GRASSROOTS PROGRAMME

England & Wales · Charity number 1163427

Details

Status	Registered
Legal form	CIO
Registered	2015-09-04
Register	View on the Charity Commission register

Contact

Address	47 High Town Road Luton Bedfordshire LU2 0BW
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Activities

Objects: 1) TO ADVANCE EDUCATION FOR THE PUBLIC BENEFIT IN GLOBAL ISSUES TO ENABLE GREATER AWARENESS OF FACTORS THAT WILL CONTRIBUTE TO THE RELIEF OF NEEDY VICTIMS OF BREECHES OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN SUCH WAYS AS IS CHARITABLE IN LAW. 2) TO ADVANCE RELIGION AND PROMOTE UNDERSTANDING AMONG CHRISTIANS AND THOSE OF OTHER FAITHS. 3) TO ENGAGE IN ANY OTHER ACTIVITIES THAT WILL FURTHER THE ABOVE OBJECTS, PROVIDED THAT SUCH ACTIVITIES ARE EXCLUSIVELY CHARITABLE IN LAW

Activities: GRASSROOTS Luton is a community engagement programme working for over 30 years with diverse faith communities building peace & reconcilation, strenghtening community relations and resilience. Founded in 1991, it registered as a charity in 1996, and became a CIO in 2015. GRASSROOTS continues to support cohesion in a town shaped by rich diversity and shifting global influences.

Classification

- **How:** Provides Advocacy/advice/information, Other Charitable Activities
- **What:** General Charitable Purposes, Religious Activities, Economic/community Development/employment, Recreation
- **Who:** The General Public/mankind

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Geography

- Luton

Finances

Period end	Income	Expenditure	Assets	Employees
2025-08-31	£108,776	£99,558	-	-
2024-08-31	£134,880	£143,152	-	-
2023-08-31	£114,576	£116,416	-	-
2022-08-31	£84,337	£103,460	-	-
2021-08-31	£190,249	£161,501	-	-

Trustees

Name	Role	Appointed
Brian Robert Roe		2018-11-08
Deborah Purfield		2018-11-08
Janet Bird		2017-11-07
Rev PHILIP JOHN HORNER		2013-11-07

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GRASSROOTS PROGRAMME

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Accounts

Grassroots

...a different point of view



"Peace, in the sense of the absence of war, is of little value to someone who is dying of hunger or cold. Peace can only last where human rights are respected, where people are fed, and where individuals and nations are free."

Tenzin Gyatso, the 14th Dalai Lama

Annual Report

2024-2025

Acknowledgement of Thanks

GRASSROOTS is blessed to have the support of many funders, partners and volunteers. We thank them for enabling our work to continue and grow:

Funders & Partners

Church of England Diocese of St. Albans

Methodist District of Beds, Essex and Herts

Roman Catholic Diocese of Northampton

United Reformed Church Thames North Synod

Church Urban Fund – Near Neighbours Programme

Luton Council of Faiths

And also:

Churches and different Faith Communities in Luton

Luton Council & Bedfordshire Police



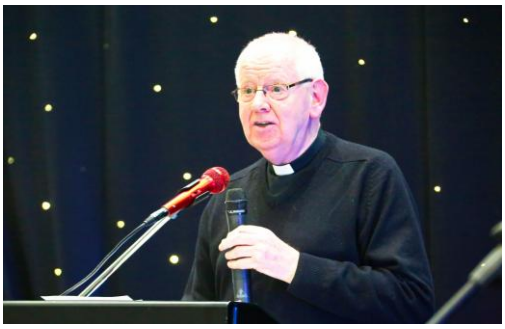
GRASSROOTS Annual Report

2024-2025

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Message from the Revd Canon David Lawson (Chair)



In the Foreword to last year's Annual report I said that the world was in a dangerous and fragile state, and sadly as I write my last Foreword, the world is perhaps now in a more perilous state. The war in Ukraine continues, famine faces the peoples of Gaza and Sudan, full scale war between Israel and Iran has been averted, as has serious conflict between India and Pakistan, and the number of refugees and displaced peoples continues to rise. It is against this global background that Grassroots and its partners in Luton work together to offer hope and light in a turbulent and unstable world.

A feature of our world today is how these global issues deeply impact upon local communities in the UK and Luton is no exception. It is a testimony to Luton's community leaders that they stand united in recognising that they have no control over international events but they are 'committed to rejecting all forms of extremism and working together to build a society in harmony and hope.'

As you read this year's Annual Report, you will see the range of Grassroots involvement in the life of Luton and beyond, too numerous to mention here, but here is a flavour. The Annual Faith Walk, uniting the faith communities, a powerful demonstration of their commitment to deepening understanding and friendship across communities. The opposition of the faith communities to the Assisted Dying Bill, further evidence of how inter faith co-operation can speak to issues of deep concern felt by the wider community. Grassroots is a regular contributor to the weekly Faith Matters column in Luton News, and Grassroots once again facilitated the Diocesan inter-faith week event at St Albans Cathedral, which is proving to be popular and well supported. This year's event is entitled 'Serving our local community', exploring how various faith communities are making a difference in their local areas. It is not only in Luton that Grassroots influence has been felt. Over the years churches, community groups and individuals across Europe, have learned about and experienced the groundbreaking work of Grassroots, inspiring others to work to make a difference in their particular contexts.

I have been a trustee of Grassroots for 19 years and more recently the Chair, and it has been an enormous privilege to have been part of the dynamic life of the charity. Two other trustees have also served as long as I have and they are Sheila Marsden and Ruth Tetlow. Both of them are standing down and in Ruth's case it is due to ill health. Sheila's contribution over the years has been extremely significant as she knows Luton inside out having lived in Luton all her life (see her poem on p…). As a committed Lutonian, her insight and knowledge of the town has meant she has been integral to the work of Grassroots. Ruth's contribution has come from her commitment to inter faith and community work in Birmingham, which has always meant she has been able to offer a fresh perspective to what is happening in Luton. We owe a huge debt of gratitude to both Sheila and Ruth and indeed our other trustees, who each in their own way contribute to furthering the work of Grassroots.

A final word of thanks from me goes to Johny, whose extraordinary and profound commitment has made real the vision of Grassroots in so many ways. I have thoroughly enjoyed working alongside him, accompanying him to many events at which I have heard again and again how hugely respected Johny is and how so many know of the impact Grassroots has made in Luton and beyond. My journey in interfaith and community work began when I was a newly ordained curate in Glasgow nearly 50 years ago. I can think of no better place from which to actively retire than Grassroots and Luton. It is a well-known quotation attributed to a former Secretary General of the United Nations, Dag Hammarskjold, but it expresses in a few words how I feel as I say farewell: 'For all that has been, thanks! To all that shall be, yes!'

The Revd Canon David Lawson
Grassroots Chair

A Tribute to Pope Francis

Tributes have been paid around the world to Pope Francis, Head of the Catholic Church and sovereign of the Vatican City State, who died on Easter Monday, aged 88. Thousands of people and many Heads of State attended his funeral ceremony held over the weekend.

The Right Reverend David Oakley, Bishop of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Northampton, said, “As we grieve his passing, we also give thanks for his prophetic witness. May we continue his legacy by building a Church that listens, loves, and walks with all God’s people. His life reminded us that the Church is not a fortress but a home where all are welcomed, listened to, and valued. His vision of the Church was one of encounter and accompaniment, where God’s mercy reaches every heart longing for hope.”



Pope Francis is described by many as a radical agent of change. He modernised the Church’s governance and introduced several reforms. He developed relational bonds between religious traditions. He called people from different faiths as “our siblings”. His funeral reminded the world leaders to build bridges, and not walls. Grassroots Chair, The Revd Canon David Lawson said, “Three things come to mind on the legacy of Pope Francis – his palpable humanity and humility, his passion for the poor and marginalized, and his care for the environment.” In his 2015 encyclical, the late Pope remarked, ‘Never have we so hurt and mistreated our common home as we have in the past 200 years’. The Luton Council of Faiths Chair, Prof Zafar Khan said, “Pope Francis was a strong advocate for peace and justice. He was a friend of the weak and the marginalised nations and the peoples across the globe. We extend our heartfelt condolences to the Catholic Church and the followers of Christianity in the UK and across the world.”

Pope Francis will be remembered for his leadership and as a Pope who washed the feet of prisoners, embraced the sick, and tirelessly sought to build bridges in a divided world. His legacy will endure in the hearts of millions inspired by his call to live the Christian Gospel values of love, mercy, and humility.

May he rest in peace and rise in glory.

C of E Bishop of St Albans Rt. Revd Dr Alan Smith Retired

It was a privilege to attend at St Albans Cathedral, the farewell service for the Rt Revd Dr Alan Smith, who retired after 44 years of ordained ministry and 16 years of generous, faithful and inspiring leadership as the Church of England Bishop of St Albans.



At the end of the service, Bishop Alan laid down his crozier bringing to a close more than 16 years of service as Bishop of St Albans.

Luton's different faith and community leaders thanked him for his visits to Luton, especially after the far-right extremist groups provoked unrest in Luton and once even firebombed a Luton Mosque in 2009-10. Prof Zafar Khan, the Chair of Luton Council of Faiths, said, "Bishop Alan's consistent voice in parliament on interfaith issues has been much appreciated. We want to wish him our very best as he retires."

The Chair of Grassroots Luton, Revd Canon David Lawson, said, "Luton went through some extremely challenging times. We remain grateful to Bishop Alan for extending his support so graciously over the years."

Bishop Alan responded to GRASSROTS, "It has been a great joy and privilege to have served as Bishop of St Albans for the past sixteen years. I have particularly enjoyed my involvement with Luton, which is one of the most lively and dynamic communities in the entire diocese. Although we are all aware of some of the challenges and difficulties, I am always grateful for the wonderful fraternal relations between the different faiths and our common desire to serve the communities which make up Luton. I'm glad to have been able to play a small part in helping it to become a place where all people can flourish and thrive. In a world disfigured by war and violence, poverty and disease, please be assured of my prayers for all your future work."

The Princess of Wales 'Together at Christmas' Community Carol Service held in Luton

The Bedfordshire 'Together at Christmas' Community Carol Service, supported by The Royal Foundation, and hosted by HM Lord-Lieutenant of Bedfordshire, brought together 400 attendees at St Mary's Luton. Guests included staff & members of Bedfordshire's Emergency Services, care workers and young carers, local mental health support groups, and various faith groups. It was part of a national initiative inspired by The Princess of Wales' 'Together at Christmas' service at Westminster Abbey, celebrating love, empathy and community spirit this festive season.

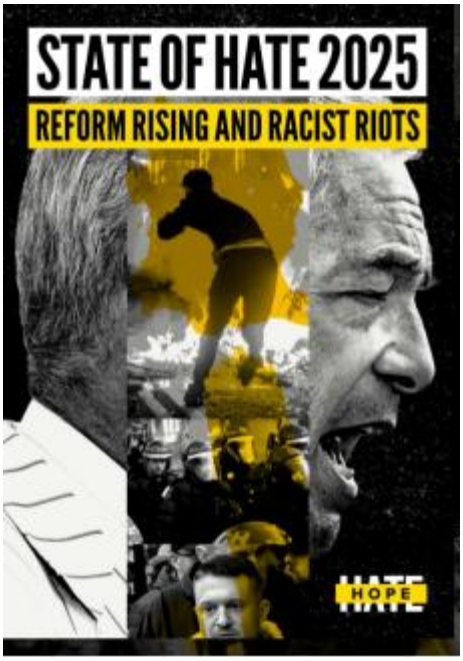


The Lord-Lieutenant of Bedfordshire, Mrs Susan Lousada hosted Bedfordshire's 'Together at Christmas' Community Carol Service inspired by The Princess of Wales initiative to celebrate love, empathy and community spirit during festive season.

The Lord-Lieutenant of Bedfordshire, Mrs Susan Lousada called it an honour that Bedfordshire was chosen to hold one of the 15 community carol services held across the country. She said, "It is wonderful to come together to thank and recognise people from across the county who help others and pull together in times of need, and who have shown selfless love, kindness and empathy in striving to make the lives of others better." She added, "I am proud of how in this county despite facing many challenges, communities live together in harmony and celebrate the glorious mix of diverse cultures and heritages."

Combined with traditional and modern elements, the Bedfordshire service was the best way of shining a light on the hard work and selflessness of voluntary and charity organisations across Bedfordshire. An attendee said, "It was a meaningful and inclusive celebration for people of all faiths and none."

Annual Report Overview Sep 2024 – Aug 2025



This year has been filled with unexpected, shocking, and deeply upsetting events, globally as well nationally. At one time at GRASSROOTS, we found ourselves asking a question that many others in our local communities were also asking: amidst so much pain and need, where do we even put our focus?

The far-right is in resurgence. The State of HATE 2025 Report by an advocacy group 'Hope Not Hate' points out that attitudes towards community cohesion and multiculturalism have worsened since far-right actors capitalised on the horrific killing of three children in Southport, Merseyside last year, and hijacked the tragedy from a grieving community for their own hateful, racist, anti-immigrant, Xenophobic and Islamophobic agenda, and the violent riots broke out in the streets of the UK. One year on, the threat hasn't gone away.

Highlighting Reform UK's rise in the polls, the report also examines how the far right is gaining ground at the ballot box, in the streets, and online – and what this means for the future of our democracy.

Earlier this year, at one of the Luton Council of Faiths meetings, Luton's faith leaders also shared concerns about how, the power-mongering majoritarian politics is benefiting by hyping fear and anxiety in society. Once identical with drunken hooliganism, the far-right extremism is now professionally and politically selling hate, and racialising & communalising it. Earlier, we were threatened by the potential damages caused by only limited sections of the media and its sympathisers, but now these threats have grown manifold – thanks to social media. In fact, social media is the most dangerous weapon in our world today, where radicalisation and polarisation seem uncontrollable, and young impressionable minds are groomed in harmful ways.



Against such a demanding and challenging backdrop, we celebrate the fact that Luton has strong community relations, but we can't be complacent. While stopping the weaponisation of online misinformation, we must continue to build resilience, strengthen & nurture strong and peaceful communities in Luton, and beyond, by standing together against division and intolerance, and win people by our love, kindness and compassion. Also, in response to the UK Prime Minister's 'island of strangers' immigration speech that is said to have echoed the sentiments of Enoch Powell's 'Rivers of Blood' speech, Luton faith leaders reverberated the statement – We are an Island of Solidarity, not Strangers. They said immigrants play a vital role in NHS, social care, and farmlands – they deserve recognition, not scapegoating.

Additionally, the national inquiry into group-based child sexual exploitation has raised several genuine questions and concerns over British “grooming gangs”, but the far-right groups, media and a few politicians have yet again hijacked the issue to demonise Muslims and immigrants.

Locally in Luton, driven by faith, to make our community safe and fair, a Christian-Muslim initiative called Faiths Against Child Sexual Exploitation (FACES) stated, “Together, we stand united in our commitment to safeguarding all children from harm.” FACES welcomed robust scrutiny of all forms of child sexual abuse and exploitation, but rejected any narrative—especially those laced with racism & Islamophobia —that diverts attention from the young people at the heart of this crisis.

FACES
Faiths Against Child Sexual Exploitation

In a statement FACES said it is a national crisis, but only one story is being told. ‘Scapegoating’ is not ‘Safeguarding’. The real causes are power, misogyny, and systemic failure. It also called to examine the data collection, which is not neutral and is influenced and driven by political agendas, and racist narratives. The statement calls for prioritising facts over fear, and justice over political point-scoring. It says, “Every child deserves to be safe. Every survivor deserves to be heard. FACES will continue to speak out — until safeguarding in this country is fair, effective, and free of prejudice.” Since it’s launch in 2016, FACES has developed multiple training and awareness courses in broad safeguarding areas from Identity and Inclusion, to working with refugees and Relationships & Sex Education. One of its latest projects has been funded by Near Neighbours and supported by GRASSROOTS Programme.

This year also marked 30 years since 8,000 Bosnian Muslims were massacred at Srebrenica. Every year, ‘Remembering Srebrenica’ selects a theme. This year the theme was ‘Remember Yesterday, Act Today’. It reminded us that our reflective remembrance must lead to proactive action to safeguard our present and future, especially at a time when the threat of ethnic prejudice and extreme nationalism is again rearing its head, and the threat of genocide continues to kill thousands of innocent people in other parts of the world.

Events in Gaza, the brutal suffering being inflicted on the innocent people, the complicity of governments, and the failure thus far of the international community to put a stop to such crimes against humanity are deeply distressing and extremely disturbing. By learning the lessons from Srebrenica, we must take, however small or big, but steady steps for peace, justice, equity and unity across diversity in our world. Our heartfelt prayers are with all those who are killed, bereaved and still suffering, and we pray for an end to all conflicts in the world.



At the 30th Anniversary of Srebrenica Memorial event at the Council Chambers of Luton Town Hall, (L to R) Bedfordshire Police & Crime Commissioner, C of E Bishop of Bedford, High Sheriff of Bedfordshire Camilla King all signed the Memorial Book. Speaking at this event, Paul Salver, Vice Chair of Remembering Srebrenica East of England Board, said, “Having seen the human capacity for darkness, and having listened to survivors, it was my responsibility not to walk away and do nothing, so I have been educating, and inspiring young people to speak out and challenge racism and intolerance in all its forms.”

IMPACT Report on Summer Riots 2024 – LUTON CASE STUDY

The riots of 2024 came out of the blue for many of us. Near Neighbours (NN) Programme held a national plenary and collated contributions from all NN local hubs from across the country, including GRASSROOTS Luton. NN then shared its learning with the MHCLG (Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government) policy-makers. NN made them aware of issues and opportunities, as well as inspirational best practice to prevent such occurrences in future. In its submission to MHCLG, NN published two of Luton's comments as following;

"Communities know their own challenges better than anyone. They have the ideas, the relationships, and the determination to make a difference. What's missing is the right support—without excessive bureaucracy—so they can lead change from the ground up." (Ryad Khodabocus of Luton Council of Faiths)

"After 15 years of far-right agitation in Luton, our faith groups, police, and wider community have learned how to work together to counter hate. Thankfully, this meant we saw no major incidents, but we can never be complacent. Building trust and strengthening relationships must be ongoing work." (Peter Adams of St Mary's Centre for Peace & Reconciliation)

Near Neighbours Luton Event – Sharing Stories of Hope and Experience

On 24th Feb'25 in Luton, Bishop Richard Atkinson chaired a conversation, with members and leaders of the different faith communities, about the events following the Southport stabbings in July 2024, and the subsequent riots, and why Luton was one of five forces that were spared these riots.



The discussions are best summarised as following;

Rumours, media and social media

People in Luton were concerned, distressed, anxious, because there were a lot of rumours on social media, not just about the perpetrator and the motive for the attacks, but later also about riots coming to Luton. There was a fear of riots guided by unreal and fake truths and rumours. Foreign media coverage didn't help – and our government didn't necessarily respond adequately to dispel the myth. If you leave an information gap, someone will fill it. In this case the far-right filled the gap, leading to a lot of speculation, which in turn fuelled the riots.

The first riot in Southport was unorganised and fairly organic – it was a local reaction to what had happened. Subsequent riots however were engineered and organised. In Luton there was a swift and non-complacent response following this incident. Police, faith and community leaders, Luton Borough Council stepped in quickly - firstly in identifying, secondly in dismissing rumours and then working together to discourage communities to listen to rumours, and to take the cue from Beds Police. Despite disagreements and mistrust, communities put their trust in the authorities, and complied with the advice of the police.

Communication

Communication was a key part in all this – the police and authorities communicated effectively with faith and community leaders, and leaders communicated efficiently with the members of their communities. It is perhaps not insignificant, certainly in terms of communication, that Luton has such a high (78%) percentage of religiously affiliated population. Swift communication was possible largely because of communication infrastructure that was already existent in different faith communities, or could easily be revived.



Positive Action

In Luton, we called on people to make short videos with someone of a different background, sharing stories of friendships and living well together, and upload it on #weareluton. In one such video, a local native English beekeeper Colin Hall (Quaker) and his neighbour Abu Nasir (British Muslim) shared how they have lived together and looked after each other as neighbours for over 20 years. “We got each other’s house keys too”, said Abu. “This is what Luton is really all about”, stated Abu & Colin. “It is about connections, relationships and caring for each other.



A Quaker & a Muslim sharing their story of living well together as neighbours in Luton

Strength of Community Relations in Luton

In Luton, organisations like Grassroots & Luton Council of Faiths have been working hard to strengthen community relations for over 30 years. This proactive, often unseen, unsung and under resourced work, is the bedrock of community relations. As a result of this work, faith and community leaders know each other. In networking and working together they disseminate and share information with one another quickly, effectively and efficiently, with a sense of mutual trust in one another, which helps calm people’s anxieties, restrain misinformation and not let it spread any further.



A Sikh & a Catholic sharing their story of living well together as neighbours in Luton

Moving Forward

Southport exposed racism, Islamophobia, xenophobia, scapegoating, and intolerance of the ‘other’. Although Luton was not affected this time, we recognise the need to strengthen relationships and keep communication channels up-to-date. There’s concern that community relations have weakened in recent years due to Brexit, austerity, Covid, the cost-of-living crisis, national elections, and international issues like the Israel-Palestine conflict. Authorities must strategically invest in partnerships with local faith leaders and support them in sharing positive stories on social media to inspire all generations.

Police Raid on the Westminster Quaker Meeting House

It was shocking and unprecedented that the police raided on Westminster Quaker Meeting House on March 27, 2025. It was a massively disproportionate response, when a force of 20 police officers broke open the door without warning, arresting six young people who had hired a room to discuss legitimate social justice concerns.

Quakers issued a statement saying it undermines democracy. People must have the right to assemble and to speak out, even when their views challenge those in power. Every citizen deserves to be heard, not just those with influence or media access. In a diverse society, we need to be able to hear dissenting voices with respect. Forcibly preventing these from being heard, through law or police action, is in no way democratic. People talking and peacefully demonstrating is not a threat to society, but stopping them is.



After this incident, Quakers in Britain were overwhelmed by messages of support, from different faiths, from the public and people around the world, but in Luton, people from different faiths gathered to support the Luton Quakers, at an excellent Sufi Storytelling Event, by Khayaal Theatre.

The wisdom tales, magically performed by Eleanor Martin, covered the themes of social and environmental justice by Muslim sages Rumi, Saadi, and Mulla Nasruddin. Eleanor has worked extensively as a storyteller, performing everywhere from schools to living rooms to a circus top and at the Abu Dhabi Grand Prix. The Artistic Director, Luqman Ali stated it was good to get together in deep and inspiring silence, contemplation and in some meaningful conversations. The far-ranging conversations and reflections covered the themes of imagination, language, ethics, symbology, spirituality, community and the contemporary relevance and resonances of the stories with capitalism, poverty, inequality, injustice, indebtedness, debt forgiveness, rapacity, children, elderly, water, waste, nature, ecology were powerful, illuminating and edifying for all.

Luqman of Khayal Theatre extended a huge thanks to the Luton Quaker community and everyone else, for their heartfelt, warm and generous reception and hospitality. He said, “Easily it was one of the most high-voltage spiritual storytelling circles we've co-convened this year.”

Stories are powerful indeed, but the art of storytelling cannot be undermined, especially as it awakens the child-like imagination, curiosity and innocence in everyone.

India-Pakistan war tensions mitigated in Luton

Amid heightened tensions of war between India and Pakistan, Luton's faith leaders of Indian, Pakistani, Kashmiri & Bangladeshi origins gathered together to prepare and share a video message, stating, "As Muslims, as Hindus, as Sikhs, despite our differences, we have always lived side by side, promoting peace and mutual support in our local community. Many incidents have tested our patience and resilience. We have not much control over what is happening internationally, but we can continue the good work locally. We call upon everyone to rise above the social media manipulation and hate, and live by the code and ethics of our faith. Every human has the right to peace, justice, freedom & liberty. United we stand, divided we fall – We are Luton!"



The terrorist attack killing 28 innocent and unarmed people in Pahalgam, Kashmir, on 22nd April 2025 had left people worldwide deeply shocked and grieved. It caused tensions between the Indian & Pakistani governments.

A Luton Council of Faiths statement said, "As people of different faiths and cultures, working together tirelessly for peace and harmony in Luton, and beyond, we have always strongly condemned such senseless violence, particularly when carried out in the name of religion. The attackers targeted innocent civilians, mostly tourists, and left survivors and victims' families traumatised and shattered."

"This heinous act has deeply wounded the collective conscience of our society, cutting across all religions, castes, and communities. We must remember that no religion condones violence. On the contrary, all faiths uphold values of compassion, love, peace, and justice."

"Our condolences and prayers are with the victims and those who have faced death, injury and suffered in any other ways. Like in other world conflicts, we have always advocated that all parties must seek to end the conflict based on mutual respect, sanctity of life, and interdependence on each other."

"We call upon all communities, locally & globally, to come together in empathy, dialogue, and unity. Only through mutual respect, understanding, and the reaffirmation of our shared humanity can we heal the wounds inflicted by hatred and violence. Let us remain committed to rejecting all forms of extremism and working together to build a society rooted in harmony and hope, and let us call out for peace between India & Pakistan."

KEY HIGHLIGHTS, EVENTS & ACTIVITIES OF THE YEAR

Covid-19 Memorial Service

5 years on…Newland (Wigmore) Church on Crawley Green Road in Luton invited members of the public and different faith communities to remember all those who died of Covid-19 in Luton. During the service, Revd Jenny Spouge introduced people to the Luton Covid Memorial frame, on which a flower each for every person who died of Covid-19 in Luton was knitted and crocheted. It was first erected in November 2020. These flowers were washed and re-attached to the trellis, and the renewed memorial was dedicated during the event.

Thanks to Gail Bennett and Jenny Spouge – the crafters and instigators of the Luton Covid Memorial for conceiving this idea of remembering the deceased in this beautiful way. At the Covid Memorial Service, friends from different faiths said, “In our coming together we have stated today that they are not forgotten.”



Gail Bennett (L) and Jenny Spouge (R) the crafters and instigators of the Luton Covid Memorial were pleased to re-dedicate it at a special event held recently. In it, there is a flower for every person who died of Covid-19.

Quoting from the Sikh eternal Guru Granth Sahib Ji, a young Sikh girl Avneet Kaur reflected, “Whoever has come shall depart. Life is temporary. Every soul that comes into this world must one day return to its true home. Though this truth is difficult to accept, the Guru teaches us that death is not an end—it is a transition. The body perishes, but the soul merges back into the Divine, into the eternal love of God.”

She encouraged all by saying that even after the darkest night, the sun must rise. Even after the harshest winter, spring must blossom. Let us move forward with the love of God in our hearts, with kindness in our actions, and with hope in our souls. May God bless everyone with strength, peace, and eternal hope!

C of E St Albans Diocesan Inter Faith Week Event

At the Inter Faith Week Event held at St Albans Cathedral, about 125 people from different and no religious backgrounds from Beds, Herts & the London borough of Barnet, saw 20 different stalls displaying a wide range of different projects and activities, showcasing powerfully how people of diverse faiths serve their communities. These projects led by different faith communities support children, youth & women, refugees & homeless with winter kits, food banks, eco projects, peace gardens, multi-faith art activities, inter-cultural cooking classes, initiatives tackling health inequalities, and supporting those with dementia, etc.

The idea behind this year's C of E St Albans Diocesan Inter Faith Week event was to inspire one another by sharing our stories and experiences, stated Revd Cath Rindl and Mrs Ulrike Hunt, who masterminded the event.

The Reverend Canon David Kesterton, Luton-based Diocesan Inter Faith Adviser said, "The event was a powerful reminder of how our common humanity allows us to live respectfully with our differences."

The Very Reverend Jo Kelly-Moore, Dean of St Albans Cathedral, welcomed all and highlighted that the foundation story of St Albans Cathedral is inter-faith work. Alban, Britain's first known Christian saint and martyr, was a Pagan and he gave safe refuge to an asylum seeker – a Christian priest facing persecution. Alban stood up with courage for justice and sacrificed his life to protect his friend, and his faith – so this is the place of welcome for people of all faiths and beliefs. Jo said, "With all the wars going on in our world today, we must re-ignite our friendships and our mutual care and support for one another."



St Albans Cathedral welcomed people from different and no religious backgrounds, at the Inter Faith Week Event

Bishop Richard Atkinson OBE said, "As we live in a challenging world, let us remain committed to explore what more can we do together to make a positive impact in our world." Many participants said it was a great experience to be in this elegant place, where a thousand years of history of singing, praying, contemplating and service added so much potency and symbolism.

Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales

In a world marked by conflict, environmental degradation, organised crime, violent extremism, injustices, and widening inequalities, it is important that nations, communities and institutions work together to reconcile human relationships, restore human dignity, and foster equality and empowerment of all. In emphasising these sentiments, Kinga Kosterska & Elliot Vanstone from the Mission Directorate of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales visited the GRASSROOTS Programme and Luton's different faith communities. They toured different places of worship places and learnt about their community outreach work.



At Luton Hindu Temple, the Priest Shri Ketan Mehta (L) welcoming and greeting Kinga Kosterska (R) & Elliot Vanstone from the Mission Directorate of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales

Kinga said, "It was great to see how Luton's multi-faith communities can not only live together but thrive and respect each other. The various faith communities we visited were incredibly welcoming and generous in sharing with us the educational and interfaith work they carry out. It was great to see how much they valued the importance of interreligious dialogue and cooperation."

Elliot Vanstone said, "It was truly inspiring to see the great work happening in Luton. Walking through the streets of Luton and experiencing its rich multicultural vibrancy was both encouraging and eye-opening. I was particularly moved by the work and legacy of Grassroots in Luton—it's clear that, in the realm of dialogue, simply being present for people in both their struggles and their joys is invaluable. Grassroots exemplifies that commitment in everything it does."

He added, "This year, the Catholic Church marks the 60th anniversary of Nostra Aetate, the landmark document that encouraged deeper relationships between faiths, and it is heartening to see these values lived out in Luton. At a time when tensions can so easily divide, Luton stands as a testament to the strength of unity—something particularly significant given that the town remained peaceful while much of the country was affected by riots following the horrific deaths in Southport last summer. This visit was a hopeful sign that, by coming together, we can build a more harmonious and compassionate society for all."

Bishops of Catholic Dioceses of Northampton & Nottingham

The Rt. Revs David Oakley & Patrick McKinney Bishops of the Roman Catholic Dioceses of Northampton & Nottingham visited GRASSROOTS Programme, and Luton's different faith communities. It was a great blessing, according to The Revd Canon David Lawson, Chair of GRASSROOTS Luton.

Referring to the Second Vatican Council, which was the twenty-first ecumenical council of the Catholic Church, Bishop David reminded that it had produced resources to direct the life of the Church in the twentieth century and beyond. The purpose of the Council was the "modernization of the Church after 20 centuries of life." He reinforced the Council's call for the Church's renewal in almost every aspect: from the Church's language and theology to the Church's role in the world, especially its relationship with other religions.



The Rt. Revs David Oakley & Patrick McKinney Bishops of the Roman Catholic Dioceses of Northampton & Nottingham, welcomed in Luton by GRASSROOTS Trustee Mrs. Deborah Purfield (L) & The Revd. Canon David Lawson (R)

Bishop David concurred that interfaith cooperation is not about trying to blend all religions and cultures into one, as if we are all the same and our differences don't really matter. It is not about negotiating away our differences. It is about realising that we have more in common than what divides us, and that must motivate us to cooperate for the common good and the flourishing of all people. He offered to continue blessing and assisting the work of GRASSROOTS to advance the causes of justice, peace, and reconciliation in a hurting world. He said, "Our meeting together with different faiths testifies that our religions invite us to remain rooted in the values of peace; to defend the values of mutual understanding, human fraternity, and harmonious coexistence."

Bishop Patrick gave GRASSROOTS credit for its efforts to bring communities together. "It's wonderful to see that Luton's inter faith work involves action as well as dialogue", he said. "The actions of Luton's faith communities speak louder than words and it is great to see their actions are inspired by their respective beliefs. Long may such partnership and networking continue, which is so clearly not about competing against one another, but complimenting one another." He said, as people of faith, we are called to open ourselves to one another, knowing and recognising each other as brothers and sisters. In this way, we can tear down walls raised out of fear and ignorance and seek together to build bridges of friendship that are fundamental for the good of all humanity."

Council for World Mission (CWM) visited Luton

The Council for World Mission (CWM) is a worldwide community and partnership of 32 Christian (mainly Protestant) denominations. It was established in 1977 by amalgamating the London Missionary Society (LMS, founded 1795). The organisation is committed to the global vision of building 'Life-flourishing Communities, and living out God's promise of a New Heaven and a New Earth', where human dignity is protected, poverty eradicated, climate catastrophe abated, ideologies of supremacy demolished and peace reigns.



25 global church leaders from the six CWM global regions – Africa, Caribbean, Europe, East Asia, South Asia, Pacific visited Luton

The CWM's Europe Region, joined by the CTBI (Churches Together in Britain & Ireland), hosted in the UK, a group of over 25 global church leaders from the six CWM global regions – Africa, Caribbean, Europe, East Asia, South Asia, Pacific. The purpose of their gathering was to explore how to initiate effective and meaningful interfaith conversations for building peace and reconciliation in our pluralistic multi-faith and multicultural world. The programme included an exposure visit to GRASSROOTS Programme in Luton.

The international group experienced Luton's hospitality at its best, when they were welcomed by the Luton Borough Council at the Town Hall, hosted Lunch at the Guru Nanak Gurudwara & afternoon tea at the Madinah Mosque. The inspiring presentations and exposure in Luton reflected and acknowledged excellent teamwork and multi-agency partnership work between the local government and the faith sector.

The Church leaders acknowledged that there is more common between us than what divides us, but our differences are equally important. They shared that our work is not about undermining or comprising our differences. On the contrary, it is about asserting and affirming our differences in a way so that it does not breed conflict and confrontation. It rather enriches our learning and understanding.

Rev. Dr Peter Colwell, CTBI Deputy General Secretary, described the overall programme as a milestone towards deepening and strengthening essential interfaith conversations. Long live the CWM's vision of building life-flourishing communities across the world.

Assisted Dying Bill

Assisted Dying Bill is to allow adults who are terminally ill, subject to safeguards and protections, to request and be provided with assistance to end their own life. The bill was introduced by Kim Leadbeater, the Labour MP for Spen Valley in the House of Commons.

Luton's different faith communities and all disability rights groups have been united in opposing the Bill. They say to legalise assisted suicide is against every religion's core belief of preserving the sanctity of life, and that every person is made by God and has intrinsic value.



Luton's Faith Leaders in discussion over writing a letter of concern to both Luton MPs regarding the Assisted Dying Bill.

While some are calling it a compassionate reform so that people at the end of their lives can die with dignity at a time of their choosing, Luton's faith leaders, before the 3rd reading of the Bill, wrote a letter to both the Luton MPs highlighting that a 'right to die' could 'all too easily' end in vulnerable people feeling they have a 'duty to die.' They raised concerns about the proposed safeguards saying 'these will suffer the curse of loopholes and eventually erode'. This poses significant risks to vulnerable patient groups, many of whom already face inequities in healthcare, including limited access to quality end-of-life care.

The letter highlighted the presence and the strength of faith communities in Luton, who are all fundamentally opposed to the intentional ending of life. 'Death should not be a treatment option', the letter stated. People shouldn't choose to end their lives, because they feel they are a burden, or they can't get the required assistance because the NHS waiting lists are too long. Investing in good quality, consistently available palliative care and actions taken to remove the inequalities in our health care system are the best ways forward for improving quality of life and reducing suffering for people with painful terminal illnesses.

Luton faith leaders are also sceptical that their concerns can be adequately addressed within the constraints of the process of a private member bill. They strongly urged that an independent commission, comprising of the rich diversity of our nation, be set up to look at this subject in a less pressurised and more considered way.

Parliamentarians, and indeed all of society, now have a collective responsibility to find a way forward that seeks to prioritise life above death.

Peace Walk showed Lutonians loving & respecting one other

In its 28th year, Luton's Annual Peace Walk, held on 21st Sep 2024, remained the most popular multi-faith event in the town.

Over 150 people of all ages visited Zakariya Mosque on Beadlow Rd, St Martin de Porres Catholic Church & St Hugh's C of E Church on Leagrave High St. People were given a fantastic welcome, wonderful hospitality and delicious food, at each place of worship. The event also marked the UN's International Day of Peace.



Many dignitaries included the Lord Lieutenant of Bedfordshire Susan Lousada, Mayor of Luton Cllr Tahmina Saleem, C of E Bishop of Bedford Rt. Revd. Richard Atkinson and the Chair of UNA Luton Branch and Deputy Lieutenant Dr Nazia Khanum.

Welcoming all, the Mayor of Luton Cllr Tahmina Saleem said "Luton is known for its diversity and inclusivity and Peace Walk is a shining example of how events like these can bring us all closer together. It helps us to reflect on the values of humanity, unity, friendship and mutual respect that are foundations of our diverse communities, here in Luton."

"Not too long ago, we have seen our nation suffering from the ugliest riots, but that Luton stayed peaceful. This could only be possible because Lutonians are committed to love and respect one other, and to work together for the betterment of humankind, and of our future generations."

A message sent by Luton MPs Sarah Owen & Rachel Hopkins also stated, "We have so much to be proud of in Luton – whether through faith communities, local organisations or charities, we all work together to make our town the best possible place to live. Luton is a town where our hyper-diverse communities can all thrive."

Stef Muzz – in his most attractive and innovative Banana Suit and Banana Car, both decorated with love and peace symbols on it (as seen in the pic), joined the Peace Walk, and shared a message of love, peace and hope for all. He said, "At Luton Peace Walk it was humbling and inspiring to see such a wonderful spirit of community solidarity. It was good to interact with so many people of different, religious, cultural and ethnic backgrounds, and bring smiles to their faces. May the peace and reconciliation in this town, and relationships between Luton's diverse communities remain strong as ever."





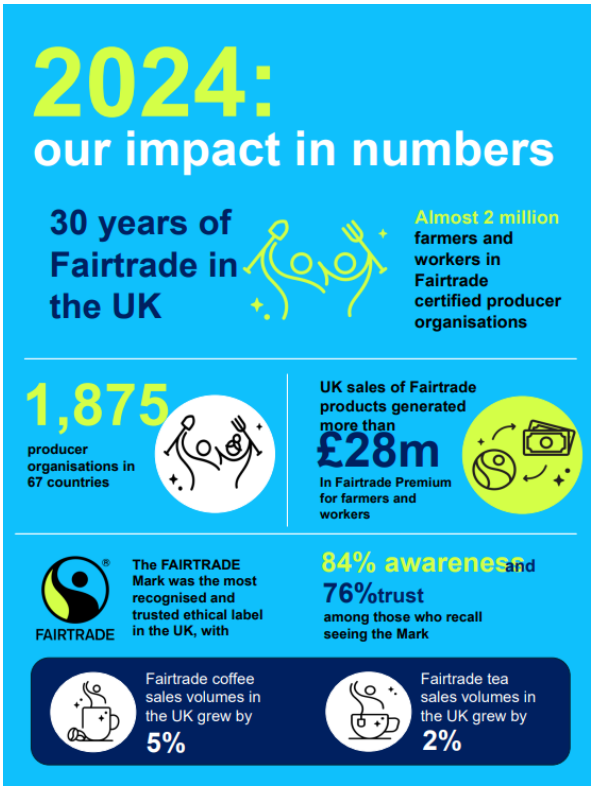
In his vote of thanks, the C of E Bishop Richard Atkinson said, "we have come together to show our solidarity and share hope for a better world and this is never more relevant than this year – when we have seen the riots erupt across the UK this summer. Let's continue to stand together for peace, and celebrate Luton."

HM Lord-Lieutenant of Bedfordshire Susan Lousada said, "Thank you so much for bringing us all together each year. It plays such an important part in the continued harmony within the Luton community".

All dignitaries thanked the Luton Council of Faiths, Grassroots & Near Neighbours Programme for their steadfast commitment, to building peace and reconciliation in this town, and for strengthening relationships between Luton's diverse communities over many years.

Celebrating 30 years of the Fairtrade movement in the UK

In 2024, we celebrated 30 years of the Fairtrade movement in the UK, which is a campaign to make trade fair.



One of the many ways of promoting the sale and awareness of fairly traded goods is a two-week campaign called the Fairtrade Fortnight. It highlights the importance of fair wages, ethical sourcing, sustainable farming practices, and encourages consumers to make ethical choices when shopping. It's an annual event organised by the UK's Fairtrade Foundation to support farmers in low-income countries.

30 years of Fairtrade sales have meant over £1.7 billion in Fairtrade Premium. This has empowered many farmers in the developing countries, driving real change in their communities. In 2024, through sales of Fairtrade products in the UK, producers earned over £28 million in Fairtrade Premium, an extra sum of money that farmers and workers invest in areas such as farming improvements and community initiatives of their choice.

Held in September for the first time, Fairtrade Fortnight 2024 was our most successful in years, stated the Fairtrade Foundation UK in its annual report 2024. It said our Fairtrade movement came out in force, organising over 615 grassroots community activities across the UK. We asked MPs to pledge to 'Be the Change' and support a fairer trade system that addresses the links between trade, development and environmental sustainability. Over 4,000 campaigners wrote to their MPs and more than 130 MPs signed 'Be the Change' pledge. We look forward to working with them over the coming years to promote fairer trade. The Fairtrade Foundation said If we could convince politicians to change the trade rules, ensuring all trade was fair, there could be millions more positive stories of farmers, labourers, craftsmen pulled out of poverty and misery. It also published 30 ways to celebrate 30 years of Fairtrade at any time of the year.



In Luton, St Christopher's Church in the Round Green area, held the 5th Annual Fairtrade Cake Baking Competition. The bakers were invited to present their cakes with recipes and the packaging as evidence of the three fair-trade ingredients. People were then asked to taste the cakes and choose the three best cakes – the best-looking cake, the best-tasting fruit cake, and the best-tasting sponge cake. The top three winners were given Fairtrade prizes, sponsored by Near Neighbours.

This is just another way of capturing people's imagination and engaging with and involving people from different faiths and cultures in strengthening the Luton Fairtrade campaign going strong for the last 18 years.

Expressing gratitude to all those who took part in the competition, the event organiser Revd Anne Crosby, Vicar of St Anne with St Christopher Parish said, "Fairtrade Fortnight is a great time to make or renew our commitment to Fairtrade. By choosing Fairtrade, we support over 2 million farmers and workers across 70 countries."

Fairtrade isn't Charity – It is Justice. To give people what they deserve, please support Fairtrade.

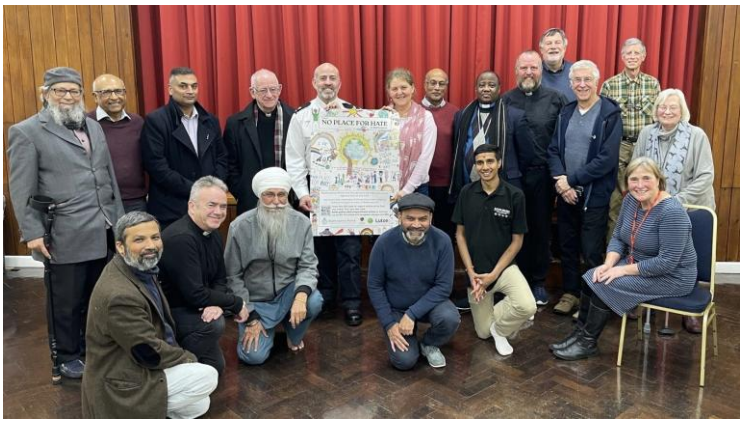
Remembrance Day held outside Luton Town Hall

In the year that marks the 80th anniversary of the D-Day landings, Luton Borough Council held two Remembrance Events held on Sunday 10 and Monday 11 November outside the Town Hall. The Remembrance Sunday parade was followed by a short service led by Pastor Lloyd Denny. In this service, Prof Zafar Khan, Chair of Luton Council of Faiths (as seen in the pic below), remembered those who made the ultimate sacrifice for what was deemed righteous wars to defend freedom, democracy, justice and peace for all.



