

# **Birmingham Open Spaces Forum**

**Trustees' Annual Report and Receipts and Payments accounts for the year ended 31 March 2024**

**Registered Charity number 1170171**

Birmingham Open Spaces Forum  
Trustees Report and Receipts and Payments Accounts  
for the year ended 31 March 2024

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**Index**

	Page
Report of the trustees	3-10
Report of the Independent Examiner	11
Receipt and payment accounts	12
Statement of assets and liabilities	13
Notes to the accounts	14-16

Birmingham Open Spaces Forum  
Trustees Report and Receipts and Payments Accounts  
for the year ended 31 March 2024

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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 2024 which comply with the Charities Act 2011 and the Charity’s Constitution.

## 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 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, West Midlands Combined Authority Environmental Group, 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.

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)”.

## Report of the trustees continued

This year allowed us to implement some fundamental changes which confirmed our commitment to making BOSF more accessible to Birmingham's residents. This fundamental and progressive work was carried out alongside our continuing commitment to existing members and all that is involved in such.

Significant happenings during the year included the following;

- The appointment of 7 new Trustees complementing our existing 3 Trustees. The appointments brought new perspective and skills to our organisation and altered the demographics of our Board considerably.
- A comprehensive analysis of the demographics of our membership. This work was undertaken in collaboration with a student based at the University of Birmingham and whilst it elicited little information that we had not already presumed, it gave us insight into where and how we should target our efforts.
- The commencement of a thorough review of our membership criteria and particularly, barriers to membership.
- The appointment of two part time members of staff largely dedicated to encouraging involvement in parks and open spaces in areas of Birmingham considered as having poor access to environmental justice.

## 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 across 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 23 new groups and undertook intensive community development endeavours, the findings of which influenced our membership criteria debate. 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. At the close of the financial year our Twitter followers numbered 3,078, Facebook 2,614 and Instagram 1,242. Visits to our website increased by 4.7% and totaled 162,711.

Birmingham Open Spaces Forum  
Trustees Report and Receipts and Payments Accounts  
for the year ended 31 March 2024

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## Report of the trustees continued

During the year we organised many social events to bring our members together and provided additional opportunities for our members to meet with others interested in the environmental sector. These events included;

- Online social events taking place in November and January.
- 10 face to face social events took place at a variety of different member sites.
- An all-day conference
- Monthly 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.
- We celebrated our impressive volunteers at our Christmas Lecture which was attended by the Lord Mayor of Birmingham, and the cabinet member for Environment This event also provided a platform for Professor Mike Hardman who lectured attendees about urban food growing and how access to it might transition from informal to formal routes.

### **(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. £30,000 from Birmingham City Council ('BCC') enabled the generation of funds to the value of £241,749 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, member groups undertook **105,757** hours of volunteering work across a range of disciplines with a financial value of **£1,269,084**. 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.

We continued to support the City of Nature Alliance both strategically and as a delivery partner. We spent a great deal of time analysing why some areas of the City were largely bereft of environmental justice, (the fair treatment of people of all races, income, and cultures with respect to the development, implementation and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies, and their meaningful involvement in the decision-making processes of the government), and the barriers that created this vacuum. Our insight encouraged us to examine our membership criteria and the ways in which we work and as a result, we amended our membership criteria to encourage and allow wider membership. We trialed ways of working in areas of the city designated as having little environmental justice and intend to redefine our vision and strategy to align our work with our findings.

Birmingham Open Spaces Forum  
Trustees Report and Receipts and Payments Accounts  
for the year ended 31 March 2024

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## Report of the trustees continued

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*\*Environmental Justice: the fair treatment of people of all races, income, and cultures with respect to the development, implementation and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies, and their meaningful involvement in the decision-making processes of the government),*

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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, Birmingham & Black Country Wildlife Trust, RSPB, National Trust, University of Birmingham and the River Cole & Tyseley Energy Park.

The continuing development of both our good reputation and infrastructure allowed us to collaborate more extensively with partners to develop mutually beneficial projects which bring us closer to our charitable aims and objectives. We strengthened our links with the University of Birmingham by hosting a student placement tasked with a further examination of our membership. We continued to impress upon the Councillors throughout Birmingham and the Cabinet Member for the Environment the importance and significance of our volunteering network and its immense capabilities. These targeted communications have proved to be hugely beneficial considering the appointment of central Government commissioners who were appointed to run the Council in September 2023 following the issue of a Section 114 notice by the Council; our good working relationship has meant that we continued to receive support from Birmingham Council.

**(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 sought to establish new walking in nature activity sessions to attract new visitors to our green spaces. The numbers attending those sessions were disappointing however we have taken the feedback gleaned at the sessions and are using this to shape alternative delivery and methods of engagement e.g. moms and tots walks etc. Unfortunately, one of our team was absent from work due to illness for a period of 5 months and although this impacted on our capacity, the remaining staff members were willing and able to work flexibly to ensure that the majority of our usual commitments were honored. 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.

