

Birmingham Open Spaces Forum

Trustees' Annual Report and Receipts and Payments accounts for the period ended 31 March 2022

Registered Charity number 1170171

Birmingham Open Spaces Forum
Trustees Report and Receipts and Payments Accounts
for the period ended 31 March 2022

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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 2022 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. 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 seeking to protect, enhance and enjoy Birmingham’s parks and open spaces.
- 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 our volunteers.
- Sharing the impactful data with Birmingham Parks Service and other influential and strategic partners to illustrate the extent of volunteering and the pragmatic difference it makes to our parks and open spaces.
- Sending regular newsletters to groups and partners.
- Attending a range of environmental groups/forums, including the Birmingham City of Nature Alliance, West Midlands Parks Forum and the National Federation of Parks and Green Spaces.
- Working closely with partners such as Birmingham City Council, Birmingham Trees for Life, Birmingham & Black Country Wildlife Trust, the Canal & River Trust, the RSPB and the University of Birmingham in the overall
- Pursuit of improvements to the environmental agenda.

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)".

For a large part of the year April 2021 – March 2022, COVID continued to impact on our service. The benefits and delights of Birmingham's parks and open spaces were heightened during the pandemic and this led to an increase in enquiries particularly from communities who previously, we had little or no engagement with. Measures adopted during the pandemic to bring members together via Zoom proved to be immensely popular and alongside a series of face to face social events, continued to be arranged enabling more members ready access to our networking events. As a result, we sought funding to employ a second community development team member on a part time basis and delightfully, made an appointment in February 2022.

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 the 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 year we set up 14 new groups and undertook intensive community development Endeavors, hopefully concluding with the formation of a further 6 groups. Other activities continued including an increased social media presence which not only served to celebrate the work and successes of our membership but also acted as the conduit of information relating to the environmental agenda, our partners and the safe use of parks whilst the effects of the pandemic continued. At the close of the financial year our Twitter followers numbered 2,676, Facebook 1,723 and Instagram 978.

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In 2021 - 2022 we organised 11 events which took place at a range of locations and via Zoom. Unfortunately, COVID restrictions meant we were unable to host our annual conference and Christmas lecture.

- Online social events took place in April, May, July 2021 and February 2022
- Face to face social events took place in May, June, July 2021 and January and March 2022 at a variety of different member sites.
- 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 and our support was integral in helping our partners to secure National Lottery funding to engage community groups and schools with local natural heritage.
- Regular newsletters were sent out each month to member groups, Birmingham Council Parks staff and other interested people and partners, advertising events & activities, funding opportunities, training and other useful information.

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

With support from Birmingham City Council and Get Grants Ltd., we continued 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') enabled the generation of funds to the value of over £100,000 for sites across the city and in the latter stages of the financial year, we were given a further £20,000 to continue this work which allows our members to protect, improve and enhance their respective park and/or open space.

Our Freelance Administrator collected volunteer data from member groups allowing us to promote the great work and extent of volunteering taking place in Birmingham's parks and open spaces. In 2021/22 a total of 118 member groups undertook 86,537 hours of volunteering work across a range of disciplines. This information is hugely influential and informative to Birmingham Parks Service as well as many other environmental partners, as it is indicative of the high regard that our public spaces have in the affections of Birmingham residents as well as the overall desire and need to improve on such spaces and utilises them to their full extent. Our excellent data collection is at the heart of this financial year's significant successes with funders.

We continued to support the Future Parks Accelerator Programme, both strategically and as a delivery partner, and consolidated our support by becoming an integral partner in the Birmingham City of Nature Alliance, an initiative borne from the Future Parks Accelerator Programme which was funded by the Commonwealth Games Legacy fund administered by Birmingham Council. We continued to be represented on the West Midlands Park Forum and the National Federation of Parks & Green Spaces consolidating our national profile. Other organisations we have worked closely with include, Clean-up UK, Birmingham Trees for Life, the University of Birmingham, the RSPB and the Birmingham and Black Country Wildlife Trust.

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(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:

Neighbourhood Network Scheme funding whose specific aim is to develop the support people need to lead happy, independent lives, allowed us to roll out Tai Chi sessions to 27 different parks enabling us to promote the benefits of our parks and open spaces to a new audience. We have continued to develop support for additional groups working to improve their local streets and areas through 'Greening the Grey' the effects of which are to be seen in reductions of litter, minor works, through planting and improved community cohesion.

Although something of a diversification, the success of the Tai Chi programme illustrated how we reached out to new audiences. By facilitating Tai Chi in our parks, we have broadened park usage beyond that which is traditional. More people now appreciate the importance of their park and/or local green space. Going forward we intend to facilitate further park-related activities thereby engaging yet more people and affirming the significance of parks and open spaces in the day to day healthy lives of more Birmingham residents.

Financial review

Over the year, BOSF received a total income of £249,164. Out of this income with an expenditure of £135,843 leaving an operating surplus of £113,321.

Income

BOSF's net income has increased by £137,305. The organisation received grants from various funders. These sources of income have allowed us to finance all our activities as well as guarantee a consistent restricted and unrestricted stream of funding.