He pointed out these were lives of not only countless soldiers from the British Isles, but across the world including from Africa, the Caribbean islands, the Middle East and the South Asian sub-continent of what is today, India, Pakistan and Bangladesh. He said, "Today we remember the fallen from many national, ethnic and religious backgrounds including the Sikh, Muslim and Hindu soldiers. Therefore, we must call out the kind of extremism and hatred we witnessed in the summer of this year. It is incumbent upon all of us to build on the legacy of those who sacrificed their precious lives for a society that cherishes and actively protects equality, freedom and justice at home and abroad. To achieve and maintain this, we must be ready to offer our sacrifices for peace, justice, compassion and prosperity for each and every one in our towns and cities across our country. There is much to remember and reflect today and to pay our tribute and eternal gratitude to the fallen. Their bravery, their suffering and the abiding grief of losing millions of soldiers must remain a reminder that their ultimate sacrifice will not be forgotten. As we remember them on this solemn day, we should consider it our duty to become active peace makers, for their sake."

Inter Faith Week with Luton Faith Leaders



During this year's inter faith week, Luton's faith leaders shared together the importance and the significance of different religious festivities observed during the winter months, such as the Hindu festivals of Navratri, Dussehra and Diwali – celebrating the return of Lord Rama after conquering the demon king Ravana, the Jewish Festivals of Rosh Hoshana, Yom Kippur, Sukkot, Chanukkah – celebrating Jewish victory over the occupying foreign forces, Sikhs celebrating the birth of its founder Guru Nanak Dev Ji, and Bandi Chhor Divas (meaning Day of Liberation), celebrating the release of the sixth Guru Hargobind Ji from the political imprisonment, Bahá'ís celebrating the birth of the Bahá'u'lláh, Jains celebrating Lord Mahavira's Nirvana (a place of perfect peace and happiness, like heaven), and Buddhists celebrating the Bodhi Day when Gautama Buddha is said to have attained enlightenment, and Christians celebrating Christmas following a month-long season of Advent (time of waiting and preparation for the coming of Jesus Christ), and the list could go on. It is great that in Luton we have diverse cultures, faiths and traditions.

Some of the common themes that emerged from the sharing of these winter festivals included – unity, light in the darkness, victory of good over evil, importance of community, prayer and generosity, closer relationship with God and with one another, universal brotherhood & sisterhood, faithfulness, sacrificial giving, humility, hope, peace, happiness and harmony. After sharing such enriching thoughts, the event concluded all together proclaiming – there's no place for hate in our town.

Peace Light Service

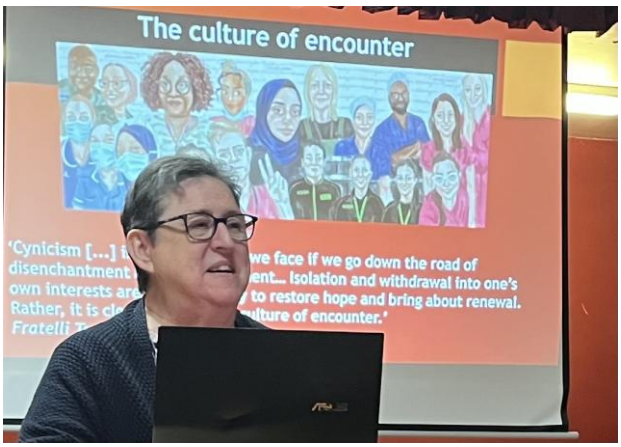
We supported and facilitated inter-faith attendance and participation at the Annual Peace Light service, held at Luton's All Saints Church on Shaftesbury Road. The service brought together local scouts, civic guests and friends from different Churches and different faith communities to welcome the Peace Light flame brought from Bethlehem to celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ.



The Revd Canon David Kesterton, Vicar, Parish of All Saints with St Peter and Church of England Area Dean of Luton said, "This light from Bethlehem has travelled far, reminding us of the light which came to a dark and fearful world when Jesus who is the light of the world, was born. We pray this light, and all those lit from it will be a sign of hope and joy in our land. May we receive this light gladly as a sign of our willingness to be channels of peace by word, and by action; and we pray that peace and joy may dwell in our hearts and homes filling us with God's love, now and for always. Amen." In his address, Archdeacon of Bedford Revd Dave Middlebrook quoted (John 14: 27) from the Bible – Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid. The Deputy Mayor of Luton Councillor Babatunde Ajisola said, "On behalf of the town of Luton and all those who live here, I am delighted to welcome the Peace Light. May this light be a sign of the peace and understanding that we all long for, in our town and beyond."

Week of Prayer for Christian Unity

The annual observance of Week of Prayer for Christian Unity Jan 18-25, involves Christian communities worldwide. In Luton, Deans and Heads of different Christian denominations invited a Catholic Nun Sr. Gemma Simmonds IBVM to speak at an event for Christian Unity. Sr Gemma quoted Pope Francis, "Our world is being torn apart by war and violence, and wounded by a widespread individualism which divides human beings, setting them against one another as they pursue their own well-being. […] I especially ask Christians in communities throughout the world to offer a radiant and attractive witness of fraternal communion. Let everyone admire how you care for one another, and encourage and accompany one another."



Sr Gemma shared that we must never do anything alone, because we are stronger together than we are ever alone. She called to examine and strengthen our hearts for reconciliation, and build resilience as ecumenical and inter-faith leaders, especially in times when we see people's cultural and religious differences are being weaponized. She concluded with a prayer from a Catholic Encyclical Fratella Tutti; "Lord, Father of our human family, you created all human beings equal in dignity: pour forth into our hearts a fraternal spirit and inspire in us a dream of renewed encounter, dialogue, justice, and peace. Move us to create healthier societies and a more dignified world – a world without hunger, poverty, violence, and war. May our hearts be open to all the peoples and nations of the Earth. May we recognise the goodness and beauty that you have sown in each of us, and thus forge bonds of unity, common projects, and shared dreams, Amen."

Chanukah Celebrations

At the Chanukah celebrations held at the Luton United Synagogue, all hoped and prayed that the lighting of the Chanukah Menorah would bring renewed light and peace into the world in the New Year. Chanukah is the Jewish festival of lights. Its origins go back around 2600 years when the Second Jewish Temple in Jerusalem was destroyed by the Romans. A seven-branched golden Menorah was always kept alight in the Temple. This was melted down by the invaders, and the light went out.



Over time, a Jewish group, the Maccabees, defied the invaders and eventually liberated Jerusalem. When they found many of the artefacts and religious symbols were destroyed and gone, including the all-important Menorah, they set about creating a new Menorah, but most of the olive oil had also been destroyed except one small bottle which was enough to light the Menorah for one day only. The Maccabees lit the Menorah whilst they collected more olives to purify into oil, a process taking 8 days. In the meantime, it is believed that God looked down upon their dedication and through the single bottle of oil kept the Menorah alight for 8 days, until the pure oil was ready. This became the celebration of Chanukah – a celebration of lighting an additional candle each day over 8 days, which this year began at nightfall on December 25 and ran until January 2, meaning it coincided with Christmas and with the New Year Celebrations too. May the Chanukah lights end all the darkness in the world.

Iftar Gatherings & Eid

March 2025 brought us much-awaited sunshine, brighter and warmer days, but this month was also special for 4 different religious observances coinciding together. Firstly, Purim – a joyous Jewish festival commemorating the survival of the Jews who, in the 5th century BCE, were marked for death by their Persian rulers; secondly Lent – a Christian season of fasting ahead of Easter; thirdly, Bahai's 19 days of fasting before Nawruz (New Year) celebrations, and lastly Ramadan – Muslim month of fasting (from dawn to sunset), culminating in Eid al-Fitr – one of the two major festivals celebrated by Muslims worldwide.



Throughout Ramadan, Muslims share food at Iftar (breaking of the fast) events with friends, neighbours, and guests. E.g. Big Iftar event led by Inspire FM brought over 400 people together; UK Islamic Mission (UKIM) Luton branches also invited many guests and friends from different or no faith backgrounds to Unity Iftar gatherings held at the Luton Town Football Club and Bushmead Community Hub. During Ramadan, Muslims also distribute free meals, donate to charities, and contribute to the community's well-being. Ramadan adds £1.3 billion to the UK economy, stated Equi (an independent nonpartisan organisation) in its newly launched report "Ramadan: Its Value to British Society and the Economy". The report highlighted that Muslims provide 33.8 million free Iftar meals, supporting local supply chains, mobilise £359 million in charitable giving and volunteering and £642 million in retail spending.

Diwali & Hindu New Year Celebrations



Diwali is a Hindu festival of lights, but Jains celebrate it too, for the Lord Mahavira had attained eternal bliss, and Sikhs celebrate the sixth Guru Hargobind Singh Ji's release from prison in 1619. Diwali symbolises the spiritual victory of light over darkness, good over evil, and knowledge over ignorance. At Luton's both Hindu Temples, a day after Diwali, another festival "Annakut" (meaning mountain of food) displaying 150 varieties of foods was celebrated. It marks Hindu New Year, and symbolises abundance and prosperity. The priest said, "Everything we take from nature is a gift of God; so today is a way for us to show our gratitude. It is an occasion to acknowledge and appreciate all our loved ones, who take care of us, protect us and provide for us – our parents, guardians, spouses, colleagues, neighbours, friends, family and community."

"It is also a day of charity. Being grateful for what we have we must not forget those who may be less fortunate than us. New Year means new beginnings. It is a day to forgive all the past misdeeds (of self and of others), and pledge to improve upon ourselves." The priests prayed may our celebrations bring peace into our hearts, into our homes, into our families, into our communities, into our country and in the whole world.

Bahai Nawruz – New Year Celebrations

At Nawruz celebrations, the Luton Baha'i community provided guests with a delightful array of traditional Persian cuisine alongside numerous entertaining musical and dance performances. The Guest Speaker Sheida Tanhai shared that Nawruz coincides with the Spring Equinox and the Persian New Year whilst occurring after a period of 19 days of fasting that provides Baha'is with a chance for reflection, and to increase one's spirituality and love for God. Nawruz is therefore seen as a "spiritual springtime" at the end of this period of fasting and a chance for eating, socialising and celebration. Sheila said, Bahai faith originated in Iran, in the 19th century, but today it has a global community of over 8 million members in every country.



It inspires individuals and communities to improve both their own lives and the lives of those around them. This vision can only be achieved once mankind is united and understands the oneness of God, the unity of all religions and the fundamental equality of humanity. She explained that Baha'i beliefs also address the themes of gender equality, the harmony of science and religion, the inherent nobility of human beings and the importance of education. The Bahá'í community is committed to fostering unity, eradicating prejudice, and contributing to a just and peaceful world. Many of the spiritual teachings of Bahá'u'lláh (Founder of the Baha'i faith), mirror those of the divine guidance from the prophets of the world's other major religions.

LOUDfence – Hope for Survivors – A Journey Towards Healing

In support of the National Day of Prayer for Survivors of Abuse, we supported the Catholic Diocese of Northampton, to organise a LOUDfence event in Luton. It was about "Hope for Survivors – A Journey Towards Healing Where There Has Been Pain". It offered an opportunity for communities to come together in solidarity and compassion for all those affected by abuse, recognising the lasting impact and the need for healing. People tied colourful ribbons and written messages to a fence, symbolising solidarity and hope for survivors of abuse. In Luton, the event created a safe, sacred space for survivors to share their stories and find spiritual and emotional support from the lay and clergy volunteers. The Diocesan Safeguarding Coordinator Danielle Dixon said, "This event stands as a public sign of the Church's commitment to acknowledging past wounds and walking together with survivors toward a hopeful future." The event included the Pilgrimage of Hope – people walked between the two Churches and also Crafting Workshops, where participants created ribbons, messages, and crafts to place on the mini LOUDfence displayed in the pic. The event concluded with a prayerful Service of Hope led by Catholic & Church of England faith leaders.



Holy Ghost Catholic Church Diamond Jubilee Anniversary

Several dignitaries attended the Diamond Jubilee Anniversary celebrations of the Holy Ghost Catholic Parish Church on Westbourne Road in Luton. In addition to the clergy procession with liturgical artefacts, the celebrations included parishioners carrying flags of many countries represented in the parish, and presenting the thanksgiving gifts at the altar with African drumming, singing & dancing. Monsignor Kevin McGinnell, who has been the parish priest for two decades and is currently also the Catholic Area Dean, said, "We give thanks to God for all that has been in the parish over the last sixty years. We thank all who since the beginning and now gave so much especially for the Jubilee celebrations. With great hope, we look forward to the future with complete confidence in the Holy Spirit." Fr Kevin explained that the Holy Ghost Catholic Parish began in 1965. It was built by people of four nations – England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales at that time, with a great deal of help from the immigrant communities from Italy and the West Indies. Over the years, our community has grown and developed, and now we are enriched by many people from Africa (Kenya), the Caribbean, India (Kerala), Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Eastern Europe (Poland). Week after week, we celebrate who we are and try to serve God and people in our local area, irrespective of their religious, cultural and ethnic backgrounds. This is because the area and the demography around the church have changed significantly over the years.



NEAR NEIGHBOURS (NN) PROGRAMME

Funded by the MHCLG (Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government), and administered by the Church Urban Fund, the Near Neighbours (NN) Programme has enabled and empowered communities through several activities for over a decade. One such stream is Near Neigbours (NN) Small Grants Fund Scheme. Over £149,000 was awarded in 2024 alone to 49 exceptional projects across England. 12 of these projects were funded in Luton. These grants of £500-£4,000 were announced open again in 2025. for the social action and social interaction projects. Seven applications were successful from Luton, as listed below;

Desi Fest Luton – Battle of Bands

Started only 2 years ago, as a celebration of south Asian culture, bringing large numbers from Hindu, Muslim, and Sikh communities, Desi Fest Luton this year, is also focusing on drawing in musicians and people from other underrepresented community groups, to collaborate, share their cultural influences, and develop relationships of trust. This project Battle of the Bands is a new initiative added to the overall festival. It was worth NN supporting it because it also exposed NN to thousands of people and certainly to those young talented people who otherwise may not be participating and engaging in NN activities.



FACES (Faiths Against Child Sexual Exploitation) – Family Conversations

A row over the sexual grooming was triggered after GB News reported that the government had refused inquiry into historical child sexual exploitation cases. BBC reported that Elon Musk, the tech billionaire, also made incendiary interventions on the subject including accusing Sir Keir Starmer of being "complicit in the rape of Britain". In the light of these issues, it was important that the NN supported Luton's pioneering interfaith project (FACES) Faiths Against Child Sex Exploitation to work with disadvantaged families, offering insights into identifying and preventing exploitation, and explaining it in a child-friendly and culturally appropriate language.



Hope Church Luton – Refugee Support Project

This year's Refugee Week (16-22 June) theme was Community as a Superpower. It's great that NN supported HOPE Church Luton to deliver the Refugee Services Day, which brought together numerous services & organisations to connect, share resources, and demonstrate our collective commitment to making Luton a place of sanctuary and welcome for all. NN also supported Global Café (Refugee Drop-in), to develop friendships, provide pastoral care and support to refugees. Showing the artwork of Refugees' handprints, Filipe Almeida, Refugee Services Coordinator at HOPE Church Luton, said, it's not 'us' & 'them'. It is only 'us'. We do not do things for them. We do things with them, together."



LCOF (Luton Council of Faiths) – Peace Artwork Competition

With NN can support, this project positively impacted over 1000 people directly, and hundreds of others through media & social media. This project was important because media thrives on conflict and drama, so peace is not considered newsworthy or exciting enough to capture audience attention, but the Peace Artwork, captured people's imagination and attention, and children's artwork attracted their families too. At the 29th Annual Peace Walk, children were given prizes by dignitaries. The project certainly fostered creativity, imagination, and compassionate resilience to the hostility around us, and it inspired people in a creative way, about the peace and community cohesion ideas.



Community Interest Luton – Luton in Bloom

'Luton in Bloom' is a community-driven initiative aimed at uplifting Luton's spirits through the power and shared interest of gardening. It is also aiming to improve the overall look and feel of the town. There are some powerful and moving stories of how some very lonely and isolated people benefitted from this project and felt part of a community in a useful and meaningful way. It is also about creating a sense of pride and ownership in the town, while also connecting people from diverse backgrounds around a shared goal. It was worth NN supporting this project.



Somali Voices Enabled (SVE) CIC – Empower Her

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) impacts individuals, families, community and society. NN supported this beneficiary-led SVE group to highlight the plight of FGM victims and survivors and to lobby for more action and support from the Police, NHS and the local authority. SVE also garnered support from Luton's diverse voluntary, faith and public sector organisations. As a result, some of the young people also came forward to get trained and confident to address this issue.



St Andrew's Church Luton – Biscot Peace and Wellbeing Hub

Although St Andrew's C of E is over 150 years old church, it wasn't particularly engaged with the wider and diverse community around it. However, since last 2 years, things have transformed for good. Thanks to the Near Neighbours Funding, the Church is able to set up a peace and wellbeing hub for people of all faiths in the area. The Blenheim Medical Centre located next door is working in close partnership with this project. People from different backgrounds have also together planted a community orchard in the church grounds. Last year, it held 'Spring Community Festival', wellbeing drop-ins, including a long-term version of our successful 'dads and lads' boxing fitness club pilot, women's weekly stretch classes and health club, and developed a drop-in for isolated older people in the community.

Biscot
PEACE AND WELLBEING HUB

OTHER EVENTS & ACTIVITIES SUPPORTED BY GRASSROOTS



1st ever Sri Lankan Christmas celebration by th Luton Sri Lankans Welfare Association (LSLWA)



OM Group Celebrates 25 Years of Unitir Luton's Diverse Community at Holi Festival



Edible High Town celebrated its 5 years Anniversary in People's Park Orchards



80th Anniversary of VE Day held outside Luton Town Hall attended by hundreds



Shri Guru Ravidass Sangat Luton, received the Kings Award for Voluntary Services



Bangladeshi Culinary Heritage Event highlighting the Curry contributions to UK's economy

OTHER EVENTS & ACTIVITIES SUPPORTED BY GRASSROOTS



The Rt. Revd. Dr. Rosemarie Mallett, the C of E Bishop in Croydon joined special Windrush event at C of E All Saints Church Luton.



Luton's different faith representatives Joined Diwali & Hindu New Year celebrations at the BAPS Shri Swaminarayan Hindu Temple Luton.



Strathmore Avenue Methodist Church Community Breakfast Club (CBC) in a special Christmas event was acknowledged as a sign of hope



Christians from diverse backgrounds joined the Good Friday Walk of Witness organised by the Bury Park Beech Hill Council of Churches.



World Religion Day event, hosted by the Luton Bahá'í community aspired for a harmonious inclusive society



Luton & Bedfordshire Windrush Awards Ceremony celebrated many Windrush pioneers

Poems by Sheila Marsden

My Town

It's the place I know best;
the place of my birth and rites of passage,
where I grew up loved and wanted.
We raised our family here,
and gathered friends, young and not so young.
This town gave me my livelihood,
and the many children I still remember
through the passing of years.

As I reflect on my town -
seeing it changing, as it will always do -
I will defend it from those who seek to scoff,
deride and divide.

I see people around me
working to make this town
a harmonious place in which to live;
people who speak up and speak out,
together,
as peacemakers and reconcilers.

I hope their example will rub off on me.
I pray so,
because I feel blessed to be a Lutonian.
And so in my daily living
I will choose to be a maker of peace.

Sheila Marsden, May 2016
(GRASSROOTS Trustee since 2006)

STOP – oh STOP!

STOP – oh STOP!
The crying, screaming,
terror, clamour – NOISE
Stop dividing, splitting, tearing,
becoming so TRIBAL.
Giving little children words of hate to say,
Giving young people weapons of war,
Creating images of fear and desperation.

It's easy to talk,
Less easy to act.
A feeling of hopelessness, wanting to do more
we cry STOP – oh STOP!

START – oh START!
The quiet, slowing,
resting, being – SOLACE
Start listening, laughing, loving,
becoming more HUMAN.
Enjoying each other's company,
understanding how each one ticks,
Creating images of harmony and restoration.
It's the best way to live,
Each one a blessing.

A feeling of joyfulness, on a journey together
We cry START – let's START!

Sheila Marsden, April 2018
(GRASSROOTS Trustee since 2006)

Financial Summary

September 2024 – August 2025

Income	**£**
Grants received	98,986
Donations	2,640
Interest and other income	2,961
Promotion & Sale of Fairtrade goods	4,189
	108,776
Expenditure – Charitable activities	
Advancement of Interfaith Relations & Community Development Work	74,897
Near Neighbours	18,536
Multi-faith Storytelling and Other Events	6,125
Admin, Governance & Fundraising	0
Total	99,558
Net Expenditure for the year	
Total	9,218
Reserves at 31 August 2025	
Unrestricted (Designated)	71,421
Restricted	750

Visit Our Website:
www.grassrootsluton.org.uk

Email Us:
admingrassroots@btconnect.com

Call Us:
01582 416946

Write To Us:
GRASSROOTS Programme
47 High Town Road
Luton
Bedfordshire
LU2 0BW



Like / Follow Us Online:

www.facebook.com/grassrootsluton

www.twitter.com/grassrootsluton

Charity Registration Number: 1163427

REGISTERED CHARITY NUMBER: 1163427

GRASSROOTS PROGRAMME

FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE

YEAR ENDED 31 AUGUST 2025

Miller & Co
Chartered Accountants
5 Imperial Court
Laporte Way
Luton
Bedfordshire
LU4 8FE

GRASSROOTS PROGRAMME

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for the Year Ended 31 August 2025

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GRASSROOTS PROGRAMME
TRUSTEES' ANNUAL REPORT
for the Year Ended 31 August 2025

The Trustees present their report and the financial statements for the year ended 31 August 2025. The trustees have adopted the provisions of the Statement of Recommended Practice (SORP) "Accounting and Reporting by Charities" in preparing the annual report and financial statements of the charity.

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

This charity, Grassroots Programme CIO took over the assets of the former unincorporated charity Grassroots Programme (charity number 1057468) on 1 September 2016. Prior years' reports relating to charity number 1057468 may be obtained from the office at the principal address.

LEGAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE DETAILS

CHARITY NAME:	Grassroots Programme
STATUS:	Charitable Incorporated Organisation - Foundation Constitution. Registered Constitution and as a charity on 04 September 2015.
CHARITY NUMBER:	1163427
PRINCIPAL ADDRESS:	47 High Town Road Luton Bedfordshire LU2 0BW
TRUSTEES AND OFFICERS:	Those who served as trustees of the charity during the year were as follows:

Rev D Lawson	(Chair)
Mrs J Bird	
Rev P Horner	
Mrs R Tetlow	(Resigned 05 June 2025)
Mrs S Marsden	(Secretary)
Ms D Purfield	
Mr B Roe	(Treasurer)

CHARITY DIRECTOR:	Mr D Jonathan
BANKERS:	The Co-operative Bank Olympic House 6 Olympic Court Salford M8 2QP
INDEPENDENT EXAMINERS:	Miller & Co Chartered Accountants Statutory Auditors 5 Imperial Court, Laporte Way Luton Bedfordshire LU4 8FE

ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE

Grassroots Programme is an independent charity. A board of trustees administers the charity. The trustees are responsible for the overall control and management of the charity and meet on a regular basis.

PUBLIC BENEFIT

The trustees confirm that they have complied with their duty, set out in the 2011 Charity Act, to have due regard to Charity Commission guidance on public benefit.

RECRUITMENT AND APPOINTMENT OF TRUSTEES

Trustees are appointed for a term of five years by a resolution of the trustees passed at a special meeting for which not less than 21 days' notice has been given.

Under the terms of the Constitution, newly appointed trustees are not entitled to act as trustees until they have signed, in the minute book of the trustees, a declaration of acceptance and willingness to act in the trusts of the Charity.

All the trustees are familiar with the work of the charity and an induction is performed for any new trustees.

OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES

The objects of the charity as set out in the Constitution are as follows:

(1) To advance education for the public benefit in global issues to enable greater awareness of factors that will contribute to the relief of needy victims of breaches of human rights in such ways that are charitable in law.

(2) To advance religion and promote understanding among Christians and those of other faiths.

(3) To provide opportunities for the advancement of education among all ages, but particularly adults, in such ways that are charitable in law.

(4) To provide relief of the aged, infirm and poor.

ACHIEVEMENTS AND PERFORMANCE

In order to achieve its objectives, the charity runs a number of programmes and activities. During the year it ran the following specific programmes and activities:

CHAIR'S MESSAGE

In last year's report I said that the world was in a dangerous and fragile state, and sadly as I write my last Foreword to this year's annual report, the world is perhaps now in a more perilous state. The war in Ukraine continues, famine faces the peoples of Gaza and Sudan, full scale wars between Israel and Iran, India and Pakistan have been averted, and the number of refugees and displaced peoples continues to rise. It is against this global background that Grassroots and its partners in Luton work together to offer hope and light in a turbulent and unstable world, which deeply impacts upon Luton communities who have come from different parts of the world. It is a testimony to Luton's community leaders that they stand united in recognising that they have no control over international events but they are 'committed to rejecting all forms of extremism and working together to build a society in harmony and hope.'

As you read this year's Annual Report, you will see the range of Grassroots involvement in the life of Luton and beyond, too numerous to mention here, but here is a flavour. The Annual Faith Walk, uniting the faith communities, a powerful demonstration of their commitment to deepening understanding and friendship across communities. The opposition of the faith communities to the Assisted Dying Bill, further evidence of how inter faith co-operation can speak to issues of deep concern felt by the wider community. Grassroots is a regular contributor to the weekly Faith Matters column in Luton News, and Johny reported at the 2024 Annual Meeting held in Nov'24 that Grassroots had contributed 54 columns! Grassroots once again hosted and facilitated the Diocesan inter faith week event at St Albans Cathedral, which is proving to be popular and well supported. This year's event is entitled 'Serving our local community', exploring how various faith communities are making a difference in their local areas. It is not only in Luton that Grassroots influence has been felt. Over the years churches, community groups and individuals across Europe, have learned about and experienced the groundbreaking work of Grassroots, inspiring others to work to make a difference in their particular contexts.

I have been a trustee of Grassroots for 19 years and more recently the Chair, and it has been an enormous privilege to have been part of the dynamic life of the charity. Two other trustees have also served as long as I have and they are Sheila Marsden and Ruth Tetlow. Both of them are standing down and in Ruth's case it is due to ill health. Sheila's contribution over the years has been extremely significant as she knows Luton inside out having lived in Luton all her

life. As a committed Lutonian, her insight and knowledge of the town has meant she has been integral to the work of Grassroots. Ruth's contribution has come from her commitment to inter faith and community work in Birmingham, which has always meant she has been able to offer a fresh perspective to what is happening in Luton. We owe a huge debt of gratitude to both Sheila and Ruth and indeed our other trustees, who each in their own way contribute to furthering the work of Grassroots.

A final word of thanks from me goes to Johny, whose extraordinary and profound commitment has made real the vision of Grassroots in so many ways. I have thoroughly enjoyed working alongside him, accompanying him to many events at which I have heard again and again how hugely respected Johny is and how so many know of the impact Grassroots has made in Luton and beyond. My journey in interfaith and community work began when I was a newly ordained curate in Glasgow nearly 50 years ago. I can think of no better place from which to actively retire than Grassroots and Luton. It is a well-known quotation attributed to a former Secretary General of the United Nations, Dag Hammarskjold, but it expresses in a few words how I feel as I say farewell: 'For all that has been, thanks! To all that shall be, yes!'

TRIBUTE TO POPE FRANCIS

Pope Francis died on Easter Monday, aged 88. We think of him as a radical agent of change. He developed strong relational bonds between religious traditions. He called people from different faiths as "our siblings". His funeral also reminded the world leaders to build bridges, and not walls. Grassroots Chair, The Revd Canon David Lawson said, "Three things come to mind on the legacy of Pope Francis – his palpable humanity and humility, his passion for the poor and marginalized, and his care for the environment." That is so true, as we read his remarks in the 2015 encyclical, 'Never have we so hurt and mistreated our common home as we have in the past 200 years'. The Luton Council of Faiths Chair, Prof Zafar Khan said, "Pope Francis was a strong advocate for peace and justice. He was a friend of the weak and the marginalised nations and the peoples across the globe. We extend our heartfelt condolences to the Catholic Church and the followers of Christianity in the UK and across the world." As the world mourns his passing, Pope Francis will be remembered for his leadership and as a Pope who washed the feet of prisoners, embraced the sick, and tirelessly sought to build bridges in a divided world. His legacy will endure in the hearts of millions inspired by his call to live the Christian Gospel values of love, mercy, and humility. May he rest in peace and rise in glory.

HIGHLIGHTS

Council for World Mission (CWM) Visited Luton

There was an international visit of Christian faith leaders coordinated by the Council for World Mission (CWM) & the CTBI (Churches Together in Britain & Ireland), jointly. The group experienced Luton's hospitality at its best when they were welcomed by the Luton Borough Council at the Town Hall and also by Luton's different faith communities at different places of worship. From our presentations, they learnt about the practical examples of faith communities working together and also working in partnership with public sector agencies. The CTBI Deputy General Secretary described the Luton visit as a milestone towards deepening and strengthening essential interfaith conversations.

Windrush Event

A special Windrush event and Service held during Black History Month at Luton's Church of England (C of E) All Saints Church. The Rt. Revd. Dr Rosemarie Mallett (the C of E Bishop in Croydon) was the keynote speaker at this event. Introducing the theme "Reclaiming Narratives" she said it marks a significant shift towards recognising and correcting the narratives of Black history and culture, and presenting the untold success stories and the full complexity of Black heritage. Whether slavery or Windrush, "we built and rebuilt this country after the war, and people must know about it", she said. It was also moving to hear first-hand from a victim of the Windrush scandal and from the Home Office representatives, how they are trying to improve the compensation scheme to those who deserve it."

Hindu Festival – "Annakut"

Hindu festival – "Annakut" (meaning mountain of food) displaying 150 varieties of foods, symbolising abundance and prosperity. The Annakut festival essentially culminates Diwali celebrations and also marks the first day of the New Year for Hindus. The visiting priest at BAPS Shri Swami Narayan Mandir was actually the International Inter Faith Representative. It was remarkable that he could meet with Luton's faith leaders from diverse religious backgrounds. It was an interesting and uplifting experience for all to converse together, and it certainly helped to advance this Hindu temple's relationship with Luton's different faith communities.

Remembrance Service

At this year's Remembrance Service, we spoke about the ultimate sacrifice of the countless soldiers, who were not just from the British Isles; they were Sikh, Muslim and Hindu soldiers from Africa, Caribbean, Middle East and South Asian sub-continent of what is today, India, Pakistan and Bangladesh. They fought for Britain and defended freedom, democracy, justice and peace for all. So, we asked people to call out the kind of extremism and hatred we witnessed in the summer of last year. It is incumbent upon all of us to build on the legacy of those who sacrificed their precious lives

for a society that cherishes and actively protects equality, freedom and justice at home and abroad.

Inter-faith Week Events
We held two inter-faith week events – one with the Luton Council of Faiths (LCoF), at which faith leaders were invited to share different religious festivities observed during the winter months. It is great that in Luton we have communities with so many wonderful cultures, faiths and traditions. Luton's faith leaders reflected on some of the common themes that emerged from the sharing of winter festivals. These included – unity, light in the darkness, victory of good over evil, importance of community, prayer and generosity, closer relationship with God and with one another, universal brotherhood & sisterhood, faithfulness, sacrificial giving, humility, hope, peace, happiness and harmony. In our divided and wounded world, these values are needed more than ever before.

The second Inter Faith Week Event was held at St Albans Cathedral, at which about 125 people from different and no religious backgrounds from Beds, Herts & the London borough of Barnet, saw 20 different stalls displaying a wide range of different projects and activities, showcasing powerfully how people of diverse faiths serve their communities. These projects led by different faith communities support children, youth & women, refugees & homeless with winter kits, food banks, eco projects, peace gardens, multi-faith art activities, inter-cultural cooking classes, initiatives tackling health inequalities, and supporting those with dementia, etc. A participant commented, "For us it was a great experience to be in this elegant place, where a thousand years of history of singing, praying, contemplating and service added so much potency and symbolism. May God bless all the communities and the organisers of this event."

Luton Community Carol Service supported by The Royal Foundation
In Luton, the Bedfordshire 'Together at Christmas' Community Carol Service, supported by The Royal Foundation brought together 400 attendees. It was part of a national initiative inspired by The Princess of Wales' 'Together at Christmas' service at Westminster Abbey, celebrating love, empathy and community spirit this festive season. Bedfordshire was chosen to hold one of the 15 community carol services held across the country. It was a meaningful and inclusive celebration for people of all faiths and none.

Sri Lankan (Sinhalese) Christmas celebration
It is also worth sharing an interesting story about the first ever Sri Lankan (Sinhalese) Christmas celebration by the Luton Sri Lankans Welfare Association (LSLWA). The Sri Lankan children's nativity play characters of Joseph and Mary were played by Muslim and Catholic children, whereas other characters of shepherds, angels and wise men were played by children from Hindu and Buddhist backgrounds. It so truly reflected the spirit of Luton in Harmony.

Holocaust Memorial Day – 'For a Better Future'
27 January 2025 marked the 80th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau, the largest Nazi death camp. It was also the 30th anniversary of the genocide in Bosnia, the largest incidence of mass-murder in Europe since World War Two. The theme for HMD 2025 was 'For a Better Future' and it was promoted as a chance to come together locally, to learn from the past and to decide on actions we can take to ensure a better future for all.

'Spiritual Springtime' for Baha'is, Christians, Muslims, Jews, Buddhists, Sikhs, Hindus, & Jains
Luton Baha'i community Nawruz (New Year) celebrations coincide with the Spring Equinox and the Persian New Year whilst occurring after a period of 19 days of fasting that provides Baha'is with a chance for reflection, and to increase one's spirituality and love for God. Nawruz is therefore seen as a "spiritual springtime", but this year it was a "spiritual springtime" for Christians & Muslims too, as the Lent and Ramadan overlapped. Besides Good Friday, Easter, several Iftar & Eid events, were held. We also supported the Jewish Purim & Pesach festivals, Irish St Patrick's Festival, Sri Lankan New Year, Vaisakhi (Sikh), Vesakh (Buddhist), Holi (Hindu), Mahavir Jayanti (Jain) festivals.

Other Festivities
We supported numerous activities at Int'l Women's Day, St George's Day, Mothering Sunday, Biscot Spring Fest and Luton Carnival. There was special VE Day 80th anniversary celebration outside the Town Hall.

Luton is blessed with such diversity and it is a privilege that GRASSROOTS has been supporting and promoting most of these activities. It is therefore apt that Kinga Kosterska & Elliot Vanstone from the **Mission Directorate of the Catholic Bishops' Conference** of England and Wales when they visited the GRASSROOTS Programme and Luton's different faith communities, they said, "It was great to see how Luton's multi-faith communities can not only live together but thrive and respect each other. The various faith communities we visited were incredibly welcoming and generous in sharing with us the educational and interfaith work they carry out. It was great to see how much they valued the importance of interreligious dialogue and cooperation."

Elliot Vanstone said, "It was truly inspiring to see the great work happening in Luton. Walking through the streets of

Luton and experiencing its rich multicultural vibrancy was both encouraging and eye-opening. I was particularly moved by the work and legacy of Grassroots in Luton—it's clear that, in the realm of dialogue, simply being present for people in both their struggles and their joys is invaluable. Grassroots exemplifies that commitment in everything it does. At a time when tensions can so easily divide, Luton stands as a testament to the strength of unity—something particularly significant given that the town remained peaceful while much of the country was affected by riots following the horrific deaths in Southport last summer. This visit was a hopeful sign that, by coming together, we can build a more harmonious and compassionate society for all."

Fostering
We linked Luton's faith leaders and communities with the Luton Council's Fostering Team. We highlighted there are over 350 children looking for safe homes currently in Luton, and only 75 fostering households are on the list. These children are of mixed backgrounds, but children of global majority heritage (Blacks and Asians) are over represented. All faiths have inherent and inbuilt values of love for all, so it is hoped with Luton's 78% religiously affiliated population we can overcome the shortage of foster carers and safe homes.

Guru Ravidass Sangat, Luton, received the Kings Award for Voluntary Services (KAVS)
It was a joy to see Guru Ravidass Sangat, Luton, receiving the Kings Award for Voluntary Services (KAVS) for their voluntary services to the local communities. "Commitment to serve our neighbour runs through all the faith communities in our land, and Guru Ravidass Sangat, Luton has been a shining example of that", stated Rt Revd Richard Atkinson, Bishop of Bedford.

Hindu faith OM Group Celebrated 25 Years
Hindu faith OM Group celebrated 25 years of its remarkable services and work in education, health, and poverty relief. It grew from a small youth initiative into a thriving charity offering a wide array of social, sporting, educational, and cultural events. Over the past quarter-century, it has remained steadfast in its commitment to fostering unity and community cohesion.

Covid Memorial Service
In this 5th anniversary year since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic, Newland (Wigmore) Church on Crawley Green Road invited members of the public and different faith communities to a Memorial Service to remember all those who died of Covid-19 in Luton. During the service, Revd Jenny Spouge (former Grassroots Staff) introduced people to the Luton Covid Memorial frame, on which a flower each for every person who died of Covid-19 in Luton was knitted and crocheted. Different faith leaders spoke and prayed for God's strength, peace, and eternal hope upon everyone.

Other activities we supported include;

- First Published Bengali Song as a tribute to Queen Elizabeth II – DVD presented to the Lord Lieutenant
- Akhand Bhajan 12-hour non-stop multi-faith devotional singing for World Peace
- Sikh Guru Nanak Dev Ji's 554th Birth Anniversary Celebrations
- Muslim Scouts group meeting with the Sikh youth group
- Exploring policing issues and challenges in meetings with the PCC (Police & Crime Commissioner)
- Catholic Bishops & Priests visiting Luton's different places of worship
- Sowing the Seeds of Change: A Community Dialogue in Islamaphobia Awareness Month
- Love Music Hate Racism: A cross-cultural youth music event to challenge racism
- Carols by Candlelight, the festive celebratory community event by the Uni Chaplaincy
- Multi-faith Peace Light Event welcoming the Peace Light from Bethlehem
- Jewish Chanukah Celebrations

An Overview of Global-National-Local Issues Impacting Life in Luton

Assisted Dying Bill
Navigating through fierce and passionate debates of Luton communities we wrote a letter to Luton MPs highlighting that a 'right to die' could 'all too easily' end in vulnerable people feeling they have a 'duty to die.' This poses significant risks to vulnerable patient groups, many of whom already face inequities in healthcare, including limited access to quality end-of-life care. 'Death should not be a treatment option', the letter stated. Investing in good quality, consistently available palliative care and actions taken to remove the inequalities in our health care system are the best ways forward for improving quality of life and reducing suffering for people with painful terminal illnesses.

Online Hate
Online hate expressed in response to Luton social media posts about local Jewish communities celebrating Chanukah raised alerts given the increased tensions in UK community relationships resulting from the conflict in the Middle East.

We intervened with the much-needed mediation and resolved issues amicably and as swiftly as possible.

Grooming Gangs Issue
An open letter by Faiths Against Child Sexual Exploitation (FACES), to Luton MPs was sent challenging the harms of the 'Muslim grooming gangs' narrative". This issue has been and continues to be weaponised against Muslims. It does nothing to prevent exploitation. Instead, it demonises, divides and marginalises communities.

Knife Crime
Deaths caused by knife crimes in Luton in recent years have brought Luton's diverse faith communities and public sector agencies to work together in tackling the issue, and to recently launch a local community-led initiative called 'Street Fathers-Luton'. It is to create a proactive, positive presence on the streets to disrupt violence through street mentoring, signposting young people and empowering parents, and to provide early intervention and support to young people at risk of gang recruitment. It's about preventing youth violence at its roots.

Westminster Quaker Meeting House raided by Police
It was shocking and unprecedented that 20 police officers raided on Westminster Quaker Meeting House in May 2025. In Luton, people from different faiths gathered to support the Luton Quakers, in a Sufi Storytelling event. The Khayaal Theatre magically performed wisdom tales of social and environmental justice, covering themes of, language, spirituality, community and the contemporary relevance and resonances of the stories with capitalism, poverty, inequality, injustice, indebtedness, debt forgiveness, and ecology. It was powerful, illuminating and edifying for all.

Immigration
Immigration has been a hot topic lately in the politics. Luton's faith leaders reflected on this issue and said immigrants play a vital role in our society – from the NHS to social care, and to working in the farmlands. They deserve recognition, not scapegoating. Luton City of Sanctuary issued a statement saying – We are an Island of Solidarity, not Strangers. The dream of "Making England Great Again" cannot be successful without immigrants.

NEAR NEIGHBOURS (NN) PROGRAMME

GRASSROOTS has administered the Near Neighbours (NN) Programme and its Small Grants Fund scheme in Luton for 11 years. Last year, in Luton we generated good quality 14 applications, the highest number from any NN hub in the country. Due to limited funds, only 7 applications could be funded, which are listed below;

Desi Fest Luton – Battle of Bands
Started only 2 years ago, as a celebration of south Asian culture, bringing large numbers from Hindu, Muslim, and Sikh communities, Desi Fest Luton this year, focussed on drawing in musicians and people from other underrepresented community groups, to collaborate, share their cultural influences, and develop relationships of trust.

FACES (Faiths Against Child Sexual Exploitation)
At the start of the year 2025, a row over the grooming and sexual abuse of girls and children was triggered. Some powerful overseas interfering individuals made incendiary interventions on the subject including accusing Sir Keir Starmer of being "complicit in the rape of Britain". In the light of these issues, FACES offered insights to disadvantaged families into how exploitation can happen, and explained it in a child-friendly and culturally appropriate language.

Hope Church Luton – Refugee Support Project
Hope Church exudes a strong sense of community. It has an excellent reputation for reaching out to those who are disadvantaged, marginalized and feel abandoned. It is the top place in Luton in helping and supporting refugees. They help Refugees to engage with the wider community. They are at the heart of Luton City of Sanctuary group.

LCOF (Luton Council of Faiths) – Peace Artwork Competition
The project positively impacted hundreds through different schools, faith communities and local Radio shows, as the artwork was shared and talked about at different local events, locations, even after the project was over in July this year. This project ws important because media thrives on conflict and drama, so peace is not considered newsworthy or exciting enough to capture audience attention, but using the Peace Artwork, we tried to capture people's attention

Community Interest Luton – Luton in Bloom
'Luton in Bloom' is a community-driven initiative aimed at uplifting Luton's spirits through the power and shared interest of gardening. It aims to improve the overall look and feel of the town. There are powerful and moving stories of how some very lonely and isolated people benefitted from this project and felt part of a community in a useful and meaningful way. It is also about creating a sense of pride and ownership in the town.

Somali Voices Enabled CIC – Empower Her
Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) has huge negative impacts on individuals, families, community and society. This beneficiary-led group lobbied for more action and support from the Police, NHS and the local authority, while also supporting FGM victims and survivors. It trained young people to address this issue.

