

# **Birmingham Open Spaces Forum**

**Trustees' Annual Report and Receipts and Payments accounts for the year ended 31 March 2023**

**Registered Charity number 1170171**

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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 2023 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 in February 2019.

## **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:

- Encouraging residents to work together to “adopt” a park or open space in order to protect, preserve and maintain that particular space and enjoy, as an individual, the associated wellbeing benefits of doing so.
- 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 and a Christmas lecture with topical speakers along with relevant workshops.
- Promotion of BOSF’s work and the work of our membership 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 impact 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, Midlands Parks Forum and the National Federation of Parks and Green Spaces.

## Report of the trustees continued

- 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.

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)".

As with most other organisations, COVID had required us to respond to emerging situations whereas the financial year April 22 to March 23 allowed time for reflection, contemplation, and the ability to develop a more strategic approach. We analysed the skill set of our board of Trustees, looked at our staff profile and surveyed our members; such a comprehensive review of our entire organisation equipped us with the intelligence to identify areas where we had little influence or sufficient expertise. This wholesale review provided the impetus for many changes within our organisation and at all levels and a great deal of what we must do carries forward to 23 – 24. We believe that the foundations laid during 22 – 23 will allow us to respond at a city level to the challenges of inequality, austerity and climate crisis.

## 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 10 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

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pandemic continued. At the close of the financial year our Twitter followers numbered 2,959, Facebook 2,171 and Instagram 1,129 which were increases on the previous years' activity of 10.5%, 26% and 15.45% respectively. Visits to our website increased by 30% and totalled 155,352.

During the year we organised 12 events which took place at a range of locations and online. Delightfully, we were able to resume two hugely significant and impactful member meetings; our annual conference and our Christmas lecture, both of which had been either suspended during the COVID crisis or done online.

- Online social events took place in May and January.
- 9 face to face social events took place 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 glaciers in the ice age.
- 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.
- Collaborated with the RSPB on the families into nature project (FINCH), which allowed for the dissemination of educational and recreational nature-based games.
- Provided a platform at our Christmas lecture to Professor Dominique Moran who lectured about carceral geography, and the importance of accessible green space in the successful rehabilitation of prisoners and the wider learnings that can be drawn from her research.

**(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. £20,000 from Birmingham City Council ('BCC') enabled the generation of funds to the value of £188,723 for sites across the city allowing 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. During the year, a total of 137 member groups undertook 97,598 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 utilise them to their full extent. Once again, our excellent data collection is at the heart of our success with funders as well as our influence with strategic partners.

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We continued to support the City of Nature Alliance (previously known as the Future Parks Accelerator Programme) both strategically and as a delivery partner. We consolidated this work by retaining a community development position in the Bordesley and Highgate areas of the city having identified the potential and absolute need for further intensive work despite the wider Alliance project having ceased in those areas.

We continued to be represented on the Midlands Park Forum and the National Federation of Parks & Green Spaces continuing our national profile. Other organisations we have worked closely with include Birmingham Parks Service, Birmingham East Regeneration Team, Members, the City of Nature Alliance, the Earth Heritage Trust, Birmingham & Black Country Wildlife Trust, RSPB, National Trust, NHS Social Prescribing Service, Natural England, Veolia, Community Payback Service and the River Cole & Tyseley Energy Park.

The continuing development of both our good reputation and infrastructure has allowed us to collaborate more extensively with partners to develop mutually beneficial projects which bring us closer to our charitable aims and objectives. During the year, we began planning a large project with the Birmingham and Black Country Wildlife Trust and supported a University of Birmingham student placement. We have developed relationships with Councillors to promote the improvement of parks and open spaces and in doing so, influenced the ward planning processes. Of long-term significance was the cultivation of a synergistic relationship with Birmingham Council's Cabinet Member for the Environment; this relationship has allowed us to document the immense volunteering efforts of our members, the potential for further such efforts, and the protection of the Council funding which supports what we do.

**(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:**

We continued to secure funding allowing for the provision of Tai Chi sessions across Birmingham and we have helped 2 of our members to access funding for similar independently of us. Recognising that Tai Chi attracted new visitors to our green spaces, we began to examine how we might provide other opportunities and amongst many meetings to drive this forward, met with public health representatives about how we might become involved in the roll out of green prescribing as well as tentative planning for walking projects. 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.

Our collective voice was used to positively influence the plans of the Lawn Tennis Association who initially strove to restrict access to tennis courts which had been refurbished. As a result of our endeavours, this is no longer the case.

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## Financial review

Over the year, BOSF received a total income of £207,946. Of this income there was an expenditure of £183,932 leaving an operating surplus of £18,014.

### Income

BOSF's net income has decreased by £41,218. 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.

