



# Birmingham Open Spaces Forum

Trustees' Annual Report and Receipts and Payments  
accounts for the period ended 31 March 2021

Registered Charity number 1170171

Birmingham Open Spaces Forum  
Trustees Report and Receipts and Payments Accounts  
for the period ended 31 March 2021

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## **Report of the trustees**

The trustees of the Birmingham Open Spaces Forum (“the Charity”) have pleasure in presenting the accounts for the year ended 31 March 2021 which comply with the Charities Act 2011 and the Charity’s Constitution.

The Charity was registered on 15 November 2016 and commenced activity once a bank account had been opened and funds transferred from the previous unincorporated charity. This took place on 1 February 2019 and the accounts for the prior year include activity from that date until 31 March 2019. Prior activity is shown in the accounts of the old charity (Birmingham Open Spaces Forum, registered number 1142231).

## **OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES**

As set out in its Constitution, the Charity’s objects are:

- (a) To advance the education of the public in the environment, understanding, application and conservation of open spaces within the City of Birmingham.
- (b) To promote the protection, conservation and improvement of the physical and natural environment of Birmingham.
- (c) To promote and enhance the open spaces within the City of Birmingham as recreational facilities in the interest of social welfare, to improve the conditions of life for the inhabitants without distinction of political, religious or other opinions.

The Charity pursues its objects through the following activities:

- Representing and supporting friends and community groups across the whole of Birmingham through training, networking, skill sharing, assistance in fundraising and acting as a collective voice of the volunteers.
- Organising social events, including an annual conference where speakers are invited, and relevant workshops offered to attendees.
- Promotion of BOSF’s work on various social media channels.
- Collecting valuable volunteer data from groups and displaying it as an infographic to showcase the great work done by volunteers. Sharing the data with BCC parks to show a wider picture of volunteering in Birmingham’s green spaces.
- Sending regular newsletters to groups and partners.
- Sitting on the Board of different environmental groups/forums, including The Future Parks Accelerator Programme, Birmingham City of Nature Alliance, Greener Birmingham Coalition, Natural Capital Core Delivery Group, West Midlands Park Forum and the National Federation of Parks and Green Spaces, amongst others.
- Working close to partners such as Birmingham City Council, Birmingham Trees for Life, Fields in Trust, the Police Partnership Team, Birmingham Botanical Gardens, Team4Nature and Waterside Care.

## **Report of the trustees continued**

In shaping the objectives for each year, and planning ahead, the Trustees take due consideration of the Charity Commission's guidance on public benefit, including the guidance "Public Benefit: Running a Charity (PB2)".

The year April 2020 – March 2021 was in many ways defined by the COVID-19 pandemic. As with many organisations, we have adapted our activities to fit changing Covid-19 guidance and regulations, always having in mind the safety and health and wellbeing of our Staff, Trustees and Member Groups.

The Impact of Covid-19 has been felt across the organisation and our member groups, as well as in the activities of many of our partners. Staff have worked from home, and we have made use of the government's furlough scheme where appropriate. Activities have been delivered remotely where possible, and whilst this has provided challenges, it has also meant that we have had to find new ways of working and increased our online presence.

### **ACHIEVEMENTS AND PERFORMANCE**

#### **(a) To advance the education of the public in the environment, understanding, application and conservation of open spaces within the City of Birmingham.**

Birmingham Open Spaces Forum (BOSF) is a membership organisation that brings together people in Birmingham with an interest in parks and green open spaces.

We support groups who want to ensure that green open spaces are accessible to people who live and work across the city. We do this by providing information to groups and individuals. We create opportunities for groups and individuals interested in open spaces to share skills, knowledge and experience by arranging networking and knowledge exchange events. We also produce regular updates about funding sources, training opportunities, events in open spaces and other information of interest to our members.

We believe that an 'open space' is any green area accessible to a local community and this includes parks, allotments, nature reserves, public open spaces, cemeteries, wildlife corridors, woodlands, playing fields, community gardens and informal green spaces.

During the first part of 2020/21 we helped to start up 8 new groups across the city, we also made initial enquiries with other possible new groups.