St Andrew's Church Luton – Biscot Peace and Wellbeing Hub
Although St Andrew's C of E is over 150 years old church, it wasn't particularly engaged with the wider and diverse community around it. However, things have transformed now for good. The Church has set up a peace and wellbeing hub for all in the area, which people say has become a blessing for the community, where people of all faiths and none are welcomed, cared for, given helpful information, and signposted to relevant agencies

CONCLUSION

The 2024 summer riots came out of the blue. Near Neighbours (NN) Programme held a national plenary to collate contributions from all NN local hubs, including GRASSROOTS Luton, and made MHCLG (Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government) and policy-makers aware of issues and opportunities, as well as shared with them inspiring best practice to prevent such occurrences in future. In its national report, NN published two of Luton's comments as following, which sum up the life and work of GRASSROOTS for over three decades in Luton;

"Communities know their own challenges better than anyone. They have the ideas, the relationships, and the determination to make a difference. What's missing is the right support—without excessive bureaucracy—so they can lead change from the ground up." (Ryad Khodabocus)

"After 15 years of far-right agitation, our faith groups, police, and wider community have learned how to work together to counter hate. Thankfully, this meant we saw no major incidents, but we can never be complacent. Building trust and strengthening relationships must be ongoing work." (Peter Adams)

RISK MANAGEMENT

The Trustees have assessed the major risks to which the charity is exposed, in particular those related to the finances of the charity and are satisfied that systems are in place to reduce exposure to the major risks.

RESERVES POLICY

The Trustees have a policy of aiming to retain reserves equivalent to six months average expenditure. This is due to the uncertain nature of funding received. The free reserves at the year-end were £71,421.

PLANS FOR FUTURE PERIODS

The Trustees remain committed to the growth of the Grassroots Programme and the possibilities of expanding the presence of Grassroots Programme to other parts of the country. However, this is dependent upon the charity securing additional funds.

FINANCIAL REVIEW

The charity had total income of £108,776 (2024 £134,880). The main sources of income were grants of £98,986 (2024 £110,564). The charity had total expenditure of £99,558 (2024 £143,152). Expenditure on charitable activities totalled £99,558 (2024 £126,792) which included governance costs of £3,867 (2024 £3,584). There was net income on the unrestricted fund of £13,526 and net expenditure of £4,308 on the restricted fund after transfers between funds. Total funds at the end of the year were £72,171.

The trustees would like to record their thanks to all individuals and associations who supported the charity during the year. All details of the income and expenditure of the charity are set out in the Statement of Financial Activities and the notes to the accounts. In the opinion of the trustees the charity was in a satisfactory financial position at the year end.

STATEMENT OF TRUSTEES' RESPONSIBILITIES

The trustees are responsible for preparing the Trustees' Annual Report and the financial statements in accordance with applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice).

The law applicable to charities in England & Wales requires the trustees to prepare financial statements for each financial year which give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the charity and of the incoming resources and application of resources of the charity for that period. In preparing these financial statements, the trustees are required to:

- select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently;
- observe the methods and principles in the Charities SORP 2019 (FRS 102);
- make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent;
- state whether applicable accounting standards have been followed, subject to any material departures disclosed and explained in the financial statements;
- prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the charity will continue in operation.

The trustees are responsible for keeping proper accounting records that disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the charity and enable them to ensure that the financial statements comply with the Charities Act 2011, the Charity (Accounts and Reports) Regulations 2008 and the provisions of the constitution. They are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the charity and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

ON BEHALF OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES:

Rev D Lawson
Chair

B Roe
Treasurer

Date: 6 November 2025

GRASSROOTS PROGRAMME

INDEPENDENT EXAMINERS' REPORT
to the Trustees of Grassroots Programme

I report to the charity trustees on my examination of the accounts of the charity for the year ended 31 August 2025 which are set out on pages 10 to 21.

RESPONSIBILITIES AND BASIS OF REPORT

As the charity's trustees you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Charities Act 2011 ('the Act').

I report in respect of my examination of the charity's accounts carried out under section 145 of the Act and in carrying out my examination I have followed all the applicable Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the Act.

INDEPENDENT EXAMINERS' STATEMENT

Your attention is drawn to the fact that the charity has prepared the accounts 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 in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) in preference to the Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice issued on 1 April 2005 which is referred to in the extant regulations but has since been withdrawn.

We understand that this has been done in order for the accounts to provide a true and fair view in accordance with the Generally Accepted Accounting Practice effective for reporting periods beginning on or after 1 January 2015.

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

1. accounting records were not kept in respect of the charity as required by section 130 of the Act; or
2. the accounts do not accord with those records; or
3. the accounts do not comply with the applicable requirements concerning the form and content of accounts set out in the Charities (Accounts and Reports) Regulations 2008 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.

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.



R A Cox FCA
Miller & Co
Chartered Accountants
5 Imperial Court
Laporte Way, Luton
Bedfordshire
LU4 8FE

7 November 2025

GRASSROOTS PROGRAMME

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES
for the Year Ended 31 August 2025

	Note	Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	2025 Total	2024 Total
		£	£	£	£
INCOME FROM					
Grants	2	80,000	18,986	**98,986**	110,564
Donations	3	2,640	-	**2,640**	4,692
Investment income		1,823	-	**1,823**	2,234
Sale of Fairtrade goods		4,189	-	**4,189**	10,936
Other income		1,138	-	**1,138**	6,454
TOTAL INCOME		89,790	18,986	**108,776**	134,880
EXPENDITURE ON					
Raising funds		-	-	-	16,360
Charitable activities	4	74,897	24,661	**99,558**	126,792
TOTAL EXPENDITURE		74,897	24,661	**99,558**	143,152
Net income / (expenditure)		14,893	(5,675)	**9,218**	(8,272)
Transfers between funds		(1,367)	1,367	-	-
Net movement in funds for the year		13,526	(4,308)	**9,218**	(8,272)
Reconciliation of funds					
Funds brought forward at 1 September 2024		57,895	5,058	**62,953**	71,225
Funds carried forward at 31 August 2025		£71,421	£750	**£72,171**	£62,953

The statement of financial activities includes all gains and losses in the year. All incoming resources and resources expended derive from continuing activities.

GRASSROOTS PROGRAMME

BALANCE SHEET
31 August 2025

	Note	2025		2024
		£	£	£
FIXED ASSETS:				
Tangible assets	9		-	-
CURRENT ASSETS:				
Debtors	10	**115**		115
COIF Funds		**36,761**		44,938
Cash at bank		**38,692**		20,504
		75,568		65,557
Creditors: amounts falling due within one year	11	**3,397**		2,604
NET CURRENT ASSETS			**72,171**	62,953
NET ASSETS			**£72,171**	£62,953
FUNDS:				
Unrestricted general fund	13		**71,421**	57,895
Restricted funds	13		**750**	5,058
TOTAL FUNDS			**£72,171**	£62,953

The financial statements on pages 10 to 21 were approved by the board of trustees on 6 November 2025.

SIGNED ON BEHALF OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES:

David Lawson

Rev D Lawson
Chair

B.K. Roe

Mr B Roe
Treasurer

6 November 2025

1. ACCOUNTING POLICIES

General information and basis of preparation
Grassroots Programme is a Charitable Incorporated Organisation. The charity constitutes a public benefit entity as defined by FRS 102. 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 issued in October 2019, the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102), the Charity's constitution, the Charities Act 2011 and UK Generally Accepted Accounting Practice.

The financial statements have been prepared to give a 'true and fair' view and have departed from the Charities (Accounts and Reports) Regulations 2008 only to the extent required to provide a 'true and fair view'. This departure has involved following the 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 issued in October 2019 rather than the Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice effective from 1 April 2005 which has since been withdrawn.

The financial statements are prepared on a going concern basis under the historical cost convention. The financial statements are presented in pounds sterling and rounded to the nearest pound. The address of the principal office is given in the charity information on page 1 of these financial statements.

Going concern
The financial statements have been prepared on a going concern basis as the trustees believe that no material uncertainties exist. The trustees have considered the level of funds held and the expected level of income and expenditure for 12 months from authorising these financial statements. The budgeted income and expenditure is sufficient with the level of reserves for the charity to be able to continue as a going concern.

Unrestricted and restricted funds
Unrestricted funds are grants and other income received for the objects of the charity without further specified purpose and are available as general funds.

Designated funds comprise unrestricted funds that have been set aside by the trustees for particular purposes. The aim and use of each designated fund is set out in the notes to the financial statements.

Restricted funds are those funds which are to be used for specific purposes as laid down by the donor or the trustees. Expenditure which meets these criteria is identified to the funds, together with a fair allocation of administration and support costs. The aim and use of each restricted fund is set out in the notes to the financial statements.

Income recognition
Donations and other income are recognised when received. Grants are recognised when received or when the charity has legal entitlement to them, the amount can be reliably measured and there is sufficient certainty of receipt them.

Expenditure recognition
Staff costs and overhead expenses are allocated to activities on the basis of staff time spent on those activities. Support costs comprise those costs incurred directly in support of expenditure on the objectives of the charity. Governance costs relate to trustees' expenses, legal charges, independent examiners fees and attributable expenses of governing the charity. The trustees give all their time free of charge.

Expenditure is recognised when the amount can be reliably measured, there is a legal obligation to make it and it is probable that settlement will be required.

ACCOUNTING POLICIES continued

Leasing commitments
Rentals paid under operating leases are charged to income as incurred.

Pensions
The charity operates a defined contribution pension scheme for certain employees. Contributions in respect of pensions are charged to income in the year in which they are paid.

Debtors and creditors receivable/payable within one year
Grants, other debtors and creditors receivable or payable within one year are recorded at transaction price.

Fixed assets
The charity has a policy of capitalising fixed asset expenditure over £1,000.

Tangible fixed assets are stated at cost less accumulated depreciation.

Depreciation is provided on all tangible fixed assets, at rates calculated to write off the cost, less estimated residual value, of each asset on a systematic basis over its expected useful life as follows:

IT and office equipment - 33% on cost

2. INCOME FROM GRANTS

	Unrestricted	Restricted	2025 Total	2024 Total
	£	£	£	£
Grants for general purposes				
Methodist Church Beds, Essex & Herts District	15,000	-	**15,000**	15,000
URC - MIG (Thames North Synod)	15,000	-	**15,000**	12,000
Diocese of St. Albans	23,000	750	**23,750**	10,000
Luton Council of Faiths	12,000	-	**12,000**	12,000
Northampton RC Diocese	15,000	-	**15,000**	15,000
Church Urban Fund (Near Neighbours)				
Near Neighbours Fund Projects	-	18,236	**18,236**	29,239
Events				
National Lottery – Community Fund	-	-	-	9,900
Westhill Endowment	-	-	-	7,425
	80,000	18,986	**98,986**	110,564

Income from grants in 2024 totalled £110,564 of which £46,564 was attributable to restricted funds and £64,000 was attributable to unrestricted funds.

3. INCOME FROM DONATIONS & LEGACIES

	Unrestricted	Restricted	2025 Total	2024 Total
	£	£	£	£
Donations				
General	2,640	-	**2,640**	4,492
Events	-	-	**-**	200
	2,640	-	**2,640**	4,692

Income from donations and legacies in 2024 totalled £4,692 of which £200 was attributable to restricted funds and £4,492 was attributable to unrestricted funds.

4. ANALYSIS OF EXPENDITURE ON CHARITABLE ACTIVITIES

Charitable Activities 2025	Activities Undertaken Directly 2025 £	Support Costs 2025 £	Total 2025 £
Events	6,125	-	**6,125**
Near Neighbours	13,923	4,613	**18,536**
Advancement of Interfaith Relations & Community Development Work	4,565	70,332	**74,897**
	24,613	74,945	**99,558**

Charitable Activities 2024	Activities undertaken directly 2024 £	Support Costs 2024 £	Total 2024 £
Events	23,845	3,450	27,295
Near Neighbours	17,372	11,867	29,239
Advancement of Interfaith Relations & Community Development Work	9,593	60,665	70,258
	50,810	75,982	126,792

£24,661 (2024 £56,534) of the above costs were attributable to restricted funds and £74,897 (2024 £70,258) were attributable to unrestricted funds.

4a. ALLOCATION OF SUPPORT COSTS

Support Cost 2025	Basis of Allocation	Advancement of Interfaith Relations & Community Development Work 2025 £	Events 2025 £	Near Neighbours 2025 £	Total 2025 £
Governance – note 5	Usage	3,867	-	-	**3,867**
Information technology	Usage	486	-	-	**486**
Staff costs	Usage	42,412	-	4,613	**47,025**
Office costs	Usage	23,567	-	-	**23,567**
		70,332	-	4,613	**74,945**

Support Cost 2024	Basis of Allocation	Advancement of Interfaith Relations & Community Development Work 2024 £	Events 2024 £	Near Neighbours 2024 £	Total 2024 £
Governance – note 5	Usage	3,584	-	-	3,584
Information technology	Usage	1,158	-	71	1,229
Staff costs	Usage	32,735	3,450	10,840	47,025
Office costs	Usage	23,188	-	956	24,144
		60,665	3,450	11,867	75,982

5. GOVERNANCE COSTS

	2025	2024
	£	£
Trustee expenses	186	96
Independent examiners fee	1,434	1,398
Support costs	2,247	2,090
	3,867	3,584

6. STAFF COSTS AND NUMBERS

Staff costs were as follows:

	2025	2024
	£	£
Charity director	45,000	45,000
Employers National Insurance - payable	5,390	4,955
Less Employment allowance	(5,390)	(4,955)
	45,000	45,000
Pension contributions	2,700	2,700
	47,700	47,700

Defined contribution pension expense is allocated to activities based on the time apportionment of the relevant employee.

No employee earned more than £60,000 during the year (2024 same).

The average number of employees during the year was as follows:

Administration	0.5	0.5
Charitable activities	0.5	0.5
	1	1

7. TRANSACTIONS WITH TRUSTEES

No trustees received any remuneration during the year. Travel costs amounting to £187 (2024 £96) were reimbursed to one (2024 two) trustees.

No trustee had any personal interest in any contract or transaction entered into by the charity during the year (2024 same).

8. TAXATION

As a charity, Grassroots Programme is exempt from tax on income and gains falling within sections 521 to 536 of the Income Tax Act 2007 or section 256 of the Taxation of Chargeable Gains Act 1992 to the extent that these are applied to its charitable objects. No tax charges have arisen in the charity.

9. TANGIBLE FIXED ASSETS

	IT and Office Equipment £	Total £
Cost:		
As at 1 September 2024	2,490	2,490
Additions	-	-
Disposals	-	-
As at 31 August 2025	2,490	2,490
Depreciation:		
As at 1 September 2024	2,490	2,490
Charge for the year	-	-
Disposals	-	-
As at 31 August 2025	2,490	2,490
Net Book Value:		
As at 31 August 2025	-	-
As at 31 August 2024	-	-

10. DEBTORS

	2025	2024
	£	£
Prepayments	115	115
Accrued income	-	-
	115	115

11. CREDITORS: Amounts falling due within one year

	2025	2024
	£	£
Accruals	1,434	1,398
Taxation and social security	1,513	756
Other creditors	450	450
	3,397	2,604

12. ANALYSIS OF NET ASSETS BETWEEN FUNDS

	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	Total 2025 £
Net current assets	71,421	750	72,171
Total net assets	71,421	750	72,171

	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	Total 2024 £
Net current assets	57,895	5,058	62,953
Total net assets	57,895	5,058	62,953

13. MOVEMENT IN FUNDS

	Balance at 1 September 2024	Income	Expenditure	Transfers	Balance at 31 August 2025
	£	£	£	£	£
Restricted Funds					
Near Neighbours	-	18,236	(18,536)	300	-
Events	5,058	-	(6,125)	1,067	-
Other	-	750	-	-	**750**
	5,058	18,986	(24,661)	1,367	**750**
Unrestricted Funds					
General funds	57,895	89,790	(74,897)	(1,367)	**71,421**
	57,895	89,790	(74,897)	(1,367)	**71,421**
Total Funds	62,953	108,776	(99,558)	-	**72,171**

	Balance at 1 September 2023	Income	Expenditure	Transfers	Balance at 31 August 2024
	£	£	£	£	£
Restricted Funds					
Near Neighbours	-	29,239	(29,239)	-	-
Events	14,828	17,525	(27,295)	-	5,058
	14,828	46,764	(56,534)	-	5,058
Unrestricted Funds					
General funds	35,223	88,116	(86,618)	21,174	57,895
Designated funds:					
Spirituality of Justice	21,174	-	-	(21,174)	-
	56,397	88,116	(86,618)	-	57,895
Total Funds	71,225	134,880	(143,152)	-	62,953

MOVEMENT IN FUNDS continued

Last year the trustees determined that the Spirituality of Justice designated fund was no longer required hence the transfer to general funds in 2024.

The balances on the restricted funds will be used to continue the work of the projects in accordance with the terms of the funders. Details of the funds are as follows:

Near Neighbours – Bringing neighbours together for 'social action' and 'social interaction'.
Events – includes Westhill Endowment Fund and National Lottery – Community Fund for the multi-faith storytelling workshops.
Other – being monies received from St Albans Diocese for a laptop which will be purchased early in the next accounting period.

14. RELATED PARTIES AND CONTROLLING PARTY

There were no related party transactions requiring disclosure. (2024 £nil). The charity is controlled by the Trustees.

REGISTERED CHARITY NUMBER: 1163427

GRASSROOTS PROGRAMME

FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE

YEAR ENDED 31 AUGUST 2025

Miller & Co
Chartered Accountants
5 Imperial Court
Laporte Way
Luton
Bedfordshire
LU4 8FE

GRASSROOTS PROGRAMME

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for the Year Ended 31 August 2025

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GRASSROOTS PROGRAMME
TRUSTEES' ANNUAL REPORT
for the Year Ended 31 August 2025

The Trustees present their report and the financial statements for the year ended 31 August 2025. The trustees have adopted the provisions of the Statement of Recommended Practice (SORP) "Accounting and Reporting by Charities" in preparing the annual report and financial statements of the charity.

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

This charity, Grassroots Programme CIO took over the assets of the former unincorporated charity Grassroots Programme (charity number 1057468) on 1 September 2016. Prior years' reports relating to charity number 1057468 may be obtained from the office at the principal address.

LEGAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE DETAILS

CHARITY NAME:	Grassroots Programme
STATUS:	Charitable Incorporated Organisation - Foundation Constitution. Registered Constitution and as a charity on 04 September 2015.
CHARITY NUMBER:	1163427
PRINCIPAL ADDRESS:	47 High Town Road Luton Bedfordshire LU2 0BW
TRUSTEES AND OFFICERS:	Those who served as trustees of the charity during the year were as follows:

Rev D Lawson	(Chair)
Mrs J Bird	
Rev P Horner	
Mrs R Tetlow	(Resigned 05 June 2025)
Mrs S Marsden	(Secretary)
Ms D Purfield	
Mr B Roe	(Treasurer)

CHARITY DIRECTOR:	Mr D Jonathan
BANKERS:	The Co-operative Bank Olympic House 6 Olympic Court Salford M8 2QP
INDEPENDENT EXAMINERS:	Miller & Co Chartered Accountants Statutory Auditors 5 Imperial Court, Laporte Way Luton Bedfordshire LU4 8FE

ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE

Grassroots Programme is an independent charity. A board of trustees administers the charity. The trustees are responsible for the overall control and management of the charity and meet on a regular basis.

PUBLIC BENEFIT

The trustees confirm that they have complied with their duty, set out in the 2011 Charity Act, to have due regard to Charity Commission guidance on public benefit.

RECRUITMENT AND APPOINTMENT OF TRUSTEES

Trustees are appointed for a term of five years by a resolution of the trustees passed at a special meeting for which not less than 21 days' notice has been given.

Under the terms of the Constitution, newly appointed trustees are not entitled to act as trustees until they have signed, in the minute book of the trustees, a declaration of acceptance and willingness to act in the trusts of the Charity.

All the trustees are familiar with the work of the charity and an induction is performed for any new trustees.

OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES

The objects of the charity as set out in the Constitution are as follows:

(1) To advance education for the public benefit in global issues to enable greater awareness of factors that will contribute to the relief of needy victims of breaches of human rights in such ways that are charitable in law.

(2) To advance religion and promote understanding among Christians and those of other faiths.

(3) To provide opportunities for the advancement of education among all ages, but particularly adults, in such ways that are charitable in law.

(4) To provide relief of the aged, infirm and poor.

ACHIEVEMENTS AND PERFORMANCE

In order to achieve its objectives, the charity runs a number of programmes and activities. During the year it ran the following specific programmes and activities:

CHAIR'S MESSAGE

In last year's report I said that the world was in a dangerous and fragile state, and sadly as I write my last Foreword to this year's annual report, the world is perhaps now in a more perilous state. The war in Ukraine continues, famine faces the peoples of Gaza and Sudan, full scale wars between Israel and Iran, India and Pakistan have been averted, and the number of refugees and displaced peoples continues to rise. It is against this global background that Grassroots and its partners in Luton work together to offer hope and light in a turbulent and unstable world, which deeply impacts upon Luton communities who have come from different parts of the world. It is a testimony to Luton's community leaders that they stand united in recognising that they have no control over international events but they are 'committed to rejecting all forms of extremism and working together to build a society in harmony and hope.'

As you read this year's Annual Report, you will see the range of Grassroots involvement in the life of Luton and beyond, too numerous to mention here, but here is a flavour. The Annual Faith Walk, uniting the faith communities, a powerful demonstration of their commitment to deepening understanding and friendship across communities. The opposition of the faith communities to the Assisted Dying Bill, further evidence of how inter faith co-operation can speak to issues of deep concern felt by the wider community. Grassroots is a regular contributor to the weekly Faith Matters column in Luton News, and Johny reported at the 2024 Annual Meeting held in Nov'24 that Grassroots had contributed 54 columns! Grassroots once again hosted and facilitated the Diocesan inter faith week event at St Albans Cathedral, which is proving to be popular and well supported. This year's event is entitled 'Serving our local community', exploring how various faith communities are making a difference in their local areas. It is not only in Luton that Grassroots influence has been felt. Over the years churches, community groups and individuals across Europe, have learned about and experienced the groundbreaking work of Grassroots, inspiring others to work to make a difference in their particular contexts.

I have been a trustee of Grassroots for 19 years and more recently the Chair, and it has been an enormous privilege to have been part of the dynamic life of the charity. Two other trustees have also served as long as I have and they are Sheila Marsden and Ruth Tetlow. Both of them are standing down and in Ruth's case it is due to ill health. Sheila's contribution over the years has been extremely significant as she knows Luton inside out having lived in Luton all her

life. As a committed Lutonian, her insight and knowledge of the town has meant she has been integral to the work of Grassroots. Ruth's contribution has come from her commitment to inter faith and community work in Birmingham, which has always meant she has been able to offer a fresh perspective to what is happening in Luton. We owe a huge debt of gratitude to both Sheila and Ruth and indeed our other trustees, who each in their own way contribute to furthering the work of Grassroots.

A final word of thanks from me goes to Johny, whose extraordinary and profound commitment has made real the vision of Grassroots in so many ways. I have thoroughly enjoyed working alongside him, accompanying him to many events at which I have heard again and again how hugely respected Johny is and how so many know of the impact Grassroots has made in Luton and beyond. My journey in interfaith and community work began when I was a newly ordained curate in Glasgow nearly 50 years ago. I can think of no better place from which to actively retire than Grassroots and Luton. It is a well-known quotation attributed to a former Secretary General of the United Nations, Dag Hammarskjold, but it expresses in a few words how I feel as I say farewell: 'For all that has been, thanks! To all that shall be, yes!'

TRIBUTE TO POPE FRANCIS

Pope Francis died on Easter Monday, aged 88. We think of him as a radical agent of change. He developed strong relational bonds between religious traditions. He called people from different faiths as "our siblings". His funeral also reminded the world leaders to build bridges, and not walls. Grassroots Chair, The Revd Canon David Lawson said, "Three things come to mind on the legacy of Pope Francis – his palpable humanity and humility, his passion for the poor and marginalized, and his care for the environment." That is so true, as we read his remarks in the 2015 encyclical, 'Never have we so hurt and mistreated our common home as we have in the past 200 years'. The Luton Council of Faiths Chair, Prof Zafar Khan said, "Pope Francis was a strong advocate for peace and justice. He was a friend of the weak and the marginalised nations and the peoples across the globe. We extend our heartfelt condolences to the Catholic Church and the followers of Christianity in the UK and across the world." As the world mourns his passing, Pope Francis will be remembered for his leadership and as a Pope who washed the feet of prisoners, embraced the sick, and tirelessly sought to build bridges in a divided world. His legacy will endure in the hearts of millions inspired by his call to live the Christian Gospel values of love, mercy, and humility. May he rest in peace and rise in glory.

HIGHLIGHTS

Council for World Mission (CWM) Visited Luton

There was an international visit of Christian faith leaders coordinated by the Council for World Mission (CWM) & the CTBI (Churches Together in Britain & Ireland), jointly. The group experienced Luton's hospitality at its best when they were welcomed by the Luton Borough Council at the Town Hall and also by Luton's different faith communities at different places of worship. From our presentations, they learnt about the practical examples of faith communities working together and also working in partnership with public sector agencies. The CTBI Deputy General Secretary described the Luton visit as a milestone towards deepening and strengthening essential interfaith conversations.

Windrush Event

A special Windrush event and Service held during Black History Month at Luton's Church of England (C of E) All Saints Church. The Rt. Revd. Dr Rosemarie Mallett (the C of E Bishop in Croydon) was the keynote speaker at this event. Introducing the theme "Reclaiming Narratives" she said it marks a significant shift towards recognising and correcting the narratives of Black history and culture, and presenting the untold success stories and the full complexity of Black heritage. Whether slavery or Windrush, "we built and rebuilt this country after the war, and people must know about it", she said. It was also moving to hear first-hand from a victim of the Windrush scandal and from the Home Office representatives, how they are trying to improve the compensation scheme to those who deserve it."

Hindu Festival – "Annakut"

Hindu festival – "Annakut" (meaning mountain of food) displaying 150 varieties of foods, symbolising abundance and prosperity. The Annakut festival essentially culminates Diwali celebrations and also marks the first day of the New Year for Hindus. The visiting priest at BAPS Shri Swami Narayan Mandir was actually the International Inter Faith Representative. It was remarkable that he could meet with Luton's faith leaders from diverse religious backgrounds. It was an interesting and uplifting experience for all to converse together, and it certainly helped to advance this Hindu temple's relationship with Luton's different faith communities.

Remembrance Service

At this year's Remembrance Service, we spoke about the ultimate sacrifice of the countless soldiers, who were not just from the British Isles; they were Sikh, Muslim and Hindu soldiers from Africa, Caribbean, Middle East and South Asian sub-continent of what is today, India, Pakistan and Bangladesh. They fought for Britain and defended freedom, democracy, justice and peace for all. So, we asked people to call out the kind of extremism and hatred we witnessed in the summer of last year. It is incumbent upon all of us to build on the legacy of those who sacrificed their precious lives

for a society that cherishes and actively protects equality, freedom and justice at home and abroad.

Inter-faith Week Events
We held two inter-faith week events – one with the Luton Council of Faiths (LCoF), at which faith leaders were invited to share different religious festivities observed during the winter months. It is great that in Luton we have communities with so many wonderful cultures, faiths and traditions. Luton's faith leaders reflected on some of the common themes that emerged from the sharing of winter festivals. These included – unity, light in the darkness, victory of good over evil, importance of community, prayer and generosity, closer relationship with God and with one another, universal brotherhood & sisterhood, faithfulness, sacrificial giving, humility, hope, peace, happiness and harmony. In our divided and wounded world, these values are needed more than ever before.

The second Inter Faith Week Event was held at St Albans Cathedral, at which about 125 people from different and no religious backgrounds from Beds, Herts & the London borough of Barnet, saw 20 different stalls displaying a wide range of different projects and activities, showcasing powerfully how people of diverse faiths serve their communities. These projects led by different faith communities support children, youth & women, refugees & homeless with winter kits, food banks, eco projects, peace gardens, multi-faith art activities, inter-cultural cooking classes, initiatives tackling health inequalities, and supporting those with dementia, etc. A participant commented, "For us it was a great experience to be in this elegant place, where a thousand years of history of singing, praying, contemplating and service added so much potency and symbolism. May God bless all the communities and the organisers of this event."

Luton Community Carol Service supported by The Royal Foundation
In Luton, the Bedfordshire 'Together at Christmas' Community Carol Service, supported by The Royal Foundation brought together 400 attendees. It was part of a national initiative inspired by The Princess of Wales' 'Together at Christmas' service at Westminster Abbey, celebrating love, empathy and community spirit this festive season. Bedfordshire was chosen to hold one of the 15 community carol services held across the country. It was a meaningful and inclusive celebration for people of all faiths and none.

Sri Lankan (Sinhalese) Christmas celebration
It is also worth sharing an interesting story about the first ever Sri Lankan (Sinhalese) Christmas celebration by the Luton Sri Lankans Welfare Association (LSLWA). The Sri Lankan children's nativity play characters of Joseph and Mary were played by Muslim and Catholic children, whereas other characters of shepherds, angels and wise men were played by children from Hindu and Buddhist backgrounds. It so truly reflected the spirit of Luton in Harmony.

Holocaust Memorial Day – 'For a Better Future'
27 January 2025 marked the 80th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau, the largest Nazi death camp. It was also the 30th anniversary of the genocide in Bosnia, the largest incidence of mass-murder in Europe since World War Two. The theme for HMD 2025 was 'For a Better Future' and it was promoted as a chance to come together locally, to learn from the past and to decide on actions we can take to ensure a better future for all.

'Spiritual Springtime' for Baha'is, Christians, Muslims, Jews, Buddhists, Sikhs, Hindus, & Jains
Luton Baha'i community Nawruz (New Year) celebrations coincide with the Spring Equinox and the Persian New Year whilst occurring after a period of 19 days of fasting that provides Baha'is with a chance for reflection, and to increase one's spirituality and love for God. Nawruz is therefore seen as a "spiritual springtime", but this year it was a "spiritual springtime" for Christians & Muslims too, as the Lent and Ramadan overlapped. Besides Good Friday, Easter, several Iftar & Eid events, were held. We also supported the Jewish Purim & Pesach festivals, Irish St Patrick's Festival, Sri Lankan New Year, Vaisakhi (Sikh), Vesakh (Buddhist), Holi (Hindu), Mahavir Jayanti (Jain) festivals.

Other Festivities
We supported numerous activities at Int'l Women's Day, St George's Day, Mothering Sunday, Biscot Spring Fest and Luton Carnival. There was special VE Day 80th anniversary celebration outside the Town Hall.

Luton is blessed with such diversity and it is a privilege that GRASSROOTS has been supporting and promoting most of these activities. It is therefore apt that Kinga Kosterska & Elliot Vanstone from the **Mission Directorate of the Catholic Bishops' Conference** of England and Wales when they visited the GRASSROOTS Programme and Luton's different faith communities, they said, "It was great to see how Luton's multi-faith communities can not only live together but thrive and respect each other. The various faith communities we visited were incredibly welcoming and generous in sharing with us the educational and interfaith work they carry out. It was great to see how much they valued the importance of interreligious dialogue and cooperation."

Elliot Vanstone said, "It was truly inspiring to see the great work happening in Luton. Walking through the streets of

Luton and experiencing its rich multicultural vibrancy was both encouraging and eye-opening. I was particularly moved by the work and legacy of Grassroots in Luton—it's clear that, in the realm of dialogue, simply being present for people in both their struggles and their joys is invaluable. Grassroots exemplifies that commitment in everything it does. At a time when tensions can so easily divide, Luton stands as a testament to the strength of unity—something particularly significant given that the town remained peaceful while much of the country was affected by riots following the horrific deaths in Southport last summer. This visit was a hopeful sign that, by coming together, we can build a more harmonious and compassionate society for all."

Fostering
We linked Luton's faith leaders and communities with the Luton Council's Fostering Team. We highlighted there are over 350 children looking for safe homes currently in Luton, and only 75 fostering households are on the list. These children are of mixed backgrounds, but children of global majority heritage (Blacks and Asians) are over represented. All faiths have inherent and inbuilt values of love for all, so it is hoped with Luton's 78% religiously affiliated population we can overcome the shortage of foster carers and safe homes.

Guru Ravidass Sangat, Luton, received the Kings Award for Voluntary Services (KAVS)
It was a joy to see Guru Ravidass Sangat, Luton, receiving the Kings Award for Voluntary Services (KAVS) for their voluntary services to the local communities. "Commitment to serve our neighbour runs through all the faith communities in our land, and Guru Ravidass Sangat, Luton has been a shining example of that", stated Rt Revd Richard Atkinson, Bishop of Bedford.

Hindu faith OM Group Celebrated 25 Years
Hindu faith OM Group celebrated 25 years of its remarkable services and work in education, health, and poverty relief. It grew from a small youth initiative into a thriving charity offering a wide array of social, sporting, educational, and cultural events. Over the past quarter-century, it has remained steadfast in its commitment to fostering unity and community cohesion.

Covid Memorial Service
In this 5th anniversary year since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic, Newland (Wigmore) Church on Crawley Green Road invited members of the public and different faith communities to a Memorial Service to remember all those who died of Covid-19 in Luton. During the service, Revd Jenny Spouge (former Grassroots Staff) introduced people to the Luton Covid Memorial frame, on which a flower each for every person who died of Covid-19 in Luton was knitted and crocheted. Different faith leaders spoke and prayed for God's strength, peace, and eternal hope upon everyone.

Other activities we supported include;

- First Published Bengali Song as a tribute to Queen Elizabeth II – DVD presented to the Lord Lieutenant
- Akhand Bhajan 12-hour non-stop multi-faith devotional singing for World Peace
- Sikh Guru Nanak Dev Ji's 554th Birth Anniversary Celebrations
- Muslim Scouts group meeting with the Sikh youth group
- Exploring policing issues and challenges in meetings with the PCC (Police & Crime Commissioner)
- Catholic Bishops & Priests visiting Luton's different places of worship
- Sowing the Seeds of Change: A Community Dialogue in Islamaphobia Awareness Month
- Love Music Hate Racism: A cross-cultural youth music event to challenge racism
- Carols by Candlelight, the festive celebratory community event by the Uni Chaplaincy
- Multi-faith Peace Light Event welcoming the Peace Light from Bethlehem
- Jewish Chanukah Celebrations

An Overview of Global-National-Local Issues Impacting Life in Luton

Assisted Dying Bill
Navigating through fierce and passionate debates of Luton communities we wrote a letter to Luton MPs highlighting that a 'right to die' could 'all too easily' end in vulnerable people feeling they have a 'duty to die.' This poses significant risks to vulnerable patient groups, many of whom already face inequities in healthcare, including limited access to quality end-of-life care. 'Death should not be a treatment option', the letter stated. Investing in good quality, consistently available palliative care and actions taken to remove the inequalities in our health care system are the best ways forward for improving quality of life and reducing suffering for people with painful terminal illnesses.

Online Hate
Online hate expressed in response to Luton social media posts about local Jewish communities celebrating Chanukah raised alerts given the increased tensions in UK community relationships resulting from the conflict in the Middle East.

We intervened with the much-needed mediation and resolved issues amicably and as swiftly as possible.

Grooming Gangs Issue
An open letter by Faiths Against Child Sexual Exploitation (FACES), to Luton MPs was sent challenging the harms of the 'Muslim grooming gangs' narrative". This issue has been and continues to be weaponised against Muslims. It does nothing to prevent exploitation. Instead, it demonises, divides and marginalises communities.

Knife Crime
Deaths caused by knife crimes in Luton in recent years have brought Luton's diverse faith communities and public sector agencies to work together in tackling the issue, and to recently launch a local community-led initiative called 'Street Fathers-Luton'. It is to create a proactive, positive presence on the streets to disrupt violence through street mentoring, signposting young people and empowering parents, and to provide early intervention and support to young people at risk of gang recruitment. It's about preventing youth violence at its roots.

Westminster Quaker Meeting House raided by Police
It was shocking and unprecedented that 20 police officers raided on Westminster Quaker Meeting House in May 2025. In Luton, people from different faiths gathered to support the Luton Quakers, in a Sufi Storytelling event. The Khayaal Theatre magically performed wisdom tales of social and environmental justice, covering themes of, language, spirituality, community and the contemporary relevance and resonances of the stories with capitalism, poverty, inequality, injustice, indebtedness, debt forgiveness, and ecology. It was powerful, illuminating and edifying for all.

Immigration
Immigration has been a hot topic lately in the politics. Luton's faith leaders reflected on this issue and said immigrants play a vital role in our society – from the NHS to social care, and to working in the farmlands. They deserve recognition, not scapegoating. Luton City of Sanctuary issued a statement saying – We are an Island of Solidarity, not Strangers. The dream of "Making England Great Again" cannot be successful without immigrants.

NEAR NEIGHBOURS (NN) PROGRAMME

GRASSROOTS has administered the Near Neighbours (NN) Programme and its Small Grants Fund scheme in Luton for 11 years. Last year, in Luton we generated good quality 14 applications, the highest number from any NN hub in the country. Due to limited funds, only 7 applications could be funded, which are listed below;

Desi Fest Luton – Battle of Bands
Started only 2 years ago, as a celebration of south Asian culture, bringing large numbers from Hindu, Muslim, and Sikh communities, Desi Fest Luton this year, focussed on drawing in musicians and people from other underrepresented community groups, to collaborate, share their cultural influences, and develop relationships of trust.

FACES (Faiths Against Child Sexual Exploitation)
At the start of the year 2025, a row over the grooming and sexual abuse of girls and children was triggered. Some powerful overseas interfering individuals made incendiary interventions on the subject including accusing Sir Keir Starmer of being "complicit in the rape of Britain". In the light of these issues, FACES offered insights to disadvantaged families into how exploitation can happen, and explained it in a child-friendly and culturally appropriate language.

Hope Church Luton – Refugee Support Project
Hope Church exudes a strong sense of community. It has an excellent reputation for reaching out to those who are disadvantaged, marginalized and feel abandoned. It is the top place in Luton in helping and supporting refugees. They help Refugees to engage with the wider community. They are at the heart of Luton City of Sanctuary group.

LCOF (Luton Council of Faiths) – Peace Artwork Competition
The project positively impacted hundreds through different schools, faith communities and local Radio shows, as the artwork was shared and talked about at different local events, locations, even after the project was over in July this year. This project ws important because media thrives on conflict and drama, so peace is not considered newsworthy or exciting enough to capture audience attention, but using the Peace Artwork, we tried to capture people's attention

Community Interest Luton – Luton in Bloom
'Luton in Bloom' is a community-driven initiative aimed at uplifting Luton's spirits through the power and shared interest of gardening. It aims to improve the overall look and feel of the town. There are powerful and moving stories of how some very lonely and isolated people benefitted from this project and felt part of a community in a useful and meaningful way. It is also about creating a sense of pride and ownership in the town.

Somali Voices Enabled CIC – Empower Her
Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) has huge negative impacts on individuals, families, community and society. This beneficiary-led group lobbied for more action and support from the Police, NHS and the local authority, while also supporting FGM victims and survivors. It trained young people to address this issue.

St Andrew's Church Luton – Biscot Peace and Wellbeing Hub
Although St Andrew's C of E is over 150 years old church, it wasn't particularly engaged with the wider and diverse community around it. However, things have transformed now for good. The Church has set up a peace and wellbeing hub for all in the area, which people say has become a blessing for the community, where people of all faiths and none are welcomed, cared for, given helpful information, and signposted to relevant agencies

CONCLUSION

The 2024 summer riots came out of the blue. Near Neighbours (NN) Programme held a national plenary to collate contributions from all NN local hubs, including GRASSROOTS Luton, and made MHCLG (Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government) and policy-makers aware of issues and opportunities, as well as shared with them inspiring best practice to prevent such occurrences in future. In its national report, NN published two of Luton's comments as following, which sum up the life and work of GRASSROOTS for over three decades in Luton;

"Communities know their own challenges better than anyone. They have the ideas, the relationships, and the determination to make a difference. What's missing is the right support—without excessive bureaucracy—so they can lead change from the ground up." (Ryad Khodabocus)

"After 15 years of far-right agitation, our faith groups, police, and wider community have learned how to work together to counter hate. Thankfully, this meant we saw no major incidents, but we can never be complacent. Building trust and strengthening relationships must be ongoing work." (Peter Adams)

RISK MANAGEMENT

The Trustees have assessed the major risks to which the charity is exposed, in particular those related to the finances of the charity and are satisfied that systems are in place to reduce exposure to the major risks.

RESERVES POLICY

The Trustees have a policy of aiming to retain reserves equivalent to six months average expenditure. This is due to the uncertain nature of funding received. The free reserves at the year-end were £71,421.

PLANS FOR FUTURE PERIODS

The Trustees remain committed to the growth of the Grassroots Programme and the possibilities of expanding the presence of Grassroots Programme to other parts of the country. However, this is dependent upon the charity securing additional funds.

FINANCIAL REVIEW

The charity had total income of £108,776 (2024 £134,880). The main sources of income were grants of £98,986 (2024 £110,564). The charity had total expenditure of £99,558 (2024 £143,152). Expenditure on charitable activities totalled £99,558 (2024 £126,792) which included governance costs of £3,867 (2024 £3,584). There was net income on the unrestricted fund of £13,526 and net expenditure of £4,308 on the restricted fund after transfers between funds. Total funds at the end of the year were £72,171.

The trustees would like to record their thanks to all individuals and associations who supported the charity during the year. All details of the income and expenditure of the charity are set out in the Statement of Financial Activities and the notes to the accounts. In the opinion of the trustees the charity was in a satisfactory financial position at the year end.

STATEMENT OF TRUSTEES' RESPONSIBILITIES

The trustees are responsible for preparing the Trustees' Annual Report and the financial statements in accordance with applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice).

The law applicable to charities in England & Wales requires the trustees to prepare financial statements for each financial year which give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the charity and of the incoming resources and application of resources of the charity for that period. In preparing these financial statements, the trustees are required to:

- select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently;
- observe the methods and principles in the Charities SORP 2019 (FRS 102);
- make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent;
- state whether applicable accounting standards have been followed, subject to any material departures disclosed and explained in the financial statements;
- prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the charity will continue in operation.

The trustees are responsible for keeping proper accounting records that disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the charity and enable them to ensure that the financial statements comply with the Charities Act 2011, the Charity (Accounts and Reports) Regulations 2008 and the provisions of the constitution. They are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the charity and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

ON BEHALF OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES:

Rev D Lawson
Chair

B Roe
Treasurer

Date: 6 November 2025

GRASSROOTS PROGRAMME

INDEPENDENT EXAMINERS' REPORT
to the Trustees of Grassroots Programme

I report to the charity trustees on my examination of the accounts of the charity for the year ended 31 August 2025 which are set out on pages 10 to 21.

RESPONSIBILITIES AND BASIS OF REPORT

As the charity's trustees you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Charities Act 2011 ('the Act').

I report in respect of my examination of the charity's accounts carried out under section 145 of the Act and in carrying out my examination I have followed all the applicable Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the Act.

INDEPENDENT EXAMINERS' STATEMENT

Your attention is drawn to the fact that the charity has prepared the accounts 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 in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) in preference to the Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice issued on 1 April 2005 which is referred to in the extant regulations but has since been withdrawn.

We understand that this has been done in order for the accounts to provide a true and fair view in accordance with the Generally Accepted Accounting Practice effective for reporting periods beginning on or after 1 January 2015.

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

1. accounting records were not kept in respect of the charity as required by section 130 of the Act; or
2. the accounts do not accord with those records; or
3. the accounts do not comply with the applicable requirements concerning the form and content of accounts set out in the Charities (Accounts and Reports) Regulations 2008 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.

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.



