

# 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**

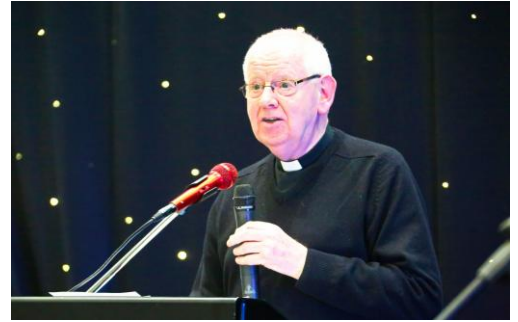
## **2024-2025**

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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 Hammarskjöld, 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 GRASSROOTS, "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.



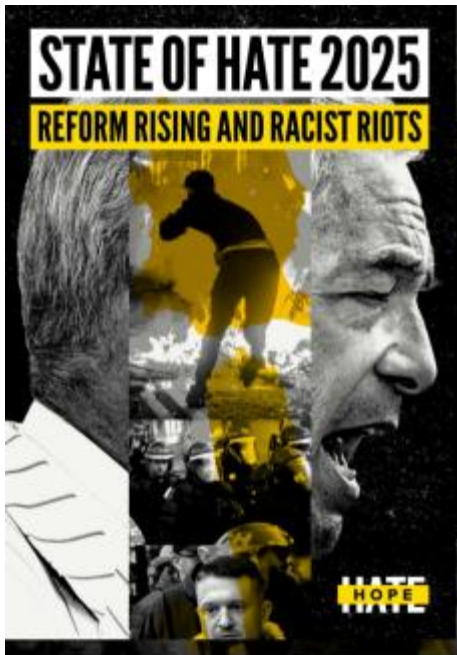
*The Lord-Lieutenant of Bedfordshire, Mrs Susan Lousada hosted Bedfordshire's 'Together at Christmas' Community Carol Service inspired by The Princess of Wales initiative to celebrate love, empathy and community spirit during festive season.*

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.



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 its 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 24<sup>th</sup> 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 Khayaal 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 Kisterska & 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 Kisterska (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 Spennings 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.



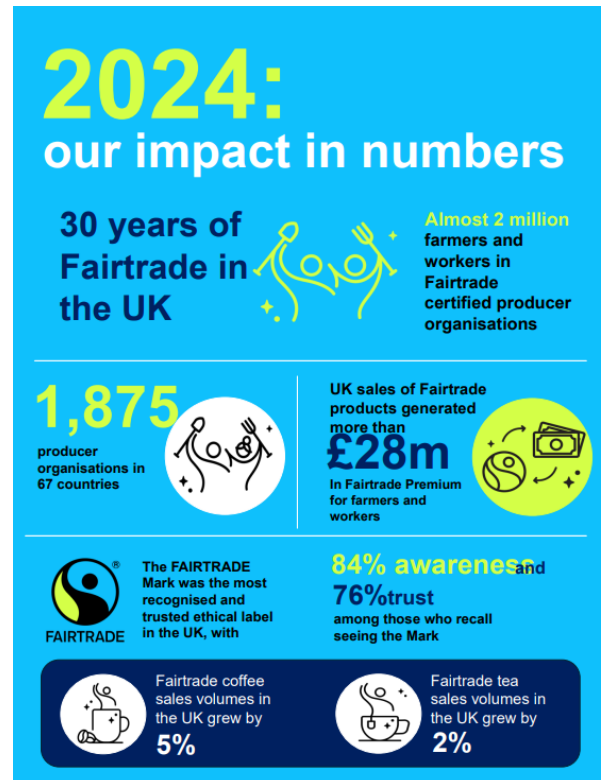
# Celebrating 30 years of the Fairtrade movement in the UK

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.