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## **Report of the trustees continued**

Awards through NNS beginning in December 2020 have meant that we have been able to develop Tia Chi sessions with 8 groups across the city, beginning online in early 2021. With support from Birmingham City Council and Get Grants Ltd., we were able to operate a 'seed corn fund' for member groups. This provided member groups with a means to apply for funding for projects they wanted to deliver. £10,000 from Birmingham City Council ('BCC') has enabled the generation of funds to the value of over £100,000 for sites across the city.

In 2020 - 2021 we organised 20 events which took place at a range of times, days and locations, and with a variety of attendees. All events in the year were online due to COVID-19, but we returned to an element of face-to-face meetings from June 2021. We will take our learnings from the pandemic and use these to deliver a combination of face-to-face and online events going forward.

Coffee Mornings online – June 20, July 20 x 3, August 20, September 20 x 2, October 20 x 2, November 20, December 20, January 21, February 21, March 21 = 14

BOSF Tea Times online – November 20, January 21, February 21, March 21 = 4

BOSF Christmas Lecture online – December 2020 - Delivered by Prof. Kathryn Moore of Birmingham City University on the subject of the West Midlands Park.

BOSF AGM online – April 2021 and the one before was January 2020 (so neither of them in this period)

We continued to work in partnership with the Earth Heritage Trust and Lapworth Museum to explore the glacial erratic boulders that were moved to Birmingham by the ice age, back around 450 thousand years ago. The bid to the National Lottery was delayed as a result of the pandemic, but work is progressing again, and the bid has finally been submitted. This is for working with community groups and schools to explore our local natural heritage and create new trails in the south of the city.

BOSF's Communications Officer has continued to increase our social media reach through our Facebook, Twitter and Instagram feeds, as well as keeping the website current. Social media and digital activities have been very important again this year as we have reacted to the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Our Freelance Administrator has been working hard on collecting volunteer data from groups and displaying this data as an Infographic to be used by BOSF, Friend's groups and partners to show the great work done by volunteers in our parks and open spaces. In 2020/21 a total of 78 groups sent in data, and the total number of separate submissions was 758. This was sent into BCC Parks so that it can be added to their data, to show a wider picture of the extent of volunteering in Birmingham's green spaces.

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## **Report of the trustees continued**

BOSF was able to show that 55,226 hours of work was undertaken by volunteers in 2020-2021, but it is thought that it is significantly under-reported and work to encourage recording and submission of volunteer hour's data is continuing. Working with the Future Parks Programme in the city, we also began to trial a mobile phone app for the collection of volunteering information from our groups. This trial continues until January 2022.

Regular newsletters were sent out each month to all groups, BCC Parks staff and all other interested people and groups, advertising events & activities, funding, training and useful information.

### **(b) To promote the protection, conservation and improvement of the physical and natural environment of Birmingham.**

Along with Eco Birmingham, the B&BC Wildlife Trust and other groups, BOSF has continued to support the Greener Birmingham Coalition. This is a gathering of many "green" organisations across Birmingham, working together to improve communication and work towards greening up our city. We have also continued to support the Future Parks Accelerator Programme in the city, as a delivery partner, FPA Board member, and employing staff working on FPA. Towards the end of the year, we have also been supporting and being part of the fledgling Birmingham City of Nature Alliance.

We are still working in partnership with the Earth Heritage Trust and Lapworth Museum to explore the glacial erratic boulders that were moved to Birmingham by the ice age, back around 450 thousand years ago. The bid to the National Lottery was delayed as a result of the pandemic, but work is progressing again and the bid has finally been submitted. This is for working with community groups and schools to explore our local natural heritage and create new trails in the south of the city.

We are represented on the Natural Capital Core Delivery Group, West Midlands Park Forum and the National Federation of Parks & Green Spaces. From our national work, we work closely with Fields in Trust, Natural England, adding in the community voice to their Green Infrastructure investigation and continue where possible to maintain these collaborations.

Other organisations we have worked closely with include, Cleanup UK, Birmingham Trees for Life, the Police Partnership Team, Birmingham Botanical Gardens, Team4Nature, Castle Bromwich Hall Gardens and KBT Waterside Care.

## **Report of the trustees continued**

**(c) To promote and enhance the open spaces within the City of Birmingham as recreational facilities in the interest of social welfare, to improve the conditions of life for the inhabitants without distinction of political, religious or other opinions:**

BOSF has continued to work closely with the Parks service of the city council (BCC). Monthly meetings are held with Senior Council staff enabling sharing of information, as well as better cooperation between the council and BOSF. We have continued to develop support for additional groups working to improve their local streets and areas through 'Greening the Grey' activities.