R A Cox FCA
Miller & Co
Chartered Accountants
5 Imperial Court
Laporte Way, Luton
Bedfordshire
LU4 8FE

7 November 2025

GRASSROOTS PROGRAMME

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES
for the Year Ended 31 August 2025

	Note	Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	2025 Total	2024 Total
		£	£	£	£
INCOME FROM					
Grants	2	80,000	18,986	**98,986**	110,564
Donations	3	2,640	-	**2,640**	4,692
Investment income		1,823	-	**1,823**	2,234
Sale of Fairtrade goods		4,189	-	**4,189**	10,936
Other income		1,138	-	**1,138**	6,454
TOTAL INCOME		89,790	18,986	**108,776**	134,880
EXPENDITURE ON					
Raising funds		-	-	-	16,360
Charitable activities	4	74,897	24,661	**99,558**	126,792
TOTAL EXPENDITURE		74,897	24,661	**99,558**	143,152
Net income / (expenditure)		14,893	(5,675)	**9,218**	(8,272)
Transfers between funds		(1,367)	1,367	-	-
Net movement in funds for the year		13,526	(4,308)	**9,218**	(8,272)
Reconciliation of funds					
Funds brought forward at 1 September 2024		57,895	5,058	**62,953**	71,225
Funds carried forward at 31 August 2025		£71,421	£750	**£72,171**	£62,953

The statement of financial activities includes all gains and losses in the year. All incoming resources and resources expended derive from continuing activities.

GRASSROOTS PROGRAMME

BALANCE SHEET
31 August 2025

	Note	2025		2024
		£	£	£
FIXED ASSETS:				
Tangible assets	9		-	-
CURRENT ASSETS:				
Debtors	10	**115**		115
COIF Funds		**36,761**		44,938
Cash at bank		**38,692**		20,504
		75,568		65,557
Creditors: amounts falling due within one year	11	**3,397**		2,604
NET CURRENT ASSETS			**72,171**	62,953
NET ASSETS			**£72,171**	£62,953
FUNDS:				
Unrestricted general fund	13		**71,421**	57,895
Restricted funds	13		**750**	5,058
TOTAL FUNDS			**£72,171**	£62,953

The financial statements on pages 10 to 21 were approved by the board of trustees on 6 November 2025.

SIGNED ON BEHALF OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES:

David Lawson

Rev D Lawson
Chair

B.K. Roe

Mr B Roe
Treasurer

6 November 2025

1. ACCOUNTING POLICIES

General information and basis of preparation
Grassroots Programme is a Charitable Incorporated Organisation. The charity constitutes a public benefit entity as defined by FRS 102. 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 issued in October 2019, the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102), the Charity's constitution, the Charities Act 2011 and UK Generally Accepted Accounting Practice.

The financial statements have been prepared to give a 'true and fair' view and have departed from the Charities (Accounts and Reports) Regulations 2008 only to the extent required to provide a 'true and fair view'. This departure has involved following the 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 issued in October 2019 rather than the Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice effective from 1 April 2005 which has since been withdrawn.

The financial statements are prepared on a going concern basis under the historical cost convention. The financial statements are presented in pounds sterling and rounded to the nearest pound. The address of the principal office is given in the charity information on page 1 of these financial statements.

Going concern
The financial statements have been prepared on a going concern basis as the trustees believe that no material uncertainties exist. The trustees have considered the level of funds held and the expected level of income and expenditure for 12 months from authorising these financial statements. The budgeted income and expenditure is sufficient with the level of reserves for the charity to be able to continue as a going concern.

Unrestricted and restricted funds
Unrestricted funds are grants and other income received for the objects of the charity without further specified purpose and are available as general funds.

Designated funds comprise unrestricted funds that have been set aside by the trustees for particular purposes. The aim and use of each designated fund is set out in the notes to the financial statements.

Restricted funds are those funds which are to be used for specific purposes as laid down by the donor or the trustees. Expenditure which meets these criteria is identified to the funds, together with a fair allocation of administration and support costs. The aim and use of each restricted fund is set out in the notes to the financial statements.

Income recognition
Donations and other income are recognised when received. Grants are recognised when received or when the charity has legal entitlement to them, the amount can be reliably measured and there is sufficient certainty of receipt them.

Expenditure recognition
Staff costs and overhead expenses are allocated to activities on the basis of staff time spent on those activities. Support costs comprise those costs incurred directly in support of expenditure on the objectives of the charity. Governance costs relate to trustees' expenses, legal charges, independent examiners fees and attributable expenses of governing the charity. The trustees give all their time free of charge.

Expenditure is recognised when the amount can be reliably measured, there is a legal obligation to make it and it is probable that settlement will be required.

ACCOUNTING POLICIES continued

Leasing commitments
Rentals paid under operating leases are charged to income as incurred.

Pensions
The charity operates a defined contribution pension scheme for certain employees. Contributions in respect of pensions are charged to income in the year in which they are paid.

Debtors and creditors receivable/payable within one year
Grants, other debtors and creditors receivable or payable within one year are recorded at transaction price.

Fixed assets
The charity has a policy of capitalising fixed asset expenditure over £1,000.

Tangible fixed assets are stated at cost less accumulated depreciation.

Depreciation is provided on all tangible fixed assets, at rates calculated to write off the cost, less estimated residual value, of each asset on a systematic basis over its expected useful life as follows:

IT and office equipment - 33% on cost

2. INCOME FROM GRANTS

	Unrestricted	Restricted	2025 Total	2024 Total
	£	£	£	£
Grants for general purposes				
Methodist Church Beds, Essex & Herts District	15,000	-	**15,000**	15,000
URC - MIG (Thames North Synod)	15,000	-	**15,000**	12,000
Diocese of St. Albans	23,000	750	**23,750**	10,000
Luton Council of Faiths	12,000	-	**12,000**	12,000
Northampton RC Diocese	15,000	-	**15,000**	15,000
Church Urban Fund (Near Neighbours)				
Near Neighbours Fund Projects	-	18,236	**18,236**	29,239
Events				
National Lottery – Community Fund	-	-	-	9,900
Westhill Endowment	-	-	-	7,425
	80,000	18,986	**98,986**	110,564

Income from grants in 2024 totalled £110,564 of which £46,564 was attributable to restricted funds and £64,000 was attributable to unrestricted funds.

3. INCOME FROM DONATIONS & LEGACIES

	Unrestricted	Restricted	2025 Total	2024 Total
	£	£	£	£
Donations				
General	2,640	-	**2,640**	4,492
Events	-	-	**-**	200
	2,640	-	**2,640**	4,692

Income from donations and legacies in 2024 totalled £4,692 of which £200 was attributable to restricted funds and £4,492 was attributable to unrestricted funds.

4. ANALYSIS OF EXPENDITURE ON CHARITABLE ACTIVITIES

Charitable Activities 2025	Activities Undertaken Directly 2025 £	Support Costs 2025 £	Total 2025 £
Events	6,125	-	**6,125**
Near Neighbours	13,923	4,613	**18,536**
Advancement of Interfaith Relations & Community Development Work	4,565	70,332	**74,897**
	24,613	74,945	**99,558**

Charitable Activities 2024	Activities undertaken directly 2024 £	Support Costs 2024 £	Total 2024 £
Events	23,845	3,450	27,295
Near Neighbours	17,372	11,867	29,239
Advancement of Interfaith Relations & Community Development Work	9,593	60,665	70,258
	50,810	75,982	126,792

£24,661 (2024 £56,534) of the above costs were attributable to restricted funds and £74,897 (2024 £70,258) were attributable to unrestricted funds.

4a. ALLOCATION OF SUPPORT COSTS

Support Cost 2025	Basis of Allocation	Advancement of Interfaith Relations & Community Development Work 2025 £	Events 2025 £	Near Neighbours 2025 £	Total 2025 £
Governance – note 5	Usage	3,867	-	-	**3,867**
Information technology	Usage	486	-	-	**486**
Staff costs	Usage	42,412	-	4,613	**47,025**
Office costs	Usage	23,567	-	-	**23,567**
		70,332	-	4,613	**74,945**

Support Cost 2024	Basis of Allocation	Advancement of Interfaith Relations & Community Development Work 2024 £	Events 2024 £	Near Neighbours 2024 £	Total 2024 £
Governance – note 5	Usage	3,584	-	-	3,584
Information technology	Usage	1,158	-	71	1,229
Staff costs	Usage	32,735	3,450	10,840	47,025
Office costs	Usage	23,188	-	956	24,144
		60,665	3,450	11,867	75,982

5. GOVERNANCE COSTS

	2025	2024
	£	£
Trustee expenses	186	96
Independent examiners fee	1,434	1,398
Support costs	2,247	2,090
	3,867	3,584

6. STAFF COSTS AND NUMBERS

Staff costs were as follows:

	2025	2024
	£	£
Charity director	45,000	45,000
Employers National Insurance - payable	5,390	4,955
Less Employment allowance	(5,390)	(4,955)
	45,000	45,000
Pension contributions	2,700	2,700
	47,700	47,700

Defined contribution pension expense is allocated to activities based on the time apportionment of the relevant employee.

No employee earned more than £60,000 during the year (2024 same).

The average number of employees during the year was as follows:

Administration	0.5	0.5
Charitable activities	0.5	0.5
	1	1

7. TRANSACTIONS WITH TRUSTEES

No trustees received any remuneration during the year. Travel costs amounting to £187 (2024 £96) were reimbursed to one (2024 two) trustees.

No trustee had any personal interest in any contract or transaction entered into by the charity during the year (2024 same).

8. TAXATION

As a charity, Grassroots Programme is exempt from tax on income and gains falling within sections 521 to 536 of the Income Tax Act 2007 or section 256 of the Taxation of Chargeable Gains Act 1992 to the extent that these are applied to its charitable objects. No tax charges have arisen in the charity.

9. TANGIBLE FIXED ASSETS

	IT and Office Equipment £	Total £
Cost:		
As at 1 September 2024	2,490	2,490
Additions	-	-
Disposals	-	-
As at 31 August 2025	2,490	2,490
Depreciation:		
As at 1 September 2024	2,490	2,490
Charge for the year	-	-
Disposals	-	-
As at 31 August 2025	2,490	2,490
Net Book Value:		
As at 31 August 2025	-	-
As at 31 August 2024	-	-

10. DEBTORS

	2025	2024
	£	£
Prepayments	115	115
Accrued income	-	-
	115	115

11. CREDITORS: Amounts falling due within one year

	2025	2024
	£	£
Accruals	1,434	1,398
Taxation and social security	1,513	756
Other creditors	450	450
	3,397	2,604

12. ANALYSIS OF NET ASSETS BETWEEN FUNDS

	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	Total 2025 £
Net current assets	71,421	750	72,171
Total net assets	71,421	750	72,171

	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	Total 2024 £
Net current assets	57,895	5,058	62,953
Total net assets	57,895	5,058	62,953

13. MOVEMENT IN FUNDS

	Balance at 1 September 2024	Income	Expenditure	Transfers	Balance at 31 August 2025
	£	£	£	£	£
Restricted Funds					
Near Neighbours	-	18,236	(18,536)	300	-
Events	5,058	-	(6,125)	1,067	-
Other	-	750	-	-	**750**
	5,058	18,986	(24,661)	1,367	**750**
Unrestricted Funds					
General funds	57,895	89,790	(74,897)	(1,367)	**71,421**
	57,895	89,790	(74,897)	(1,367)	**71,421**
Total Funds	62,953	108,776	(99,558)	-	**72,171**

	Balance at 1 September 2023	Income	Expenditure	Transfers	Balance at 31 August 2024
	£	£	£	£	£
Restricted Funds					
Near Neighbours	-	29,239	(29,239)	-	-
Events	14,828	17,525	(27,295)	-	5,058
	14,828	46,764	(56,534)	-	5,058
Unrestricted Funds					
General funds	35,223	88,116	(86,618)	21,174	57,895
Designated funds:					
Spirituality of Justice	21,174	-	-	(21,174)	-
	56,397	88,116	(86,618)	-	57,895
Total Funds	71,225	134,880	(143,152)	-	62,953

MOVEMENT IN FUNDS continued

Last year the trustees determined that the Spirituality of Justice designated fund was no longer required hence the transfer to general funds in 2024.

The balances on the restricted funds will be used to continue the work of the projects in accordance with the terms of the funders. Details of the funds are as follows:

Near Neighbours – Bringing neighbours together for 'social action' and 'social interaction'.
Events – includes Westhill Endowment Fund and National Lottery – Community Fund for the multi-faith storytelling workshops.
Other – being monies received from St Albans Diocese for a laptop which will be purchased early in the next accounting period.

14. RELATED PARTIES AND CONTROLLING PARTY

There were no related party transactions requiring disclosure. (2024 £nil). The charity is controlled by the Trustees.

GRASSROOTS PROGRAMME

England & Wales - Charity number 1163427

Accounts

Grassroots

...a different point of view



"There can be no justice without peace, and there can be no peace without justice"
Martin Luther King Jr.

Annual Report

2023-2024

Acknowledgement of Thanks

GRASSROOTS is blessed to have the support of many funders, partners and volunteers, and we wish to say thank you for enabling our work to continue and grow:

Funders:

Church of England Diocese of St. Albans

Luton Council of Faiths

Methodist District of Beds, Essex and Herts

National Lottery Community Fund – Awards for All

Near Neighbours Programme

Roman Catholic Diocese of Northampton

United Reformed Church Thames North Synod

Westhill Endowment Fund

Partners:

Churches and Other Faith Communities in Luton

Daughters of the Holy Spirit

Ghar se Ghar

Luton Council of Faiths

Near Neighbours Programme

Luton Council & Bedfordshire Police



Grassroots
...a different point of view

Annual Report

2023-2024

Charity Registration Number:
1163427

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Foreword by the Revd Canon David Lawson (Chair)



I began last year's Foreword reminding us of the many complex and huge issues facing the world. Today the world is in a more dangerous and fragile state, or as Johny expressed it in a report to the Trustees: 'The world seems a very dark and hostile place.' The war in Ukraine grinds on, it is over a year since the October 7th attack in Gaza, with the conflict in the Middle East threatening to spread out of control. This last year has also seen the growth of far right political parties in Europe, and anti-immigration demonstrations and riots in many parts of the UK this summer. Nevertheless, Grassroots determined vision of engaging with the contemporary world is in no way diminished, continuing to work for a stronger and more cohesive, peaceful Luton.

Inter-faith dialogue and co-operation is needed more than ever today. Grassroots laid the foundations of what is now the Luton Council of Faiths (LCoF), and we continue working closely with LCoF, and with the Luton Borough Council. There is also a facilitation of inter faith advisers across the C of E Diocese of St Albans, and last year's inter faith event at St Albans Cathedral was organised jointly with Grassroots. It is wonderful to know that the event will be repeated in November 2024. The words of the Catholic theologian Hans Kung are more pertinent than ever: 'There will be no peace among the nations, without peace among the religions.'

A highlight for some of the Trustees was a Spring walk from our offices through Luton arriving at the Guru Nanak Gurudwara, where we had an informative tour, learning about Sikh religious teaching and practices, ending with a splendid lunch there. In November 2024 the Catholic Bishop of Northampton, David Oakley, will also be treated to a similar tour of the town.

Over the last few years, Grassroots has been invited to a number of international conferences organised by European churches. The presentations of our work have been highly acclaimed, giving us much encouragement as to the undoubted value of all that is happening across Luton in terms of strengthening community relations. Grassroots has also hosted a number of visitors to Luton, and one such this year was from the Diocese of Linkopping in the Church of Sweden. A multi faith group of over 30 people wanted to benefit from Luton's experience of inter faith work and all that is being done to strengthen community relations, while promoting unity in diversity. The reaction to all that the group experienced was 'ecstatic', and hopefully their experience will enable them to translate something of what they learnt into their own particular context.

I mentioned the demonstrations and riots that took place across the UK this summer. Thankfully Luton remained unaffected, though there have been profound concerns across all communities not just with what happened in the UK but what is also unfolding across the Middle East. The Annual Peace Walk in September, not only demonstrated the strength of community relations in Luton; it also acknowledged the crucial part played by Grassroots, the Luton Council of Faiths and Near Neighbours Programme over many years.

It is with great sadness, that as I am writing this Foreword, we have learnt that Sister Maire Hayes has died. Sister Maire was a dedicated and committed member of the Grassroots team for many years, contributing so much in so many ways to the Grassroots programme. She was a member of the Catholic Justice and Peace Network, and was at the heart of the campaign to make Luton a Fairtrade town. We cannot but think of Sister Maire at this time and express our profound thanks for all she has contributed to the flourishing of the life and people of Luton. Elsewhere in the Annual Report there is a tribute to Sister Maire.

The Annual Report as always gives a fuller picture of the range and variety of Grassroots commitment to the flourishing of Luton. We extend our deepest gratitude to the church bodies that fund us, as well as other funders. I am also hugely grateful to our Trustees for their insights and unstinting commitment to Grassroots. The last word of thanks but most certainly not the least goes to Johny, for his outstanding dedication to the work, and all he does so graciously and efficiently on behalf of Grassroots.

Annual Report Overview Sep 2023 – Aug 2024

In our globalised, but divided and wounded world, we are seeing a general lack of good political leadership, and a lack of professionalism, integrity and accountability in the media and politics. The current political trends are inciting people with majoritarian, sectarian, and nationalist agendas, presenting minorities, immigrants, and refugees, as threats to the majorities. When held accountable for its corruption, failures, scams or scandals, most governments and political parties, either blast-the-past, or blame the opposition for political conspiracies against them, but as people, as communities, we must believe in change. We must recognise that in our divided and wounded world, the call and the need to become 'one human race', and the need to be 'united not uniform', has never been greater.

We must learn lessons from all that has happened wrong in the past and try doing what is right in our present, to make a better future for all. It is bearing these thoughts in mind, we have held activities during the period Sep 2023 – Aug 2024 that have indeed brought people & communities together to recognise and celebrate the signs of hope in seeking a kinder world in which all may thrive. In this report, we have presented some key highlights;

KEY EVENTS & ACTIVITIES

Annual Peace Walk 2023

In its 27th year, Luton's Annual Peace Walk (led by Luton Council of Faiths, supported by GRASSROOTS and Near Neighbours Programme) continued to be one of the most popular multi-faith events in the town. While also commemorating the UN's International Day of Peace (IDP), it attracted people of all ages from Luton's diverse communities.

Several dignitaries, who joined the event, included the Lord Lieutenant of Bedfordshire Susan Lousada, Mayor of Luton Cllr Yaqub Hanif, Luton MPs Sarah Owen & Rachel Hopkins, Bishop of Bedford Rt. Revd. Richard Atkinson and Cllrs. Javeria Hussain and Maria Lovell.

People visited Catholic Our Lady Help of Christians Church, Luton Christian Fellowship, Turkish Mosque, and Guru Ravidass Sangat Luton.





Primary School students and teachers gave presentations and shared their commitment to being an Eco-School, litter picking and planting trees. Sponsored by Near Neighbours Programme, CATALYST Youth Leadership & Mental Health Training graduates were awarded certificates. These young people shared their dreams for a better world and pledged to combat poverty and deprivation in our town.

May all these hopes, aspirations, and commitments for a better world bear fruits!

Inter Faith Week Event held at St Albans Cathedral

St Albans Diocese of Church of England, in partnership with GRASSROOTS Luton, held for the second consecutive year, the Inter Faith Week Event at St Albans Cathedral on 6th Nov 2023. About 125 people from different religious and those of no religious backgrounds were welcomed from Beds, Herts & parts of the London borough of Barnet, covered by St Albans Diocese.

Talking of this event, the Diocesan Inter Faith Advisers (DIFAs), Reverend Canon David Kesterton (Luton) and Reverend Tony Rindl (Watford) said we were struck by the connections in the language used by the different faith representatives on the event theme “Strangers & Co-Pilgrims – Sharing together how encounter with those of different beliefs strengthen our own faith.”



Representatives of 8 different faiths shared from their own perspective how their religious teachings led them to view the value of others and to respect those of different beliefs. There was a strong sense of unity of language and purpose, as each speaker placed the value on every member of the human race and the creation itself.





Multi-faith Storytelling – Tales of Wonder & Wisdom

Luton has suffered from religious extremism, racial and religious hatred propagated by far-right groups in the last 15 years or so. Scarcity of resources means there is little capacity to invest in our young people, who are in danger of being easily influenced by extremist or dominant polarising and divisive narratives, steeped in racism and religious intolerance. We therefore applied and received funding from the Westhill Endowment Fund, National Lottery Community Fund – Awards for All, and Near Neighbours Programme for an interactive and participatory multi-faith storytelling theatre project exploring 'golden rule' stories from Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Sikhism and Judaism. The project instilled in young people values of conviviality, mutual respect and environmental stewardship.





Over 12000 pupils (Years 3-6) have participated in the storytelling workshops in the last 2 years and all demonstrated an appreciation for the opportunity to explore a range of universal humanitarian values and character virtues through wisdom tales from different faith traditions: Hinduism, Judaism, Sikh, Christianity and Islam, dramatically and interactively performed by a professional storytelling theatre artist. This appreciation really came through in the way that at least a dozen pupils in each school enthusiastically shared their reflections on the values that they recognised in the stories' characters and on the shared estimation of these values (e.g. courage, generosity, trust, peace, perseverance, hope, faith, joy, determination, honesty, love, loyalty) across the different faith traditions.



A pupil stated that though she was irreligious, she loved the humanitarian values promoted and celebrated in all stories.

In a Facebook Post, Pioneer Trust managing quite a few Primary Schools, said, "All of our schools were privileged to receive the wonderful series of multi-faith stories, exploring key values that exist within different faiths. It encouraged the children to treat others, with respect, fairness, love and empathy. A wonderful experience for the pupils involved."

Another school teacher Grietje Reid said, "The stories are such a good example of how all the common values are present in all religions and the children recognised them too. I would recommend these performances to any school."

Given the super diversity of Luton and the town's predominance of self-identifying faith communities in an increasingly polarised world, these Multi-faith Storytelling Workshops helped to underpin difference with an edifying and unifying wellspring of inspiring common spiritual and ethical values. The enacted stories have spelled inter-faith and intercultural understanding in the most creative way, especially to young audiences. The project has left a lasting impression in young people's minds.

Swedish multi-faith delegation visited Luton

There were several days of rioting in Stockholm, Malmö, Linköping and Norrköping after far-Right group Stram Kurs planned and held Qu'ran burning demonstrations across the country in 2022. A news headline in May'24 suggested that Sweden could be on the 'brink of a civil war' as country is gripped by anti-migrant violence.

It was to mitigate risks posed by such socio-political developments in Sweden that a group of 30+ Swedish guests and visitors from churches, mosques, municipality, police, voluntary organisation, young people in the cities of Norrköping, Motala and Linköping, visited Luton from 11-14 Nov'23. They wanted to learn from Luton;

- How to develop inter faith work initiatives and strengthen inter faith relations
- How to tackle the growth of far-right activities and its after-effects and adverse impact on inter-faith and inter-community relations
- How in Luton, and in the UK, communities, government & Police, both locally and nationally, strive to work for peace and reconciliation and strengthen community cohesion while also acknowledging and promoting unity in diversity





The Mayor of Luton Cllr Yaqub Hanif (pictured above) welcomed and greeted them all at Luton Town Hall. Later, Adam Divney (pictured above), the Service Director for Citizen Engagement, gave an excellent presentation outlining the Council's vision for the growth and prosperity of Luton.

The Swedish guests were thrilled by the wonderful hospitality when they visited different places of worship in Luton. They learnt a great deal during their field visits to Discover Islam Centre, Luton Council's Social Justice Unit, Bedfordshire Police Community Cohesion, The Feast, Grassroots & Near Neighbours Programmes.





The fact that Luton made an impact upon the Swedish group is a testament to everyone in Luton working to promote peace and understanding across communities.

The Church of England Diocese of St Albans and The Church of Sweden Diocese of Linkopping have a long-standing partnership. During this visit, the Diocese of Linkopping Bishop Marika Markovits and the Diocese of St Albans Bishop Alan Smith signed a special covenant (pictured left below) strengthening link between the two Dioceses.





And the Very Reverend Jo Kelly-Moore, the Dean of St Albans Cathedral presented a gift to The Revd Mattias Bähr, the Dean of Linkopping Cathedral (pictured right above).

Additionally, Ryad Khodabocus of the Luton Council of Faiths illustrated practical examples and stories of interfaith community work & collaboration with an impressive visual slide show. Canon Peter Adams, Director of St. Mary's Centre for Peace and Reconciliation, spoke about the difficulties the far right presents, and shared how community mediation helped in some really trying periods.

The Swedish group also observed a meeting of Luton's faith leaders (pictured below) and were astounded to see religious leaders having an honest and open conversation on both local and global issues that affect life in Luton.





We in Luton certainly have a wealth of positive and inspiring stories to share. Long may we continue to work together for peace and harmony in Luton and beyond, and may our cooperation, friendships, and relationships across faiths and cultures, continue to grow.

The Chair of GRASSROOTS Programme, Revd Canon David Lawson, said, "The group will return to Sweden with much to think about and hopefully in time translate something of the Luton experience into their own particular contexts."

Sujel Miah of Luton Council of Mosques said, "We are not about unity of opinion, but we are committed to the unity of purpose. We are voices of justice, compassion and peace. When people, communities, refugees are demonised and dehumanised, when a group of people are targeted, because of their race, faith or ethnicity, we, as people of faith, are called to act prophetically.

The Swedish Group Coordinator Susanna Löfgren said, "Everyone in the group has been so inspired and I think that this trip has proved to be just the injection of energy and tools that our local networks needed."

Inter Faith Week Event

During Inter Faith Week, a special community storytelling event was held at Luton's Sacred Heart Catholic Church in Stopsley. Stories are powerful and have a lasting impact on people. Using the local Award-winning Khayaal Theatre, Grassroots, jointly with Luton Council of Faiths, and Near Neighbours Programme delivered a multi-faith storytelling performance consisting of character and virtue-nourishing stories from different faiths.



Speaking of this event, the then Mayor of Luton Cllr Mohd. Yaqub Hanif said, "In our world full of negative stories, it is good to have an event like this, where we can share positive stories from different faiths and cultures. Very often religion gets blamed for the world's problems. It is actually not religion, but the 'misuse of religion' by a few people that creates problems. As we have watched and heard the stories from different faiths and cultures this evening, I am sure we have seen how religion only teaches good things. I hope the stories we have heard today will inspire us all to become better human beings and will encourage us to make our town and our world a better place for all."

Black History Month

During the Black History Month, we supported two key events. One was the 75th-anniversary commemoration event of the Windrush Generation in which a dozen Windrush local Heroes were honoured, including the two women (pictured right) Mrs Lorna Markland and Cllr Jacqueline Burnett, for their years of relentless services in representing and serving the black communities in Luton.







And the other event was the Black Culture Market at which there were a variety of stalls (pictured left) offering a range of creative and interesting products and materials, celebrating the contributions of black businesses and social entrepreneurs who add colour, vigour, and spice to the British cultural landscape. The organiser Dee Bailey said that Black History Month is not just a time for us to recognise and celebrate the invaluable contributions of black people to British society; it is also a great opportunity to inspire and empower future generations."

World Council of Reformed Churches Consultation



Just before Christmas 2023, it was a pleasant surprise to be invited to the Global Consultation in Haus Villigst, Schwerte, Germany 11-15 December led by the Lutheran World Foundation & the World Council of Reformed Churches on the theme “A Protestant Theological Approach to Freedom of Religion and Belief (FoRB)”.

Seventeen theologians, church leaders, and mission practitioners reflected on a significant rise in the documented violations of religious rights and freedoms in our world, and agreed to lend a Protestant voice to the ongoing discourse on FoRB.

The consultation was about striking a delicate balance between religious freedom concerns and tolerance to avoid making religious liberty absolute or disregarding religious beliefs altogether. The consultation utilised the “See, Discern, and Act” methodology. Contextual and thematic presentations provided an opportunity to see the issues more clearly. Theological reflections allowed for communal discernment on the issues through both Lutheran and Reformed lenses. Discussions in small groups and plenary led to clarity on possible future actions.

In its presentation, GRASSROOTS highlighted the positive manifestation of the FoRB, as wellas the unpleasant aspects, especially when these freedoms are defined in an ‘extreme(ist) versions’. Recognising Martin Luther King’s statement that before you finish breakfast, you’ve depended on half the world, GRASSROOTS reminded that we are all ‘vulnerable’ & ‘dependent’ on others, and only when we come together, we can become the force of an ocean.

Faith Leaders School Assemblies

Thanks to our wonderful and supportive panel of local faith leaders who like previous years have been helping us to deliver a series of primary school assemblies on popular demand. It aims at fostering a positive environment and mutual respect amongst young people when they see the local faith leaders demonstrating how, despite their differences, they work together for the common good in our town.





"I enjoyed the opportunity to learn about different faiths and beliefs to my own. This assembly was fantastic and I was inspired by it," a student said. A teacher commented “The similarities between the faith leaders (e.g. believing in one God), faith leaders talking about their experiences in different countries and now all living together in Luton), religious clothing used to show what they wear, was all fascinating and hugely educational for us all in our school.”

Keech Hospice 'Hare & Tortoise' Trail – Peace Artwork

In partnership with the Luton Council of Faiths, we supported the Keech Hospice Short Tail Trail appeal. (https://keech.org.uk/whats-on/the-short-tail-trail/)

This trail featured over 90 hare & tortoise big and small sculptures, placed across Luton's key landmarks, streets, and open spaces from 6th July – 12th September 2024. It brought colour and energy to the town.

With the help and donations from Luton's diverse faith communities, we sponsored 4 sculptures, costing £5,000.

After collecting the plain sculptures, we invited faith leaders, and young people from diverse religious and cultural backgrounds to colour the sculptures with peace artwork (as pictured below).





Our sculptures artwork theme was 'Peace' – Peace amongst humans and the ecosystem with bright colours representing diversity. A message on Hare was from a primary school pupil – *"Peace will always grow. If bees can spread their pollen, humans can spread peace"*. Faith leaders message on the Tortoise stated *"Slow and steady steps for peace"*. Under Hare's neck, the caterpillar evolution to a butterfly symbolises the evolution of life and signifies new beginnings. Butterflies are thought to represent change and transformation, comfort, hope, and positivity.



This was yet another example of good practice of inter faith cooperation showcasing how Luton communities can live well together and work for the common good. In a thank you message, Keech Hospice said that you and all those who worked with you should feel extremely proud of the positive and creative artwork on sculptures that you created. It helps to show Luton as we know it, as a warm, kind, generous and inclusive place to live and work.

NHS Bedfordshire Chaplaincy Training Day

We facilitated a group of Chaplains from different ethnic and national backgrounds, serving at the Bedfordshire Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust to visit different places of worship in Luton. At Guru Nanak Gurudwara Luton (pictured left below), Nelson Mandela's quote was remembered, "If you talk to a man in a language he understands, that gets to his head; if you talk to him in his own language that goes to his heart". Trust Chaplain Vanessa Bradley said these visits give chaplains confidence to connect with people from diverse backgrounds, not only with their heads but also with their hearts, even if it is simply greeting someone from another culture in their language.





At the Bury Park Jamie Mosque (pictured right above) it was said if we want to love our neighbour, we must know who they are; and it is much better we meet with people and learn from them who they are, rather than learning about them from the books, media or stereotypes.

In a hostile environment of mistrust and fear, it is easy to view all those who are different from us, as a threat or enemy. It is therefore important that we create opportunities for people to experience the welcome and hospitality of one another and help people discover that those different from us are not 'enemies'; they are our 'allies', because they share the same aspirations as we do, which are to be loved, valued and to work together for the peace and prosperity of all.



A Chaplain on the training day said, "My understanding of these religions from adherents' perspective will enable me to provide them effective referral, if not partial religious care when situation arises in my healthcare chaplaincy role. The idea of "humanity first" seems projected in all religions. GRASSROOTS Presentation on Luton's multi faith context has opened my eyes to continued efforts, towards sustainability of peaceful co-existence among people of different faith in Luton, and the need to see humanity first, before religion in healthcare chaplaincy services."

Another Chaplin said, "I really enjoyed the warm welcome and hospitality at all places of worship. I appreciate the work done by GRASSROOTS which illustrates the effort required to encourage and engender respect and collaboration between all of us."

Faith Leaders concerned with issues impacting life in Luton

With Luton communities' ties worldwide, many international issues affect communities locally, raising stress, anxieties, and potential community unrest and tension. GRASSROOTS through Luton Council of Faiths (LCoF) plays a crucial role in acting as a buffer across faith communities and also a listening ear on the ground and helping communities and leaders to navigate through tense, contentious and uneasy local, national and global contexts.

We facilitate regular meetings of faith leaders and invite different places of worship to host these meetings, which seek to bring together members of the different faith communities and those with no particular faith affiliation for dialogue, cooperation, understanding, trust, and for greater social cohesion and community development in Luton.



We understand peace is not just about the absence of conflict and violence; it is also about constantly seeking to address issues of people's well-being. We therefore provide advice, consultancy, information dissemination, and networking to all public & voluntary sector agencies, particularly about the initiatives concerned with people's overall well-being. Keeping the big picture in mind and ensuring that peace and harmony in our town are held at all times, we encourage faith communities to work together with the local authority, Police & NHS.

We understand that listening and building bridges is an ongoing work. With the international, national, and local events and issues unfolding, the terrain keeps changing and it gets sensitive, so we constantly monitor communal tensions and work closely with local leadership to mitigate any risks.



Global-National-Local Issues Impacting Life in Luton

Israel-Palestine Conflict

The world currently seems a very dark and a hostile place, because of over 110 wars and armed conflicts according to the Geneva Academy of International Humanitarian Law & Human Rights. Whether it is territorial disputes, control of resources, power struggles, ideological differences, or economic competition, seeing the conflicting interests between nations escalating into armed & bloody conflicts is extremely distressing.

We have all been appalled by the attacks in Israel by Hamas on October 7, 2023, and the subsequent war in Gaza has caused immense civilian suffering.

Here, in the UK, we experienced record levels of anti-Semitism, anti-Jewish hatred. On the other hand, many are feeling that anti-Semitism needs redefining as all pro-Palestinian stance is currently misconstrued as being anti-Semitic and it certainly needs to be separated from criticising the Israeli government's actions.

We also witnessed in the last year, a deplorable and deeply concerning steep rise in Islamophobia – which is the fear of and hatred for Muslims People often stereotype Muslims as a geopolitical threat or a source of terrorism.

In a joint statement with the Luton Council of Faiths, GRASSROOTS expressed condolences and prayers for those who faced death, injury and are suffering in this ongoing conflict. It reminded that as Jews, Christians and Muslims with shared Abrahamic heritage and those from different or no particular faith, we are called to uphold the highest of morals, unite in humanity and pray that reconciliation, peace and justice prevails for everyone. It called upon everyone to stay united in our longing for a peaceful solution which does justice to all involved in the region.

Hundreds gathered at Wardown Park Bandstand, to grieve and to pray for the peace in the Holy Hand, in a Vigil organised jointly by the Luton Councils of Mosques and the Churches Together in Luton and supported by the Luton Council of Faiths. A number of young people, Christian-Muslim, and other faith leaders called for a transition from lamentation to action for ceasefire, and for peace and justice in the Holy Land.







Gulie Butcher, a Quaker and the Vice Chair of Luton Council of Faiths said, "Luton town came together as one at this prayer vigil – watching as the silent stars go by the hopes and fears of all the years. For in this world where there's war, we have watched violence, injury, loss of life, grief, inhumanity. We have felt, overwhelming sadness, disbelief, grief, anger, and helplessness. As the dark night breaks in and we all join together in prayer for the love of power to be overcome by the power of love, let's hope that nations speak peace unto nations and there is peace on earth, and goodwill to all humankind transcends all borders and boundaries."

Knife Crime in Luton

In a local Knife Crime incident in Oct'23, a 16-year-old boy was stabbed to death in Luton. We networked with the Bedfordshire Police, Luton's many schools, the Luton council, and also with Luton's diverse communities and faith groups to come together to express our collective shock and deep sadness at this tragic event. A silent candle light prayer vigil was held in Wardown Park.



Southport Attacks & Summer Riots

The horrifying killings of innocent children in Southport in Jul'24 left everyone shocked, but it has been even more upsetting to watch the subsequent civil unrest, the riots and the deplorable violent events in cities and towns across the UK targeting minority communities and the police. Far-right extremists hijacked the tragedy of Southport from a grieving community for their own hateful racist and Islamophobic agenda.

The Bedfordshire local authorities, Police & Fire Authority jointly stated "Bedfordshire is a safe, multicultural county. We, and all our communities, reject extremism, violence and those who seek to divide us."

We welcomed a multi-stakeholder meeting convened by the Luton Council, to discuss how to tackle misinformation of the potential rioting in Luton. With everyone else, we shared our deep concern and solidarity for anyone being targeted by hateful narratives. Together with others, we proclaimed that Luton will always be a no place for hate.

We facilitated C of E Bishop Richard Atkinson to write a letter to Luton's Mosques and all faith leaders, condemning the Southport killings, the subsequent riots, and the hate mails & threats to the Muslims/Mosques in Luton. Luton Council of Mosques acknowledged the overwhelming support from individuals, organisations and leaders across Luton and beyond. This solidarity, especially in times of fear, is a powerful force.

Grassroots ... a different point of view | LUTON COUNCIL OF FAITHS | NEAR NEIGHBOURS BRINGING PEOPLE TOGETHER

7th August 2024

Working Together for Peace and Unity

It is heartbreaking to see the riots and violence after the killings of innocent children in Southport. Additionally, we are seeing lots of anxiety and misinformation about the potential demonstrations in Luton.

THIS IS NOT TRUE.

Let us all keep calm and carry on as usual. Let us foster messages of peace, unity and solidarity with one another. Let us all be peacemakers. Every little peace helps.

Join #weareluton project, and upload a 10-20 sec video clip of solidarity between friends, colleagues and neighbours from diverse backgrounds. Talk to your neighbour, colleague or friend and make a small video or picture with a message.

Let's make peace, harmony, and positivity viral in any way we can.

The town of Southport set an example by coming together to condemn the violence, support the victims and clean up the mess after the riots, but they must not be the only ones; we all must play our part too. And that is why in Luton, we invited people to make a short solidarity video with someone of a different background, sharing their stories of friendships and living well together, and upload it on #weareluton. These videos can be watched on https://www.facebook.com/groups/LutonFaiths/

Al Jalal Masjid (Mosque) Incident

An individual intentionally defaced the banner outside a Mosque, and painted a red cross behind it. This malicious act understandably caused distress among members of the congregation, particularly in the climate of heightened Islamophobia and anti-Muslim sentiments. In its message to the Mosque, GRASSROOTS & Luton Council of Faiths said that such malicious acts are distressing for all those, who want to live well together in peace and harmony, and also for those who continuously work hard to strengthen community cohesion in our town. It is important that we keep meeting, dialoguing, and strengthening our relationship with one another. GRASSROOTS also facilitated the Bedfordshire Police, and the C of E Bishop Richard Atkinson to visit the Al-Jalal Mosque (as pictured below).



Faith Matters Articles in Luton News

Luton often gets negative publicity, so we have continued writing positive news, particularly about Luton's faith communities, which are making a significant positive contribution in keeping the values and virtues alive in our town. A few examples can be seen below.



OPINION

Faith Matters

by David Jonathan, Grassroots & Luton Council of Faiths

Break down walls for a world of acceptance and peace



OPINION

Faith Matters

by David Jonathan, Grassroots & Luton Council of Faiths

River Lea and Wardown Lakes receive blessing from vicar



OPINION

Faith Matters

by David Jonathan, Grassroots & Luton Council of Faiths

Catholic Priests visited Luton's different places of worship



OPINION

Faith Matters

by David Jonathan, Grassroots & Luton Council of Faiths

Uplifting experiences of living well together are shared

NEAR NEIGHBOURS PROGRAMME

Huge, complex issues face us all today - climate change, migration, war, poverty, famine, racism, religious hatred, the rise of far right politics. In addition, we have had the unstoppable cost of living crisis and the country still feeling the effects of the pandemic, followed by political & economic instability. Also a disproportionately high number of refugees have been placed in Luton in the recent years, which has remained a concern for Luton's welcoming and generous communities. In light of all these challenges, it is fair to say that the message and ethos of Near Neighbours Programme is vital in reminding people that we all are created to be interdependent, just like the ecosystem is and that we have no other option, but to transcend the barriers of our race, religion, gender, ethnicity and nationality, and live well together in mutual solidarity with one another.

In the last year, besides supporting several events in Luton, Near Neighbours Small Grant Funding supported 12 great community project applications submitted from Luton. Some of the successfully delivered projects are listed below;

STEP FORWARD STORIES OF LUTON by Att10tive Social Enterprise

It brought together nearly 200 people, mainly youth, from different religious, cultural and ethnic backgrounds, to tell their stories, and celebrate Luton's heritage, using art and videos. Nearly a dozen young people presented their videos that they prepared for 'MyLuton' Video Competition.



Councillor Zanib Raja said "The event and exhibition featured diverse artwork by local artists capturing the essence and spirit of our town. The project celebrated the beauty, diversity and vibrancy of Luton."

Montell Neufville, the Managing Director of Att10tive said "This was the result of months of hard work. And this wouldn't have been possible without our sponsors like Near Neighbours.

REACHING A NEW NEIGHBOURHOOD by Edible High Town

It ran 16 gardening activity sessions with volunteers and opened up one new community plot in an area, after co-designing it with residents. In addition to running social events, the project ran 2 coffee mornings to meet neighbours and give residents a safe and beautiful place to socialise.



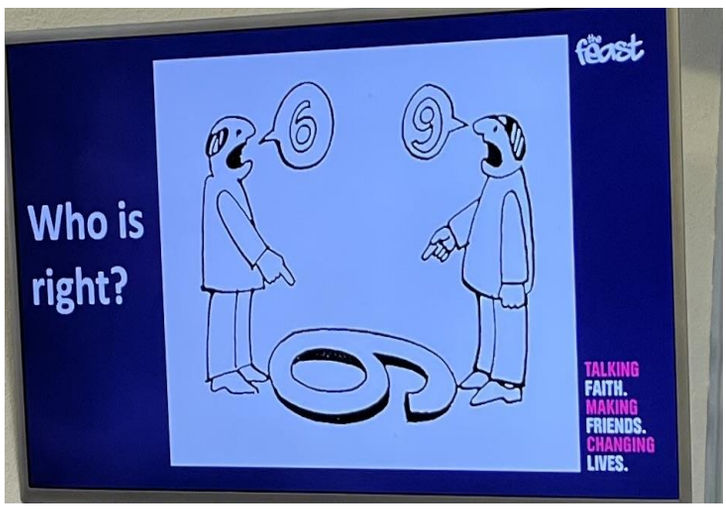
Konni Deppe, the Project Coordinator said, "Working in this new neighbourhood has been incredibly rewarding - to open a garden on a fly tipping hotspot, turning it into a colourful little allotment, and then sharing the first home-grown potatoes was great."

Gardener Dee said, "This project has been very rewarding, turning a small neglected piece of land into something so lovely from growing flowers to vegetables bringing the people of the community together, making new friends."

JOINING THE DOTS by Feast Youth Project

It ran 7 dialogue encounters for young people skilling them to disagree respectfully. They reflected on the value of listening to one another without judging each other. A participant said, it strengthens friendship and the work of creating cohesion and understanding between different communities.

Another participant said, there are probably many people like me out there that feel helpless and can't speak about their feelings, while these sessions open a gate to be empowered in day to day life and make a real change. It is nice to hear other people's perspectives. It is interesting to see how different people answer the same question.



OPEN DAYS & AWARENESS CAMPAIGNS by Luton Food Bank

To tackle food insecurity by intertwining community engagement with educational events, Luton Food Bank hosted Open Days, engaging with over 150 people to understand operations and volunteer opportunities, fostering inclusivity and trust-building. It also ran Awareness Campaigns on food insecurity, and promoted intercultural dialogues and cooking workshops, encouraging participation from various ethnic groups to share culinary traditions.