Birmingham Open Spaces Forum  
Trustees Report and Receipts and Payments Accounts  
for the year ended 31 March 2024

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## Report of the trustees continued

### Financial review

Over the year, BOSF received a total income of £219,666. There was an expenditure of £187,285 leaving an operating surplus of £32,381. Our net income has increased by £11,720. 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.

- £47,143 from Esmee Fairbairn towards unrestricted revenue costs to continue delivering BOSF core activities.
- £5,032 other unrestricted donations including an upfront amount in respect of a project with the RHS delivered during financial year 2024 – 2025.
- £10,000 from Awards for All to pilot community development initiatives in areas identified as having little access to environmental justice.
- £5,000 from John Feeney Trust to provide additionality to the above.
- £10,000 from Garfield Weston to continue our pilot work in the Bordesley and Highgate area.
- £9,188 from Sport England to deliver walking projects as a community development tool.
- £38,920 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). This included backpay of £7,780 in respect of the previous financial year.
- £18,000 from Birmingham City Council to continue collecting and processing valuable data (volunteer hours) from friends' groups. This amount included a late payment of £9,000.
- £28,585 from Birmingham City Council to support core costs associated with providing 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.
- £30,000 from Birmingham City Council to work with Get Grants to support effective applications to grants and trusts to improve local parks, allotments and green spaces.
- BOSF also received funds from various Neighbourhood Network Schemes and other small funders to provide the delivery of free outdoor tai-chi sessions;

Yardley Green NNS	£2,460
Perry Barr NNS	£2,320
Tai Chi city support	£ 600
Queens Park Tai Chi	£ 1,785
Sennellys Park Tai Chi	£2,130
Billesley Common Tai Chi	£1,800
Hall Green NNS	£2,580

### Expenditure

Our overall expenditure increased by 1.82%, which illustrates our commitment to consolidating our position following our expansion in the previous financial year. Our staff costs increased by 13.26% reflecting the additional staff that were

Birmingham Open Spaces Forum  
Trustees Report and Receipts and Payments Accounts  
for the year ended 31 March 2024

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## **Report of the trustees continued**

employed to pilot work in areas lacking in environmental justice. Associated with having a busier team, were the increases in fundraising, expenses and payroll.

### **Overview**

2023 – 2024 was a stable year for BOSF and one which gave us the opportunity to reflect on our direction of travel and how we might continue to grow our membership and widen our impact. The continuing endeavours of our insightful Trustees means time has been spent deliberating on risks and 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 being 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 2024, the account held £25,922. Unallocated reserves at the end of financial year 23 – 24 totaled £116,452. 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.

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.

## Report of the trustees continued

### Management and administration

**The Networking & Communications 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.

**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 Director** oversees all operations including staff, trustee recruitment, management accounts, project delivery, strategy, fundraising 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 Director, the Networking & Communications Development Manager and other members of the staff team.

Birmingham Open Spaces Forum  
Trustees Report and Receipts and Payments Accounts  
for the year ended 31 March 2024

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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:**

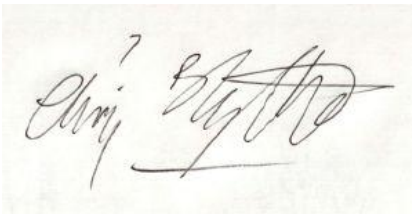
Unity Trust Bank plc  
Nine Brindley Place  
Birmingham  
B1 2HB

**Independent Examiner:**

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

Approved by the Board and signed on its behalf by:

Date: 23<sup>rd</sup> December 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

Birmingham Open Spaces Forum  
Trustees Report and Receipts and Payments Accounts  
for the year ended 31 March 2024

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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 2024**

I report to the trustees on my examination of the accounts of Birmingham Open Spaces Forum ('the charity') for the year ended 31 March 2024 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: 23/12/2024

Birmingham Open Spaces Forum  
Trustees Report and Receipts and Payments Accounts  
for the year ended 31 March 2024