### **FINANCIAL REVIEW**

Over the year, BOSF received a total income of £111,859 with expenditure of £86,085, leaving an operating surplus of £25,774 of which £7,615 related to restricted funds.

### **INCOME**

BOSF's net income has increased by £63,970. The organisation received grants from the following funders:

- £15,283.00 from Esmee Fairbairn as Covid-19 Fast Response Grant towards unrestricted core cost.
- £32,000 from Esmee Fairbairn as short-term unrestricted revenue support while BOSF planned a strategic response to the Covid-19 situation and the Future Parks Accelerator Project.
- £25,000 from Birmingham City Council to continue providing professional services through the employment of the Community Facilitator for the Future Parks Accelerator Project
- £8,000 from Birmingham City Council to continue collecting and processing valuable data (volunteer hours) from friend's groups.
- £4,200 from Birmingham Sport and Physical Activity Trust and £7,680 from Selly Oak NNS to reinstate the delivery of free outdoor tai-chi sessions in 7 different sites, including Kings Norton Park, Kings Heath, Perry Hall Park, Billesley Common, Cotteridge Park, Bournville Park and Stirchley Park.

During the year BOSF received £3,811.36 from HMRC as part of the Job Retention Scheme to support the organisation to pay worker's wages as they were unable to work during the coronavirus crisis. The claims contributed to the financial stability of the organisation and the retention of employees during lockdown.

An additional £541 was received from Birmingham City Council for support given to the Future Park Accelerator Project, which included website development work, management of social media and processing survey results.

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## **Report of the trustees continued**

Other income includes £244 from Birmingham City Council for the piloting of an application to record volunteer hours from friend's groups.

## **Expenditure**

BOSF's expenditure increased last year by £11,829. This is due to the employment of two additional members of staff to support the existing volunteer offer and get a better understanding of volunteer motivations and participation. In addition, freelance contractor hours also increased to support online delivery during the pandemic, and to carry out additional responsibilities managing the tai-chi funds and volunteer data.

Project cost and project professional fees were much higher than previous years, because of the reinstatement of Tai-chi sessions and the work carried out by the sustainable financial advisor.

## **Overview**

Like many other UK charities, BOSF faced a number of difficult decisions during the lockdown period; however, thanks to the UK government's Job Retention Scheme and the invaluable support of long-term funders we finished the year in a financially resilient state.

Throughout the year Trustees regularly reviewed BOSF's operations and ways to reduce overhead expenditure, and focused on ensuring an effective and efficient use of resources, especially during the first few months of the pandemic.

In April, one member of staff was furloughed, leaving the charity understaffed. At the same time, the charity also suffered other knock-on effects, such as the increase of workload (policies, safety procedures) and having to come up with new ways of operating, supporting friends groups and delivering projects (online tai-chi, DVDs, video workshops).

2020-2021 has been a very difficult year however BOSF has proved to be a very resilient charity. The challenges and opportunities will continue, but Trustees and staff feel now more prepared to face unforeseen situations.

Based on the information available in respect of the future, and the reviewed forecast to March 2022, Trustees are confident that BOSF has the plans and resources to manage its business risk successfully and to continue delivering its core activities effectively next year.



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## **Report of the trustees continued**

### **Reserves policy**

The Trustees aim to retain sufficient free reserves equivalent to three months general running costs and any winding up costs. Based on projections this amounts to approximately £15,172. Such reserves are held in case of any sudden decline in income or unexpected cost or risk exposure, and to ensure that commitments to meeting contractual obligations to staff, premises and funding partners are met with confidence. Reserves are held in a separate account, Unity Trust Deposit Account. The charity meets its day-to-day working capital requirements through its existing banking facilities and an overdraft has not been requested.

The reserves policy will be kept under periodic review and reserves levels will be adjusted as perceptions of risks and other factors change.

### **STRUCTURE, GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT**

BOSF registered as a CIO with the Charities Commission for England and Wales on 15 November 2016.