Many families in the community grapple with economic hardships, experiencing unemployment, financial instability, and limited access to resources and opportunities. A prevalent issue is the inadequate access to nutritious food. This project tackled these challenges by capitalising on community's strengths.



COMMUNITY READY, STEADY, COOK PROJECT by Shri Guru Ravidass Sangat

Based on Langar (free Sikh communal meals), this project provided cooking classes for those of non-Sikh faiths, Including Eastern European communities, Asylum Seekers and new communities looking to make Luton their home. As different communities worked together, not only they learnt about each other's cultural and religious differences, and developed friendships understanding and community harmony, it also helped to improve the quality of life of many from the local disadvantaged communities.

It also helped organisations that may not have ever considered working together. They reprinted their recipe book to enable the project to continue.



LETS EAT TOGETHER by The Big Iftar Luton



Let's Eat Together campaign involved over 3000 participants and 16 different events held at High Schools, Luton Town Football Club, and at other community settings, such as the Dunstable Downs Visitors Centre. It was an ambitious initiative that brought together several community partners, faith leaders, schools and places of worship.

It was important to reach out to young people and women. It donated all proceeds from the campaign to the Luton Foodbank, to provide for the most vulnerable in the town. The Project Manager Mohammad Tariq said, "It was a celebration of Luton's diversity, unity and community spirit. The opportunity to bring together so many people from around Luton's diverse communities was a real blessing".

TALES OF WONDER & WISDOM – MULTIFAITH STORYTELLING by Khayaal Theatre



This interactive and participatory multi-faith storytelling theatre project explored 'golden rule' stories from Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Sikhism and Judaism. The project helped to instil in young people values of conviviality, mutual respect and environmental stewardship. It helped to underpin difference with an edifying and unifying wellspring of inspiring common spiritual and ethical values.

Over 1700 pupils participated in the workshops and all demonstrated an appreciation for the opportunity to explore a range of universal humanitarian values and character virtues (e.g. courage, generosity, trust, peace, perseverance, hope, faith, joy, determination, honesty, love, loyalty and more) through wisdom tales dramatically and interactively performed by a professional storytelling theatre artist.

FOOTBALL DIVERSITY TOURNAMENT by Luton All Stars FC



The biggest vibrant multicultural football diversity tournament in Luton history drew over 1500 participants, fostering not just talent, but also promoting community spirit through sport, celebrating the richness of diverse cultures, faiths, languages, and heritage. This was a young people led event – empowering young people with skills for life.

The tournament featured intense competition, culminating in the crowning of deserving winners in each age group. Participants and spectators alike were treated to thrilling matches and a vibrant atmosphere. The Chair of the Club, Mr Kwesi Edubatey said, "We are grateful to the Near Neighbours Programme for sponsoring the tournament. It helped us to promote social integration, by breaking down barriers, and tackling social exclusion and economic disparities, by providing equal opportunities to everyone to train and participate in the tournament."

CULTURAL HARMONY THROUGH EXCHANGE by Next Generation Scheme

It hosted six workshops involving 50 young & adults from diverse backgrounds joining together to learn and share about each other's cultural traditions, food, religious and folk stories, and arts to understand and respect each other better.



Plan activities like cultural displays and music performances to celebrate our differences and work together on creative projects. 80% of participants said they learnt two new cultural practices or traditions and 70% of participants formed better connections with people from other cultures. This prevented men women from potentially being drawn into the politics of despair, and made the community stronger and more united

BETTER HEALTH FOR ALL by Oasis Centre

This new 'English for Health' Course brought together women from different cultural, religious and language backgrounds in order to break down barriers between them and to learn the English language mainly to access health care and NHS services. Most women saw A&E as their first choice, but this course helped them to know appropriate NHS services to access.



Learners also made 2 trips to build confidence with their English speaking – a visit to the fire station for safety information and a shopping trip. Project Manager Gill Boyd said this health literacy programme empowered those with limited English to get the adequate healthcare support they and their families need. It also helped in tackling health inequalities pointed out during the Covid-19.

CYCLE ROOTS by Revolution Fitness

This project delivered 12 'learn to cycle' sessions facilitated by cycle coaches from Evolve Cycling Network. These took place in 3 blocks of 4 sessions for 10 women each, so by the end of all 12 sessions, 30 women of different ages were enabled to learn how to ride a bike with confidence. Unexpectedly, a few elderly participants, over 60 years, also joined. This was inspirational.



The project led 3 local bike rides: at Wardown Park, around the Lewsey area, and along the Luton Busway. This helped build confidence for new cyclists and also prompted other cyclists to organise bike rides in their local parks too.

BISCOT PEACE AND WELLBEING HUB by St Andrew's Church

St Andrew's Church set up a 'Peace and Wellbeing Hub' project in partnership with the Doctor's Surgery next-door to the Church, local councillors and other local stakeholders. It launched a community gardening project, health and wellbeing drop-ins, and regular community events involving a wide variety of faiths, ethnicities and cultures. It's 'Spring Festival' attracted over 200 people from the local community.



The Vicar Revd Luke Larner said, "Running this project has brought a new lease of life both into our Church and our local community. We have no community spaces or parks in our ward, and so opening up our premises and gardens to our local community has meant a flourishing of local relationships and a new sense of solidarity in our neighbourhood.

LUTON ORCHARDS PROJECT by Edible High Town

GRASSROOTS has been important in helping to sustain Edible High Town (EHT) since its start in 2016. It connected EHT to Luton's faith communities, provided thoughtful advice on working in Luton's diverse communities, and helped EHT find funding for projects through Near Neighbours.

To help EHT build capacity, particularly to run the Luton Orchards project, GRASSROOTS, through Near Neighbours Programme, supported EHT to enrol in a 9-month course on Community Orcharding.

The course helped to deepen and formalise EHT skill base to work with people around sustainability, biodiversity and to help Lutonians connect with nature around them. It covered fruit tree management skills such as pruning, planting and grafting, but also extended into areas such as:

- Considering climate change in the context of urban orchards
- Working with community groups to help them care for their orchards
- Analysing the potential orchard sites and planning successful orchards





Edible High Town Project Coordinator Konni Deppe presented GRASSROOTS Trustees each with a bottle of apple juice made of Luton Apples.

OTHER EVENTS & ACTIVITIES SUPPORTED BY GRASSROOTS



Hindu Festival Diwali Celebrations in Luton



Luton in Bloom Garden Competition (Prize Winners)



Peace Garden Tree Plantation in memory of those died in Covid-19



East Fest – Celebrating Eastern European Cultures in Luton



University of Bedfordshire Chaplain Helen Burgess after her Commissioning Service



University of Bedfordshire Annual Remembrance Service

OTHER EVENTS & ACTIVITIES SUPPORTED BY GRASSROOTS



Dr Sabeel Ahmed (L), Executive Director of ICNA (Islamic Circle of North America) visited our offices



Jewish Festival Chanukkah Celebrations at Luton United Synagogue



Revd. Michael Anokye (2nd from right), the newly inducted Minister at The Olive Tree Church



Different faith communities welcomed the Peace Light flame brought from Bethlehem at All Saints



University of Bedfordshire
Annual Carols by Candlelight Service



Holocaust Memorial Day Service at University of Bedfordshire

OTHER EVENTS & ACTIVITIES SUPPORTED BY GRASSROOTS



All Saints Church Refugee & Asylum Seekers' Drop-in & Support Group



Bahai Nawruz (New Year) Celebrations Reinforced oneness of humanity



Multi faith gathering at the Big Iftar Event showing mutual respect and solidarity



Catholic Priests visited Luton's different places of worship strengthening bonds of friendships



GRASSROOTS Trustees visited Guru Nanak Gurudwara



Good Friday Walk of Witness by Bury Park Beech Hill Council of Churches

OTHER EVENTS & ACTIVITIES SUPPORTED BY GRASSROOTS



Luton Council 2040 Vision Conference



Blessing of River Lea by St Andrew's Church



Loving Leagrave Campaign by St Luke's Church Community Cafe



World Day of Prayer Service prepared by Women of Palestine



International Mother Language Day Online Event by Purbachal – Eastern Sky Bangladeshi Cultural Group



Sikh Guru Shri Ravidass Ji's 647th Birthday Celebrations

OTHER EVENTS & ACTIVITIES SUPPORTED BY GRASSROOTS



Beech Hill Methodist Church
90th Anniversary Celebrations



Buddha Day Celebrations by the Luton Sri Lankan Welfare Association (LSLWA)



Colours of Eid Festival



Lord Lieutenant's Annual Service of Thanksgiving



High Street Leagrave Methodist Church
200th Anniversary Celebrations



Sri Lankan New Year Celebrations by the Luton Sri Lankan Welfare Association (LSLWA)

TRIBUTE TO SISTER MAIRE HAYES



A former member of GRASSROOTS Staff Team, Sr Maire Hayes, died peacefully on Tue 5th Nov. She suffered from the aftereffects of a stroke.

Sr Maire belonged to a Catholic Religious Congregation called “Daughters of the Holy Spirit”, and as a religious Nun, she went off to Chile at a time, when the country was suffering under Pinochet’s brutal military rule of political suppression through torture, murder, and exile. As a chaplain to the women political prisoners, Sr Maire came across a woman who became pregnant after repeatedly being raped by a prison guard. When this woman requested Sr Maire to ask the fellow prisoner (a doctor) for an abortion, the Dr replied, "She must bear a child for the revolution," and Sr Marie said, "For this I’d risk even my immortal soul."

Sr Maire was indeed a brave and a courageous Daughter of the Holy Spirit. She never hesitated to take a stand for peace and justice in the world.

Soon after 9/11, she arrived in Luton. She became the Inter Faith Coordinator for the Roman Catholic Diocese of Northampton, and she carried out that role with great passion for nearly 20 years.

She was a great supporter of our partner organisation, the Luton Council of Faiths, and she contributed significantly to inter-faith & cohesion work in Luton. She stood shoulder to shoulder with Luton's different faith communities in testing times. Her spirit of defiance to those attempting to undermine the stability and integrity of diverse communities in our town has left a lasting impression on us all.

She was admired by many in Luton's diverse faith communities for her gentleness, humility, grace, astuteness, diligence, and the dignified way in which she contributed to life in Luton.

Prof Zafar Khan, LCoF Chair of Luton Council of Faiths said, “Sr Maire had empathetic and engaging personality. We’ll sorely miss her. We are grateful for her life, her faith, and her selfless commitment to our town.”

The Church of England’s Bishop Richard Atkinson called Sr Maire “a faithful servant of Luton and beyond”.

The URC (United Reformed Church) Ex Moderator Revd Dr Andrew Prasad, said, “We have lost a passionate inter faith advocate. Her legacy must continue.”

Sr Maire was also a trained teacher. So after coming back from Chile, Sr Maire, went on to support the work of Cardinal Newman School in Luton. The former Head Teacher Jane Crow said, “Sr Maire was diligent, hardworking, supportive but also genuinely interested in making a difference for the students. She had a lively intelligence and great sense of humour. She’d brighten up all our meetings. What a life and what a great female role model she was. Sr Maire was way ahead of her time!”

Sr Maire also supported the work of a great charity called the Luton Irish Forum, whose CEO Noelette Hanley (present amongst us) said that Sr Marie was passionate for working cross community. She’d act out her values, and champion causes for common good. And that is so true, because Sr Maire laid the foundation of a Campaign, which was about Making Luton a Fairtrade Town.

As part of this Campaign Sr Maire was seen walking in the streets with Hindu & Muslim friends Mr. Thakor Morarji & Dr Anwer Usmani, holding in her hands, a 5-feet tall inflatable fairtrade banana, making a spectacle of herself, for the sake of promoting fairtrade & economic justice. Looking at such an effort collectively made by people from diverse faiths, many people would stop by say, "You are promoting so much more than just the fair trade. You are promoting hope for the world, not just for the fairtrade farmers & growers."

In the 25th Anniversary Celebration event of GRASSROOTS, Sr Maire promoted Fairtrade by wearing a Luton Boaters Hat and arriving in an Indian Tricycle Rickshaw, driven by our colleague Mr. Ryad Khodabocus, Head of Community Relations & Development at Luton Council of Faiths.

Sr Maire also contributed as a member of the Roman Catholic National Justice and Peace Network (popularly known as NJPN). She also supported the work of CAFOD (Catholic Agency for Overseas Development). She also supported the work of Near Neighbours Programme which brought neighbours of diverse backgrounds to work together. She led workshops and retreats introducing 'Christ in Other Cultures' using Jesus's portrayal by artists from different parts of the world.

We will always remain indebted for her support, guidance, and leadership in many different ways. We are grateful for her life, her faith, and her selfless commitment to people's wellbeing in Luton and beyond.

A Priest from the Church of Netherlands spent 6-weeks of internship at GRASSROOTS in Luton. She said, "I had little but very profound interaction with Sr Maire. She has left a lasting impression on me. She was a remarkable woman."

Dr Nazia Khanum – a Muslim woman activist in Luton said, "When I think of Sr Maire, I vividly recall her lovely face and strikingly pure sacred voice, like the sound of a bell. Her devotion to duty and fairness was remarkable. Her robust support for women's empowerment was seen in action in women's events like Precious Pearls, marking the International Women's Day.

May Sr Maire's spirit of compassion and her spirit of courage-strength-resilience continue to inspire us all and keep us all united in our longing for peace, justice, and prosperity of all in our world!

Most condolence messages we received have ended saying may she rest in peace, but those of us who know Sr Maire closely, would know that resting eternally would be suicidal for Sr Maire. Therefore, we say, continue to be at work, Sr Maire. Since you are liberated from the limitations of your physical body – fly & hover around, for you are a true Daughter of the Holy Spirit.



Ahead of EDL (English Defence League) demonstration in May 2012, Sr Maire Hayes (in the middle) speaking at a Peace Rally held in the grounds of St. Mary's Church in Luton, with Muslim & Sikh friends

Financial Summary

September 2023 – August 2024

Income	**£**
Grants received	110,564
Donations	4,692
Interest and other income	8,688
Sale of Fairtrade goods	10,936
	134,880
Expenditure – Charitable activities	
Advancement of Interfaith Relations & Community Development Work	70,258
Near Neighbours	29,239
Multi-faith Storytelling and Other Events	27,295
Admin, Governance & Fundraising	16,360
Total	143,152
Net Expenditure for the year	
Total	8,272
Reserves at 31 August 2023	
Unrestricted (Designated)	57,895
Restricted	5,058

Visit Our Website:
www.grassrootsluton.org.uk

Email Us:
admingrassroots@btconnect.com

Call Us:
01582 416946

Write To Us:
GRASSROOTS Programme
47 High Town Road
Luton
Bedfordshire
LU2 0BW



Like / Follow Us Online:

www.facebook.com/grassrootsluton

www.twitter.com/grassrootsluton

Charity Registration Number: 1163427

REGISTERED CHARITY NUMBER: 1163427

GRASSROOTS PROGRAMME

FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE

YEAR ENDED 31 AUGUST 2024

Miller & Co
Chartered Accountants
5 Imperial Court
Laporte Way
Luton
Bedfordshire
LU4 8FE

GRASSROOTS PROGRAMME

CONTENTS OF THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
for the Year Ended 31 August 2024

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GRASSROOTS PROGRAMME
TRUSTEES' ANNUAL REPORT
for the Year Ended 31 August 2024

The Trustees present their report and the financial statements for the year ended 31 August 2024. The trustees have adopted the provisions of the Statement of Recommended Practice (SORP) "Accounting and Reporting by Charities" in preparing the annual report and financial statements of the charity.

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

This charity, Grassroots Programme CIO took over the assets of the former unincorporated charity Grassroots Programme (charity number 1057468) on 1 September 2016. Prior years' reports relating to charity number 1057468 may be obtained from the office at the principal address.

LEGAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE DETAILS

CHARITY NAME:	Grassroots Programme
STATUS:	Charitable Incorporated Organisation - Foundation Constitution. Registered Constitution and as a charity on 04 September 2015.
CHARITY NUMBER:	1163427
PRINCIPAL ADDRESS:	47 High Town Road Luton Bedfordshire LU2 0BW
TRUSTEES AND OFFICERS:	Those who served as trustees of the charity during the year were as follows:

Rev D Lawson	(Chair)
Mrs J Bird	
Rev M Hindley	(Resigned 31 December 2023)
Rev P Horner	
Mrs R Tetlow	
Mrs S Marsden	(Secretary)
Ms D Purfield	
Mr B Roe	(Treasurer)

CHARITY DIRECTOR:	Mr D Jonathan
BANKERS:	The Co-operative Bank Olympic House 6 Olympic Court Salford M8 2QP
INDEPENDENT EXAMINERS:	Miller & Co Chartered Accountants Statutory Auditors 5 Imperial Court, Laporte Way Luton Bedfordshire LU4 8FE

ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE

Grassroots Programme is an independent charity. A board of trustees administers the charity. The trustees are responsible for the overall control and management of the charity and meet on a regular basis.

PUBLIC BENEFIT

The trustees confirm that they have complied with their duty, set out in the 2011 Charity Act, to have due regard to Charity Commission guidance on public benefit.

RECRUITMENT AND APPOINTMENT OF TRUSTEES

Trustees are appointed for a term of five years by a resolution of the trustees passed at a special meeting for which not less than 21 days' notice has been given.

Under the terms of the Constitution, newly appointed trustees are not entitled to act as trustees until they have signed, in the minute book of the trustees, a declaration of acceptance and willingness to act in the trusts of the Charity.

All the trustees are familiar with the work of the charity and an induction is performed for any new trustees.

OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES

The objects of the charity as set out in the Constitution are as follows:

(1) To advance education for the public benefit in global issues to enable greater awareness of factors that will contribute to the relief of needy victims of breaches of human rights in such ways that are charitable in law.

(2) To advance religion and promote understanding among Christians and those of other faiths.

(3) To provide opportunities for the advancement of education among all ages, but particularly adults, in such ways that are charitable in law.

(4) To provide relief of the aged, infirm and poor.

ACHIEVEMENTS AND PERFORMANCE

In order to achieve its objectives, the charity runs a number of programmes and activities. During the year it ran the following specific programmes and activities:

WORKING TOGETHER FOR PEACE & UNITY

In celebrating unity, diversity, and community by bringing individuals from different backgrounds together, and in fostering a sense of togetherness, and promoting cultural exchanges, GRASSROOTS supported and promoted a few big events; Desi Fest Luton | East Fest Luton | Diwali in Luton | Luton in Bloom | Turk Fest | Big Iftar | Colours of Eid and numerous other religious and cultural festivities.

We also supported activities during the Black History Month. Two key events, we supported include the 75th-anniversary commemoration of the Windrush Generation in which a dozen Windrush local Heroes from Luton were honoured. And the other event was the Black Culture Market at which there were a variety of stalls offering a range of creative and interesting products and materials, celebrating the contributions of black businesses and social entrepreneurs who add colour, vigour, and spice to the British cultural landscape.

We also commemorated the UN's International Day of Peace (IDP) by organising a multi-faith Peace Walk event in the town, visiting different places of worship including 2 Churches, a Mosque, and a Gurudwara. At this event. Near Neighbours funded CATALYST Training Graduates were presented with their certificates. They shared their aspirations for a better world and their resolve to combat poverty, deprivation, and other current problems in the town.

During Inter Faith Week (IFW) 2023, we held several activities. We coordinated exchange visits between different places of worship. In a Diocesan IFW event held at the Church of England St Albans Cathedral, we invited people from different faiths to reflect together on the theme of "Strangers & Co-Pilgrims – Sharing how encounters with those of different beliefs strengthen our faith. Representatives of 8 different faiths shared from their perspectives how their teachings lead them to view the value of others and to respect those of different beliefs.

Stories are powerful and have a lasting impact on people. So, during this year's Inter-faith Week, using the 'lost art' of story-telling with the local Award-winning Khayaal Theatre, we delivered a special multi-faith storytelling performance consisting of character and virtue-nourishing stories from 4 different faiths. This was appealing, especially to young audiences. However, throughout the year, we rolled out Multi Faith Storytelling Workshops, supported by the Westhill Foundation and the Awards for All Funding. We also supported Luton Council of Faiths to deliver 15 School Assemblies by a panel of multi faith leaders on the theme how to make our town more respectful.

We hosted a multi-faith group of over 30 Swedish guests and visitors for 3 days in Luton. We convened a Luton & Swedish Faith Leaders' Exchange meeting during Inter Faith Week. At this meeting, colleagues shared good practices, exchanged ideas, and shared how to talk about difficult issues e.g. Israel-Palestine conflict. We also organised a number of field visits acknowledging and involving various other inter faith projects, initiatives, groups and organisations including the Police and the local authority – all focussing around the theme of strengthening cohesion in Luton.

The other networking event we supported was to connect faith communities and the NHS BLMK (Bedfordshire, Luton and Milton Keynes) ICB (Integrated Care Board), previously known as BLMK CCG (Clinical Commissioning Group). We organised a multi faith Listening event for the ICB to improve health and care services in Luton.

At the University of Bedfordshire Chaplaincy Commissioning Event, we coordinated different faith leaders to commit their support to the Chaplaincy services, especially for the overseas students arriving in Luton from very diverse backgrounds. We also helped with the multi-faith aspects at the Chaplaincy-led Carols by Candlelight event and Remembrance Service.

We facilitated a multi-faith training day for the Bedfordshire Hospital Chaplains and facilitated workshops and visits to different places of worship in Luton.

We supported the multi-faith attendance and participation at
- Luton's Peace Garden tree plantation events in memory of all those who died of Covid-19
- Lord Lieutenant's Annual Service of Thanksgiving for the voluntary organisations in Bedfordshire

We supported and contributed to the organising of the World Religion Day & the Holocaust Memorial Day (HMD) events in Luton. A Holocaust survivor shared a moving account of his painful story. He said this wasn't the first genocide and sadly this wasn't the last. The human race is not good at 'Never Again'. Several civic dignitaries, including the Lord Lieutenant of Bedfordshire and members of Luton's diverse communities lit candles in memory of all those killed during the Holocaust and the subsequent genocides.

This year's Annual World Day of Prayer (WDP) materials were prepared by the Christian women of Palestine. When it was prepared, no one foresaw the terrible war that is currently raging, still the service material felt perfectly appropriate for the present time. One prayer in the service booklet read; "God of Peace, we pray for a peaceful end to the ongoing situation in Palestine. We also pray for the city of Jerusalem, sacred to the three religions of Christianity, Judaism and Islam. Let there be equality, freedom of religion, freedom of movement and freedom of expression." GRASSROOTS supported and promoted the event, in the print media and social media too. May we all continue to work for peace and justice in our world and bear with one another in love!

We also supported;
- A Bangladeshi community organisation called Purbachal (meaning Eastern Sky) 25th Anniversary Celebration Event
- Guru Nanak Gurudwara commemorating its founder Sikh Guru Nanak Dev Ji's 554th Birth Anniversary Celebrations
- Carols by Candlelight Event by University Chaplaincy called The Treehouse
- Chanukah Celebrations held at Luton United Synagogue.
- Peace Light Service
- St Luke's Café in promoting communal eating
- Shri Guru Ravidass Ji's 647th Birth Anniversary Celebrations
- 10th Big Iftar & Eid Events
- Good Friday & Easter Events
- Bahai Nawruz (New Year) Celebrations
- First-ever Sri Lankan (Sinhalese) New Year & Vesakh (Buddha Day) celebrations
- Beech Hill Methodist Church 90th Anniversary
- Leagrave High Street Methodist Church 200th Anniversary
- Launch of Knife Angel – a 27-foot sculpture highlighting negative effects of violent knife crime on our communities

GRASSROOTS supported the Luton Council of Faiths (LCoF) appeal to support The Keech Hospice Short Tail Fundraising Trail. (https://keech.org.uk/whats-on/the-short-tail-trail/) Keech Hospice – Hare & Tortoise Sculptures were to be sponsored and with LCoF support, we brought diverse communities together to paint the sculptures. This was yet another example of good practice of inter faith cooperation, showcasing how Luton communities can live well together and work for the common good.

Partnership with C of E DIFA (Diocesan Inter Faith Advisors)

We have been facilitating regular meetings of DIFAs (Diocesan Inter Faith Advisers). We formed the Diocesan Inter Faith Network (DIFN). It has now over 20 members. We contributed to the national C of E's P & E (Presence & Engagement) network, particularly about our experiences of tackling issues and challenges caused by the Israel-Palestine conflict. We facilitated Bishop Richard's visit to different places of worship in Luton, where faith leaders appreciated Bishop's visit and discussed with him, local and global issues and concerns impacting lives locally.

World Council of Reformed Churches (WCRC) Consultation

We were invited to attend and share our inter faith community work story at the Global Consultation held in Haus Villigst, Schwerte, Germany 11-15 December 2023 led by the Lutheran World Foundation & the World Council of Reformed Churches (WCRC) on the theme "A Protestant Theological Approach to Freedom of Religion and Belief".

NEAR NEIGHBOURS PROGRAMME

GRASSROOTS has been hosting and administering the Near Neighbours (NN) Programme in Luton for over 10 years. Through its numerous projects and activities funded locally, NN helped communities to stay connected, especially as interfaith relations have been strained due to the ongoing Israel-Palestine conflict. We worked hard to encourage a total of 17 Near Neighbours Small Grant Funding Applications submitted from Luton. The 12 successful projects funded by the Near Neighbours Programme in Luton are listed below;

- Att10tive Luton – a social enterprise helped young people celebrate Luton's diverse heritage, using art and videos
- Luton All Stars held biggest Diversity Football Tournament
- Edible High Town making High Town greener and more sustainable
- Feast Project held 7 dialogue encounters for young people skilling them to disagree respectfully
- Food Bank diversifying its volunteer base
- Guru Ravidass Sangat South Asian Cookery Sessions for diverse community groups
- Inspire FM multi-faith engagement at the 10th Anniversary of Big Iftar
- Khayaal Theatre delivered multi faith story-telling sessions
- Next Generation Scheme delivered cultural exchange workshops, promoting and celebrating diversity
- Oasis served women of diverse faiths and cultures with English speaking with a focus on accessing health services
- Revoluton Fitness ran biking sessions for women of global majority heritage
- St Andrew's Church Biscot Peace & Wellbeing Hub

BBC RADIO 1 BIG WEEKEND

This report will be incomplete, if we did not mention about the BBC Radio 1's Big Weekend – a famous British annual music festival run by BBC Radio 1, bringing world-class musicians to Luton's Stockwood Park for the first time. GRASSROOTS was invited to join on Sunday, at a special morning Breakfast Reception. We had opportunity to converse with Aled Haydn Jones, Head of BBC Radio 1 and also with the Director of Public Affairs. Over 100,000 festivalgoers had flocked to see this amazing weekend full of incredible performances. During the performance, there were fireworks, tears, smiles and a very special song just for Luton Town Football Club. It was the perfect end to an epic weekend of music. The festival was a real tonic for the town. Estimates suggest that the Big Weekend helped bring in £4 million for the local economy.

An Overview of Global, National & Local Issues Impacting Life in Luton

The world currently seems a very dark and a hostile place, because of over 110 wars and armed conflicts according to the Geneva Academy of International Humanitarian Law & Human Rights. Whether it is territorial disputes, control of resources, power struggles, ideological differences, or economic competition, seeing the conflicting interests between nations escalating into armed & bloody conflicts is extremely distressing.

We have all been appalled by the immense civilian suffering in Israel-Palestine. Here, in the UK, we saw record levels of anti-Semitism, anti-Jewish hatred, and also a deplorable and deeply concerning rise in anti-Muslim hatred - Islamophobia. A top London school was taken to high court over prayer ban for Muslims. At a local mosque in Luton, an individual intentionally defaced a mosque banner, and painted a red cross behind it. This malicious act understandably caused distress among members of the congregation, particularly in the climate of heightened Islamophobia and anti-Muslim sentiments. It is good that Luton's faith leaders have talked about Israel-Palestine as a political conflict, and not as a conflict between the Jews & Muslims, even though it may seem and feel and projected that way. At the end of last year, a prayer vigil was held in Luton for the peace in Israel- Palestine. All hoped and aspired for peace and an end to conflict in Israel & Palestine.

Nationally, the withdrawal of government funding to the Inter Faith Network (IFN) UK was a decision that is seen as short-sighted and harmful to interfaith and community relations throughout the country.

Locally, in a local Knife Crime incident in Oct'23, a 16-year-old boy was stabbed to death in Luton. We networked with the Bedfordshire Police, Luton's many schools, the Luton council, and also with Luton's diverse communities and faith groups to come together to express our collective deep shock and sadness at the tragic event. A silent prayer vigil was held in Wardown Park. We also supported a special faith-led event at one of Luton's prominent mosques propagating a strong message – Stop the Hate and Violence. It has no place in our civilised societies. One of our CATALYST-trained young persons contributed significantly to a multi-agency Knife Crime Summit held at Luton Sixth Form College later in Nov'23.

A neighbourly issue involving a place of worship could have potentially gotten out of hand, on the night of Christmas day. We mediated, mentored, and made people aware of the unpleasant consequences bringing disrepute to the whole of Luton town, and eventually we helped resolve the issue amicably as soon as possible.

The killing of children in Southport was shocking for everyone. What was even more shocking was the far-right extremists hijacking the tragedy of Southport from a grieving community for their own hateful racist and Islamophobic agenda. This triggered the civil unrest, the riots and the deplorable violent events in cities and towns across the UK targeting minority communities and the police. Thankfully, Luton stayed peaceful. The role played by the Bedfordshire Police, Luton Council, Luton Council of Faiths and the local communities, was commended. Such solidarity, especially in times of fear, is a powerful force, and strategies deployed to tackle misinformation, and calming anxieties, was a good and timely intervention.

People in Southport set an example by coming together to condemn the violence, support the victims and clean up the mess after the riots, but they must not be the only ones; we all must play our part too. And that is why in Luton, we invited people to make short solidarity videos with those of different backgrounds, sharing their stories of friendships and living well together, and upload it on #weareluton. (Watch it on https://www.facebook.com/groups/LutonFaiths/)

Overall, our priorities during the last year have included, continuing to

- monitor tensions caused by the ongoing wars and conflicts, particularly the conflict in M'East
- mentor individuals and organisations (faith and voluntary) reminding and strengthening everyone of our collective resolve to keep peace in our town
- encourage and foster 'social interaction' and 'social action' across religious and cultural divides so that we can continue to work together for the common good
- build, consolidate & strengthen local partnerships & networks
- support local projects funded by the Near Neighbours Grants
- strengthen good and positive leadership in our communities

We must all strengthen our resolve to continue working together for safeguarding the vulnerable, for the stability and compassion in our society, and for the peace, unity, wellbeing, and prosperity of all in our town, as well as in our country.

RISK MANAGEMENT

The Trustees have assessed the major risks to which the charity is exposed, in particular those related to the finances of the charity and are satisfied that systems are in place to reduce exposure to the major risks.

RESERVES POLICY

The Trustees have a policy of aiming to retain reserves equivalent to six months average expenditure. This is due to the uncertain nature of funding received. The free reserves at the year-end were £57,895.

PLANS FOR FUTURE PERIODS

The Trustees remain committed to the growth of the Grassroots Programme and the possibilities of expanding the presence of Grassroots Programme to other parts of the country. However, this is dependent upon the charity securing additional funds.

FINANCIAL REVIEW

The charity had total income of £134,880 (2023 £114,576). The main sources of income were grants of £110,564 (2023 £101,807). The charity had total expenditure of £143,152 (2023 £116,416). Expenditure on charitable activities totalled £126,792 (2023 £97,216) which included governance costs of £3,584 (2023 £3,147). There was net income on the unrestricted fund of £1,498 and net expenditure of £9,770 on the restricted fund after transfers between funds. Total funds at the end of the year were £62,953.

GRASSROOTS PROGRAMME
TRUSTEES' ANNUAL REPORT
for the Year Ended 31 August 2024

The trustees would like to record their thanks to all individuals and associations who supported the charity during the year. All details of the income and expenditure of the charity are set out in the Statement of Financial Activities and the notes to the accounts. In the opinion of the trustees the charity was in a satisfactory financial position at the year end.

STATEMENT OF TRUSTEES' RESPONSIBILITIES

The trustees are responsible for preparing the Trustees' Annual Report and the financial statements in accordance with applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice).

The law applicable to charities in England & Wales requires the trustees to prepare financial statements for each financial year which give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the charity and of the incoming resources and application of resources of the charity for that period. In preparing these financial statements, the trustees are required to:

- select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently;
- observe the methods and principles in the Charities SORP 2019 (FRS 102);
- make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent;
- state whether applicable accounting standards have been followed, subject to any material departures disclosed and explained in the financial statements;
- prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the charity will continue in operation.

The trustees are responsible for keeping proper accounting records that disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the charity and enable them to ensure that the financial statements comply with the Charities Act 2011, the Charity (Accounts and Reports) Regulations 2008 and the provisions of the constitution. They are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the charity and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

ON BEHALF OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES:

David Lawson

Rev D Lawson
Chair

B Roe
Treasurer

Date: 7 November 2024

GRASSROOTS PROGRAMME

INDEPENDENT EXAMINERS' REPORT
to the Trustees of Grassroots Programme

I report to the charity trustees on my examination of the accounts of the charity for the year ended 31 August 2024 which are set out on pages 8 to 19.

RESPONSIBILITIES AND BASIS OF REPORT

As the charity's trustees you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Charities Act 2011 ('the Act').

I report in respect of my examination of the charity's accounts carried out under section 145 of the Act and in carrying out my examination I have followed all the applicable Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the Act.

INDEPENDENT EXAMINERS' STATEMENT

Your attention is drawn to the fact that the charity has prepared the accounts 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 in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) in preference to the Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice issued on 1 April 2005 which is referred to in the extant regulations but has since been withdrawn.

We understand that this has been done in order for the accounts to provide a true and fair view in accordance with the Generally Accepted Accounting Practice effective for reporting periods beginning on or after 1 January 2015.

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

1. accounting records were not kept in respect of the charity as required by section 130 of the Act; or
2. the accounts do not accord with those records; or
3. the accounts do not comply with the applicable requirements concerning the form and content of accounts set out in the Charities (Accounts and Reports) Regulations 2008 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.

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.



R A Cox FCA
Miller & Co
Chartered Accountants
5 Imperial Court
Laporte Way, Luton
Bedfordshire
LU4 8FE

8 November 2024

GRASSROOTS PROGRAMME

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES
for the Year Ended 31 August 2024

	Note	Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	2024 Total	2023 Total
		£	£	£	£
INCOME FROM					
Grants	2	64,000	46,564	**110,564**	101,807
Donations	3	4,492	200	**4,692**	9,567
Investment income		2,234	-	**2,234**	1,372
Sale of Fairtrade goods		10,936	-	**10,936**	1,830
Other income		6,454	-	**6,454**	-
TOTAL INCOME		88,116	46,764	**134,880**	114,576
EXPENDITURE ON					
Raising funds		16,360	-	**16,360**	19,200
Charitable activities	4	70,258	56,534	**126,792**	97,216
TOTAL EXPENDITURE		86,618	56,534	**143,152**	116,416
Net income / (expenditure)		1,498	(9,770)	**(8,272)**	(1,840)
Transfers between funds		-	-	**-**	-
Net movement in funds for the year		1,498	(9,770)	**(8,272)**	(1,840)
Reconciliation of funds					
Funds brought forward at 1 September 2023		56,397	14,828	**71,225**	73,065
Funds carried forward at 31 August 2024		£57,895	£5,058	**£62,953**	£71,225

The statement of financial activities includes all gains and losses in the year. All incoming resources and resources expended derive from continuing activities.

GRASSROOTS PROGRAMME

BALANCE SHEET
31 August 2024

	Note	2024		2023
		£	£	£
FIXED ASSETS:				
Tangible assets	9		-	-
CURRENT ASSETS:				
Debtors	10	**115**		123
COIF Funds		**44,938**		42,703
Cash at bank		**20,504**		32,627
		65,557		75,453
Creditors: amounts falling due within one year	11	**2,604**		4,228
NET CURRENT ASSETS			**62,953**	71,225
NET ASSETS			**£62,953**	£71,225
FUNDS:				
Unrestricted general fund	13		**57,895**	56,397
Restricted funds	13		**5,058**	14,828
TOTAL FUNDS			**£62,953**	£71,225

The financial statements on pages 8 to 19 were approved by the board of trustees on 7 November 2024.

SIGNED ON BEHALF OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES:

Rev D Lawson
Chair

Mr B Roe
Treasurer

7 November 2024

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
for the Year Ended 31 August 2024

1. ACCOUNTING POLICIES

General information and basis of preparation
Grassroots Programme is a Charitable Incorporated Organisation. The charity constitutes a public benefit entity as defined by FRS 102. 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 issued in October 2019, the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102), the Charity's constitution, the Charities Act 2011 and UK Generally Accepted Accounting Practice.

The financial statements have been prepared to give a 'true and fair' view and have departed from the Charities (Accounts and Reports) Regulations 2008 only to the extent required to provide a 'true and fair view'. This departure has involved following the 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 issued in October 2019 rather than the Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice effective from 1 April 2005 which has since been withdrawn.

The financial statements are prepared on a going concern basis under the historical cost convention. The financial statements are presented in pounds sterling and rounded to the nearest pound. The address of the principal office is given in the charity information on page 1 of these financial statements.

Going concern
The financial statements have been prepared on a going concern basis as the trustees believe that no material uncertainties exist. The trustees have considered the level of funds held and the expected level of income and expenditure for 12 months from authorising these financial statements. The budgeted income and expenditure is sufficient with the level of reserves for the charity to be able to continue as a going concern.

Unrestricted and restricted funds
Unrestricted funds are grants and other income received for the objects of the charity without further specified purpose and are available as general funds.

Designated funds comprise unrestricted funds that have been set aside by the trustees for particular purposes. The aim and use of each designated fund is set out in the notes to the financial statements.

Restricted funds are those funds which are to be used for specific purposes as laid down by the donor or the trustees. Expenditure which meets these criteria is identified to the funds, together with a fair allocation of administration and support costs. The aim and use of each restricted fund is set out in the notes to the financial statements.

Income recognition
Donations and other income are recognised when received. Grants are recognised when received or when the charity has legal entitlement to them, the amount can be reliably measured and there is sufficient certainty of receipt them.

Expenditure recognition
Staff costs and overhead expenses are allocated to activities on the basis of staff time spent on those activities. Support costs comprise those costs incurred directly in support of expenditure on the objectives of the charity. Governance costs relate to trustees' expenses, legal charges, independent examiners fees and attributable expenses of governing the charity. The trustees give all their time free of charge.

Expenditure is recognised when the amount can be reliably measured, there is a legal obligation to make it and it is probable that settlement will be required.

ACCOUNTING POLICIES continued

Leasing commitments
Rentals paid under operating leases are charged to income as incurred.

Pensions
The charity operates a defined contribution pension scheme for certain employees. Contributions in respect of pensions are charged to income in the year in which they are paid.

Debtors and creditors receivable/payable within one year
Grants, other debtors and creditors receivable or payable within one year are recorded at transaction price.

Fixed assets
The charity has a policy of capitalising fixed asset expenditure over £1,000.

Tangible fixed assets are stated at cost less accumulated depreciation.

Depreciation is provided on all tangible fixed assets, at rates calculated to write off the cost, less estimated residual value, of each asset on a systematic basis over its expected useful life as follows:

IT and office equipment - 33% on cost

2. INCOME FROM GRANTS

	Unrestricted	Restricted	2024 Total	2023 Total
	£	£	£	£
Grants for general purposes				
Methodist Church Beds, Essex & Herts District	15,000	-	**15,000**	15,000
URC - MIG (Thames North Synod)	12,000	-	**12,000**	12,000
Diocese of St. Albans	10,000	-	**10,000**	10,840
Luton Council of Faiths	12,000	-	**12,000**	12,000
Northampton RC Diocese	15,000	-	**15,000**	13,250
Church Urban Fund (Near Neighbours)				
Near Neighbours Fund Projects	-	29,239	**29,239**	31,292
Events				
National Lottery – Community Fund	-	9,900	**9,900**	-
Westhill Endowment	-	7,425	**7,425**	7,425
	64,000	46,564	**110,564**	101,807

Income from grants in 2023 totalled £101,807 of which £38,717 was attributable to restricted funds and £63,090 was attributable to unrestricted funds.

3. INCOME FROM DONATIONS & LEGACIES

	Unrestricted	Restricted	2024 Total	2023 Total
	£	£	£	£
Donations				
General	4,492	-	**4,492**	9,567
Events	-	200	**200**	-
	4,492	200	**4,692**	9,567

Income from donations and legacies in 2023 totalled £9,567 of which £nil was attributable to restricted funds and £9,567 was attributable to unrestricted funds.

4. ANALYSIS OF EXPENDITURE ON CHARITABLE ACTIVITIES

Charitable Activities 2024	Activities Undertaken Directly 2024 £	Support Costs 2024 £	Total 2024 £
Events	23,845	3,450	**27,295**
Near Neighbours	17,372	11,867	**29,239**
Advancement of Interfaith Relations & Community Development Work	9,593	60,665	**70,258**
	50,810	75,982	**126,792**

Charitable Activities 2023	Activities undertaken directly 2023 £	Support Costs 2023 £	Total 2023 £
Events	4,036	-	4,036
Working With Women	4,360	-	4,360
Near Neighbours	20,276	11,417	31,693
Advancement of Interfaith Relations & Community Development Work	3,783	53,344	57,127
	32,455	64,761	97,216

£56,534 (2023 £40,089) of the above costs were attributable to restricted funds and £70,258 (2023 £57,127) were attributable to unrestricted funds.

4a. ALLOCATION OF SUPPORT COSTS

Support Cost 2024	Basis of Allocation	Advancement of Interfaith Relations & Community Development Work 2024 £	Events 2024 £	Near Neighbours 2024 £	Total 2024 £
Governance	Usage	3,584	-	-	**3,584**
Information technology	Usage	1,158	-	71	**1,229**
Staff costs	Usage	32,735	3,450	10,840	**47,025**
Depreciation	Usage	-	-	-	**-**
Office costs	Usage	23,188	-	956	**24,144**
		60,665	3,450	11,867	**75,982**

Support Cost 2023	Basis of Allocation	Advancement of Interfaith Relations & Community Development Work 2023 £	Events 2023 £	Near Neighbours 2023 £	Total 2023 £
Governance	Usage	3,147	-	-	3,147
Information technology	Usage	1,349	-	-	1,349
Staff costs	Usage	33,360	-	11,015	44,375
Depreciation	Usage	830	-	-	830
Office costs	Usage	14,658	-	402	15,060
		53,344	-	11,417	64,761

5. GOVERNANCE COSTS

	2024	2023
	£	£
Trustee expenses	**96**	10
Independent examiners fee	**1,398**	1,362
Support costs	**2,090**	1,775
	3,584	3,147

6. STAFF COSTS AND NUMBERS

Staff costs were as follows:

	2024	2023
	£	£
Charity director	**45,000**	42,500
Employers National Insurance - payable	**4,955**	4,674
Less Employment allowance	**(4,955)**	(4,674)
	45,000	42,500
Pension contributions	**2,700**	2,550
	47,700	45,050

Defined contribution pension expense is allocated to activities based on the time apportionment of the relevant employee.

No employee earned more than £60,000 during the year (2023 same).

The average number of employees during the year was as follows:

Administration	**0.5**	0.5
Charitable activities	**0.5**	0.5
	1	1

7. TRANSACTIONS WITH TRUSTEES

No trustees received any remuneration during the year. Travel costs amounting to £96 (2023 £10) were reimbursed to two (2023 one) trustees.

