>Expenditure on charitable activities</i>				
Services - Project Income	3,652	378	4,030	27,209
Governance costs				
	<u>3,652</u>	<u>378</u>	<u>4,030</u>	<u>27,209</u>

8 Other expenditure

	Unrestricted	Restricted	Total 2025	Total 2024
	£	£	£	£
Employee costs	70,290	26,806	97,096	86,475
Motor and travel costs	2,484	-	2,484	1,891
Premises costs	4,328	-	4,328	4,328
Amortisation, depreciation, impairment, profit/loss on disposal of fixed assets	170	-	170	170
General administrative costs	3,256	-	3,256	4,683
Legal and professional costs	3,283	-	3,283	7,209
	<u>83,811</u>	<u>26,806</u>	<u>110,617</u>	<u>104,756</u>

9 Net (expenditure)/income before transfers

	2025	2024
	£	£
This is stated after charging:		
Depreciation of owned fixed assets	170	170
Independent Examiner's fee	450	450

10 Staff costs

	2025	2024
Salaries and wages	84,781	71,925
Social security costs	8,051	10,480
Pension costs	3,499	4,045
	<u>96,331</u>	<u>86,450</u>

No employee received emoluments in excess of £60,000.

The average monthly number of full time equivalent employees during the year was as follows:

2025	2024
Number	Number
7	4
<u>7</u>	<u>4</u>

11 Tangible fixed assets

	Plant and Machinery	Computer Equipment	Total
	£	£	£
Cost or revaluation			
At 1 April 2024	16,137	6,883	23,020
At 31 March 2025	<u>16,137</u>	<u>6,883</u>	<u>23,020</u>
Depreciation and impairment			
At 1 April 2024	16,137	6,375	22,512
Depreciation charge for the year	-	170	170
At 31 March 2025	<u>16,137</u>	<u>6,545</u>	<u>22,682</u>
Net book values			
At 31 March 2025	<u>-</u>	<u>338</u>	<u>338</u>
At 31 March 2024	<u>-</u>	<u>508</u>	<u>508</u>

12 Debtors

	2025	2024
	£	£
Trade debtors	3,191	-
Prepayments and accrued income	1,795	1,795
	<u>4,986</u>	<u>1,795</u>

13 Creditors:

amounts falling due within one year

	2025	2024
	£	£
Other taxes and social security	2,112	1,479
Accruals	900	450
Deferred income	-	27,095
	<u>3,012</u>	<u>29,024</u>

14 Movement in funds

	At 1 April 2024	Incoming resources (including other gains/losses ) £	Resources expended £	At 31 March 2025 £
Restricted funds:				
Restricted income funds:				
Grantham Yorke	-	2,500	(2,500)	-
SPF	-	9,999	(9,999)	-
Sutton NNS	-	5,997	(5,997)	-
Nature Neighbourhood	-	6,250	(6,250)	-
Paddle UK	-	560	(560)	-
Airport Fund	-	2,500	(378)	2,122
Brum Breathes	-	2,000	(1,500)	500
<i>Total</i>	<u>-</u>	<u>29,806</u>	<u>(27,184)</u>	<u>2,622</u>
Unrestricted funds:				
General funds	168,720	43,724	(87,463)	124,981
<b>Total funds</b>	<u>168,720</u>	<u>73,530</u>	<u>(114,647)</u>	<u>127,603</u>

Purposes and restrictions in relation to the funds:

Restricted funds:  
Grantham Yorke  
SPF  
Sutton NNS  
Nature Neighbourhood  
Paddle UK  
Airport Fund  
Brum Breathes

15 Analysis of net assets between funds

	Unrestricted funds £	Total £
Fixed assets	338	338
Net current assets	127,265	127,265
	<u>127,603</u>	<u>127,603</u>

16 Reconciliation of net debt

	At 1 April 2024 £	Cash flows £	At 31 March 2025 £
Cash and cash equivalents	195,439	(70,148)	125,291
	<u>195,439</u>	<u>(70,148)</u>	<u>125,291</u>
Net debt	<u>195,439</u>	<u>(70,148)</u>	<u>125,291</u>

17 Commitments

*Operating lease commitments*

Annual commitments under non-cancellable operating leases are as follows:

	2025 Land and buildings £	2025 Other £	2024 Land and buildings £	2024 Other £
Operating leases with expiry date:				

*Pension commitments*

	2025 £	2024 £
The pension cost charge to the company amounted to:	<u>3,499</u>	<u>4,045</u>

18 Related party disclosures

*Controlling party*

The company is limited by guarantee and has no share capital; thus no single party controls the company.