#### **Governing Document**

Birmingham Open Spaces Forum is a registered Charity governed by its Constitution adopted on 16 February 2016 and amended on 10 July 2017.

#### **Appointment of trustees, induction & training**

All trustees are elected at a BOSF Annual General Meeting and serve a two-year term. They bring with them skills, knowledge, and experience to contribute to the Charity's activities and to discharge their obligations as Trustees.

In order to keep the Trustees and Friend's groups fully informed of the progress of the projects and to ensure that staff are provided with support and strategic direction, meetings are held monthly, alternating between Trustees only meetings and advisory committee meetings.

#### **Management and administration.**

**The Community Open Spaces Development Manager's** role is to develop and manage the Forum in line with current aims and objectives as well as raise the profile of BOSF locally and nationally and establish good links with Parks and Open Spaces Community Groups, Birmingham City Council and all interested agencies. Amongst other duties, the manager helps to set up new groups and support existing ones, attends Steering group meetings, and give regular update reports and newsletters; organises and runs BOSF annual conference and networking opportunities in Birmingham and helps secure funding, not only to friend's groups, but also the Forum. The Community Open Spaces Development Manager also manages the Communications Officer.

## Report of the trustees continued

**The Communications Officer's** role is to support the effective promotion of BOSF's aims and objectives using a mix of social media, communications, and marketing channels (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Website) and attending steering group meetings with partners. In addition, the Communications Officer assists BOSF's member groups on social media and communications and is currently working with young people to increase young people's knowledge, input, and activity in green open spaces.

Two new members of staff were employed on a part time basis for six months to support the multi-disciplinary Future Parks Accelerator programme as **Volunteer Development Coordinators**. Their role was to support BOSF's volunteer offer to two key pilot sites, Dawberry Fields and Ward End Park. They worked with park users and the wider community to develop opportunities for volunteering, community management and development of the sites.

**Freelance admin** provides administrative support 1 or 2 days a week. Her main aim is to gather and compile volunteer data from Friend's groups, produce infographics and give administrative support in meetings.

The Trustees delegate the day-to-day running and administering of the charity and its activities to the Community Open Spaces Development Manager and other members of the staff team.

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## Report of the trustees continued

### REFERENCE AND ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION

**Charity Number:** 1170171

**Trustees:**

C Blythe (Chair)	Appointed 11/09/2018	
T Clark	Appointed 11/09/2018	
A Grande Cristobal	Appointed 11/09/2018	
H Sultan	Appointed 17/02/2020	Resigned 17/03/20
E WoolfMBE	Appointed 11/2016 and to the position of Secretary on 11/09/2018	

**Registered Office:**

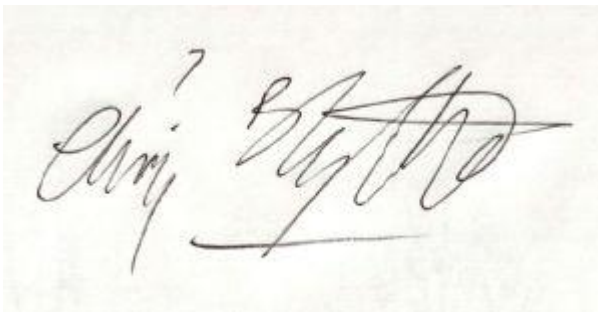
School of Horticulture  
The White House  
Kings Heath Park  
Vicarage Road  
B14 7TQ

**Bankers:**

Unity Trust Bank plc  
Nine Brindley Place  
Birmingham  
B1 2HB

Approved by the Board and signed on its behalf by:

Date: 26th January 2022

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'C Blythe', with a large, stylized flourish extending from the end of the signature.

C Blythe  
Chair of Trustees

## **Independent Examiner's Report to the Trustees of Birmingham Open Spaces Forum on the receipts and payments accounts for the year ended 31 March 2021**

I report to the trustees on my examination of the accounts of Birmingham Open Spaces Forum ('the charity') for the year ended 31 March 2021 which are set out on pages 13 to 15.

### **Responsibilities and basis of report**

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

I report in respect of my examination of the Charity's accounts carried out under section 145 of the 2011 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 2011 Act.

### **Independent examiner's statement**

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 2011 Act: or
- 2) the accounts do not accord with those records.

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.