No trustee had any personal interest in any contract or transaction entered into by the charity during the year (2023 same).

8. TAXATION

As a charity, Grassroots Programme is exempt from tax on income and gains falling within sections 521 to 536 of the Income Tax Act 2007 or section 256 of the Taxation of Chargeable Gains Act 1992 to the extent that these are applied to its charitable objects. No tax charges have arisen in the charity.

9. TANGIBLE FIXED ASSETS

	IT and Office Equipment £	Total £
Cost:		
As at 1 September 2023	2,490	2,490
Additions	-	-
Disposals	-	-
As at 31 August 2024	2,490	2,490
Depreciation:		
As at 1 September 2023	2,490	2,490
Charge for the year	-	-
Disposals	-	-
As at 31 August 2024	2,490	2,490
Net Book Value:		
As at 31 August 2024	-	-
As at 31 August 2023	-	-

10. DEBTORS

	2024	2023
	£	£
Prepayments	**115**	123
Accrued income	**-**	-
	115	123

11. CREDITORS: Amounts falling due within one year

	2024	2023
	£	£
Accruals	**1,398**	2,914
Taxation and social security	**756**	864
Other creditors	**450**	450
	2,604	4,228

12. ANALYSIS OF NET ASSETS BETWEEN FUNDS

	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	Total 2024 £
Net current assets	57,895	5,058	**62,953**
Total net assets	56,397	14,828	**71,225**

	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	Total 2023 £
Net current assets	56,397	14,828	71,225
Total net assets	56,397	14,828	71,225

13. MOVEMENT IN FUNDS

	Balance at 1 September 2023	Income	Expenditure	Transfers	Balance at 31 August 2024
	£	£	£	£	£
Restricted Funds					
Near Neighbours	-	29,239	(29,239)	-	-
Events	14,828	17,525	(27,295)	-	**5,058**
	14,828	46,764	(56,534)	-	**5,058**
Unrestricted Funds					
General funds	35,223	88,116	(86,618)	21,174	**57,895**
Designated funds:					
Spirituality of Justice	21,174	-	-	(21,174)	-
	56,397	88,116	(86,618)	-	**57,895**
Total Funds	71,225	134,880	(143,152)	-	**62,953**

	Balance at 1 September 2022	Income	Expenditure	Transfers	Balance at 31 August 2023
	£	£	£	£	£
Restricted Funds					
Working with Women	-	-	(4,360)	4,360	-
Near Neighbours	401	31,292	(31,693)	-	-
Events	11,439	7,425	(4,036)	-	14,828
	11,840	38,717	(40,089)	4,360	14,828
Unrestricted Funds					
General funds	51,644	62,609	(74,670)	(4,360)	35,223
Designated funds:					
Spirituality of Justice	9,581	13,250	(1,657)	-	21,174
	61,225	75,859	(76,327)	(4,360)	56,397
Total Funds	73,065	114,576	(116,416)	-	71,225

MOVEMENT IN FUNDS continued

The trustees have determined that the Spirituality of Justice designated fund is no longer required hence the transfer to general funds.

The balances on the restricted funds will be used to continue the work of the projects in accordance with the terms of the funders. Details of the funds are as follows:

Near Neighbours – Bringing neighbours together for 'social action' and 'social interaction'.
Events – includes Westhill Endowment Fund and National Lottery – Community Fund for the multi-faith storytelling workshops.

14. RELATED PARTIES AND CONTROLLING PARTY

There were no related party transactions requiring disclosure. (2023 £nil). The charity is controlled by the Trustees.

GRASSROOTS PROGRAMME

England & Wales - Charity number 1163427

Accounts

REGISTERED CHARITY NUMBER: 1163427

GRASSROOTS PROGRAMME

FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE

YEAR ENDED 31 AUGUST 2023

Miller & Co
Chartered Accountants
5 Imperial Court
Laporte Way
Luton
Bedfordshire
LU4 8FE

GRASSROOTS PROGRAMME

CONTENTS OF THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
for the Year Ended 31 August 2023

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GRASSROOTS PROGRAMME
TRUSTEES' ANNUAL REPORT
for the Year Ended 31 August 2023

The Trustees present their report and the financial statements for the year ended 31 August 2023. The trustees have adopted the provisions of the Statement of Recommended Practice (SORP) "Accounting and Reporting by Charities" in preparing the annual report and financial statements of the charity.

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

This charity, Grassroots Programme CIO took over the assets of the former unincorporated charity Grassroots Programme (charity number 1057468) on 1 September 2016. Prior years' reports relating to charity number 1057468 may be obtained from the office at the principal address.

LEGAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE DETAILS

CHARITY NAME:	Grassroots Programme
STATUS:	Charitable Incorporated Organisation - Foundation Constitution. Registered Constitution and as a charity on 04 September 2015.
CHARITY NUMBER:	1163427
PRINCIPAL ADDRESS:	47 High Town Road Luton Bedfordshire LU2 0BW
TRUSTEES AND OFFICERS:	Those who served as trustees of the charity during the year were as follows:

Rev D Lawson	(Chair)
Mrs J Bird	
Rev M Hindley	
Rev P Horner	
Mrs R Tetlow	
Mrs S Marsden	(Secretary)
Ms D Purfield	
Mr B Roe	(Treasurer)

CHARITY DIRECTOR:	Mr D Jonathan
BANKERS:	The Co-operative Bank Olympic House 6 Olympic Court Salford M8 2QP
INDEPENDENT EXAMINERS:	Miller & Co Chartered Accountants Statutory Auditors 5 Imperial Court, Laporte Way Luton Bedfordshire LU4 8FE

ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE
Grassroots Programme is an independent charity. A board of trustees administers the charity. The trustees are responsible for the overall control and management of the charity and meet on a regular basis.

PUBLIC BENEFIT
The trustees confirm that they have complied with their duty, set out in the 2011 Charity Act, to have due regard to Charity Commission guidance on public benefit.

RECRUITMENT AND APPOINTMENT OF TRUSTEES
Trustees are appointed for a term of five years by a resolution of the trustees passed at a special meeting for which not less than 21 days' notice has been given.

Under the terms of the Constitution, newly appointed trustees are not entitled to act as trustees until they have signed, in the minute book of the trustees, a declaration of acceptance and willingness to act in the trusts of the Charity.

All the trustees are familiar with the work of the charity and an induction is performed for any new trustees.

OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES
The objects of the charity as set out in the Constitution are as follows:

(1) To advance education for the public benefit in global issues to enable greater awareness of factors that will contribute to the relief of needy victims of breaches of human rights in such ways that are charitable in law.

(2) To advance religion and promote understanding among Christians and those of other faiths.

(3) To provide opportunities for the advancement of education among all ages, but particularly adults, in such ways that are charitable in law.

(4) To provide relief of the aged, infirm and poor.

ACHIEVEMENTS AND PERFORMANCE
In order to achieve its objectives, the charity runs a number of programmes and activities. During the year it ran the following specific programmes and activities:

WORKING TOGETHER FOR PEACE & UNITY

During the last year in our country, a BBC news headline reported "Three PMs in two months, is political chaos the UK's new normal?" (https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-63383616) In addition, we have had the unstoppable cost of living crisis and the country still feeling the effects of the pandemic. Amidst such political and economic uncertainties, least desired was a 102% rise in anti-migrant hatred as reported by the Hope Not Hate research stating 73% of people in the UK think that Britain is going in the wrong direction and the far-right wants to take advantage of that.

During the first week in Feb'23 in Luton, GB News (right-leaning news channel) contacted GRASSROOTS and various other faith groups and organisations in Luton about participating in a talk show on social cohesion hosted by Nigel Farage. Stephen Yaxley Lennon (Tommy Robinson) focused his attention once again on Luton targeting Luton's Discover Islam Centre, the Muslim community and the Luton Borough Council with negative allegations.

Faith leaders stated, "We are deeply distressed by the radical and extreme far right elements. They target Luton and the way in which Luton's communities are abused online is simply horrifying." Meetings were convened involving representation from the Police, Council and faith leaders to ensure there are measures in place to respond to any potential issues that may harm the community cohesion that we have worked hard to build in our town over the years.

Also, a spate of Quran burning in Sweden, Denmark and the rise of Finland's far-right party True Finns has highlighted how globally, there appears to be a growing intolerance of both immigrants and Islam, particularly in the right-wing political discourses. Majoritarianism backed by nationalism is becoming a threat to minorities everywhere globally.

It was therefore worth inviting faith and community leaders to discuss the PASS (Protecting All Spiritual Scriptures) Initiative in a special meeting held on 1st Aug'23 at the Luton Central Mosque. The meeting acknowledged that the deliberate burning of any sacred Scripture is an egregious violation of human rights. Letters of concern were sent from Luton to the UK's Prime Minister and to the Deputy Secretary General of the UN and Luton Council proposed to pass a resolution and to lobby other local authorities too, to strengthen the legislation to prevent such hostile acts of burning any religious scriptures and provoking communal discord.

In another incident of series of attacks on churches in the Punjab Province of Pakistan in Aug'23, Muslim leaders and Mosques in Luton unequivocally condemned the actions of the mob calling it as an offence against God and humankind. They said, "In this time of adversity, we stand in solidarity with our Christian brothers, sisters, and their families." In a letter to the UK High Commission of Pakistan, the Government of Pakistan was urged to take strong and firm action against those responsible for these acts of violence and ensure the safety and well-being of not only Christians but all religious minorities in Pakistan.

HM QUEEN ELIZABETH II PASSED AWAY

In Sep'22, the nation's beloved and the longest-reigning queen in British history, Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II passed away. Various religious groups in Luton mourned as she was admired by the faith communities for her gentleness, humility, grace, astuteness, diligence and the dignified way in which she carried out her duties as head of state, defender of faith and ambassador to the rest of the world. We are grateful for her life, her faith, and her selfless commitment to our country. God bless our country and may we all continue to be inspired by the life of our Queen. May her soul rest in peace!

HM KING CHARLES VISITED LUTON

His Majesty King Charles visited Luton Town Hall, Luton DART and Guru Nanak Gurudwara in Luton. HM King Charles officially opened the newly built Guru Nanak Gurudwara in Luton. The event was attended by many members of the Sikh community, civic leaders, representatives of other faiths, Luton Council of Faiths, GRASSROOTS & Near Neighbours Programme. It was an honour for the town that His Majesty King Charles visited Luton and he spent considerable time meeting and conversing with people. He listened to the children at the Gurudwara singing Kirtan (Sikh religious devotional singing). He encouraged volunteers at the Luton Sikh Soup Kitchen who serve free meals in the Town Centre to those in need. He also visited the massive new Kitchen at the Gurudwara where hot meals are cooked for hundreds every day. Since the start of his reign, so many of King's engagements have been about championing diversity and celebrating an inclusive Britain. The King actively supports all communities and all faiths.

KING'S CORONATION

The Coronation of His Majesty King Charles III and Her Majesty Queen Camilla were blessed by clergy and leaders of many different faith traditions. Over the long weekend (May 6-9, 2023), around the country, in the village halls, city centres, places of worship, and in the countless street parties, celebrations marked the historic ceremony in which King Charles was crowned as the monarch of this multi-cultural and multi-ethnic country and commonwealth. It is great that His Majesty The King has been a lifelong advocate for Christian faith, and for the diversity of the UK's faiths. We supported Luton's Global Parade to celebrate the coronation, and two weeks later, we made a significant contribution of interfaith participation in a special Service of Thanksgiving celebrating the Coronation of Their Majesties, held by the HM Lord-Lieutenant of Bedfordshire, at St Mary's Woburn.

HATTERS PROMOTED TO PREMIER LEAGUE

After a nail-biting victory in Wembley on Sat 27th May 2023, Luton Town Football Club called Hatters was promoted to the Premier League. It was One Town, One Family & One Dream at Wembley on Saturday 27th May. Over 36,500 Luton Town fans had walked to the Wembley Stadium. Hatters' victory is great, but we shouldn't pretend it's all about football alone. It was also about people from diverse ethnic, religious, and cultural backgrounds coming together – hugging, cheering, dancing, singing, and exchanging those amazingly alive smiles and acknowledging looks with one another in the stadium, in the trains, in the buses, and in the streets of Wembley and Luton Town. For once they were all proudly proclaiming, "We are Luton"!

This was a communal dialogue in action. It was promoting stronger ties amongst people from diverse backgrounds. It was communicating a message of hope and the prospect of living side by side as friends, despite our prejudices and misunderstandings, which are also part of life in an ever-evolving multi-cultural multi-ethnic Britain and Luton.

Luton Council held a celebration event in St George's Square on Monday 29th May 2023, in which Lutonians gathered in thousands to give our victorious football team the reception of their lives. Watching Luton's celebrations, a member of the public tweeted saying "I don't think I have ever seen so many people wearing different religious headgear at a football celebration as there was in St Georges' Square today." Well Done Hatters! Well Done Luton!

NEAR NEIGHBOURS (NN) KEY EVENTS & ACTIVITIES

Despite very limited funding announced by the government NN Luton with the help and support from GRASSROOTS delivered the following key activities:

Near Neighbours (NN) Grants
We managed to get 7 Luton community projects funded by NN grants as listed below:

1) Att10tive – Social Enterprise "I Am Unique" project brought together young people to tell their stories using Poetry, fashion, paintings, drawings and photography, showcasing who they are and what is unique about them.

2) Edible High Town – A local community group held weekend gardening events for local residents, addressing issues of isolation, loneliness, anti-social behavior and environmental issues such as fly tipping.

3) The FEAST – A youth inter faith initiative brought together teenagers from different faiths to build friendships, explore faith and change lives. through sit-down meals, ice-breaker games & meaningful conversations.

4) Guru Ravidass Sangat Luton – A Sikh Temple (Gurudwara) harmonised diverse communities through food, cooking and teaching how 'Langar' (free Sikh communal meal) is a concept that is important and integral to their faith.

5) The Trauma Healing Collective – Muslim/Black Women delivered Trauma Healing services for those impacted by sexual violence, neglect, Domestic, violence, birth Trauma, addiction and Mental Health.

6) The Treehouse Community & Faith Centre – University Chaplaincy in Luton Campus offered a range of spiritual and social activities and support to young people from over 100 countries in Luton.

7) Luton Council of Faiths – An intergenerational project organising School Assemblies as Question Time with Faith Leaders on the theme of how to make our town (and world) respectful.

Catalyst Youth Leadership 4-Day Training Programme
Over 50 young leaders aged 16-26 have been trained into positive role models in Luton so far from Christian, Muslim, Sikh, Buddhist and no faith backgrounds. The course included topics of Faith, Identity & Belonging, Leadership Styles, Qualities & Challenges, Media & Effective Communication, Social Action and Positive Change. Some of the feedback Catalyst participants provided, include "these four days have been of high-quality leadership training", "the trainers were extremely good & inspirational", "we gained practical skills and knowledge to build confidence, effective communication and leadership skills".

KEY EVENTS & ACTIVITIES

Annual Peace Walk 2022
In commemorating Int'l Day of Peace, we helped to co-organise Luton's Annual Peace Walk at which people from different faiths and those with no particular faith affiliation came together in solidarity and walked and talked with one another while visiting different places of worship too. At this event, it was inspiring to hear the amazing refugees & asylum seekers' support work carried out by the partnership of Madinah Mosque and All Saints Church. A few teachers & pupils from 3 schools recited poetry on the theme of Peace. A teacher said events like these help nurture young minds positively. They learn that peace and harmony are not abstract theories. At the Ukrainian Chapel, people expressed solidarity with Ukrainians and with all those suffering because of wars and conflicts in different parts of the world.

Inter Faith Week (IFW) Activities 13th – 20th Nov 2022
In commemorating this year's Inter Faith Week (IFW) Nov'22, three activities were held. Firstly, Diocesan Inter Faith Week Event was held on the theme "God's Justice in our World; Let's make a difference TOGETHER". Over 125 people from different and no religious backgrounds attended. This event addressed topical themes like Climate Change, Racial Justice, Refugees & Asylum Seekers, Justice, Peace & Integrity of Creation. Secondly, over 50 faith leaders, attended a special meeting with Luton North MP Sarah Owen (Shadow Faith Minister) to discuss the role of faith communities in tackling contemporary social issues of deprivation, austerity and extremism. Thirdly, Bishop & Lord Lieutenant visited different places of worship in Luton during the week.

Annual Fairtrade Fortnight 27th Feb – 12th Mar 2023
During the Annual Fairtrade Fortnight, in Luton, we held the 4th Annual Fairtrade Cake Baking Competition involving people from different faiths and cultures, strengthening the Luton Fairtrade campaign going strong for the last 18 years. Nearly 50 people tasted the cakes and chose the three best cakes. The top three winners were given Fairtrade prizes.

Deputy Lieutenants of the Bedfordshire Lieutenancy visited Luton's different places of worship
Susan Lousada was appointed as HM Lord-Lieutenant of Bedfordshire in September 2022. Soon after her appointment, she visited Luton's different places of worship "It was a really positive experience which I found very rewarding and informative" she said. She extended this opportunity to the wider Lieutenancy and encouraged the Deputy Lieutenants, to visit the Central Mosque and Guru Nanak Gurudwara. They all said, "We learnt a great deal."

Young People trained as Mental Health Champions
After completing Near Neighbors CATALYST Youth Leadership Training in Luton, a few young people from Christian, Muslim, Sikh, Buddhist, and no faith backgrounds followed it up with a 2-day Mental Health First Aid training programme. The training covered key topics such as suicide, self-harm, PTSD (Post-traumatic stress disorder), phobias, anxiety and depression. It also discussed how to spot signs of these issues and how best to support people.

Pope's Ambassador NUNCIO to Great Britain visited Luton
NUNCIO to Great Britain, Archbishop Miguel Maury Buendía, visited Luton and met with representatives of the Luton Council of Faiths, Churches Together in Luton, and the CEOs of Noah, Chums, Luton Irish Form, and Grassroots. Nuncio took keen interest in listening to people. Applauding Pope's encyclical Laudato Si on caring for our common home — planet Earth, Sr Maire Hayes presented Nuncio with a book by Luton author Jeremy Williams – Climate Change Is Racist: Race, Privilege and the Struggle for Climate Justice. Nuncio responded saying we must respect and love one another and together we must become a beacon of hope for justice, peace and reconciliation in our world.

L & D Hospital Chaplains Training Day
After last year's success, another group of Chaplains at the Bedfordshire and L & D Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust requested GRASSROOTS for a day out to visit a Mosque, Hindu Temple (Mandir) and Sikh Temple (Gurudwara).

Black History Month
During Black History Month in Luton several events were held. We helped and supported the Black Culture Market, which was about supporting & celebrating the contributions of black businesses and social entrepreneurs who add colour, vigour and spice to the British social and cultural landscape. Secondly, we promoted the launch of an interesting photographic illustration & exhibition of the contributions and sacrifices made by the African soldiers as part of the British Empire in World War II. Lastly, we supported a special event celebrating the Windrush generation that was held at All Saints Church Luton, during the Black History Month.

Diwali in Luton 2022
Diwali in Luton 2022 was special this year because it helped to diffuse communal tensions in Luton when it was being fuelled by social media across many areas in the country in Sep'22. Hindu-Sikh-Muslims and friends from other religious and ethnic backgrounds were brought together to co-organise this event, which was attended by thousands and all joined in proclaiming the message – we are one human race. This was significant in defying the Hindu-Muslim communal tensions incited by a few miscreants in a few parts of the UK. Luton's Hindus raised £1,100 for the Pakistan flood appeal. This is one way in which Luton's amazing community cohesion continues to transcend borders and barriers, globally and locally, and long may it continue.

Hindu New Year (Annakut festival) Celebrations
Members from different faith communities enjoyed hundreds of food items prepared carefully by volunteers. People greeted one another collectively prayed that the New Year may bring health, wealth and happiness to all and that the dignity of every human being and that of the creation be preserved in the coming year.

Sikh Guru Nanak Dev Ji's 553rd Birth Anniversary Celebrations
At these celebrations in Luton, a Scouts group joined and together Sikh youth group & Scouts from different religious/cultural backgrounds, reinforced the spirit and message of universal brotherhood and sisterhood.

Luton's Annual Peace Light Service
Border crossing is a crucial contemporary issue. No one chooses to be a refugee. It is commendable that despite hostility and division pushed by the politicians and the press, thousands of ordinary people around the country are stepping up to support people seeking sanctuary in our country and in our communities. At the start of this year, Luton has also received a 'City of Sanctuary' status. Bearing this in mind, this year Luton's Annual Peace Light service theme was "Sanctuary". The service was an expression of peace and goodwill to all men and women of all backgrounds.

Warm Places
Given the energy price rise and fuel poverty, different places of worship and faith centres across the UK and certainly in Luton too, opened their doors as warm spaces for those who are struggling to heat their homes. Many are doing this through the Warm Welcome initiative started by the Church Works Commission or Places of Welcome started by the Near Neighbours Together Network and through the local authority-led networks of 'warm spaces' or 'warm hubs'.

World Religion Day
It occurs annually on the third Sunday of January and was first established by the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States in Wilmette, Illinois. The first day was observed in 1950. Since then, the event has now taken on a life of its own, as it's no longer just followers of the Bahá'í faith that celebrate this day. People from all religions, across the globe, come together to mark this special day. People from Luton's different faith communities shared together prayers, readings, meditations and thoughts on the themes of unity and peace.

Week of Prayer for Christian Unity 18th – 25th January 2023
This is an annual observance, which has more than 100 years of history. In Luton, Deans and Heads of different denominations got together and invited Christians to reflect together on the theme – What is Interfaith and why should Christians be involved with this? Guest Speaker Revd Dr Richard Sudworth, Secretary for Inter Religious Affairs to the Archbishop of Canterbury and National Inter Religious Affairs Adviser for the Church of England shared a wealth of reflections from his experiences of inter faith community engagement.

Holocaust Memorial Day (HMD) 2023
Tens of thousands of people from across the country watched the UK online Ceremony joined by parliamentarians, faith leaders, and lit candles in their windows in remembrance of those murdered, and to stand against prejudice and hatred today. In a world scarred by genocides, HMD helps us to remember the six million Jews murdered during the Holocaust, alongside the millions of other people killed under Nazi persecution of other groups and during more recent genocides in Cambodia, Rwanda, Bosnia and Darfur. Genocide must be resisted every day. We cannot be complacent. Even in the UK, prejudice and the language of hatred must be challenged by us all.

Luton Food Bank commemorated 10th Anniversary of its services
It is obvious and evident that far more people are depending on food banks than ever before in Britain, and certainly in Luton. It is not just for those unemployed and poor, but many employed people as well as pensioners are also seeking help amid the cost of living crisis. Luton Foodbank, like all the other Food Banks across the country, is run entirely for the benefit of people in and around Luton who need emergency food. Luton Food Bank was started for a 3-month period initially, but over a decade it is still here. GRASSROOTS continues to support these vital services in Luton.

75 years of Windrush Generation commemorated across the Country
The 75th anniversary of the Windrush Generation was marked with several events across Britain including a national commemoration service on 22nd Jun'23 at Southwark Cathedral (GRASSROOTS was invited attended this), the King attending an event for young people at St George's Chapel, Windsor, United Luton Caribbean & African Committee (ULCAC) holding its 4th Annual Civic Ceremony at Luton Town Hall and Pastors Llyod Denny and Vincent Cox conducting special Windrush services in the honour of Luton Windrush generation. We pray and hope that the 75th anniversary of the Windrush Generation will inspire us all to stand up for justice, peace, equity and dignity for all human beings. We must honour the Windrush generation's resilience and determination and hold light to their experiences to strengthen our communities and build a flourishing future for all.

AWARDS & RECOGNITION

GRASSROOTS received 2 Awards
In celebrating the 30th year of its remarkable services, GRASSROOTS Luton received two special awards – the prestigious Highly Commended BBC 3 Counties Radio Make a Difference Award and Luton & Bedfordshire COMMUNITY AWARD. In choosing award winners, Judges were looking for those who have done the most to work in harmony with others to promote diversity, equality, and inclusion with the aim to positively discourage discrimination and to support the whole town, involving people from all backgrounds and sectors. The Award nominator, Dr Nazia Khanum said, "GRASSROOTS has remained 'the unsung hero' in the truest sense, because over three decades, it has worked in the background 'quietly' and 'modestly', but 'consistently' and 'persistently'. Therefore, in celebrating the 30th year of GRASSROOTS' remarkable and outstanding services, it has been my privilege to wholeheartedly commend GRASSROOTS for these prestigious awards."

David Jonathan, Director GRASSROOTS, received two prestigious awards and honours
For his services to community cohesion and interfaith relations in Luton, David Jonathan received two prestigious awards and honours. Firstly, UNA Luton presented Outstanding Peace Champion Award. Secondly, The Lord Bishop of St Albans The Right Reverend Dr Alan Smith offered him an honorary canonry. Canonries of the Cathedral are largely an honorary title. Lord Bishop said to David Jonathan, "I feel that the contribution you have made to the life of the diocese, the church and the wider community makes you a very worthy and deserving recipient of a canonry."

The Luton Peace Garden Initiative Honoured with a Royal Tree
The Luton Peace Garden Initiative that Grassroots has supported since its inception, has been honoured with a special tree that was planted at the Wardown Park Arboretum. The project was selected to receive this special 'Royal Tree of Trees' as part of the late Queen Elizabeth II's Queen's Green Canopy UK-wide tree planting initiative. The Queen's Green Canopy was a unique tree-planting initiative created to mark Her Majesty's Platinum Jubilee. The event was attended by Lord Lieutenant Mrs Susan Lousada, the High Sherif of Bedfordshire Lady (Jane) Clifford, Cllr Khatija Malik, Cllr Jacqui Burnett and Cllr Maria Lovell MBE.

6th BEDFORDSHIRE POLICE COMMUNITY COHESION AWARDS

Annual Peace Walk
At a special glitzy ceremony held on 17th March 2023, Luton Annual Peace Walk event, which GRASSROOTS co-organises, won the Cohesion Award in the category of Promoting Diversity. The Award citation stated: "Luton Peace Walk is an annual event organised by Luton Council of Faiths (LCoF) and GRASSROOTS, with the aim to promote cohesion and interfaith relations. The peace walk includes visits to religious locations across the town, and provides the opportunity for residents from all backgrounds to come together, learn from one another and discover shared bonds. The Peace Walk is always well-attended with a great mix of young and old taking part. Each year a number of schools also get involved, ensuring that the young people of Luton understand one another and barriers are broken down."

David Jonathan, Director GRASSROOTS, Nominated
David Jonathan, Director GRASSROOTS was nominated in the Unsung Hero category. His nomination read; "David Jonathan, known affectionately as Johny within the community, is a leading member of the Luton Council of Faiths. Johny has been involved in some tremendous work with people from all faiths and backgrounds to help build a stronger community in town. Johny spearheads a variety of community initiatives, helping to bring the diverse communities of Luton together. Johny can also be found most weekends and evenings working tirelessly behind the scenes of numerous events helping to support the work of local communities. Through his work with GRASSROOTS, Johny is integral in leading workshops, giving talks, and delivering diversity training to the community."

RISK MANAGEMENT
The Trustees have assessed the major risks to which the charity is exposed, in particular those related to the finances of the charity, including those related to Covid-19 and are satisfied that systems are in place to reduce exposure to the major risks.

RESERVES POLICY
The Trustees have a policy of aiming to retain reserves equivalent to six months average expenditure. This is due to the uncertain nature of funding received. The free reserves at the year-end were £35,223.

PLANS FOR FUTURE PERIODS
The Trustees remain committed to the growth of the Grassroots Programme and the possibilities of expanding the presence of Grassroots Programme to other parts of the country. However, this is dependent upon the charity securing additional funds.

FINANCIAL REVIEW
The charity had total income of £114,576 (2022 £84,337). The main sources of income were grants of £101,807 (2022 £75,519). The charity had total expenditure of £116,416 (2022 £103,460). Expenditure on charitable activities totalled £97,216 (2022 £90,020) which included governance costs of £3,147 (2022 £2,985). There was net expenditure on the unrestricted fund of £4,828 and net income of £2,988 on the restricted fund after transfers between funds. Total funds at the end of the year were £71,225.

The trustees would like to record their thanks to all individuals and associations who supported the charity during the year. All details of the income and expenditure of the charity are set out in the Statement of Financial Activities and the notes to the accounts. In the opinion of the trustees the charity was in a satisfactory financial position at the year end.

STATEMENT OF TRUSTEES' RESPONSIBILITIES

The trustees are responsible for preparing the Trustees' Annual Report and the financial statements in accordance with applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice).

The law applicable to charities in England & Wales requires the trustees to prepare financial statements for each financial year which give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the charity and of the incoming resources and application of resources of the charity for that period. In preparing these financial statements, the trustees are required to:

- select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently;
- observe the methods and principles in the Charities SORP 2019 (FRS 102);
- make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent;
- state whether applicable accounting standards have been followed, subject to any material departures disclosed and explained in the financial statements;
- prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the charity will continue in operation.

The trustees are responsible for keeping proper accounting records that disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the charity and enable them to ensure that the financial statements comply with the Charities Act 2011, the Charity (Accounts and Reports) Regulations 2008 and the provisions of the constitution. They are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the charity and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

ON BEHALF OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES:

Rev D Lawson
Chair

B Roe
Treasurer

Date: 9 November 2023

GRASSROOTS PROGRAMME

INDEPENDENT EXAMINERS' REPORT
to the Trustees of Grassroots Programme

I report to the charity trustees on my examination of the accounts of the charity for the year ended 31 August 2023 which are set out on pages 10 to 21.

RESPONSIBILITIES AND BASIS OF REPORT

As the charity's trustees you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Charities Act 2011 ('the Act').

I report in respect of my examination of the charity's accounts carried out under section 145 of the Act and in carrying out my examination I have followed all the applicable Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the Act.

INDEPENDENT EXAMINERS' STATEMENT

Your attention is drawn to the fact that the charity has prepared the accounts 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 in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) in preference to the Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice issued on 1 April 2005 which is referred to in the extant regulations but has since been withdrawn.

We understand that this has been done in order for the accounts to provide a true and fair view in accordance with the Generally Accepted Accounting Practice effective for reporting periods beginning on or after 1 January 2015.

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

1. accounting records were not kept in respect of the charity as required by section 130 of the Act; or
2. the accounts do not accord with those records; or
3. the accounts do not comply with the applicable requirements concerning the form and content of accounts set out in the Charities (Accounts and Reports) Regulations 2008 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.

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.



R A Cox FCA
Miller & Co
Chartered Accountants
5 Imperial Court
Laporte Way, Luton
Bedfordshire
LU4 8FE

10 November 2023

GRASSROOTS PROGRAMME

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES
for the Year Ended 31 August 2023

	Note	Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	2023 Total	2022 Total
		£	£	£	£
INCOME FROM					
Grants	2	63,090	38,717	**101,807**	75,519
Donations	3	9,567	-	**9,567**	4,827
Investment income		1,372	-	**1,372**	172
Sale of Fairtrade goods		1,830	-	**1,830**	3,819
TOTAL INCOME		75,859	38,717	**114,576**	84,337
EXPENDITURE ON					
Raising funds		19,200	-	**19,200**	13,440
Charitable activities	4	57,127	40,089	**97,216**	90,020
TOTAL EXPENDITURE		76,327	40,089	**116,416**	103,460
Net income / expenditure		(468)	(1,372)	**(1,840)**	(19,123)
Transfers between funds		(4,360)	4,360	-	-
Net movement in funds for the year		(4,828)	2,988	**(1,840)**	(19,123)
Reconciliation of funds					
Funds brought forward at 1 September 2022		61,225	11,840	**73,065**	92,188
Funds carried forward at 31 August 2023		£56,397	£14,828	**£71,225**	£73,065

The statement of financial activities includes all gains and losses in the year. All incoming resources and resources expended derive from continuing activities.

GRASSROOTS PROGRAMME

BALANCE SHEET
31 August 2023

	Note	2023		2022
		£	£	£
FIXED ASSETS:				
Tangible assets	9		-	830
CURRENT ASSETS:				
Debtors	10	**123**		13,776
COIF Funds		**42,703**		51,331
Cash at bank		**32,627**		9,743
		75,453		74,850
Creditors: amounts falling due within one year	11	**4,228**		2,615
NET CURRENT ASSETS			**71,225**	72,235
NET ASSETS			**£71,225**	£73,065
FUNDS:				
Unrestricted general fund	13		**56,397**	61,225
Restricted funds	13		**14,828**	11,840
TOTAL FUNDS			**£71,225**	£73,065

The financial statements on pages 10 to 21 were approved by the board of trustees on 9 November 2023.

SIGNED ON BEHALF OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES:

David Lawson

Rev D Lawson
Chair

Mr B Roe
Treasurer

9 November 2023

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
for the Year Ended 31 August 2023

1. ACCOUNTING POLICIES

General information and basis of preparation
Grassroots Programme is a Charitable Incorporated Organisation. The charity constitutes a public benefit entity as defined by FRS 102. 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 issued in October 2019, the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102), the Charity's constitution, the Charities Act 2011 and UK Generally Accepted Accounting Practice.

The financial statements have been prepared to give a 'true and fair' view and have departed from the Charities (Accounts and Reports) Regulations 2008 only to the extent required to provide a 'true and fair view'. This departure has involved following the 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 issued in October 2019 rather than the Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice effective from 1 April 2005 which has since been withdrawn.

The financial statements are prepared on a going concern basis under the historical cost convention. The financial statements are presented in pounds sterling and rounded to the nearest pound. The address of the principal office is given in the charity information on page 1 of these financial statements.

Going concern
The financial statements have been prepared on a going concern basis as the trustees believe that no material uncertainties exist. The trustees have considered the level of funds held and the expected level of income and expenditure for 12 months from authorising these financial statements. The budgeted income and expenditure is sufficient with the level of reserves for the charity to be able to continue as a going concern.

Unrestricted and restricted funds
Unrestricted funds are grants and other income received for the objects of the charity without further specified purpose and are available as general funds.

Designated funds comprise unrestricted funds that have been set aside by the trustees for particular purposes. The aim and use of each designated fund is set out in the notes to the financial statements.

Restricted funds are those funds which are to be used for specific purposes as laid down by the donor or the trustees. Expenditure which meets these criteria is identified to the funds, together with a fair allocation of administration and support costs. The aim and use of each restricted fund is set out in the notes to the financial statements.

Income recognition
Donations and other income are recognised when received. Grants are recognised when received or when the charity has legal entitlement to them, the amount can be reliably measured and there is sufficient certainty of receipt them.

Expenditure recognition
Staff costs and overhead expenses are allocated to activities on the basis of staff time spent on those activities. Support costs comprise those costs incurred directly in support of expenditure on the objectives of the charity. Governance costs relate to trustees' expenses, legal charges, independent examiners fees and attributable expenses of governing the charity. The trustees give all their time free of charge.

Expenditure is recognised when the amount can be reliably measured, there is a legal obligation to make it and it is probable that settlement will be required.

ACCOUNTING POLICIES continued

Leasing commitments
Rentals paid under operating leases are charged to income as incurred.

Pensions
The charity operates a defined contribution pension scheme for certain employees. Contributions in respect of pensions are charged to income in the year in which they are paid.

Debtors and creditors receivable/payable within one year
Grants, other debtors and creditors receivable or payable within one year are recorded at transaction price.

Fixed assets
The charity has a policy of capitalising fixed asset expenditure over £1,000.

Tangible fixed assets are stated at cost less accumulated depreciation.

Depreciation is provided on all tangible fixed assets, at rates calculated to write off the cost, less estimated residual value, of each asset on a systematic basis over its expected useful life as follows:

IT and office equipment - 33% on cost

2. INCOME FROM GRANTS

	Unrestricted	Restricted	2023 Total	2022 Total
	£	£	£	£
Grants for general purposes				
Methodist Church Beds, Essex & Herts District	15,000	-	**15,000**	10,000
URC - MIG (Thames North Synod)	12,000	-	**12,000**	12,000
Diocese of St. Albans	10,840	-	**10,840**	10,469
Luton Council of Faiths	12,000	-	**12,000**	6,000
Northampton RC Diocese (SOJ)	13,250	-	**13,250**	12,000
Church Urban Fund (Near Neighbours)				
Near Neighbours Fund Projects	-	31,292	**31,292**	22,500
Events				
Diocese of St. Albans	-	-	-	750
Methodist Church Beds, Essex & Herts District	-	-	-	750
URC - MIG (Thames North Synod)	-	-	-	1,050
Westhill Endowment	-	7,425	**7,425**	-
	63,090	38,717	**101,807**	75,519

Income from grants in 2022 totalled £75,519 of which £25,050 was attributable to restricted funds and £50,469 was attributable to unrestricted funds.

3. INCOME FROM DONATIONS & LEGACIES

	Unrestricted	Restricted	2023 Total	2022 Total
	£	£	£	£
Donations				
General	9,567	-	**9,567**	4,303
Spirituality of Justice	-	-	-	200
Working with Women	-	-	-	324
	9,567	-	**9,567**	4,827

Income from donations and legacies in 2022 totalled £4,827 of which £680 was attributable to restricted funds and £4,147 was attributable to unrestricted funds.

4. ANALYSIS OF EXPENDITURE ON CHARITABLE ACTIVITIES

Charitable Activities 2023	Activities Undertaken Directly 2023 £	Support Costs 2023 £	Total 2023 £
Events	4,036	-	**4,036**
Working With Women	4,360	-	**4,360**
Near Neighbours	20,276	11,417	**31,693**
Advancement of Interfaith Relations & Community Development Work	3,783	53,344	**57,127**
	32,455	64,761	**97,216**

Charitable Activities 2022	Activities undertaken directly 2022 £	Support Costs 2022 £	Total 2022 £
Events	319	-	319
Working With Women	8,580	-	8,580
Near Neighbours	5,441	24,224	29,665
Advancement of Interfaith Relations & Community Development Work	15,504	35,952	51,456
	29,844	60,176	90,020

£40,089 (2022 £38,564) of the above costs were attributable to restricted funds and £57,127 (2022 £51,456) were attributable to unrestricted funds.

4a. ALLOCATION OF SUPPORT COSTS

Support Cost 2023	Basis of Allocation	Advancement of Interfaith Relations & Community Development Work 2023 £	Near Neighbours 2023 £	Total 2023 £
Governance	Usage	3,147	-	**3,147**
Information technology	Usage	1,349	-	**1,349**
Staff costs	Usage	33,360	11,015	**44,375**
Depreciation	Usage	830	-	**830**
Office costs	Usage	14,658	402	**15,060**
		53,344	11,417	**64,761**

Support Cost 2022	Basis of Allocation	Advancement of Interfaith Relations & Community Development Work 2022 £	Near Neighbours 2022 £	Total 2022 £
Governance	Usage	2,985	-	2,985
Information technology	Usage	1,049	-	1,049
Staff costs	Usage	21,651	21,409	43,060
Depreciation	Usage	830	-	830
Office costs	Usage	9,437	2,815	12,252
		35,952	24,224	60,176

5. GOVERNANCE COSTS

	2023	2022
	£	£
Trustee expenses	**10**	72
Independent examiners fee	**1,362**	1,314
Support costs	**1,775**	1,599
	3,147	2,985

6. STAFF COSTS AND NUMBERS

Staff costs were as follows:

	2023	2022
	£	£
Charity director	**42,500**	40,000
Employers National Insurance - payable	**4,674**	4,446
Less Employment allowance	**(4,674)**	(3,131)
	42,500	41,315
Pension contributions	**2,550**	2,400
	45,050	43,715

Defined contribution pension expense is allocated to activities based on the time apportionment of the relevant employee.

No employee earned more than £60,000 during the year (2022 same).

The average number of employees during the year was as follows:

Administration	**0.5**	0.5
Charitable activities	**0.5**	0.5
	1	1

7. TRANSACTIONS WITH TRUSTEES

No trustees received any remuneration during the year. Travel costs amounting to £10 (2022 £72) were reimbursed to one (2022 two) trustees.

No trustee had any personal interest in any contract or transaction entered into by the charity during the year (2022 same).

8. TAXATION

As a charity, Grassroots Programme is exempt from tax on income and gains falling within sections 521 to 536 of the Income Tax Act 2007 or section 256 of the Taxation of Chargeable Gains Act 1992 to the extent that these are applied to its charitable objects. No tax charges have arisen in the charity.

9. TANGIBLE FIXED ASSETS

	IT and Office Equipment £	Total £
Cost:		
As at 1 September 2022	2,490	2,490
Additions	-	-
Disposals	-	-
As at 31 August 2023	2,490	2,490
Depreciation:		
As at 1 September 2022	1,660	1,660
Charge for the year	830	830
Disposals	-	-
As at 31 August 2023	2,490	2,490
Net Book Value:		
As at 31 August 2023	-	-
As at 31 August 2022	830	830

10. DEBTORS

	2023	2022
	£	£
Prepayments	123	726
Accrued income	-	13,050
	123	13,776

11. CREDITORS: Amounts falling due within one year

	2023	2022
	£	£
Accruals	2,914	1,455
Taxation and social security	864	760
Other creditors	450	400
	4,228	2,615

12. ANALYSIS OF NET ASSETS BETWEEN FUNDS

	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	Total 2023 £
Net current assets	56,397	14,828	**71,225**
Total net assets	56,397	14,828	**71,225**

	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	Total 2022 £
Fixed assets	830	-	830
Net current assets	60,395	11,840	72,235
Total net assets	61,225	11,840	73,065

13. MOVEMENT IN FUNDS

	Balance at 1 September 2022	Income	Expenditure	Transfers	Balance at 31 August 2023
	£	£	£	£	£
Restricted Funds					
Working with Women	-	-	(4,360)	4,360	-
Near Neighbours	401	31,292	(31,693)	-	-
Events	11,439	7,425	(4,036)	-	**14,828**
	11,840	38,717	(40,089)	4,360	**14,828**
Unrestricted Funds					
General funds	51,644	62,609	(74,670)	(4,360)	**35,223**
Designated funds:					
Spirituality of Justice	9,581	13,250	(1,657)	-	**21,174**
	61,225	75,859	(76,327)	(4,360)	**56,397**
Total Funds	73,065	114,576	(116,416)	-	**71,225**

	Balance at 1 September 2021	Income	Expenditure	Transfers	Balance at 31 August 2022
	£	£	£	£	£
Restricted Funds					
Working with Women	-	324	(8,580)	8,256	-
Near Neighbours	7,566	22,500	(29,665)	-	401
Events	8,852	2,906	(319)	-	11,439
	16,418	25,730	(38,564)	8,256	11,840
Unrestricted Funds					
General funds	65,895	46,407	(52,402)	(8,256)	51,644
Designated funds:					
Spirituality of Justice	9,875	12,200	(12,494)	-	9,581
	75,770	58,607	(64,896)	(8,256)	61,225
Total Funds	92,188	84,337	(103,460)	-	73,065

MOVEMENT IN FUNDS continued

The designated fund is for Spirituality of Justice - being for the promotion of interfaith work across the town.

The balances on the restricted funds will be used to continue the work of the projects in accordance with the terms of the funders. Details of the funds are as follows:

Working with women – Work with women across faiths and cultures for their holistic wellbeing.
Near Neighbours – Bringing neighbours together for 'social action' and 'social interaction'.
Events – includes Westhill Endowment Fund for the multi-faith storytelling workshops.

14. RELATED PARTIES AND CONTROLLING PARTY

There were no related party transactions requiring disclosure. (2022 £nil). The charity is controlled by the Trustees.