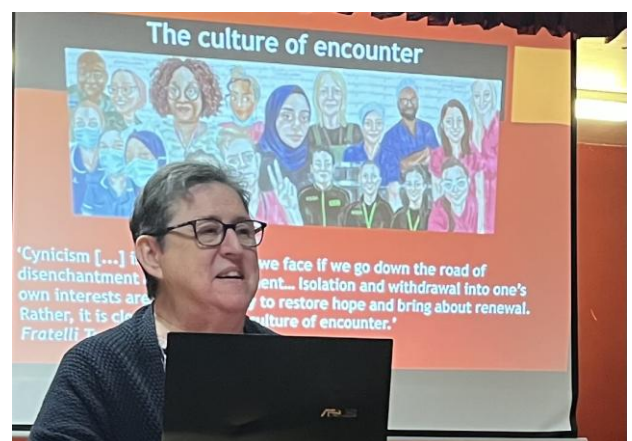
The Revd Canon David Kesterton, Vicar, Parish of All Saints with St Peter and Church of England Area Dean of Luton said, "This light from Bethlehem has travelled far, reminding us of the light which came to a dark and fearful world when Jesus who is the light of the world, was born. We pray this light, 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 Neighbours (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 29<sup>th</sup> 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.



## OTHER EVENTS & ACTIVITIES SUPPORTED BY GRASSROOTS



1<sup>st</sup> 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



80<sup>th</sup> 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

<b>Income</b>	<b>£</b>
Grants received	98,986
Donations	2,640
Interest and other income	2,961
Promotion & Sale of Fairtrade goods	4,189
	108,776
<b>Expenditure – Charitable activities</b>	
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
<b>Net Expenditure for the year</b>	
Total	9,218
<b>Reserves at 31 August 2025</b>	
Unrestricted (Designated)	71,421
Restricted	750

**Visit Our Website:**

[www.grassrootsluton.org.uk](http://www.grassrootsluton.org.uk)

**Email Us:**

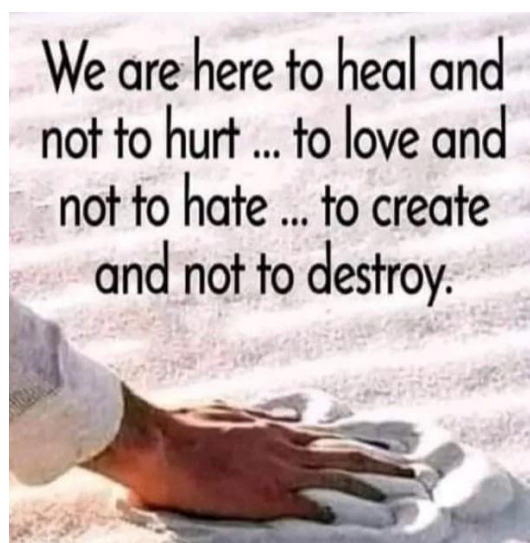
[admin@grassroots@btconnect.com](mailto:admin@grassroots@btconnect.com)

**Call Us:**

01582 416946

**Write To Us:**

GRASSROOTS Programme  
47 High Town Road  
Luton  
Bedfordshire  
LU2 0BW



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**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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**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**

<b>CHARITY NAME:</b>	Grassroots Programme
<b>STATUS:</b>	Charitable Incorporated Organisation - Foundation Constitution. Registered Constitution and as a charity on 04 September 2015.
<b>CHARITY NUMBER:</b>	1163427
<b>PRINCIPAL ADDRESS:</b>	47 High Town Road Luton Bedfordshire LU2 0BW
<b>TRUSTEES AND OFFICERS:</b>	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)
<b>CHARITY DIRECTOR:</b>	Mr D Jonathan
<b>BANKERS:</b>	The Co-operative Bank Olympic House 6 Olympic Court Salford M8 2QP
<b>INDEPENDENT EXAMINERS:</b>	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.



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**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

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

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 Johnny, 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 Johnny 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 Hammarskjöld, 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

**GRASSROOTS PROGRAMME  
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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



**GRASSROOTS PROGRAMME  
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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 (KAWS)**

It was a joy to see Guru Ravidass Sangat, Luton, receiving the Kings Award for Voluntary Services (KAWS) 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 Islamophobia 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.

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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 was 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.

**GRASSROOTS PROGRAMME  
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**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.