- £62,857 from Esmee Fairbairn towards unrestricted revenue cost to continue delivering BOSF core activities.
- £31,950 from Birmingham City Council to continue providing professional services through the employment of the Community Facilitator for the Future Parks Accelerator Project (FPA) and to increase the working hours dedicated to the project from 22.5 to 35 hours per month
- £9,740 from Birmingham City Council to continue collecting and processing valuable data (volunteer hours) from friends' groups.
- £19,932 from Birmingham City Council to employ two volunteer development coordinators to support BOSF's volunteer offer to two key pilot sites
- £2,000 from Birmingham City Council to support the delivery of activities by the Volunteer Development Coordinators, including the purchase of equipment and materials, marketing and publicity and the development and application of the Trackit App.

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- £9,880 from Awards for All to provide volunteer to support and help establish and formalise new friends' groups across Birmingham
- £2,043.17 from RSPS (FINCH project) towards restricted revenue cost for the additional workload carried out by the Operations Manager and the Communications Officer
- £58,585 from Birmingham City Council to achieve the following:
 - provide support to community groups and active citizens to enable them to improve their local environment more effectively by cleaning and greening grey areas of the city.
 - work with Get Grants to support groups making effective funding application to grants and trusts to improve the local community environment (2021-2023)
- £10,000 from Garfield Weston Foundation to provide increased support and 'hand-holding' to new and potential groups in areas with lower social capital
- BOSF also received funds from various Neighbourhood Network Schemes to provide the delivery of free outdoor tai-chi sessions 27 different sites.
 - £2020 Perry Barr NNS
 - £2,120 from Birmingham Settlement (Ladywood NNS)
 - £6,000 from Green Square Accord (Hall Green NNS)
 - £4,240 from Birmingham Disability (Yardley NNS)
 - £5,000 from Witton Lodge (Erdington NSS)
 - £10,000 from Hearth of England Foundation (Edgbaston & Northfield NNS)
 - £4,200 from Selly Oak NNS

During the year BOSF supported the installation of notice boards in several parks to enhance communication with park users and promote local activities, as such, BOSF anticipated and transferred the money for the cost of the notice boards and their installation which was later reimbursed by the Council (£2,327). This has helped to speed the process up and allow an earlier start of the work. Additionally, £6,000 were paid for the service of a Financial Sustainable Adviser who was engaged as a consultant to BOSF to explore sustainable finance for the Birmingham Future Parks Accelerator Project. Lastly, £1,000 was held on behalf of a friend's group until their bank account is opened.

In February BOSF received £192.70 from HMRC as part of covid related statutory Sick Pay for one of the workers.

In addition, BOSF received the following donations:

- £439.04 were received by Friends of Fox Holly when the group finished its activities and close the account

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- £10.56 were donated anonymously via Amazon Smile

21-22 has shown the importance of income diversification to help with the financial sustainability of the organization, therefore this new operating model which involved more bid writing and partnership work will continue to be used to have a more balanced approach to income generation.

Expenditure

BOSF's expenditure increased substantially last year. The nearly 58% increase (£49,758) in the charity expenses 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, and the increase of weekly hours of the existing FPA Community Facilitator from 22.5 to 35. In addition, freelance contractor hours also increased to carry out additional responsibilities managing the tai-chi funds and volunteer data. As a result of this, there has been an overall rise in overhead costs, including salaries, national insurance and pension contributions but also, payroll and bank charges.

Project expenses were also much higher than in previous years due to the high number of tai-chi sessions delivered on a weekly basis across Birmingham and engagement sessions provided by the Volunteer Development Coordinators. Professional and fundraising fees have increased because of the work carried out by the Financial Advisor and Get Grants.

Overview

2021-2022 has been a very successful year for BOSF and we are very proud of all that we have achieved together. Despite the great opportunities that the year has offered us, BOSF Trustees are aware that challenges will also arise and continue but Trustees now feel more prepared to face unforeseen situations.

Based on the information available in respect of the future, the reviewed forecast and cashflow for March 2023, and the income generated during the current financial year, 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.

Reserves policy

As part of the BOSF's Reserves Policy, BOSF holds a reserves account to ensure that main operations can continue for a period of at least three months and that redundancy costs are covered if funding difficulties arise. At the last review done in September 2021, trustees agreed that a transfer of £5,000 to accurately reach the amount stated in BOSF's reserve policy. At end of March 2022, the account held £20,183.75. The reserves policy will continue to be kept under periodic review and reserves levels may be adjusted as perceptions of risks and other factors change.

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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 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 members of part time staff fulfilled their fixed term roles as **Volunteer Development Coordinators** as part of the Future Parks Accelerator programme in August 2021. The success of this work was the foundation for further work and in February 2022, we recruited a further **Volunteer Development Co-ordinator** to engage 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.

An **Operations Manager** was recruited in November 2021 to oversee operations, staff, budgets, project delivery, strategy and reporting to the Trustees. This post is strengthening our governance as a Charity and indeed as an employer; we now have a suite of policies, key

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performance indicators for ease of reporting to our funders, and a proper structure for the care and oversight of all staff.