GRASSROOTS PROGRAMME

England & Wales - Charity number 1163427

Accounts

REGISTERED CHARITY NUMBER: 1163427

GRASSROOTS PROGRAMME

FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE

YEAR ENDED 31 AUGUST 2022

Miller & Co
Chartered Accountants
5 Imperial Court
Laporte Way
Luton
Bedfordshire
LU4 8FE

GRASSROOTS PROGRAMME

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for the Year Ended 31 August 2022

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GRASSROOTS PROGRAMME
TRUSTEES' ANNUAL REPORT
for the Year Ended 31 August 2022

The Trustees present their report and the financial statements for the year ended 31 August 2022. The trustees have adopted the provisions of the Statement of Recommended Practice (SORP) "Accounting and Reporting by Charities" in preparing the annual report and financial statements of the charity.

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

This charity, Grassroots Programme CIO took over the assets of the former unincorporated charity Grassroots Programme (charity number 1057468) on 1 September 2016. Prior years' reports relating to charity number 1057468 may be obtained from the office at the principal address.

LEGAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE DETAILS

CHARITY NAME:	Grassroots Programme
STATUS:	Charitable Incorporated Organisation - Foundation Constitution. Registered Constitution and as a charity on 04 September 2015.
CHARITY NUMBER:	1163427
PRINCIPAL ADDRESS:	47 High Town Road Luton Bedfordshire LU2 0BW
TRUSTEES AND OFFICERS:	Those who served as trustees of the charity during the year were as follows:
	Rev D Lawson (Chair) Mrs J Bird Rev M Hindley Rev P Horner Mrs R Tetlow Mrs S Marsden (Secretary) Ms D Purfield Mr B Roe (Treasurer)
CHARITY DIRECTOR:	Mr D Jonathan
BANKERS:	The Co-operative Bank Olympic House 6 Olympic Court Salford M8 2QP
INDEPENDENT EXAMINERS:	Miller & Co Chartered Accountants Statutory Auditors 5 Imperial Court, Laporte Way Luton Bedfordshire LU4 8FE

ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE

Grassroots Programme is an independent charity. A board of trustees administers the charity. The trustees are responsible for the overall control and management of the charity and meet on a regular basis.

PUBLIC BENEFIT

The trustees confirm that they have complied with their duty, set out in the 2011 Charity Act, to have due regard to Charity Commission guidance on public benefit.

RECRUITMENT AND APPOINTMENT OF TRUSTEES

Trustees are appointed for a term of five years by a resolution of the trustees passed at a special meeting for which not less than 21 days' notice has been given.

Under the terms of the Constitution, newly appointed trustees are not entitled to act as trustees until they have signed, in the minute book of the trustees, a declaration of acceptance and willingness to act in the trusts of the Charity.

All the trustees are familiar with the work of the charity and an induction is performed for any new trustees.

OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES

The objects of the charity as set out in the Constitution are as follows:

(1) To advance education for the public benefit in global issues to enable greater awareness of factors that will contribute to the relief of needy victims of breaches of human rights in such ways that are charitable in law.

(2) To advance religion and promote understanding among Christians and those of other faiths.

(3) To provide opportunities for the advancement of education among all ages, but particularly adults, in such ways that are charitable in law.

(4) To provide relief of the aged, infirm and poor.

ACHIEVEMENTS AND PERFORMANCE

In order to achieve its objectives, the charity runs a number of programmes. During the year it ran the following specific programmes:

Working our way through the Covid-19 Pandemic

Despite the unexpected Fuel Crisis in Sep-Oct'21 causing significant disruption, and despite people's fears, apprehensions and uncertainties about physically attending events (after government restrictions were lifted in Aug 2021), GRASSROOTS successfully organised several Covid safe socially distanced events and activities during Sep – Dec 2021. Sadly the government had to announce restrictions once again in the mid-Dec'21, due to the new Covid variant Omincrant. By then many of our activities, events, and meetings were over. Besides our activities (listed below), we have throughout the year supported and engaged with the voluntary, community and faith sectors mainly to remind (without scaremongering) people from time to time that we are still in the pandemic and that it isn't over yet. So let's "proceed with caution". And yet national headlines at the start of the year 2022 included 'One rule for them, another for us' – when revelations of Westminster lockdown parties had become a nightmare for our nation. Thankfully on 27th January 2022, the last of the government's Plan B Covid restrictions were lifted. The success of the vaccination programme was cited as one of the major factors behind this. The role of local government and voluntary & faith sector organisations had been crucial in encouraging vaccine take-up, alleviating the fears and anxieties of those who were hesitant to take the vaccine, and encouraging everyone to keep themselves and each other safe. GRASSROOTS had also played its part by mobilising people from different faith communities to do the needful and had encouraged people to voluntarily come forward to translate and speak in different languages some of the key public health messages.

Black Lives Matter & Climate Change

During the year, GRASSROOTS mentored and mobilised faith communities and voluntary organisations while also consolidating partnerships and networking with public sector stakeholders to address challenges, needs and concerns, particularly within the context of Black Lives Matter & Climate Change – the two big challenges facing us all currently.

Black Lives Matter

During the autumn last year we fostered inter-racial conversations on racial justice issues not just amongst communities, but also between the clergy and lay leaders. We facilitated C of E Bishop of Bedford to engage in helpful conversations with faith leaders. We facilitated a special session with black faith & community leaders to feed into Luton Council's new Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) strategy. Qs in this session included how can Council make its services more accessible and ensure its workforce reflect the diversity of Luton communities etc.?

In the New Year, the death of the veteran anti-apartheid icon, the Nobel-peace prize laureate and the former Anglican Archbishop of Cape Town Desmond Tutu was mourned locally in Luton. In a joint statement with Luton Council of Faiths (LCoF) & Near Neighbours (NN) Programme we thanked him for his struggle for justice and for his lifelong commitment to forgiveness and reconciliation and for pointing us to what it means to be the rainbow people of God. Later we facilitated two events encouraging Black leaders to work together with the Police and the local authority.

Climate Change

Highlighting disproportionate impact of climate change on some more than the others, GRASSROOTS has been working alongside Luton's faith communities to highlight the urgency of the climate change issues. Ahead of COP26, we held 4 major events;

Firstly, we hosted and supported 70-year old British south Indian climate activist Pushpanath Krishnamurthy's (called Push's) epic walk for climate justice (400 miles or one million steps) from London to Glasgow from 2nd October to 2nd November 2021. After sharing what climate justice means in their respective faith communities and what are they doing about it, many faith leaders and community members cheered Push from the footsteps of the Luton Town Hall saying 'Go Push Go'. Chair of Luton Council of Faiths Prof Zafar Khan said, *"Our gathering today signifies unity of purpose and unity of action for climate justice. We are united in our collective quest for climate justice."* Push said, *"I am encouraged by the immense sense of fraternity shown by Luton. To help the poorest who have done the least to create the problem, our collective quest for climate justice is much needed".*

Secondly, on 23rd Oct'21, commemorating the UN Day, we co-organised a virtual event "Climate Crisis: Faith in the Environment" involving 9 different faiths & belief representatives, who shared the importance of actively preserving the creation and living in harmony with the environment from their respective faith perspectives. UNA Luton Chair Dr Nazia Khanum,OBE, DL said, "Climate Change is much bigger than any of us, but the importance of our actions cannot be under-estimated. Faith communities have much to contribute."

Thirdly, with the UK hosting COP26 many people in the UK had walked & travelled to Glasgow to put pressure on the governments and demand action for climate justice, but there were many people who also took action in their own local areas by joining the COP26 Coalition Day of Action on Sat 6 November. In Luton over a hundred people had gathered at 1pm at Town Hall. We helped facilitate the presentations and ensured the event is safely held. Thanking GRASSROOTS, an event participant said *"It was really great to share the action with you, with super placards you brought with you. I need to thank you for your support for Climate Justice in terms of this event and in other contexts. The role of a combined Faith voice is valuable and important - I hope that it can grow in Luton and worldwide."*

Fourthly, during the Annual Peace Light service at All Saints Church in Luton, in which a flame is brought from Bethlehem to mark Jesus' birth celebrations, the theme was "Peace with the Planet". This was because the UK was hosting COP26 and Climate Change was big on everyone's agenda. GRASSROOTS helped in bringing different faith leaders to read out short statements, on "how their faith inspires them to establish peace with the planet".

Peace Garden

Luton's Peace Garden Initiative is about planting trees for those died of Covid in Luton. It is led by Sujel Miah who is a member of Luton Council of Mosques. He does tremendous work in supporting numerous local causes and charities. GRASSROOTS supported Peace Garden Initiative by helping the creation of a short awareness video about the project made voluntarily by communities. It can be seen here https://t.co/X0u1SboQO0?amp=1. We also helped launch a fundraising appeal to all places of worship & faith communities in Luton. 75% of the funding target of £30k (https://bit.ly/3niSwdi) has been raised to plant 700 plus trees – a tree for every life lost to Covid locally. On the several tree planting days held so far, we invited faith representatives to show their support and encourage everyone involved. Further information about the project can be found at https://www.justgiving.com/campaign/Peacegarden.

'Zoom Peace' Event

At the 'Zoom Peace' event held virtually (due to Covid) for the second consecutive year on the International Day of Peace (21st Sep'21), after watching a colourful picture presentation, commemorating 25 years of Luton Council of Faiths (LCoF) and its partnership work with GRASSROOTS, a faith leader said, "A tiny mustard seed, born out of GRASSROOTS has grown into a big safe and secure tree". At this event, people's contributions covered a range of issues including Racial Justice, Mental Health, Climate Change, Bee Keeping, helping refugees etc.

4 Events held during Inter Faith Week Nov 14-21, 2021

To strengthen inter faith relations which had been strained in the last two years due to various factors including global political developments in the middle east, south Asia and the Black Lives Matter – GRASSROOTS initiated the following activities strategically during the Inter Faith Week (IFW) to influence life in our town in a positive way.

Firstly, during the Remembrance Services held across Luton, we highlighted that our soldiers and civilians did not sacrifice their lives for the kind of 'nationalism', 'hate' & 'racism' we see all over the world today. We must therefore not allow the society to recreate the mistakes from the past. We must learn to appreciate the importance of co-existence. We need one another for the well-being of all and that of our common home, the planet earth.

Secondly, in a Covid-safe socially distanced event titled "Strengthening Cohesion in Luton" on Mon 15th Nov'21, people from different faiths were invited to celebrate Luton Council of Faiths (LCoF) 25th Year Anniversary and the fact that in this year, LCoF had also received The Queens Award for Voluntary Service (QAVS). The event acknowledged tremendous contributions of several volunteers, faith and community leaders, supporters and partners.

Thirdly, at another Inter Faith Week event we jointly organised with the Church of England St Albans Diocese on 17th Nov'21 it was emphasised that as a diverse society, we must demonstrate our commitment to engaging with and partnering with one another for the common good. At this event faith & community leaders from Luton, Bedford, Watford and St Albans shared positive stories of living well together and navigating way through the difficult issues.
Lastly, we facilitated C of E Bishop Richard Atkinson's visits to different places of worship across Luton. During these visits we addressed issues of Israel-Palestine conflict and India's emerging political landscape impacting community relations in Luton, while also reviewing with Black faith leaders the issues and concerns of Black Lives Matter.

Luton City of Sanctuary
To help and provide services for refugees and asylum seekers, we co-facilitated the process of creating Luton City of Sanctuary Steering Group. It has now applied and received the City of Sanctuary status for Luton. The biggest challenge however was the influx of the Afghan refugees dropped off in Luton. Their numbers were far greater when compared with other areas. The Leader of the Luton Council said while the town is pleased to play a part in helping those fleeing their troubled homeland, Luton's already overstretched services should not be taken undue advantage of. Commending the role of the faith and other community organisations, Leader of the Council said Luton sprang into action as always but we are under a lot of pressure and we don't want our communities' generosity being taken advantage of. The safeguarding, adequate care and the kind of support that traumatised people need had put a lot of strain on what we could do with the help from the other statutory and voluntary partners. Still, with others' help, we helped arrange a whole array of highly professional services, ranging from health to social care, translation, advice and education to help individuals and families starting to adjust to life in a new country.

Bedfordshire Lieutenancy's Service of Thanksgiving, Remembrance and Hope
We supported Bedfordshire Lieutenancy's Service of Thanksgiving, Remembrance and Hope, which was held on 10th Oct'21. In her message, HM Lord-Lieutenant of Bedfordshire Helen Nellis, said *"We meet together with representatives of the richly diverse communities in our county, to give thanks for all those who have used their skills, their generosity, their compassion and their love to help the people of Bedfordshire come through the enormous challenges we are facing due to the pandemic. We look forward in hope, building on what we have learnt about the power of neighbours and communities reaching out one to another and the excellent partnerships that have been formed which have had such a beneficial impact on how we help make things better. I am so proud that people of Bedfordshire have shown their generosity of spirit in such large measure and am optimistic that we will go forward in our determination to build communities where all feel welcome, at home and are able to flourish."*

Near Neighbours Grants
4 projects funded during the year included;

- Golden Arrow Archery Club – 'Archery Tag' sessions for young people with soft-tipped arrows to provide an indoor archery activity for groups of ethnically diverse young people in an area with high levels of gang crime.

- Simply Deez Events CIC – Publish and launch an anthology book (as a sequel to the first book) with 25 women & men writing a chapter each documenting their time during lockdown and 5 x monthly online Zoom sessions to upskill people's expertise on writing skills, mental health & well-being, breathing techniques and entrepreneurship.

- The FEAST Programme – Organising 3 inter-faith dialogue sessions during Christmas, Easter and Fairtrade Fortnight to discuss different topics e.g. the vaccine can be trusted or not, different faith perspectives on the climate crisis and/or the sovereignty of God in relation to the world-shattering events such as the pandemic or war.

- Luton Council of Faiths (LCoF) – Organising up to 6 community mediation & social justice events ending in a Covid-safe socially distanced communal celebratory gathering during Inter Faith Week.

Near Neighbours Training Programmes
We delivered 1 session of each of the following three FREE training programmes in Luton;

- COVID Cash Recovery (CCR) 2-hour webinar up-skilling churches, charities, community leaders and organisations to provide information and resources, to help communities recover from money issues that have arisen due to COVID-19.

- Let's Talk Money 2-hour workshop introducing young people to basic money skills, knowing, understanding, creating and managing a budget, the importance of saving for a poverty-free future. It consisted of a series of videos.

- Diverting to Digital (D2D) 3-hour workshop included beginner and advanced sessions increase the ability/confidence to engage online by using social media, websites or video calls, zoom meetings, create web content etc.

Near Neighbours Network
We launched the national Near Neighbours Network in Luton and promoted it amongst diverse communities locally enabling individuals & groups to connect and collaborate beyond Luton.

Near Neighbours National Webinars
GRASSROOTS helped deliver the following two national webinars through the NN Network – one was on Climate change and racism and other was about creating and managing the community gardening projects.

Fairtrade Fortnight 21st Feb – 6th Mar 2022
During the Fairtrade Fortnight, in partnership with St Christopher's Church (Round Green), we organised the Annual Fairtrade Cake Baking Competition. It was a good opportunity to highlight how Fairtrade helps to address issues of poverty, deprivation, unfairness and inequality across the world. A participant said Fairtrade is not about doing charity to people; it is about doing justice by paying people what they deserve for their labour and for their sustenance.

International Women's Day 2022
In commemorating this year's International Women's Day, GRASSROOTS & Near Neighbours Luton supported 3 events led respectively by Ghar se Ghar (Hindi/Urdu Words meaning 'Home to Home') – a Luton based women's group, Simply Deez Events (NN Small Grant Recipient) and Shanthona (a Bangladeshi Women's Group, also a former NN Grant Recipient). Ghar se Ghar focused on women's safety. Simply Deez Events created a market place for relevant organisations to showcase well-being services for women. Shanthona focused on Bangladeshi women's recreation.

High Sheriff of Bedfordshire visited Luton
High Sheriff of Bedfordshire Lady Jane Clifford, soon after her appointment, visited GRASSROOTS, Madinah Mosque, Church of God in Christ (COGIC), Discover Islam Centre, and Guru Ravidass Sangat. Humbled and moved, she acclaimed the selfless philanthropic efforts of all the faith communities. Commending GRASSROOTS, she stated, "By bringing people together from different communities, you are indeed promoting social action and transformation."

ECUMENICAL EVENTS & VISITS

Bishop of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Northampton & Moderator of United Reformed Church (URC) Thames North Syond visited GRASSROOTS Luton. Both Bishop David Oakley and Moderator George Watt gave credit to GRASSROOTS for its efforts to bring communities together and said. *"It's wonderful to see that Luton's inter faith work involves action as well as dialogue. Actions speak louder than words and it is great that our actions are inspired by our beliefs. Long may such partnerships continue which do not compete against but complement one another."*

GRASSROOTS helped to bring together eight speakers from Luton's different faith communities to contribute to a virtual event titled "Building Life Flourishing Communities from different Faith Perspectives" led by the CWM (Council for World Mission) Europe Region, in partnership with GRASSROOTS.

CWM Europe is one of six regions of the Council for World Mission (CWM), a worldwide partnership of churches in mission made up of over 21 million Christians in forty countries of the world. The Europe Regional Assembly held last year in the UK included a day-long immersion visit to Luton during which the Assembly delegates visited Luton's different places of worship and engaged with members from Luton's faith communities.

This year's 'Week of Prayer for Christian Unity' resources were prepared by the churches of the Middle East. In Luton, the local Ecumenical Area Deans co-organised an event for Christians reflecting on the Church post-Covid. The guest speaker Rt Rev David J Oakley, Bishop of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Northampton, said *"Our communion may not be perfect but it is real. Our common witness and collaboration in the post Covid context must include us talking together about the spiritual, social and ecological problems of our world."* He added, *"We are pilgrim people of God. We are not there yet, but we are on the journey. We have come a long way already. It's only a matter of time when we get there. In the meantime, let's not give up on one another"*

In another event held in March 2022, Churches Together in Luton (CTL) gathered a group of over 40 Church leaders from different Churches, different racial, cultural & ethnic backgrounds over breakfast. It was to nurture and foster the ideals of peace and unity in our town. The keynote speaker Pastor Alan West of Luton Christian Fellowship said that as a diverse group, theologically and doctrinally, we are never going to agree on everything, but this shouldn't stop us from discovering what we can agree upon. Sharing several past experiences in which Christians in Luton have prayed together or co-hosted town-wide events and fundraised for the well-being of our town, Alan said, *"We are walking in the footsteps of so many others who have walked before us, in prayer and in action, concerned with the well-being and prosperity of this town. We must continue our journey."*

World Day of Prayer (WDP) resources this year were prepared by women in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. The overarching theme was HOPE, which is very appropriate for the time when the world is coming to terms with the ongoing effects of the pandemic, the looming climate crisis and the most recent war between Russia & Ukraine. A service was held at St Mary's Church Luton, just after a Global Day of Prayer and Fasting called by The Pope Francis.

Hospital Chaplains Training Day was covered by BBC Songs of Praise. Trust Chaplain Vanessa Bradley, stated when we visit different places of worship and learn a word or two from another language or when we learn even something as simple as how to greet someone from another culture, it gives chaplains more confidence to connect with people from various cultural, religious, ethnic, or national backgrounds, not only with their heads but also with their hearts.

Holocaust Memorial Day (HMD) 2022
For a second year, due to Covid, HMD Service was nationally commemorated online in which Holocaust survivors shared powerful stories of loss, grief, and resilience. The theme for this year was "One Day". At the end of the online commemoration, as part of the 'Light the darkness' initiative, many households in Luton lit candles and safely put them in their windows to remember the six million Jews murdered during the Holocaust alongside the millions others killed, under Nazi persecution and in genocides that followed in Cambodia, Rwanda, Bosnia and Darfur.

Sri Lankan Muslims held 74th Independence Day Celebrations
Luton's Sri Lankan Muslim organisation Al Furqan joined hands with the UK's National Council of Sri Lanka Muslim Organisations (COSMOS UK) in hosting an annual flagship event commemorating the 74th Sri Lanka Independence Day in Luton. Besides the Chief Guest H E Saroja Sirisena – The High Commissioner of Sri Lanka in UK, GRASSROOTS Director David Jonathan was invited to deliver the keynote address.

Shri Guru Ravidass Ji's 645th Birthday Celebrations
On this auspicious occasion, amongst numerous dignitaries, Luton's Ravidassia community honoured Johny & Ryad and some others with Siropa – a length of cloth bestowed on someone as a mark of honour.

C of E Readers Visit Luton's Madinah Mosque
In furthering Diocesan efforts of engaging and partnering with members of other faith communities for the common good, we supported Luton's All Saints Parish Church efforts to host Church of England (C of E) 'Readers' from different parishes across the diocese to come and see how Church must remain present in diverse areas, and engage positively with different faiths. Host Sandra Miller said, "It is about seeking 'opportunities' than to feel overwhelmed by the 'challenges'; seeking opportunities to present God by the lives we live and the words."

Muslims greeted Sikhs on their Vaisakhi Celebration Procession
'Vaisakhi' is a historical and religious festival for Sikhs worldwide. It is celebrated in mid-April with large street processions led by decorated vehicles, religious and community leaders. At various points in Luton's procession, devotees shared free food to hundreds. The highlight was when the procession passed through Bury Park, and the President, Head Imam, Committee Members from the Central Mosque and several others from the Muslim community greeted the Sikh leaders with garlands and distributed hot snacks and tea to hundreds of Sikhs walking in the procession. This was a real testament of how Luton's communities live in harmony with one another.

Invitation to the Chief Rabbi's Iftar Gathering

It was an honour for GRASSROOTS to be invited to represent the Near Neighbours Programme at a very special Iftar gathering hosted by the Office of The Chief Rabbi of the UK. Welcoming an esteemed gathering of people from different religious, cultural and professional backgrounds, Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis emphasized that Covid-19 has created a fundamental rupture in the fabric of our communal life, disrupting our established infrastructure and institutions. He said, *"In addition to the climate crisis, the refugee crisis and ever-deepening global, political and social polarisation, we must now prepare to contend with the aftermath of a pandemic, which has created extreme economic disadvantage, significant mental health challenges and yet further political and social upheaval."* He said tonight's Iftar gathering is about reinforcing our relationship with one another across faiths and cultures. On behalf of Near Neighbours Programme, GRASSROOTS presented a gift of fairly traded hand-crafted candles to the Chief Rabbi.

Lord Lieutenant's Queen's Platinum Jubilee Thanksgiving Service

We supported and participated in the historic Thanksgiving Service at St Mary's Church, Luton, to commemorate HM The Queen's Platinum Jubilee and the services of voluntary organisations across Bedfordshire. HM Lord-Lieutenant of Bedfordshire Helen Nellis had hosted the event at which the topics of' 'service' and 'servanthood' were reflected upon.

Ukraine Peace Walk

Ahead of Refugee Week, we promoted and supported the Luton branch of the Association of Ukrainians in Great Britain to hold a Peace Walk in Wardown Park as a sign of solidarity for world and global peace and for the safety, well-being of Ukraine. In a statement, Prof Zafar Khan, Chair of Luton Council of Faiths said, *"It is also worth bearing in mind that refugees are not a single group. They have different experiences, because of race, class, gender and sexuality. While fighting discrimination and disinformation, and countering nationalism and xenophobia we must ensure we nurture the space, wherever we are, to continually respond to the refugee crisis in the most amicable way."*

Windrush Commemorations in Luton

On 22nd June at Luton Town Hall, United Luton Caribbean & African Committee (ULCAC) held its 3rd Annual Civic Ceremony in the honour of Luton Windrush generation. Soraya Bowen, Co-Chair ULCAC said *"Our history is everybody's history. From slavery to Windrush, the stories of yesterday still impact on our lives."* Pas Vincent Cox said, *"There's need for the economic impact assessment of the Windrush Generation, its positive influence & contribution to the key recruiting sectors including health and transport and also the Church in the UK."*

Clouds of Blessings at Colours of Eid Festival Parade at St George's Sq. Luton

At the Colours of Eid festive celebrations held on Sat 16th Jul'22 at St George's Square, GRASSROOTS helped bring people from different faiths together to join in an inclusive Eid Parade holding the cloud props, made up of white balloons, named as "The Clouds of Blessings". Thanking GRASSROOTS, Sarah Salim, the event coordinator, said, *"The work you do is so significant. Long may you continue to bring Luton's diverse communities together. I strongly feel that Luton town, and multicultural events like ours won't be the same without your presence and contributions."*

Peace Garden Outdoor Storytelling Event

How long you think it will take to count up to 1 million? At the outdoor storytelling event supported by GRASSROOTS and hosted by Edible High Town at High Town's Peace Garden, next to High Town Methodist Church, this was one of the many questions posed by the Luton-based professional artists to keep kids and adults interested, engaged, and amused. The storybook "Max counts to a Million" was narrated and performed by the artists. Written by Luton based author Jeremy Williams, this book is a light-hearted read. It is about 8 year old young boy Max Cromwell, who like other children, tries to get along in the best way he can while having to deal with the impact of Covid 19, the Lockdown and isolation and therefore decides to count to a million.

David Jonathan Awarded MBE & Invited at the National Service of Thanksgiving for HM Platinum Jubilee

In the Queen's New Year's Honours List 2022, an MBE was awarded to David Jonathan, Director of the Grassroots Programme, Luton Council of Faiths and the Near Neighbours Programme for services to community cohesion and interfaith relations in Luton. In online news LUTON TODAY Steve Sims reported on 3rd January 2022 that a Luton man shares MBE for strengthening community cohesion with those who have supported his work over two decades. In a statement David Jonathan said, *"It is with a sense of gratitude and privilege that in 2021, I marked 20 years of my work. During these years, the focus of my work has always been on strengthening peace building and reconciliation by appropriate mediation and constant relationship building across Luton's diverse communities. I feel humbled and honoured to be included in the Queen's New Year's Honours List 2022 and to receive the MBE, but I would like to share this with people of Luton and many others who have supported and enabled the work over the years."*

He also thanked his past and present co-workers, colleagues, volunteers, trustees and partner agencies which include Council for World Mission (CWM) and United Reformed Church (URC) and the four Church denominations that have consistently supported GRASSROOTS over the years. These include The Church of England St Albans Diocese, The Roman Catholic Diocese of Northampton, The Methodist Church Beds, Essex & Herts District, and The United Reformed Church Thames North Synod. He also thanked Luton Borough Council, Luton Rising (formerly known as London Luton Airport Ltd) and Bedfordshire and Luton Community Foundation for supporting inter faith work in Luton through Luton Council of Faiths. And he thanked Near Neighbours Programme for supporting nearly 300 different community projects and initiatives in Luton over the last 10 years.

He conclude saying, *"Long may our work continue to inspire communities to stand together in solidarity with one another and send a strong message of defiance to all those who seek to divide in the name of race, religion or ethnicity, by promoting prejudice and hate. May we appreciate the strength that comes from being united in concern for one another and work together for the well-being of all and that of our common home, the planet earth!*

It was a privilege for David Jonathan to be invited at the National Service of Thanksgiving for Her Majesty's Platinum Jubilee at St. Paul's Cathedral, followed by a Reception at Guildhall, on 3rd June. Straight after this, David Jonathan was invited to Buckingham Palace, for his Investiture on 7th June 2022, where David Jonathan received from Prince William, Duke of Cambridge, an MBE Award for his services.

UNA Luton presented Outstanding Peace Champion Award to David Jonathan

It is astounding that in the same year at a special event of UNA-Luton held on 28th Aug'22, David Jonathan was presented with another prestigious Outstanding Peace Champion Award for his services in Luton. UNA Luton Chair Dr Nazia Khanum OBE, DL shared these words, *"David Jonathan has demonstrated to many of us in the community how it is possible to build bridges over turbulent waters and link up with communities seemingly miles apart from each other in so many ways! I am a big admirer of his Peace-building work, his patience, his imagination and his passion for making progress in developing a better understanding of diversity, by building empathy, friendship, trust and common ground for sustainable peace. His determination to improve the conditions of the poor and the exploited was well demonstrated by his passionate work to make Luton a Fair Trade Town. His knowledge of diverse religions is phenomenal and his relentless work towards keeping our town free from conflicts and hostilities is widely known and highly respected. He has been a supporter of UNA-Luton from its inception. The least we can do to show our appreciation of his passionate work for fairness, peace, environment and youth engagement is to give him a UNA-Luton Award to say that we love you and admire you."*

RISK MANAGEMENT

The Trustees have assessed the major risks to which the charity is exposed, in particular those related to the finances of the charity, including those related to Covid-19 and are satisfied that systems are in place to reduce exposure to the major risks.

RESERVES POLICY

The Trustees have a policy of aiming to retain reserves equivalent to six months average expenditure. This is due to the uncertain nature of funding received. The free reserves at the year-end were £50,814.

PLANS FOR FUTURE PERIODS

The Trustees remain committed to the growth of the Grassroots Programme and the possibilities of expanding the presence of Grassroots Programme to other parts of the country. However, this is dependent upon the charity securing additional funds.

FINANCIAL REVIEW

The charity had total income of £84,337 (2021 £190,249). The main sources of income were grants of £75,519 (2021 £160,969). The charity had total expenditure of £103,460 (2021 £161,501). Direct charitable expenditure on projects totalled £87,035 (2021 £159,623) and governance costs totalled £2,985 (2021 £1,878). There was net expenditure on the unrestricted fund of £14,545 and net expenditure of £4,578 on the restricted fund after transfers between funds. Total funds at the end of the year were £73,065.

The trustees would like to record their thanks to all individuals and associations who supported the charity during the year. All details of the income and expenditure of the charity are set out in the Statement of Financial Activities and the notes to the accounts. In the opinion of the trustees the charity was in a satisfactory financial position at the year end.

STATEMENT OF TRUSTEES' RESPONSIBILITIES

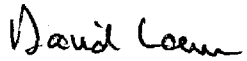
The trustees are responsible for preparing the Trustees' Annual Report and the financial statements in accordance with applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice).

The law applicable to charities in England & Wales requires the trustees to prepare financial statements for each financial year which give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the charity and of the incoming resources and application of resources of the charity for that period. In preparing these financial statements, the trustees are required to:

- select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently;
- observe the methods and principles in the Charities SORP 2019 (FRS 102);
- make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent;
- state whether applicable accounting standards have been followed, subject to any material departures disclosed and explained in the financial statements;
- prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the charity will continue in operation.

The trustees are responsible for keeping proper accounting records that disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the charity and enable them to ensure that the financial statements comply with the Charities Act 2011, the Charity (Accounts and Reports) Regulations 2008 and the provisions of the constitution. They are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the charity and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

ON BEHALF OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES:



Rev D Lawson
Chair



B Roe
Treasurer

Date: 10 November 2022

INDEPENDENT EXAMINERS' REPORT
to the Trustees of Grassroots Programme

I report to the charity trustees on my examination of the accounts of the charity for the year ended 31 August 2022 which are set out on pages 11 to 22.

RESPONSIBILITIES AND BASIS OF REPORT

As the charity's trustees you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Charities Act 2011 ('the Act').

I report in respect of my examination of the charity's accounts carried out under section 145 of the Act and in carrying out my examination I have followed all the applicable Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the Act.

INDEPENDENT EXAMINERS' STATEMENT

Your attention is drawn to the fact that the charity has prepared the accounts 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 in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) in preference to the Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice issued on 1 April 2005 which is referred to in the extant regulations but has since been withdrawn.

We understand that this has been done in order for the accounts to provide a true and fair view in accordance with the Generally Accepted Accounting Practice effective for reporting periods beginning on or after 1 January 2015.

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

1. accounting records were not kept in respect of the charity as required by section 130 of the Act; or
2. the accounts do not accord with those records; or
3. the accounts do not comply with the applicable requirements concerning the form and content of accounts set out in the Charities (Accounts and Reports) Regulations 2008 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.

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.



R A Cox FCA
Miller & Co
Chartered Accountants
5 Imperial Court
Laporte Way, Luton
Bedfordshire
LU4 8FE

11 November 2022

GRASSROOTS PROGRAMME

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES
for the Year Ended 31 August 2022

	Note	Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	2022 Total	2021 Total
		£	£	£	£
INCOME FROM					
Grants	2	50,469	25,050	**75,519**	160,969
Donations	3	4,147	680	**4,827**	26,188
Investment income		172	-	**172**	2
Sale of Fairtrade goods		3,819	-	**3,819**	3,090
TOTAL INCOME		58,607	25,730	**84,337**	190,249
EXPENDITURE ON					
Raising funds		13,440	-	**13,440**	-
Charitable activities	4	51,456	38,564	**90,020**	161,501
TOTAL EXPENDITURE		64,896	38,564	**103,460**	161,501
Net income / expenditure		(6,289)	(12,834)	**(19,123)**	28,748
Transfers between funds		(8,256)	8,256	**-**	-
Net movement in funds for the year		(14,545)	(4,578)	**(19,123)**	28,748
Reconciliation of funds					
Funds brought forward at 1 September 2021		75,770	16,418	**92,188**	63,440
Funds carried forward at 31 August 2022		£61,225	£11,840	**£73,065**	£92,188

The statement of financial activities includes all gains and losses in the year. All incoming resources and resources expended derive from continuing activities.

GRASSROOTS PROGRAMME

BALANCE SHEET
31 August 2022

	Note	2022		2021
		£	£	£
FIXED ASSETS:				
Tangible assets	8		**830**	1,660
CURRENT ASSETS:				
Stock	9	-		200
Debtors	10	**13,776**		11,970
COIF Funds		**51,331**		51,158
Cash at bank		**9,743**		30,183
		74,850		93,511
Creditors: amounts falling due within one year	11	**2,615**		2,983
NET CURRENT ASSETS			**72,235**	90,528
NET ASSETS			**£73,065**	£92,188
FUNDS:				
Unrestricted general fund	13		**61,225**	75,770
Restricted funds	13		**11,840**	16,418
TOTAL FUNDS			**£73,065**	£92,188

The financial statements on pages 11 to 22 were approved by the board of trustees on 10 November 2022.

SIGNED ON BEHALF OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES:

Rev D Lawson
Chair

Mr B Roe
Treasurer

10 November 2022

1. ACCOUNTING POLICIES

General information and basis of preparation
Grassroots Programme is a Charitable Incorporated Organisation. The charity constitutes a public benefit entity as defined by FRS 102. 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 issued in October 2019, the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102), the Charity's constitution, the Charities Act 2011 and UK Generally Accepted Accounting Practice.

The financial statements have been prepared to give a 'true and fair' view and have departed from the Charities (Accounts and Reports) Regulations 2008 only to the extent required to provide a 'true and fair view'. This departure has involved following the 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 issued in October 2019 rather than the Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice effective from 1 April 2005 which has since been withdrawn.

The financial statements are prepared on a going concern basis under the historical cost convention. The financial statements are presented in pounds sterling and rounded to the nearest pound. The address of the principal office is given in the charity information on page 1 of these financial statements.

The Covid-19 pandemic has not had a significant impact on the charity's finances in the current year. Some sources of funds were potentially affected but this was mitigated by reduced costs where activities had to be cancelled or curtailed by the Coronavirus. The trustees have considered the financial position of the Charity for 12 months from the date the financial statements are approved and have concluded that no adjustments are required to the carrying value of its assets and that cash balances and reserves are adequate to maintain its activities. They are also of the opinion that there are no material uncertainties relating to going concern.

Unrestricted and restricted funds
Unrestricted funds are grants and other income received for the objects of the charity without further specified purpose and are available as general funds.

Designated funds comprise unrestricted funds that have been set aside by the trustees for particular purposes. The aim and use of each designated fund is set out in the notes to the financial statements.

Restricted funds are those funds which are to be used for specific purposes as laid down by the donor or the trustees. Expenditure which meets these criteria is identified to the funds, together with a fair allocation of administration and support costs. The aim and use of each restricted fund is set out in the notes to the financial statements.

Income recognition
Donations and other income are recognised when received. Grants are recognised when received or when the charity has legal entitlement to them, the amount can be reliably measured and there is sufficient certainty of receipt them.

Expenditure recognition
Staff costs and overhead expenses are allocated to activities on the basis of staff time spent on those activities. Support costs comprise those costs incurred directly in support of expenditure on the objectives of the charity. Governance costs relate to trustees' expenses, legal charges, independent examiners fees and attributable expenses of governing the charity. The trustees give all their time free of charge.

Expenditure is recognised when the amount can be reliably measured, there is a legal obligation to make it and it is probable that settlement will be required.

ACCOUNTING POLICIES continued

Leasing commitments
Rentals paid under operating leases are charged to income as incurred.

Pensions
The charity operates a defined contribution pension scheme for certain employees. Contributions in respect of pensions are charged to income in the year in which they are paid.

Debtors and creditors receivable/payable within one year
Grants, other debtors and creditors receivable or payable within one year are recorded at transaction price.

Stock
Stocks are stated at the lower of cost and estimated selling price less costs to sell.

Fixed assets
The charity has a policy of capitalising fixed asset expenditure over £1,000.

2. INCOME FROM GRANTS

	Unrestricted	Restricted	2022 Total	2021 Total
	£	£	£	£
Grants for general purposes				
Methodist Church Beds, Essex & Herts District	10,000	-	**10,000**	10,000
URC - MIG (Thames North Synod)	12,000	-	**12,000**	12,000
Diocese of St. Albans	10,469	-	**10,469**	10,000
Luton Council of Faiths	6,000	-	**6,000**	12,000
Northampton RC Diocese (SOJ)	12,000	-	**12,000**	12,000
Church Urban Fund (Near Neighbours)				
Near Neighbours Fund Projects	-	22,500	**22,500**	85,219
Events				
Diocese of St. Albans	-	750	**750**	-
Methodist Church Beds, Essex & Herts District	-	750	**750**	-
URC - MIG (Thames North Synod)	-	1,050	**1,050**	-
National Lottery Community Fund	-	-	**-**	9,550
Council For World Mission	-	-	**-**	10,200
	50,469	25,050	**75,519**	160,969

Income from grants in 2021 totalled £160,969 of which £104,969 was attributable to restricted funds and £56,000 was attributable to unrestricted funds.

3. INCOME FROM DONATIONS & LEGACIES

	Unrestricted	Restricted	2022 Total	2021 Total
	£	£	£	£
Donations				
General	3,947	356	**4,303**	6,488
Spirituality of Justice	200	-	**200**	200
Working with Women	-	324	**324**	500
Legacies	-	-	**-**	19,000
	4,147	680	**4,827**	26,188

Income from donations and legacies in 2021 totalled £26,188 of which £500 was attributable to restricted funds and £25,688 was attributable to unrestricted funds.

4. ALLOCATION OF SUPPORT COSTS

	Basis of Allocation	Mission Education & Advancement	Restricted Funds	Governance Costs	2022 Total	2021 Total
		£	£	£	£	£
Costs directly allocated to activities						
Staff costs (note 5)	Direct	-	19,176	-	**19,176**	35,082
Programme expenses	Direct	12,724	17,155	-	**29,879**	76,356
Cost of goods sold	Direct	2,780	-	-	**2,780**	2,559
Trustee expenses	Direct	-	-	72	**72**	-
Independent examiners fee	Direct	-	-	1,314	**1,314**	1,278
Insurance	Direct	354	-	-	**354**	693
Depreciation	Direct	830	-	-	**830**	830
Support costs allocated to activities						
Staff costs (note 5)	Time	21,651	2,233	655	**24,539**	37,988
Rent and rates	Usage	4,943	-	-	**4,943**	4,443
Postage	Usage	-	-	-	**-**	-
Stationery and printing	Usage	376	-	-	**376**	654
Telephone	Usage	879	-	46	**925**	595
Office running expenses	Usage	2,034	-	-	**2,034**	903
Email and website	Usage	56	-	-	**56**	-
Computer expenses	Usage	1,049	-	-	**1,049**	90
Miscellaneous expenses	Usage	750	-	898	**1,648**	-
Subscriptions	Usage	45	-	-	**45**	30
		48,471	38,564	2,985	**90,020**	161,501

Expenditure in 2021 totalled £161,501 of which £110,358 was attributable to restricted funds and £51,143 to unrestricted funds which included £1,878 relating to governance costs.

4a. ANALYSIS OF EXPENDITURE ON CHARITABLE ACTIVITIES

	Basis of Allocation	Near Neighbours	Working with Women	Events	2022 Total	2021 Total
		£	£	£	£	£
Costs directly allocated to activities						
Staff costs (note 5)	Direct	19,176	-	-	**19,176**	35,082
Programme expenses	Direct	8,256	8,580	319	**17,155**	68,456
Support costs allocated to activities						
Staff costs - Co-ordinator (note 5)	Time	2,233	-	-	**2,233**	6,820
Total year to 31 August 2022		29,665	8,580	319	**38,564**	110,358
Total year to 31 August 2021		87,937	8,580	13,841	110,358	-

5. STAFF COSTS AND NUMBERS

Staff costs were as follows:

	2022	2021
	£	£
Charity director	40,000	34,500
Community workers	-	32,000
Employers National Insurance	1,315	2,752
	41,315	69,252
Pension contributions	2,400	3,670
	43,715	72,922

Defined contribution pension expense is allocated to activities based on the time apportionment of the relevant employee.

No employee earned more than £60,000 during the year (2021 same).

The average number of employees during the year was as follows:

Administration	0.5	1
Charitable activities	0.5	1
	1	2

6. TRANSACTIONS WITH TRUSTEES

No trustees received any remuneration during the year. Travel costs amounting to £72 (2021 £nil) were reimbursed to two (2021 nil) trustees.

No trustee had any personal interest in any contract or transaction entered into by the charity during the year (2021 same).

7. TAXATION

As a charity, Grassroots Programme is exempt from tax on income and gains falling within sections 521 to 536 of the Income Tax Act 2007 or section 256 of the Taxation of Chargeable Gains Act 1992 to the extent that these are applied to its charitable objects. No tax charges have arisen in the charity.

8. TANGIBLE FIXED ASSETS

	IT and Office Equipment £	Total £
Cost:		
As at 1 September 2021	2,490	2,490
Additions	-	-
Disposals	-	-
As at 31 August 2022	2,490	2,490
Depreciation:		
As at 1 September 2021	830	830
Charge for the year	830	830
Disposals	-	-
As at 31 August 2022	1,660	1,660
Net Book Value:		
As at 31 August 2022	**830**	**830**
As at 31 August 2021	1,660	1,660

9. STOCK

	2022	2021
	£	£
Finished goods	-	200
	-	200

Stock represents fair-trade goods for sale. Stock amounts recognised in expenses are £2,780 (2021 £2,559).

10. DEBTORS

	2022	2021
	£	£
Other debtors	-	604
Prepayments	726	116
Accrued income	13,050	11,250
	13,776	11,970

11. CREDITORS: Amounts falling due within one year

	2022	2021
	£	£
Accruals	1,455	1,278
Taxation and social security	760	1,163
Other creditors	400	542
	2,615	2,983

12. ANALYSIS OF NET ASSETS BETWEEN FUNDS

	Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	Total 2022
	£	£	£
Fixed assets	830	-	830
Net current assets	60,395	11,840	72,235
Total net assets	61,225	11,840	73,065

	Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	Total 2021
	£	£	£
Fixed assets	1,660	-	1,660
Net current assets	74,110	16,418	90,528
Total net assets	75,770	16,418	92,188

13. MOVEMENT IN FUNDS

	Balance at 1 September 2021	Income	Expenditure	Transfers	Balance at 31 August 2022
	£	£	£	£	£
Restricted Funds					
Working with Women	-	324	(8,580)	8,256	-
Near Neighbours	7,566	22,500	(29,665)	-	401
Events	8,852	2,906	(319)	-	11,439
	16,418	25,730	(38,564)	8,256	11,840
Unrestricted Funds					
General funds	65,895	46,407	(52,402)	(8,256)	51,644
Designated funds:					
Spirituality of Justice	9,875	12,200	(12,494)	-	9,581
	75,770	58,607	(64,896)	(8,256)	61,225
Total Funds	92,188	84,337	(103,460)	-	73,065

	Balance at 1 September 2020	Income	Expenditure	Transfers	Balance at 31 August 2021
	£	£	£	£	£
Restricted Funds					
Working with Women	2,347	500	(8,580)	5,733	-
Near Neighbours	10,284	85,219	(87,937)	-	7,566
Events	5,433	19,750	(13,841)	(2,490)	8,852
	18,064	105,469	(110,358)	3,243	16,418
Unrestricted Funds					
General funds	37,093	72,580	(40,535)	(3,243)	65,895
Designated funds:					
Spirituality of Justice	8,283	12,200	(10,608)	-	9,875
	45,376	84,780	(51,143)	(3,243)	75,770
Total Funds	63,440	190,249	(161,501)	-	92,188

MOVEMENT IN FUNDS continued

The designated fund is for Spirituality of Justice - being for the promotion of interfaith work across the town.