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

**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
		£	£	£	£
<b><u>INCOME FROM</u></b>					
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
<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>		<b>89,790</b>	<b>18,986</b>	<b>108,776</b>	<b>134,880</b>
<b><u>EXPENDITURE ON</u></b>					
Raising funds		-	-	-	16,360
Charitable activities	4	74,897	24,661	99,558	126,792
<b>TOTAL EXPENDITURE</b>		<b>74,897</b>	<b>24,661</b>	<b>99,558</b>	<b>143,152</b>
<b>Net income / (expenditure)</b>		<b>14,893</b>	<b>(5,675)</b>	<b>9,218</b>	<b>(8,272)</b>
Transfers between funds		(1,367)	1,367	-	-
<b>Net movement in funds for the year</b>		<b>13,526</b>	<b>(4,308)</b>	<b>9,218</b>	<b>(8,272)</b>
<b><u>Reconciliation of funds</u></b>					
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	<u>2025</u>		<u>2024</u>
		£	£	£
<b>FIXED ASSETS:</b>				
Tangible assets	9		-	-
<b>CURRENT ASSETS:</b>				
Debtors	10	115		115
COIF Funds		36,761		44,938
Cash at bank		<u>38,692</u>		<u>20,504</u>
		75,568		65,557
<b>Creditors: amounts falling due within one year</b>	11	<u>3,397</u>		<u>2,604</u>
<b>NET CURRENT ASSETS</b>			<u>72,171</u>	<u>62,953</u>
<b>NET ASSETS</b>			<u><u>£72,171</u></u>	<u><u>£62,953</u></u>
<b>FUNDS:</b>				
Unrestricted general fund	13		71,421	57,895
Restricted funds	13		<u>750</u>	<u>5,058</u>
<b>TOTAL FUNDS</b>			<u><u>£72,171</u></u>	<u><u>£62,953</u></u>

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 Cam*

Rev D Lawson  
Chair

*B. Roe*

Mr B Roe  
Treasurer

6 November 2025

## **GRASSROOTS PROGRAMME**

### **NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS for the Year Ended 31 August 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.

**GRASSROOTS PROGRAMME**  
**NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS**  
**for the Year Ended 31 August 2025**

**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
	£	£	£	£
<b>Grants for general purposes</b>				
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
 <b>Church Urban Fund (Near Neighbours)</b>				
Near Neighbours Fund Projects	-	18,236	18,236	29,239
 <b>Events</b>				
National Lottery – Community Fund	-	-	-	9,900
Westhill Endowment	-	-	-	7,425
	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
	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.



**GRASSROOTS PROGRAMME**

**NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS**  
for the Year Ended 31 August 2025

**3. INCOME FROM DONATIONS & LEGACIES**

	Unrestricted	Restricted	2025 Total	2024 Total
	£	£	£	£
<b>Donations</b>				
General	2,640	-	<b>2,640</b>	4,492
Events	-	-	-	200
	<b>2,640</b>	-	<b>2,640</b>	<b>4,692</b>

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.

# GRASSROOTS PROGRAMME

## NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS for the Year Ended 31 August 2025

### 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.

**GRASSROOTS PROGRAMME**

**NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS  
for the Year Ended 31 August 2025**

**4a. ALLOCATION OF SUPPORT COSTS**

<b>Support Cost 2025</b>	<b>Basis of Allocation</b>	<b>Advancement of Interfaith Relations &amp; Community Development Work 2025 £</b>	<b>Events 2025 £</b>	<b>Near Neighbours 2025 £</b>	<b>Total 2025 £</b>
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
		<b>70,332</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>4,613</b>	<b>74,945</b>

<b>Support Cost 2024</b>	<b>Basis of Allocation</b>	<b>Advancement of Interfaith Relations &amp; Community Development Work 2024 £</b>	<b>Events 2024 £</b>	<b>Near Neighbours 2024 £</b>	<b>Total 2024 £</b>
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
		<b>60,665</b>	<b>3,450</b>	<b>11,867</b>	<b>75,982</b>



## GRASSROOTS PROGRAMME

### NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS for the Year Ended 31 August 2025

#### 5. GOVERNANCE COSTS

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

#### 6. STAFF COSTS AND NUMBERS

Staff costs were as follows:

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

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	<u>0.5</u>	<u>0.5</u>
	<hr/>	<hr/>
	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>