Karen Hanlan, Institute of Chartered Accountants in England & Wales  
Karen Hanlan Independent Examiner Limited  
12 Waterloo Close, Wellesbourne, CV35 9JG

Date: 26 January 2022

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## Receipts and Payments Accounts

	Un-restricted funds £	Restricted funds £	Total funds 2021 £	Total funds 2020 £
<b>RECEIPTS</b>				
Donations & grants	51,094	11,880	<b>62,974</b>	35,233
Charitable activities	48,870	-	<b>48,870</b>	12,500
Other income	-	-	-	-
Bank Interest	15	-	<b>15</b>	156
<b>Total receipts</b>	<b>99,979</b>	<b>11,880</b>	<b>111,859</b>	47,889
<b>PAYMENTS</b>				
Fundraising costs	3,007	-	<b>3,007</b>	2,550
Payments for volunteer data collection	8,010	-	<b>8,010</b>	7,680
Staff cost (note 1)	40,932	2,700	<b>43,632</b>	41,403
FRAP project costs	15,326	-	<b>15,326</b>	6,645
Thai Chi Sessions	-	1,147	<b>1,147</b>	
Project professional fees	6,000	-	<b>6,000</b>	3,247
Other project costs	916	418	<b>1,334</b>	393
Freelance contractor payments	4,251	-	<b>4,251</b>	4,013
Conference & networking events	-	-	-	2,966
Website/IT costs	672	-	<b>672</b>	2,192
Travel expenses	1,365	-	<b>1,365</b>	1,522
Insurance	494	-	<b>494</b>	605
Payroll charges	225	-	<b>225</b>	330
Independent Examiners fee	550	-	<b>550</b>	550
Bank charges	72	-	<b>72</b>	160
<b>Total payments</b>	<b>81,820</b>	<b>4,265</b>	<b>86,085</b>	74,256
<b>NET OF RECEIPTS AND PAYMENTS</b>	<b>18,159</b>	<b>7,615</b>	<b>25,774</b>	(26,367)
Transfer of funds	<b>4,956</b>	<b>(4,956)</b>	-	-
Cash funds at beginning of year	<b>18,694</b>	<b>8,074</b>	<b>26,768</b>	53,135
<b>Cash funds at end of year</b>	<b>41,809</b>	<b>10,733</b>	<b>52,542</b>	26,768

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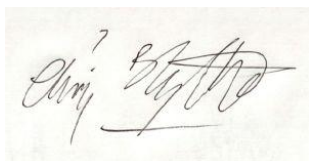
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## Statement of Assets and Liabilities

	Un-restricted funds £	Restricted funds £	2021 Total £	2020 Total £
Unity Trust Current account	26,637	10,733	<b>37,370</b>	11,612
Unity Trust Deposit account	15,172	-	<b>15,172</b>	15,156
Cash at bank and in hand	41,809	10,733	<b>52,542</b>	26,768

Approved by the Trustees and signed on their behalf by:

Date: 26<sup>th</sup> January 2022



C Blythe  
Chair of Trustees

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## Notes to the financial statements

### 1. Staff costs, trustee remuneration and expenses

Staff costs comprise:	<b>2021</b>	2020
	£	£
Salaries	<b>42,369</b>	40,230
National Insurance	-	-
Pension costs	<b>1,263</b>	1,173
Total	<b>43,632</b>	41,403

The charity's Trustees were not paid nor received any other benefits from employment in the year (2020: £nil). No expenses were reimbursed to Trustees in the year (2020: £nil).

### 2. Fund movements

	Balance at beginning of year £	Receipts £	Payments £	Transfer of funds £	Balance at end of year £
<b>Restricted funds</b>					
Awards for All – Inspire with Art	8,024	-	(3,118)	(4,906)	-
John Feeney Trust – Young People in Parks	50	-	-	(50)	-
Sports Birmingham – Thai Chi	-	4,200	(600)	-	3,600
Selly Oak NNS	-	7,680	(547)	-	7,133
	8,074	11,880	(4,265)	(4,956)	10,733
<b>Unrestricted funds</b>					
- General fund	18,694	99,979	(81,820)	4,956	41,809
Total	26,768	111,859	(86,085)	-	52,542

### 3. Transactions with related parties

There were no transactions with related parties during the year that require disclosure in these accounts (2020: none).