- £65,214 from Esmee Fairbairn towards unrestricted revenue costs to continue delivering BOSF core activities. This amount was inclusive of £10,214 which was in addition to our original grant award and given to assist us during the cost of living crisis.
- £1,500 from the Edgar Lawley Foundation unrestricted revenue.
- £4,500 other unrestricted donations
- £4,328 from the Dulverton Trust in respect of a new website and associated training for a staff member.
- £5,000 from the City of Nature Alliance to deliver work in the Bordesley and Highgate areas of Birmingham.
- £25,585 from Birmingham City Council to continue providing professional services through the employment of the Community Facilitator for the Future Parks Accelerator Project (FPA but also known as City of Nature Alliance).
- £9,000 from Birmingham City Council to continue collecting and processing valuable data (volunteer hours) from friends' groups.
- £13,264.84 from RSPB (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 (2022 - 2023)
- BOSF also received funds from various Neighbourhood Network Schemes and other small funders to provide the delivery of free outdoor tai-chi sessions 23 different sites.
  - £2,440 from Birmingham Sports & Physical Activity
  - £1,000 from William Cadbury
  - £17,570 from several Neighbourhood Network Schemes.

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During 22- 23 we paid particular attention to our profile and sought to cultivate relationships and partnerships with individuals and organisations with mutual interests. The foundations built and capitalized on during this year will be cornerstones of how we generate income e.g. the work we have begun with the Birmingham and Black Country Wildlife Trust.

### **Expenditure**

Although some individual elements of our expenditure dropped during 22 – 23, our overall expenditure increased by 35% and this reflects a return to normal working practices following COVID. Our staff costs increased as we were able to employ an additional member of staff (February 2022) and associated with having a busier team, were the increases in fundraising, travel expenses, Tai Chi and conferencing/networking.

### **Overview**

2022-2023 has been a very successful year for BOSF and we are very proud of all that we have achieved together. Our Trustees spent time deliberating on probable challenges and their foresight has steered BOSF to a place where we are more able to sustain ourselves.

Based on the information available in respect of the future, the reviewed forecast and cashflow for March 2024, 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 end of March 2023, the account held £25,253.55. Currently free reserves total £129, 783 which exceeds our requirement by £104,530. Trustees plan to review the reserves policy and expenditure plans and reserves levels may 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, 27<sup>th</sup> April 2022 and 26<sup>th</sup> April 2023.

### **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. Recent constitutional changes provided for an increase in the number of our trustees and in doing so, strengthened the skills, expertise and diversity of our Board.



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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.

**The Volunteer Development Co-ordinator's** role is to engage with park users and the wider community to develop opportunities for the community to be more active in their outdoor spaces. This work promotes good health and wellbeing through volunteering to improve spaces and encouraging the taking part in activities that promote self-care. Ideally, this work will generate the formation of Friends Of groups and associated activities creating more inclusiveness in all open spaces which leads to a more positive community feel.

**Freelance administrator** provides administrative support on a part time basis. Her main aim is to gather and compile volunteer data from Friend's groups, produce infographics and give administrative support in meetings.

**The Operations Manager** oversees all operations including staff, trustee recruitment, management accounts, project delivery, strategy and reporting to the Trustees. This post continues to strengthen our governance as a Charity and indeed as an employer.

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 (resigned 26 April 2023)  
A Grande Cristobal  
E Woolf MBE  
N Brown (appointed 26 April 2023)  
C Nijjar (appointed 26 April 2023)  
F Elder (appointed 26 April 2023)  
M Checkley (appointed 26 April 2023)  
R Brown (appointed 26 April 2023)  
S Watson (appointed 26 April 2023)  
N Worton (appointed 26 April 2023)

**Registered Office:**

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

**Bankers:**

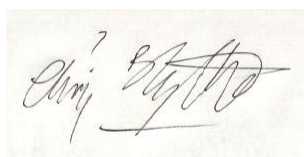
Unity Trust Bank plc  
Nine Brindley Place  
Birmingham  
B1 2HB

**Independent Examiner:**

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

Approved by the Board and signed on its behalf by:

Date: 15<sup>th</sup> January 2024

A handwritten signature in black ink on a light-colored background. The signature is cursive and appears to read 'C Blythe'.