The balances on the restricted funds will be used to continue the work of the projects in accordance with the terms of the funders. Details of the funds are as follows:

Working with women – Work with women across faiths and cultures for their holistic wellbeing.
Near Neighbours – Bringing neighbours together for 'social action' and 'social interaction'.
Other Events – includes National Lottery Community Fund: to counter the impact of Covid-19 on faith leaders and faith communities (especially women and young people); Council for World Mission: to support faith communities and leaders to look at building resilience during the pandemic and mental health issues from a faith perspective; Awards for All: Strengthening cohesion in Luton acknowledging work undertaken by GRASSROOTS so far.

14. RELATED PARTIES AND CONTROLLING PARTY

There were no related party transactions requiring disclosure. (2021 £nil). The charity is controlled by the Trustees.

15. COMMITMENTS

Minimum lease payments under non-cancellable operating leases fall due as follows:

	2022	2021
	£	£
Within one year	1,750	1,500
	1,750	1,500

GRASSROOTS PROGRAMME

England & Wales - Charity number 1163427

Accounts

REGISTERED CHARITY NUMBER: 1163427

GRASSROOTS PROGRAMME

FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE

YEAR ENDED 31 AUGUST 2021

Miller & Co
Chartered Accountants
5 Imperial Court
Laporte Way
Luton
Bedfordshire
LU4 8FE

GRASSROOTS PROGRAMME

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for the Year Ended 31 August 2021

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GRASSROOTS PROGRAMME
TRUSTEES' ANNUAL REPORT
for the Year Ended 31 August 2021

The Trustees present their report and the financial statements for the year ended 31 August 2021. The trustees have adopted the provisions of the Statement of Recommended Practice (SORP) "Accounting and Reporting by Charities" in preparing the annual report and financial statements of the charity.

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

This charity, Grassroots Programme CIO took over the assets of the former unincorporated charity Grassroots Programme (charity number 1057468) on 1 September 2016. Prior years' reports relating to charity number 1057468 may be obtained from the office at the principal address.

LEGAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE DETAILS

CHARITY NAME:	Grassroots Programme
STATUS:	Charitable Incorporated Organisation - Foundation Constitution. Registered Constitution and as a charity on 04 September 2015.
CHARITY NUMBER:	1163427
PRINCIPAL ADDRESS:	47 High Town Road Luton Bedfordshire LU2 0BW
TRUSTEES AND OFFICERS:	Those who served as trustees of the charity during the year were as follows:

Rev D Lawson	(Chair)
Mrs J Bird	
Rev M Hindley	
Rev P Horner	
Mrs R Tetlow	
Mrs S Marsden	(Secretary)
Ms D Purfield	
Mr B Roe	(Treasurer)

CHARITY DIRECTOR:	Mr D Jonathan
BANKERS:	The Co-operative Bank Olympic House 6 Olympic Court Salford M8 2QP
INDEPENDENT EXAMINERS:	Miller & Co Chartered Accountants Statutory Auditors 5 Imperial Court, Laporte Way Luton Bedfordshire LU4 8FE

ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE

Grassroots Programme is an independent charity. A board of trustees administers the charity. The trustees are responsible for the overall control and management of the charity and meet on a regular basis.

PUBLIC BENEFIT

The trustees confirm that they have complied with their duty, set out in the 2011 Charity Act, to have due regard to Charity Commission guidance on public benefit.

RECRUITMENT AND APPOINTMENT OF TRUSTEES

Trustees are appointed for a term of five years by a resolution of the trustees passed at a special meeting for which not less than 21 days' notice has been given.

Under the terms of the Constitution, newly appointed trustees are not entitled to act as trustees until they have signed, in the minute book of the trustees, a declaration of acceptance and willingness to act in the trusts of the Charity.

All the trustees are familiar with the work of the charity and an induction is performed for any new trustees.

OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES

The objects of the charity as set out in the Constitution are as follows:

(1) To advance education for the public benefit in global issues to enable greater awareness of factors that will contribute to the relief of needy victims of breaches of human rights in such ways that are charitable in law.

(2) To advance religion and promote understanding among Christians and those of other faiths.

(3) To provide opportunities for the advancement of education among all ages, but particularly adults, in such ways that are charitable in law.

(4) To provide relief of the aged, infirm and poor.

ACHIEVEMENTS AND PERFORMANCE

In order to achieve its objectives, the charity runs a number of programmes. During the year it ran the following specific programmes:

Working our way through the Covid-19 Pandemic

Throughout the pandemic "We are all in this together" has been echoed all around us and yet some of us involved in the community and voluntary sector know that we may have been in the same storm but not everyone has been in the same boat. The pandemic has highlighted the inequalities and injustices that exist, locally, nationally as well as globally.

Secondly, we mustn't forget that the coronavirus pandemic has been as much a mental health emergency as it has been a physical one. Therefore, it is worth reminding our local-national governments that the economic sectors will only be as healthy as the people, communities and environments that support them. Interestingly it is community, voluntary and faith sectors which have done the MOST with the LEAST resources because they are motivated by their faith, mission statement, and service users, not by profit. Therefore, the work that many charities like ours have done over the past year, in responding to the pandemic has been nothing short of remarkable.

Re-opening places of worship had not been easy particularly as government instructions had been very demanding and Luton's population includes people who are vulnerable to disproportionate impact and severity of COVID-19, including BAME, elderly and deprived populations. Supporting and reassuring faith leaders that they are not alone and that we are all together in this had been at the core of our work. Besides that we continued providing the right and relevant information from time to time as government guidelines had been constantly changing and updating. We regularly cascaded the messages encouraging faith communities to continue preventing the spread of Covid-19, protecting the vulnerable and providing reassurance to people, countering their fears and anxieties.

Towards the end of 2020, the world had been waiting for the COVID-19 vaccine, but since then it has taken lots of our energy, focus and determination to confront the rumours and conspiracy myths which were (and still are) undermining public trust in health authorities and in tested and approved vaccines, which threaten an effective public health response to the pandemic. It is great that the government strengthened Near Neighbours local hubs and local authorities, to improve on public health communication in dispelling myths, reduce fear, and build confidence among ethnic minorities, tackling misinformation and anti-vaccination narratives and encouraging engagement with NHS services.

Amidst all these challenges what has been most encouraging is to see communities pulling together, whether it was for the extremely heavy ash fall rained down on parts of the Caribbean island of St Vincent on 9th April 2021 or it was commemorating Black Lives Matter - One Year On in Luton on 25th May 2021; whether it was negotiating our way through the strong & divisive narrative around Israel-Palestine conflict) or it was trying to understand and discern how climate change can be racist too. We have hope as long as people of faith and goodwill continue to come together to discern ways of responding to challenges facing our world today. Our report is a testament to that hope and affirms the fact that our efforts to make the world a better place do make a difference.

Spirituality of Justice

Spirituality involves the recognition of a sense or belief that there is something greater than ourselves and that greater of which we are part is cosmic or divine in nature. Spirituality of Justice however describes Justice as the best beloved of all things in the sight of divine. It is a gift from God to humanity, and the sign of His loving-kindness. All our work is guided by it, some of which is mentioned below.

Holocaust Memorial Day (HMD) 2021 (Jan'21)
The theme for Holocaust Memorial Day (HMD) 2021 was "Be the light in the darkness". In a statement the HMD Trust said, "Increasing levels of denial, division and misinformation in today's world mean we must remain vigilant against hatred and identity-based hostility. We can all stand in solidarity – at home, in public, and online." This year everyone joined the national event held online. This can be viewed at https://www.hmd.org.uk/ceremony. Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis said "Darkness can only endure when we fail to shine a light. We are the guardians of the fragile flame of our humanity. If each one of us will become that flame, this will be a different world – a world in which light will prevail."

Fairtrade Fortnight 22nd Feb – 7th March 2021
Like every year, during the Fairtrade Fortnight we reminded faith communities to renew our commitment to Fairtrade, pledging to buy and use Fairtrade to help disadvantaged farmers and communities in developing countries. It guarantees them a fair price which helps them access education, healthcare, and sustainable farming methods. By choosing Fairtrade, we support 7 million people in 59 developing countries. Fairtrade isn't Charity – It is Justice.

A Fair Deal – Challenging the exploitation of trade by business giants (Feb'21)
GRASSROOTS contributed an article at http://www.jointpublicissues.org.uk/a-fair-deal/ sharing an individual perspective and experience of seeing the signs of Western Empire and colonial legacies continue to exert their influence and modern globalization initiating a new era of economic slavery and oppression.

Black Lives Matter - One Year On in Luton (May'21)
To commemorate first death anniversary of George Floyd and to remember and refresh our commitment to the ethos of racial justice and Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement, in Luton, we invited Pas Vincent Cox to talk about developing Interdenominational Commission on Racial Justice under Churches Together in Luton. This is aimed at discerning, defining and understanding what does it mean to be black in the UK/Luton? How black communities and people end up at the bottom of the upside down pyramid of the ethnic minority communities? It is about Identifying disadvantages that the black communities face, before articulating solutions to create equity around those disadvantages.

Windrush Day 2021 Commemorated in Luton (Jun'21)
It's been more than 70 years since the Empire Windrush ship sailed to Britain, and now an estimated 500,000 people live in the UK who arrived between 1948 and 1971 from Caribbean countries. Many of them have experienced racism and discrimination. Still, their positive contributions are a testament to their resilience and fortitude. In a commemorative event organised by African Caribbean Community Development Forum (ACCDF) that we supported, Luton Cllr Jacqui Burnett said: "It is worth remembering that our NHS would not have survived without the Windrush Generation and its descendants." Luton North MP Sarah Owen said, "This year more than ever we've rightly paid tribute to NHS workers from home & abroad. We must acknowledge the overseas workers' fantastic contributions to the NHS and stop penalising people who come to the UK to care for our sick, elderly and vulnerable."

Remembering Srebrenica (Jul'21)
A book "Voices from Srebrenica: Survivor Narratives of the Bosnian Genocide" provides eyewitness accounts of the Bosnian genocide, which is called the worst atrocity on European soil since the Second World War. In commemorating UK National Srebrenica Memorial Day, we supported, promoted and actively participated and contributed to the University of Bedfordshire led online event with the authors of this book Professor Ann Petrila & Hasan Hasanovic. In writing this book, they have revealed stories of individual trauma, loss and resilience.

GRASSROOTS Commitment to Climate Change

GRASSROOTS has been actively liaising and networking with St Albans Diocesan Environmental network, Catholic Agency for Overseas Development (CAFOD), The Roman Catholic National Justice & Peace Network (NJPN) to see what and how we can do more to visibly and explicitly demonstrate our commitment to the climate change issues ahead of the COP26 – the 26th UN Climate Change conference taking place in Glasgow, Scotland, from 1 to 12 November 2021.

GRASSROOTS played its part in promoting awareness of a national initiative in which over 75 of Britain's biggest charities joined together through 'Crack the Crisis Coalition' https://crackthecrises.org/#join and mobilised over 80,000 people to join in the #WaveOfHope campaign to showcase that through collective action hope arises. We also promoted CAFOD led G7 interfaith event on the theme of "Building a better world after the pandemic". This event on 10th June 2021 was streamed live from Truro Cathedral (Cornwall). It brought people of all faiths together to send messages and prayers to the G7 leaders that we expect green, sustainable and fair recovery plans from the crisis, which leave no one behind.

In an ecumenical event & retreat led by GRASSROOTS, Sr Maire Hayes (GRASSROOTS Staff Team Member) reflected on the Catholic Encyclical Laudato Si and outlined Pope Francis's vision for an integrated approach to combating poverty, restoring dignity to the excluded, protecting nature and fostering sustainable development. Explaining 'affective conversion' she said we must move away from thinking too much and feeling too little. To protect the Earth we must love the Earth. We must create an economy that no longer idolises profit but the integrity of creation and the well-being of all.

We also encouraged all faith communities to sign the petition https://www.theclimatecoalition.org/declaration for a healthier, greener, fairer future for all. Many churches have held bible studies already but we are also encouraging other faith communities to reflect on and pray for climate change issues. We lobby our MPs and faith groups to become aware of numerous local & national initiatives because due to COP26, Climate Change is big on everyone's Agenda this year.

In consultation with Bedfordshire Beekeeper's Association, we are also promoting awareness of 'Save the Bees', our endangered pollinators, campaign through workshops and school assemblies. Sr Maire Hayes has contributed an article on Integral Ecology and the Roman Catholic Order of The Daughters of the Holy Spirit. She also contributed to an online Climate Change event organised by UNA Luton branch in commemorating the UN Day on 24th Oct'20.

Climate Change Is Racist: Race, Privilege and the Struggle for Climate Justice (Jun'21)
Ahead of World Environment Day, we facilitated faith leaders from different faith communities, to reflect on the theme of "Climate Change & Racism". Jeremy Williams, Luton based Writer-Campaigner-Award winning Blogger https://earthbound.report/ (named Britain's best green blog by the UK Blog Awards) shared his thoughts. In the light of Black Lives Matter movement, Jeremy said the two big crises of racism and climate change that we face in the 21st-century are intimately connected. It is about structural racism, where outcomes of climate change are different and much harder on people of colour. The world's richest countries of white populations have the highest carbon footprints and yet the poorest countries of black populations who have contributed the least to the climate change are facing the greatest risks. This is a major social justice issue he said. Therefore, it is crucial that we see climate justice issue also as a racial justice issue. The continent of Africa is going to suffer the most as a result of the climate change and it is the same continent that Jeremy said his ancestors exploited throughout the age of slavery, imperialism and colonialism and now through climate change.

GRASSROOTS Luton has committed to work alongside Luton Council of Faiths to continue promoting compostable cutlery amongst Luton's different faith communities. Considering Luton's 78% population is religiously affiliated, there are numerous faith events held in a year, which can substantially reduce our plastic waste. As such the UK sends much of its plastic waste to poorer nations where it is often burnt, which reinforces how climate justice is also as a racial justice issue.
https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2021/jan/12/loophole-will-let-uk-continue-to-ship-plastic-waste-to-poorer-countries

Working with Women across Faiths & Cultures

Ghar se Ghar (Hindi/Urdu Words meaning 'Home to Home') is a women's co-operative, cultivating safe space for disadvantaged women, to discuss and discern responses to isolation, depression and health-related problems. This initiative helps women through educational, recreational and well-being sessions. Those requiring help with domestic violence, counselling, housing benefits, social services etc. are signposted to the relevant agencies for further guidance and support.

Ghar se Ghar Activity Groups
The Bury Park, Ashcroft and Beech Hill groups had all closed the week ending 20th March 2020 due to Covid lockdown. They have not resumed in their full capacity since. Some exercise sessions were held in the parks during the summer when weather & Covid regulations allowed. Now sessions are taking place periodically as restrictions have relaxed.

Amina Khaiyyam Kantha Kathak Well-being Embroidery Project
Ghar se Ghar members and others in Luton participated in this south Asian embroidery project aimed to, "connect, share, learn & create our lockdown expressions through a stitch at a time." The finished pieces have been sewn together and presented on shows in galleries. Also through a south Asian classical dance form called 'Kathak', the stories behind the embroidery were shared with audiences.

Precious Pearls 2021 Theme: Somewhere Over the Rainbow
The sign of the rainbow is a sign of hope. This event celebrated 'hope' by acknowledging the emerging women leaders in different parts of the world, but it also invited local women to share stories of how they had come from 'somewhere over the rainbow' (distant parts of the world) to Luton, to fulfil their hopes, dreams and aspirations and have made Luton their much loved home now. Numerous contributors shared inspirational stories about what they do e.g. Messy Church – working with young people and families, women from different faiths helping refugees in Luton with the winter clothing and English lessons in conjunction with "Care for Calais", Azalea charity concerned with LASE (Luton Against Sexual Exploitation) and women's sexual health in Luton, Signposts charity helping the homeless. Several other presentations include poetry, singing, reflections, piano recital of the song "Somewhere over the Rainbow" and Kathak – a south Asian dance form movement using only hands. Sr Maire Hayes said, "Somewhere over the rainbow, women from diverse cultures and faiths gathered together in Luton to share their experiences of hope in a world filled with fear and anxiety. Women have made a difference and continue to do so. We are never too small to make a difference."

Circle Dancing
All regular dance sessions remained closed but a few of circle dance WhatsApp videos were shared in the hope that they might bring light into the dark times of lockdown. The Youlgrave, Peak District national group tried using Zoom dance sessions but it was not a fulfilling experience. Internet interruptions were plentiful and patience was indeed a virtue! The most valuable gain was keeping in touch with the other dancers.

Near Neighbours (NN) Programme

Near Neighbours (NN) Grants Programme
Due to pandemic lockdown, Near Neighbours had to delay the delivery of its usual grants programme, still it was a huge success. This took a lot of preparation meetings but it has been encouraging to work with 28 groups including several new ones. Grant criteria and guidelines had to be adapted, to keep up with the continually changing government guidelines.

Sharing Stories of Hope
During Interfaith week, this online event invited all its beneficiaries and partners to share stories from their work during the pandemic. The event proved a great opportunity for networking and making connections. Nearly 26 organisations contributed to this event with a very positive feedback.

Building Resilience to COVID 19 Pandemic and Beyond'
This online conference was delivered in partnership with SFI (Strengthening Faith Institutions). Amidst other things, the conference provided training workshops on income generation for faith centres, faith-based social entrepreneurship and safeguarding children at faith organisations. Luton's Near Neighbours Coordinator Kim Greig co-delivered a Grant Writing workshop in 2 sessions during this conference.

COVID Relief Community Grants & Other Programmes
Between January and March 2021 Near Neighbours expanded its work to support those most at risk from Covid-19, through communicating accurate public health information, encouraging vaccine take up and more widely, engaging and supporting communities to tackle the disproportionate impact the pandemic has had on certain ethnic and social groups. Building on its existing local networks in some of the most diverse and deprived areas like Luton, besides launching an exclusive round of funding as Covid Relief Grants, it also delivered programmes to

- boost digital inclusion through social media training webinar 'Diverting to Digital'
- enhance youth leadership through 'Ripple Effect – Individual Action Collective Change' event
- strengthen financial resilience through 'Covid Cash Recovery Course'
- enhance community leadership through networking event based on 'Stories of Hope' event model

All these initiatives helped increase the community engagement and community support in mutual aid and increased collective working in a Covid-secure way.

Near Neighbours 10th Anniversary Celebrations in Luton
Over 25 Luton organisations attended the 10th Anniversary celebrations and shared their outstanding work of helping people and communities in this town supported by Near Neighbours Programme. During the last 10 years, Luton has seen 287 projects undertaking activities e.g. community gardening, litter picking, music for those suffering from dementia, connecting young people with horses, arts & sports activities, mental health first aid training programmes, human trafficking, child sexual exploitation, international women and inter faith week activities and several other projects involving people from diverse backgrounds, promoting cultural and racial understanding and integration. Near Neighbours Programme has contributed £728,157 worth of grants to support Luton communities, which is a significant contribution, much of it helped during the pandemic lockdowns too.

Inter Faith Relations

Last year, at the start of the autumn (which is also the start of GRASSROOTS operational year), days had begun to get darker and shorter. People were finding the prospects of more restrictions during the winter months even harder than when we had first gone into lockdown. In the midst of loss and pain, people found our interventions and innovative ideas therapeutic in what had been a sad and weary time for all. Some highlights are mentioned below.

Zoom Peace Event (Sep'20)
Every year, LCoF commemorates International Day of Peace at its Annual Peace Walk event in which Luton's communities of faith or no faith background visit different places of worship and enjoy hospitality. Due to Covid –19, this year's peace walk event was held online. Therefore, it was called 'Zoom Peace' event. It celebrated Luton's faith communities' outstanding work during the Covid-19 pandemic, by showing video clips, news items and pictures of community in action. All dignitaries (including Lord Lieutenant, Mayor of Luton, MPs) admired and applauded Luton's faith communities, saying places of worship and faith leaders have been the first port of call, for people in distress facing death, bereavement, isolation, mental health issues and issues of physical, emotional and spiritual well-being. High Sheriff of Bedfordshire Susan Lousada said, "Two words I take from this evening are 'HOPE' & 'PEACE'."

Hope in the face of Loss & Despair – Seeing 'Light' through the Dark (Nov'20)
In this event, friends from different faiths shared prayers, scriptural & other inspirational quotes on the theme above. It was uplifting for everyone who had attended this event or read about this event on the social media or in the local press. The Holy Quran verses reminded us not to despair. After a difficulty, Allah will soon grant relief. A verse from the Sikh scripture Shri Guru Granth Sahib assured, "Why are you afraid, O human! The Creator will save you." Quaker Book of Faith and Practice said light is already shining into the darkness, and the darkness cannot overcome it. Bahai reflection highlighted transformation in human world; in adversities, many are uniting to help those in need. The Torah encouraged us not to despair. God performs the role of comforter. It reminded that surviving despair is a character-transforming experience. You realise life is not about you. It is about others. A humanist poem called us to value the love of our friends and neighbours and the beautiful creation. Hindus, Sikhs and Jains Diwali celebrations reminded us that "Hope is being able to see that there is light despite all of the darkness." Reading of Psalms from The Bible and St Mary's Church's 900 years history of witnessing human suffering and its recovery were powerful symbols of God's restoring power in the difficult times. Zen Master Thich Nhat Hanh quote summed up this event well. "Hope is important because it can make the present moment less difficult to bear. If we believe that tomorrow will be better, we can bear a hardship today."

Government Research Projects (Oct & Dec'20)
The Prime Minister had asked Danny Kruger MP for proposals to sustain the community spirit we saw during the first lockdown. We contributed our responses from Luton asking for a more local, more humane, less bureaucratic, less centralised work ethics so people feel supported and empowered to play an active role in their neighbourhoods. In Oct'20, The Prime Minister responded positively to Kruger's proposals. Levelling Up Our Communities report is available for download here: https://www.dannykruger.org.uk/communities-report

In Dec'20 the Independent Faith Review was carried out by Colin Bloom who is the Faith Engagement Adviser at the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG). He led this review to discern how best the government should engage with faith groups in England. This call for evidence posed a series of questions around how those of all faiths, or none, perceive the government's engagement with faith organisations. Colin Bloom is now expected to make recommendations to the Communities Secretary as part of this review.
https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/independent-faith-engagement-review-call-for-evidence

Britain First Groups (Oct & Dec'20)
As though the pandemic wasn't enough, far right groups made their appearances in Luton on 19th Oct'20 and 12th Dec'20. Even in the midst of a devastating pandemic some extremists had the will, power, energy and time to spread and incite hatred. Thankfully all remained peaceful. Luton once again sent a strong message of defiance and condemnation to all such tactics that seek to divide the town. Bedfordshire Police and the Luton Council are looking into a further injunction given the success of the last one to help dissuade any such activities in the future.

Hate Mail sent to Hindu Temple (Nov'20)
Following a hate mail sent anonymously to the Hindu Temple on 18th Nov'20, we brought Hindu and Muslim community leaders together. It was acknowledged that we need to care for one another; attack on one is attack on us all. Councils of Mosques in Luton formally wrote to the Hindu Temple saying "this is upsetting and unacceptable behaviour. We have shared this across our Mosques and the responses have been unequivocal in their dismay and sadness that you have been hurt in this way. We stand in absolute solidarity with you at this time - as we stand beside any faith group that is targeted by such malicious attempts to ridicule others and incite hatred. As Muslims we have often been at the receiving end of such hostile communications, and we know first-hand the anxiety and fear it can create within a community."

Israel-Palestine Conflict Local Impact
Israel-Palestine conflict had diverted focus and energy for a short while, from the life threatening pandemic to the violence and violation of human rights in Israel-Palestine. Violence and hatred cannot lead to any solutions to the deep ethnic and religious divisions that have afflicted this region now for a century. And sadly what happens there, affects community relations all across the world, due to multinational multicultural communities present in the globally interconnected world. In Luton all faith communities had expressed sympathy with all those in Israel and Palestinian territories who had suffered death, injury and mental stress in the current conflict. All sought the end of conflict based on mutual respect and interdependence on each other and reiterated that the strength comes from being united in concern and love rather than divided by prejudice and hate. We need to build societies of unity, tolerance harmony and peace.

The Queen's Award for Voluntary Service 2021 for Luton Council of Faiths (LCoF)
GRASSROOTS Luton congratulated it's partner organisation LUTON COUNCIL OF FAITHS (LCoF) for having received this year, The Queen's Award for Voluntary Service (QAVS), which is the highest award a voluntary group can receive in the UK. In 2021, Luton Council of Faiths (LCoF) completes 25 years, since founded as Inter Faith Forum and 20 years since registered as independent Charity. It is so well timed to be receiving the Queen's Award for Voluntary Services in this year. HM Lord-Lieutenant of Bedfordshire, Helen Nellis, while presenting the award said, "With volunteers at the heart of its activities, Luton Council of Faiths is an exceptionally well-run, high quality organisation and represents the very best example of how well co-ordinated and dedicated volunteers can make a genuine impact on everyone." Thanking God for GRASSROOTS & LCoF's services, using the famous quote, Bishop Richard Atkinson said "For all that has been, Thanks. For all that is to come, Yes!"

RISK MANAGEMENT
The Trustees have assessed the major risks to which the charity is exposed, in particular those related to the finances of the charity, including those related to Covid-19 and are satisfied that systems are in place to reduce exposure to the major risks.

RESERVES POLICY
The Trustees have a policy of aiming to retain reserves equivalent to six months average expenditure. This is due to the uncertain nature of funding received. The free reserves at the year-end were £65,895.

PLANS FOR FUTURE PERIODS
The Trustees remain committed to the growth of the Grassroots Programme and the possibilities of expanding the presence of Grassroots Programme to other parts of the country. However, this is dependent upon the charity securing additional funds.

FINANCIAL REVIEW
The charity had total income of £190,249 (2020 £123,791). The main sources of income were grants of £160,969 (2020 £112,000). The charity had total expenditure of £161,501 (2020 £130,053). Direct charitable expenditure on projects totalled £159,623 (2020 £126,991) and governance costs totalled £1,878 (2020 £3,062). There was net income on the unrestricted fund of £30,394 and net expenditure of £1,646 on the restricted fund after transfers between funds. Total funds at the end of the year were £92,188.

The trustees would like to record their thanks to all individuals and associations who supported the charity during the year. All details of the income and expenditure of the charity are set out in the Statement of Financial Activities and the

notes to the accounts. In the opinion of the trustees the charity was in a satisfactory financial position at the year end.

STATEMENT OF TRUSTEES' RESPONSIBILITIES

The trustees are responsible for preparing the Trustees' Annual Report and the financial statements in accordance with applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice).

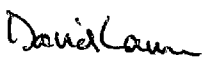
The law applicable to charities in England & Wales requires the trustees to prepare financial statements for each financial year which give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the charity and of the incoming resources and application of resources of the charity for that period. In preparing these financial statements, the trustees are required to:

- select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently;
- observe the methods and principles in the Charities SORP 2019 (FRS 102);
- make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent;
- state whether applicable accounting standards have been followed, subject to any material departures disclosed and explained in the financial statements;
- prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the charity will continue in operation.

The trustees are responsible for keeping proper accounting records that disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the charity and enable them to ensure that the financial statements comply with the Charities Act 2011, the Charity (Accounts and Reports) Regulations 2008 and the provisions of the constitution. They are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the charity and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

ON BEHALF OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES:





Rev D Lawson
Chair

B Roe
Treasurer

Date: 9 November 2021

GRASSROOTS PROGRAMME

INDEPENDENT EXAMINERS' REPORT
to the Trustees of Grassroots Programme

I report to the charity trustees on my examination of the accounts of the charity for the year ended 31 August 2021 which are set out on pages 10 to 21.

RESPONSIBILITIES AND BASIS OF REPORT

As the charity's trustees you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Charities Act 2011 ('the Act').

I report in respect of my examination of the charity's accounts carried out under section 145 of the Act and in carrying out my examination I have followed all the applicable Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the Act.

INDEPENDENT EXAMINERS' STATEMENT

Your attention is drawn to the fact that the charity has prepared the accounts 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 in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) in preference to the Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice issued on 1 April 2005 which is referred to in the extant regulations but has since been withdrawn.

We understand that this has been done in order for the accounts to provide a true and fair view in accordance with the Generally Accepted Accounting Practice effective for reporting periods beginning on or after 1 January 2015.

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

1. accounting records were not kept in respect of the charity as required by section 130 of the Act; or
2. the accounts do not accord with those records; or
3. the accounts do not comply with the applicable requirements concerning the form and content of accounts set out in the Charities (Accounts and Reports) Regulations 2008 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.

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.



R A Cox FCA
Miller & Co
Chartered Accountants
5 Imperial Court
Laporte Way, Luton
Bedfordshire
LU4 8FE

9 November 2021

GRASSROOTS PROGRAMME

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES
for the Year Ended 31 August 2021

	Note	Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	2021 Total	2020 Total
		£	£	£	£
INCOME FROM					
Grants	2	56,000	104,969	**160,969**	112,000
Donations	3	25,688	500	**26,188**	7,034
Investment income		2	-	**2**	34
Sale of Fairtrade goods		3,090	-	**3,090**	4,723
TOTAL INCOME		84,780	105,469	**190,249**	123,791
EXPENDITURE ON					
Charitable activities	4	51,143	110,358	**161,501**	130,053
TOTAL EXPENDITURE		51,143	110,358	**161,501**	130,053
Net income / expenditure		33,637	(4,889)	**28,748**	(6,262)
Transfers between funds		(3,243)	3,243	**-**	-
Net movement in funds for the year		30,394	(1,646)	**28,748**	(6,262)
Reconciliation of funds					
Funds brought forward at 1 September 2020		45,376	18,064	**63,440**	69,702
Funds carried forward at 31 August 2021		£75,770	£16,418	**£92,188**	£63,440

The statement of financial activities includes all gains and losses in the year. All incoming resources and resources expended derive from continuing activities.

GRASSROOTS PROGRAMME

BALANCE SHEET
31 August 2021

	Note	2021		2020
		£	£	£
FIXED ASSETS:				
Tangible assets	8		**1,660**	-
CURRENT ASSETS:				
Stock	9	**200**		425
Debtors	10	**11,970**		23,366
COIF Funds		**51,158**		7,657
Cash at bank		**30,183**		34,955
		93,511		66,403
Creditors: amounts falling due within one year	11	**2,983**		2,963
NET CURRENT ASSETS			**90,528**	63,440
NET ASSETS			**£92,188**	£63,440
FUNDS:				
Unrestricted general fund	13		**75,770**	45,376
Restricted funds	13		**16,418**	18,064
TOTAL FUNDS			**£92,188**	£63,440

The financial statements on pages 10 to 21 were approved by the board of trustees on 9 November 2021.

SIGNED ON BEHALF OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES:

Rev D Lawson
Chair

Mr B Roe
Treasurer

9 November 2021

1. ACCOUNTING POLICIES

General information and basis of preparation
Grassroots Programme is a Charitable Incorporated Organisation. The charity constitutes a public benefit entity as defined by FRS 102. 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 issued in October 2019, the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102), the Charity's constitution, the Charities Act 2011 and UK Generally Accepted Accounting Practice.

The financial statements have been prepared to give a 'true and fair' view and have departed from the Charities (Accounts and Reports) Regulations 2008 only to the extent required to provide a 'true and fair view'. This departure has involved following the 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 issued in October 2019 rather than the Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice effective from 1 April 2005 which has since been withdrawn.

The financial statements are prepared on a going concern basis under the historical cost convention. The financial statements are presented in pounds sterling and rounded to the nearest pound. The address of the principal office is given in the charity information on page 1 of these financial statements.

The Covid-19 pandemic has not had a significant impact on the charity's finances in the current year. Some sources of funds were potentially affected but this was mitigated by reduced costs where activities had to be cancelled or curtailed by the Coronavirus. In the next financial year, it is estimated that perhaps a further 10-15% of funding may be lost due to reductions in grants because of the pandemic. However, the trustees have considered the financial position of the Charity for 12 months from the date the financial statements are approved and have concluded that no adjustments are required to the carrying value of its assets and that cash balances and reserves are adequate to maintain its activities. They are also of the opinion that there are no material uncertainties relating to going concern.

Unrestricted and restricted funds
Unrestricted funds are grants and other income received for the objects of the charity without further specified purpose and are available as general funds.

Designated funds comprise unrestricted funds that have been set aside by the trustees for particular purposes. The aim and use of each designated fund is set out in the notes to the financial statements.

Restricted funds are those funds which are to be used for specific purposes as laid down by the donor or the trustees. Expenditure which meets these criteria is identified to the funds, together with a fair allocation of administration and support costs. The aim and use of each restricted fund is set out in the notes to the financial statements.

Income recognition
Donations and other income are recognised when received. Grants are recognised when received or when the charity has legal entitlement to them, the amount can be reliably measured and there is sufficient certainty of receipt them.

Expenditure recognition
Staff costs and overhead expenses are allocated to activities on the basis of staff time spent on those activities. Support costs comprise those costs incurred directly in support of expenditure on the objectives of the charity. Governance costs relate to trustees' expenses, legal charges, independent examiners fees and attributable expenses of governing the charity. The trustees give all their time free of charge.

Expenditure is recognised when the amount can be reliably measured, there is a legal obligation to make it and it is probable that settlement will be required.

ACCOUNTING POLICIES continued

Leasing commitments
Rentals paid under operating leases are charged to income as incurred.

Pensions
The charity operates a defined contribution pension scheme for certain employees. Contributions in respect of pensions are charged to income in the year in which they are paid.

Debtors and creditors receivable/payable within one year
Grants, other debtors and creditors receivable or payable within one year are recorded at transaction price.

Stock
Stocks are stated at the lower of cost and estimated selling price less costs to sell.

Fixed assets
The charity has a policy of capitalising fixed asset expenditure over £1,000.

2. INCOME FROM GRANTS

	Unrestricted	Restricted	2021 Total	2020 Total
	£	£	£	£
Grants for general purposes				
Methodist Church Beds, Essex & Herts District	10,000	-	**10,000**	10,000
URC - MIG (Thames North Synod)	12,000	-	**12,000**	17,000
Diocese of St. Albans	10,000	-	**10,000**	10,000
Luton Council of Faiths	12,000	-	**12,000**	10,000
Northampton RC Diocese (SOJ)	12,000	-	**12,000**	12,000
Working with Women across Faiths & Cultures				
Allder Trust	-	-	**-**	5,000
Church Urban Fund (Near Neighbours)				
Near Neighbours Fund Projects	-	85,219	**85,219**	48,000
Events				
National Lottery Community Fund	-	9,550	**9,550**	-
Council For World Mission	-	10,200	**10,200**	-
	56,000	104,969	**160,969**	112,000

Income from grants in 2020 totalled £112,000 of which £53,000 was attributable to restricted funds and £59,000 was attributable to unrestricted funds.

3. INCOME FROM DONATIONS & LEGACIES

	Unrestricted	Restricted	2021 Total	2020 Total
	£	£	£	£
Donations				
General	6,488	-	**6,488**	1,654
Spirituality of Justice	200	-	**200**	-
Working with Women	-	500	**500**	1,120
Legacies	19,000	-	**19,000**	-
Other				
Bury Park Beech Hill Council of Churches	-	-	-	4,260
	25,688	500	**26,188**	7,034

Income from donations and legacies in 2020 totalled £7,034 of which £5,380 was attributable to restricted funds and £1,654 was attributable to unrestricted funds.

4. ALLOCATION OF SUPPORT COSTS

	Basis of Allocation	Mission Education & Advancement	Restricted Funds	Governance Costs	2021 Total	2020 Total
		£	£	£	£	£
Costs directly allocated to activities						
Staff costs (note 5)	Direct	-	35,082	-	**35,082**	34,944
Programme expenses	Direct	7,900	68,456	-	**76,356**	40,930
Cost of goods sold	Direct	2,559	-	-	**2,559**	4,599
Trustee expenses	Direct	-	-	-	**-**	103
Independent examiners fee	Direct	-	-	1,278	**1,278**	1,254
Insurance	Direct	693	-	-	**693**	677
Depreciation	Direct	830	-	-	**830**	-
Support costs allocated to activities						
Staff costs (note 5)	Time	30,598	6,820	570	**37,988**	37,534
Rent and rates	Usage	4,443	-	-	**4,443**	6,538
Postage	Usage	-	-	-	**-**	291
Stationery and printing	Usage	654	-	-	**654**	1,161
Telephone	Usage	565	-	30	**595**	1,020
Office running expenses	Usage	903	-	-	**903**	732
Email and website	Usage	-	-	-	**-**	104
Computer expenses	Usage	90	-	-	**90**	121
Sundry expenses	Usage	-	-	-	**-**	15
Subscriptions	Usage	30	-	-	**30**	30
		49,265	110,358	1,878	**161,501**	130,053

Expenditure in 2020 totalled £130,053 of which £83,248 was attributable to restricted funds and £46,805 to unrestricted funds which included £3,062 relating to governance costs.

4a. ANALYSIS OF EXPENDITURE ON CHARITABLE ACTIVITIES

	Basis of Allocation	Near Neighbours	Bury Park Beech Hill CRCW	IDAI	Working with Women	Events	2021 Total	2020 Total
		£	£	£	£	£	£	£
Costs directly allocated to activities								
Staff costs (note 5)	Direct	35,082	-	-	-	-	**35,082**	34,944
Programme expenses	Direct	46,035	-	-	8,580	13,841	**68,456**	34,903
Support costs allocated to activities								
Staff costs - Co-ordinator (note 5)	Time	6,820	-	-	-	-	**6,820**	13,401
Total year to 31 August 2021		87,937	-	-	8,580	13,841	**110,358**	83,248
Total year to 31 August 2020		57,136	6,782	1,125	8,838	9,367	-	83,248

5. STAFF COSTS AND NUMBERS

Staff costs were as follows:

	2021	2020
	£	£
Charity director	**34,500**	34,500
Community workers	**32,000**	32,000
Employers National Insurance	**2,752**	2,308
	69,252	68,808
Pension contributions	**3,670**	3,670
	72,922	72,478

Defined contribution pension expense is allocated to activities based on the time apportionment of the relevant employee.

No employee earned more than £60,000 during the year (2020 same).

The average number of employees during the year was as follows:

Administration	**1**	1
Charitable activities	**1**	1
	2	2

6. TRANSACTIONS WITH TRUSTEES

No trustees received any remuneration during the year. Travel costs amounting to £nil (2020 £103) were reimbursed to no (2020 two) trustees.

No trustee had any personal interest in any contract or transaction entered into by the charity during the year (2020 same).

7. TAXATION

As a charity, Grassroots Programme is exempt from tax on income and gains falling within sections 521 to 536 of the Income Tax Act 2007 or section 256 of the Taxation of Chargeable Gains Act 1992 to the extent that these are applied to its charitable objects. No tax charges have arisen in the charity.

8. TANGIBLE FIXED ASSETS

	IT and Office Equipment £	Total £
Cost:		
As at 1 September 2020	-	-
Additions	2,490	2,490
Disposals	-	-
As at 31 August 2021	2,490	2,490
Depreciation:		
As at 1 September 2020	-	-
Charge for the year	830	830
Disposals	-	-
As at 31 August 2021	830	830
Net Book Value:		
As at 31 August 2021	**1,660**	**1,660**
As at 31 August 2020	-	-

9. STOCK

	2021	2020
	£	£
Finished goods	**200**	425
	200	425

Stock represents fair-trade goods for sale. Stock amounts recognised in expenses are £2,559 (2020 £4,599).

10. DEBTORS

	2021	2020
	£	£
Other debtors	604	-
Prepayments	116	116
Accrued income	11,250	23,250
	11,970	23,366

11. CREDITORS: Amounts falling due within one year

	2021	2020
	£	£
Accruals	1,278	1,254
Taxation and social security	1,163	1,167
Other creditors	542	542
	2,983	2,963

12. ANALYSIS OF NET ASSETS BETWEEN FUNDS

	Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	Total 2021
	£	£	£
Net current assets	75,770	16,418	92,188
Total net assets	75,770	16,418	92,188

	Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	Total 2020
	£	£	£
Net current assets	45,376	18,064	63,440
Total net assets	45,376	18,064	63,440

13. MOVEMENT IN FUNDS

	Balance at 1 September 2020	Income	Expenditure	Transfers	Balance at 31 August 2021
	£	£	£	£	£
Restricted Funds					
Working with Women	2,347	500	(8,580)	5,733	-
Near Neighbours	10,284	85,219	(87,937)	-	7,566
Events	5,433	19,750	(13,841)	(2,490)	8,852
	18,064	105,469	(110,358)	3,243	16,418
Unrestricted Funds					
General funds	37,093	72,580	(40,535)	(3,243)	65,895
Designated funds:					
Spirituality of Justice	8,283	12,200	(10,608)	-	9,875
	45,376	84,780	(51,143)	(3,243)	75,770
Total Funds	63,440	190,249	(161,501)	-	92,188

	Balance at 1 September 2019	Income	Expenditure	Transfers	Balance at 31 August 2020
	£	£	£	£	£
Restricted Funds					
Working with Women	5,065	6,120	(8,838)	-	2,347
Bury Park Beech Hill CRCW	2,522	4,260	(6,782)	-	-
IDAI	1,104	-	(1,125)	21	-
Near Neighbours	18,762	48,000	(57,136)	658	10,284
Events	15,458	-	(9,367)	(658)	5,433
	42,911	58,380	(83,248)	21	18,064
Unrestricted Funds					
General funds	24,481	53,411	(40,778)	(21)	37,093
Designated funds:					
Spirituality of Justice	2,310	12,000	(6,027)	-	8,283
	26,791	65,411	(46,805)	(21)	45,376
Total Funds	69,702	123,791	(130,053)	-	63,440

MOVEMENT IN FUNDS continued

The designated fund is for Spirituality of Justice - being for the promotion of interfaith work across the town.

The balances on the restricted funds will be used to continue the work of the projects in accordance with the terms of the funders. Details of the funds are as follows:

Working with women – Work with women across faiths and cultures for their holistic wellbeing.
Bury Park Beech Hill CRCW – Engaging people in Church Related Community Work.
Near Neighbours – Bringing neighbours together for 'social action' and 'social interaction'.
IDAI – disaster relief following cyclone Idai in Mozambique.
Other Events – includes National Lottery Community Fund: to counter the impact of Covid-19 on faith leaders and faith communities (especially women and young people); Council for World Mission: to support faith communities and leaders to look at building resilience during the pandemic and mental health issues from a faith perspective; Awards for All: Strengthening cohesion in Luton acknowledging work undertaken by GRASSROOTS so far.

14. RELATED PARTIES AND CONTROLLING PARTY

There were no related party transactions requiring disclosure. (2020 £nil). The charity is controlled by the Trustees.

15. COMMITMENTS

Minimum lease payments under non-cancellable operating leases fall due as follows:

	2021	2020
	£	£
Within one year	1,500	1,500
	1,500	1,500