## GRASSROOTS PROGRAMME

### NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS for the Year Ended 31 August 2025

#### 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

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

**GRASSROOTS PROGRAMME**  
**NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS**  
**for the Year Ended 31 August 2025**

**10. DEBTORS**

	<u>2025</u>	<u>2024</u>
	£	£
Prepayments	115	115
Accrued income	-	-
	<hr/>	<hr/>
	<u>115</u>	<u>115</u>

**11. CREDITORS: Amounts falling due within one year**

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

**12. ANALYSIS OF NET ASSETS BETWEEN FUNDS**

	<b>Unrestricted Funds £</b>	<b>Restricted Funds £</b>	<b>Total 2025 £</b>
Net current assets	71,421	750	72,171
	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
Total net assets	<u>71,421</u>	<u>750</u>	<u>72,171</u>

	<b>Unrestricted Funds £</b>	<b>Restricted Funds £</b>	<b>Total 2024 £</b>
Net current assets	57,895	5,058	62,953
	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
Total net assets	<u>57,895</u>	<u>5,058</u>	<u>62,953</u>



# GRASSROOTS PROGRAMME

## NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS for the Year Ended 31 August 2025

### 13. MOVEMENT IN FUNDS

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

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

**GRASSROOTS PROGRAMME**  
**NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS**  
**for the Year Ended 31 August 2025**

**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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**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**

<b>CHARITY NAME:</b>	Grassroots Programme
<b>STATUS:</b>	Charitable Incorporated Organisation - Foundation Constitution. Registered Constitution and as a charity on 04 September 2015.
<b>CHARITY NUMBER:</b>	1163427
<b>PRINCIPAL ADDRESS:</b>	47 High Town Road Luton Bedfordshire LU2 0BW
<b>TRUSTEES AND OFFICERS:</b>	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)
<b>CHARITY DIRECTOR:</b>	Mr D Jonathan
<b>BANKERS:</b>	The Co-operative Bank Olympic House 6 Olympic Court Salford M8 2QP
<b>INDEPENDENT EXAMINERS:</b>	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.

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

**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



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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 Johnny, 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 Johnny 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 Hammarskjöld, 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

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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

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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 (KAWS)**

It was a joy to see Guru Ravidass Sangat, Luton, receiving the Kings Award for Voluntary Services (KAWS) 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 Islamophobia 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.

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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 was 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.



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**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.

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**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
		£	£	£	£
<b><u>INCOME FROM</u></b>					
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
<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>		<b>89,790</b>	<b>18,986</b>	<b>108,776</b>	<b>134,880</b>
<b><u>EXPENDITURE ON</u></b>					
Raising funds		-	-	-	16,360
Charitable activities	4	74,897	24,661	99,558	126,792
<b>TOTAL EXPENDITURE</b>		<b>74,897</b>	<b>24,661</b>	<b>99,558</b>	<b>143,152</b>
<b>Net income / (expenditure)</b>		<b>14,893</b>	<b>(5,675)</b>	<b>9,218</b>	<b>(8,272)</b>
Transfers between funds		(1,367)	1,367	-	-
<b>Net movement in funds for the year</b>		<b>13,526</b>	<b>(4,308)</b>	<b>9,218</b>	<b>(8,272)</b>
<b><u>Reconciliation of funds</u></b>					
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	<u>2025</u>		<u>2024</u>
		£	£	£
<b>FIXED ASSETS:</b>				
Tangible assets	9		-	-
<b>CURRENT ASSETS:</b>				
Debtors	10	115		115
COIF Funds		36,761		44,938
Cash at bank		<u>38,692</u>		<u>20,504</u>
		75,568		65,557
<b>Creditors: amounts falling due within one year</b>	11	<u>3,397</u>		<u>2,604</u>
<b>NET CURRENT ASSETS</b>			<u>72,171</u>	<u>62,953</u>
<b>NET ASSETS</b>			<u><u>£72,171</u></u>	<u><u>£62,953</u></u>
<b>FUNDS:</b>				
Unrestricted general fund	13		71,421	57,895
Restricted funds	13		<u>750</u>	<u>5,058</u>
<b>TOTAL FUNDS</b>			<u><u>£72,171</u></u>	<u><u>£62,953</u></u>

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 Cam*

Rev D Lawson  
Chair

*B. Roe*

Mr B Roe  
Treasurer

6 November 2025



## **GRASSROOTS PROGRAMME**

### **NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS for the Year Ended 31 August 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.