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

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Reference and administrative information

Charity Number: 1170171

Trustees:

C Blythe (Chair)
T Clark
A Grande Cristobal
E Woolf MBE

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

Independent Examiner:

Karen Hanlan independent Examiner Ltd
1 Saracen Close
Ettington
CV37 7SZ

Approved by the Board and signed on its behalf by:

Date: 29th January 2023

C Blythe
Chair of Trustees

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Independent Examiner's Report to the Trustees of Birmingham Open Spaces Forum on the receipts and payments accounts for the year ended 31 March 2022

I report to the trustees on my examination of the accounts of Birmingham Open Spaces Forum ('the charity') for the year ended 31 March 2022 which are set out on pages 13 to 16.

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
1 Saracen Close, Ettington, CV37 7SZ

Date: 29th January 2023

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Receipts and Payments Accounts

	Un-restricted funds £	Restricted funds £	Total funds 2022 £	Total funds 2021 £
RECEIPTS				
Donations & grants	73,500	43,460	116,960	62,974
Charitable activities	71,564	60,628	132,192	48,870
Bank Interest	12	-	12	15
Total receipts	145,076	104,088	249,164	111,859
PAYMENTS				
Fundraising costs	-	6,400	6,400	3,007
Payments for volunteer data collection	9,520	-	9,520	8,010
Staff cost (note 1)	45,066	16,651	61,717	43,632
FRAP project costs	19,653	-	19,653	15,326
Thai Chi Sessions	-	15,743	15,743	1,147
Project professional fees	12,000	-	12,000	6,000
Other project costs	775	-	775	1,334
Freelance contractor payments	2,048	5,000	7,048	4,251
Conference & networking events	150	-	150	-
Website/IT costs	163	-	163	672
Travel expenses	794	393	1,187	1,365
Insurance	471	-	471	494
Payroll charges	240	-	240	225
Independent Examiners fee	650	-	650	550
Bank charges	126	-	126	72
Management Fee	(5,385)	5,385	-	-
Total payments	86,271	49,572	135,843	86,085
NET OF RECEIPTS AND PAYMENTS	58,805	54,516	113,321	25,774
Transfer of funds	-	-	-	-
Cash funds at beginning of year	41,809	10,733	52,542	26,768
Cash funds at end of year	100,614	65,249	165,863	52,542

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Statement of Assets and Liabilities

	Un-restricted funds £	Restricted funds £	2022 Total £	2021 Total £
Unity Trust Current account	100,614	45,065	145,679	37,370
Unity Trust Deposit account	-	20,184	20,184	15,172
Cash at bank and in hand	100,614	65,249	165,863	52,542

Approved by the Trustees and signed on their behalf by:

Date: 29th January 2023

C Blythe
Chair of Trustees

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Notes to the financial statements

1. Staff costs, trustee remuneration and expenses

Staff costs comprise:	2022	2021
	£	£
Salaries	59,973	42,369
National Insurance	-	-
Pension costs	1,744	1,263
Total	61,717	43,632

The charity's Trustees were not paid nor received any other benefits from employment in the year (2021: £nil). No expenses were reimbursed to Trustees in the year (2021: £nil).

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2. Fund movements

Restricted funds		Balance at beginning of year £	Receipts £	Payments £	Balance at end of year £
Funder	Fund purpose				
Awards for All Sports	Volunteer Group Support	-	9,880	(2,470)	7,410
Birmingham	Thai Chi sessions in parks	3,600	-	(3,600)	-
Selly Oak NNS	Thai Chi sessions in Selly Oak Park	7,133	4,200	(7,051)	4,282
Edgbaston NNS	Thai Chi sessions in Edgbaston Park	-	5,000	(630)	4,370
Erdington NNS	Thai Chi sessions in Erdington Park	-	5,000	(1,160)	3,840
Hall Green NNS	Thai Chi sessions in Hall Green Park	-	6,000	(1,530)	4,470
Ladywood NNS	Thai Chi sessions in Ladywood Park	-	2,120	(450)	1,670
Northfield NNS	Thai Chi sessions in Northfield Park	-	5,000	(630)	4,370
Perry Barr NNS	Thai Chi sessions in Perry Barr Park	-	2,020	(210)	1,810
Yardley Green NNS	Thai Chi sessions in Yardley Park	-	4,240	(480)	3,760
Greening The Grey	Support for groups to clean up open spaces	-	28,585	(24,961)	3,624
Seedcorn Fund	Funding to support groups with applications for funding	-	30,000	(6,400)	23,600
FINCH RSPB	Engaging communities with their natural heritage	-	2,043	-	2,043
		10,733	104,088	(49,572)	65,249
Unrestricted funds					
- General funds		41,809	145,076	(86,271)	100,614
Total		52,542	249,164	(135,843)	165,863

3. Transactions with related parties

There were no transactions with related parties during the year that require disclosure in these accounts (2021: none).