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 2023**

I report to the trustees on my examination of the accounts of Birmingham Open Spaces Forum ('the charity') for the year ended 31 March 2023 which are set out on pages 12 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: 15 January 2024

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## Receipts and Payments Accounts

	Un-restricted funds	Restricted funds	Total funds 2023	Total funds 2022
	£	£	£	£
<b>RECEIPTS</b>				
Donations & grants	71,215	30,338	101,553	116,960
Charitable activities	34,285	71,850	106,135	132,192
Bank Interest	258	-	258	12
<b>Total receipts</b>	<b>105,758</b>	<b>102,188</b>	<b>207,946</b>	<b>249,164</b>
<b>PAYMENTS</b>				
Fundraising costs	-	19,547	19,547	6,400
Payments for volunteer data collection	12,090	-	12,090	9,520
Staff cost (note 1)	37,215	38,041	75,256	61,717
FRAP project costs	13,943	-	13,943	19,653
Tai Chi Sessions	477	35,124	35,601	15,743
Project professional fees	-	-	-	12,000
Other project costs	3,122	1,470	4,592	775
Freelance administrator	633	8,205	8,838	7,048
Consultancy fees	6,254	-	6,254	-
Conference & networking events	2,562	-	2,562	150
Website/IT costs	836	-	836	163
Travel expenses	2,344	-	2,344	1,187
Insurance	557	-	557	471
Payroll charges	284	-	284	240
Independent Examiners fee	1,000	-	1,000	650
Bank charges	228	-	228	126
Management Fee	(321)	321	-	-
<b>Total payments</b>	<b>81,224</b>	<b>102,708</b>	<b>183,932</b>	<b>135,843</b>
<b>NET OF RECEIPTS AND PAYMENTS</b>	<b>24,534</b>	<b>(520)</b>	<b>24,014</b>	<b>113,321</b>
Transfer of funds	4,635	(4,635)	-	-
Cash funds at beginning of year	100,614	65,249	165,863	52,542
<b>Cash funds at end of year</b>	<b>129,783</b>	<b>60,094</b>	<b>189,877</b>	<b>165,863</b>

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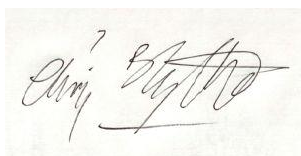
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## Statement of Assets and Liabilities

	Un-restricted funds £	Restricted funds £	2023 Total £	2022 Total £
Unity Trust Current account	104,529	60,094	<b>164,623</b>	145,679
Unity Trust Deposit account	25,254	-	<b>25,254</b>	20,184
Cash at bank and in hand	129,783	60,094	<b>189,877</b>	165,863

Approved by the Trustees and signed on their behalf by:

Date: 15<sup>th</sup> January 2024



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>2023</b>	2022
	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>
Salaries	<b>72,281</b>	59,263
Working from home allowance	<b>864</b>	710
National Insurance	-	-
Pension costs	<b>2,111</b>	1,744
Total	<b>75,256</b>	61,717

The charity's Trustees were not paid nor received any other benefits from employment in the year (2022: £nil). No expenses were reimbursed to Trustees in the year (2022: £nil).

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## 2. Fund movements

Restricted funds		Balance at beginning of year	Receipts	Payments	Transfer	Balance at end of year
Funder	Fund purpose	£	£	£	£	£
Awards for All	Volunteer Group Support	7,410	-	(7,410)	-	-
Selly Oak NNS	Thai Chi sessions in Selly Oak Park	4,282	4,700	(5,675)	-	3,307
Edgbaston NNS	Thai Chi sessions in Edgbaston Park	4,370	-	(3,930)	-	440
Erdington NNS	Thai Chi sessions in Erdington Park	3,840	5,000	(6,715)	-	2,125
Hall Green NNS	Thai Chi sessions in Hall Green Park	4,470	7,870	(7,784)	-	4,556
Ladywood NNS	Thai Chi sessions in Ladywood Park	1,670	-	(1,497)	-	173
Northfield NNS	Thai Chi sessions in Northfield Park	4,370	-	(4,295)	-	75
Perry Barr NNS	Thai Chi sessions in Perry Barr Park	1,810	-	(1,523)	-	287
Yardley Green NNS	Thai Chi sessions in Yardley Park	3,760	-	(2,812)	-	948
Birmingham Sport & Physical Activity Trust	Tai Chi sessions in local parks	-	2,440	(136)	-	2,304
William Cadbury Trust	Tai Chi sessions in local parks	-	1,000	(757)	-	243
Greening The Grey	Support for groups to clean up open spaces	3,624	28,585	(27,695)	-	4,514
Seedcorn Fund	Funding to support groups with applications for funding	23,600	30,000	(19,547)	-	34,053
FINCH RSPB	Engaging communities with their natural heritage	2,043	13,265	(10,673)	(4,635)	-
Dulverton Trust	Website development in 2024	-	4,328	-	-	4,328
Cona Project	Funding towards FPA programme	-	5,000	(2,259)	-	2,741
		65,249	102,188	(102,708)	(4,635)	60,094
Unrestricted funds						
General funds		100,614	105,758	(81,224)	4,635	129,783
Total		165,863	207,946	(183,932)	-	189,877

Transfers relate to the Finch Project in respect of an agreed fee for access to BOSF data and membership and on-going hosting of an RSPB resource on the website.

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**3. Transactions with related parties**

There were no transactions with related parties during the year that require disclosure in these accounts (2022: none).