**GRASSROOTS PROGRAMME**  
**NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS**  
**for the Year Ended 31 August 2025**

**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
	£	£	£	£
<b>Grants for general purposes</b>				
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
 <b>Church Urban Fund (Near Neighbours)</b>				
Near Neighbours Fund Projects	-	18,236	18,236	29,239
 <b>Events</b>				
National Lottery – Community Fund	-	-	-	9,900
Westhill Endowment	-	-	-	7,425
	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
	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.

**GRASSROOTS PROGRAMME**

**NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS**  
for the Year Ended 31 August 2025

**3. INCOME FROM DONATIONS & LEGACIES**

	Unrestricted	Restricted	2025 Total	2024 Total
	£	£	£	£
<b>Donations</b>				
General	2,640	-	<b>2,640</b>	4,492
Events	-	-	-	200
	<b>2,640</b>	-	<b>2,640</b>	<b>4,692</b>

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.

## GRASSROOTS PROGRAMME

### NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS for the Year Ended 31 August 2025

#### 4. ANALYSIS OF EXPENDITURE ON CHARITABLE ACTIVITIES

<b>Charitable Activities 2025</b>	<b>Activities Undertaken Directly 2025 £</b>	<b>Support Costs 2025 £</b>	<b>Total 2025 £</b>
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
	<u>24,613</u>	<u>74,945</u>	<u>99,558</u>

<b>Charitable Activities 2024</b>	<b>Activities undertaken directly 2024 £</b>	<b>Support Costs 2024 £</b>	<b>Total 2024 £</b>
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
	<u>50,810</u>	<u>75,982</u>	<u>126,792</u>

£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.

**GRASSROOTS PROGRAMME**

**NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS  
for the Year Ended 31 August 2025**

**4a. ALLOCATION OF SUPPORT COSTS**

<b>Support Cost 2025</b>	<b>Basis of Allocation</b>	<b>Advancement of Interfaith Relations &amp; Community Development Work 2025 £</b>	<b>Events 2025 £</b>	<b>Near Neighbours 2025 £</b>	<b>Total 2025 £</b>
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
		<b>70,332</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>4,613</b>	<b>74,945</b>

<b>Support Cost 2024</b>	<b>Basis of Allocation</b>	<b>Advancement of Interfaith Relations &amp; Community Development Work 2024 £</b>	<b>Events 2024 £</b>	<b>Near Neighbours 2024 £</b>	<b>Total 2024 £</b>
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
		<b>60,665</b>	<b>3,450</b>	<b>11,867</b>	<b>75,982</b>



# GRASSROOTS PROGRAMME

## NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS for the Year Ended 31 August 2025

### 5. GOVERNANCE COSTS

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

### 6. STAFF COSTS AND NUMBERS

Staff costs were as follows:

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

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	<u>0.5</u>	<u>0.5</u>
	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>

## GRASSROOTS PROGRAMME

### NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS for the Year Ended 31 August 2025

#### 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

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

**GRASSROOTS PROGRAMME**  
**NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS**  
**for the Year Ended 31 August 2025**

**10. DEBTORS**

	<u>2025</u>	<u>2024</u>
	£	£
Prepayments	115	115
Accrued income	-	-
	<hr/>	<hr/>
	<u>115</u>	<u>115</u>

**11. CREDITORS: Amounts falling due within one year**

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

**12. ANALYSIS OF NET ASSETS BETWEEN FUNDS**

	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	Total 2025 £
Net current assets	71,421	750	72,171
	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
Total net assets	<u>71,421</u>	<u>750</u>	<u>72,171</u>

	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	Total 2024 £
Net current assets	57,895	5,058	62,953
	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
Total net assets	<u>57,895</u>	<u>5,058</u>	<u>62,953</u>

# GRASSROOTS PROGRAMME

## NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS for the Year Ended 31 August 2025

### 13. MOVEMENT IN FUNDS

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

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

**GRASSROOTS PROGRAMME**  
**NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS**  
**for the Year Ended 31 August 2025**

**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.