Community Environmental Trust  
Detailed Statement of Financial Activities  
for the year ended 31 March 2025

	Unrestricted funds 2025 £	Restricted funds 2025 £	Total funds 2025 £	Total funds 2024 £
Income and endowments from:				
Donations and legacies				
Donations	611	-	611	7,856
	<u>611</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>611</u>	<u>7,856</u>
Charitable activities				
Services - Project Income	39,194	-	39,194	153,280
Grants receivable	2,349	29,806	32,155	5,054
	<u>41,543</u>	<u>29,806</u>	<u>71,349</u>	<u>158,334</u>
Investments				
Bank interest	1,570	-	1,570	1,325
	<u>1,570</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>1,570</u>	<u>1,325</u>
Total income and endowments	43,724	29,806	73,530	167,515
Expenditure on:				
Charitable activities				
Services - Project Income	3,652	378	4,030	27,209
	<u>3,652</u>	<u>378</u>	<u>4,030</u>	<u>27,209</u>
Total of expenditure on charitable activities	3,652	378	4,030	27,209
Employee costs				
Salaries/wages	57,975	26,806	84,781	71,925
Employer's NIC	8,051	-	8,051	10,480
Pension costs	3,499	-	3,499	4,045
Staff training	765	-	765	25
	<u>70,290</u>	<u>26,806</u>	<u>97,096</u>	<u>86,475</u>
Motor and travel costs				
Vehicles - General costs	2,406	-	2,406	1,891
Travel and subsistence	78	-	78	-
	<u>2,484</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>2,484</u>	<u>1,891</u>
Premises costs				
Rent	4,328	-	4,328	4,328
	<u>4,328</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>4,328</u>	<u>4,328</u>
General administrative costs, including depreciation and amortisation				
Depreciation of Plant and Machinery	-	-	-	-
Depreciation of Computer Equipment	170	-	170	170
Bank charges	100	-	100	106

Community Environmental Trust  
Detailed Statement of Financial Activities

General insurances	1,676	-	1,676	960
Software, IT support and related costs	261	-	261	1,436
Stationery and printing	-	-	-	682
Sundry expenses	185	-	185	873
Telephone, fax and broadband	1,034	-	1,034	626
	<u>3,426</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>3,426</u>	<u>4,853</u>
Legal and professional costs				
Audit/Independent examination fees	450	-	450	450
Accountancy and bookkeeping	97	-	97	94
Consultancy fees	2,736	-	2,736	6,665
	<u>3,283</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>3,283</u>	<u>7,209</u>
Total of expenditure of other costs	<u>83,811</u>	<u>26,806</u>	<u>110,617</u>	<u>104,756</u>
Total expenditure	87,463	27,184	114,647	131,965
Net gains on investments	-	-	-	-
	<u>(43,739)</u>	<u>2,622</u>	<u>(41,117)</u>	<u>35,550</u>
Net (expenditure)/income				
Net (expenditure)/income before other gains/(losses)	<u>(43,739)</u>	<u>2,622</u>	<u>(41,117)</u>	<u>35,550</u>
Other Gains	-	-	-	-
	<u>(43,739)</u>	<u>2,622</u>	<u>(41,117)</u>	<u>35,550</u>
Net movement in funds				
Reconciliation of funds:				
Total funds brought forward	168,720	-	168,720	133,168
Total funds carried forward	<u>124,981</u>	<u>2,622</u>	<u>127,603</u>	<u>168,718</u>