## Receipts and Payments Accounts

	Un-restricted funds £	Restricted funds £	Total funds 2024 £	Total funds 2023 £
<b>RECEIPTS</b>				
Donations & grants	58,575	41,318	<b>99,893</b>	101,553
Charitable activities	60,520	58,585	<b>119,105</b>	106,135
Bank Interest	668	-	<b>668</b>	258
<b>Total receipts</b>	<b>119,763</b>	<b>99,903</b>	<b>219,666</b>	<b>207,946</b>
<b>PAYMENTS</b>				
Fundraising costs	-	17,193	<b>17,193</b>	19,547
Payments for volunteer data collection	11,260	-	<b>11,260</b>	12,090
Staff cost (note 1)	48,105	37,133	<b>85,238</b>	75,256
FRAP project costs	23,386	-	<b>23,386</b>	13,943
Tai Chi Sessions	35	17,824	<b>17,859</b>	35,601
Other project costs	531	2,956	<b>3,487</b>	4,592
Freelance administrator	31	8,908	<b>8,939</b>	8,838
Consultancy fees	280	-	<b>280</b>	6,254
Conference & networking events	11,289	-	<b>11,289</b>	2,562
Website/IT costs	3,961	-	<b>3,961</b>	836
Travel expenses	1,873	200	<b>2,073</b>	2,344
Training	176	-	<b>176</b>	-
Insurance	629	-	<b>629</b>	557
Payroll charges	284	-	<b>284</b>	284
Independent Examiners fee	1,000	-	<b>1,000</b>	1,000
Bank charges	231	-	<b>231</b>	228
<b>Total payments</b>	<b>103,071</b>	<b>84,214</b>	<b>187,285</b>	<b>183,932</b>
<b>NET OF RECEIPTS AND PAYMENTS</b>	<b>16,692</b>	<b>15,689</b>	<b>32,381</b>	<b>24,014</b>
Transfer of funds	<b>(1,850)</b>	<b>1,850</b>	-	-
Cash funds at beginning of year	129,783	60,094	189,877	165,863
<b>Cash funds at end of year</b>	<b>144,625</b>	<b>77,633</b>	<b>222,258</b>	<b>189,877</b>

Birmingham Open Spaces Forum  
Trustees Report and Receipts and Payments Accounts  
for the year ended 31 March 2024

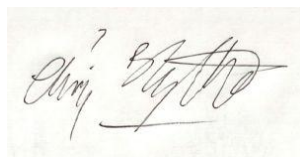
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## Statement of Assets and Liabilities

### Cash at bank and in hand

	Un-restricted funds £	Restricted funds £	2024 Total £	2023 Total £
Unity Trust Current account	118,703	77,633	<b>196,336</b>	164,623
Unity Trust Deposit account	25,922	-	<b>25,922</b>	25,254
<b>Total</b>	<b>144,625</b>	<b>77,633</b>	<b>222,258</b>	<b>189,877</b>

Approved by the Trustees and signed on their behalf by:



Date: 23<sup>rd</sup> December 2024

C Blythe  
Chair of Trustees

Birmingham Open Spaces Forum  
Trustees Report and Receipts and Payments Accounts  
for the year ended 31 March 2024

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## Notes to the financial statements

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

Staff costs comprise:	<b>2024</b>	2023
	<b>£</b>	£
Salaries	<b>81,717</b>	72,281
Working from home allowance	<b>864</b>	864
National Insurance	<b>225</b>	-
Pension costs	<b>2,432</b>	2,111
Total	<b>85,238</b>	75,256

The charity's Trustees were not paid nor received any other benefits from employment in the year (2023: £nil). No expenses were reimbursed to Trustees in the year (2023: £nil).

Birmingham Open Spaces Forum  
Trustees Report and Receipts and Payments Accounts  
for the year ended 31 March 2024

## 2. Fund movements

		At beginning of year	Receipts	Payments	Transfers	At end of year
Restricted funds	Funder	£	£	£	£	£
	Fund purpose					
	Volunteer Development					
Awards for All	Coordinator	-	10,000	(4,515)	-	5,485
	Volunteer Development					
John Feeney	Coordinator	-	5,000	(1,055)	-	3,945
BCC	Bordesley/Highgate	-	2,715	(2,216)	-	499
	Criss Cross	-	740	(740)	-	-
Sport England		-	9,188	(3,061)	-	6,127
Selly Oak NNS	Thai Chi sessions in Selly Oak Park	3,307	-	(2,485)	-	822
	Thai Chi sessions in Edgbaston Park					
Edgbaston NNS		440	-	-	-	440
Erdington NNS	Thai Chi sessions in Erdington Park	2,125	-	(1,643)	-	482
	Thai Chi sessions in Hall Green Park					
Hall Green NNS		4,556	2,580	(5,112)	-	2,025
Ladywood NNS	Thai Chi sessions in Ladywood Park	173	-	(60)	-	113
Northfield NNS	Thai Chi sessions in Northfield Park	75	-	-	-	75
Perry Barr NNS	Thai Chi sessions in Perry Barr Park	287	2,320	(1,535)	-	1,072
Yardley Green NNS	Thai Chi sessions in Yardley Park	948	2,460	(1,635)	-	1,773
Birmingham Sport & Physical Activity Trust	Tai Chi sessions in local parks	2,304	-	(2,065)	-	239
William Cadbury Trust	Tai Chi sessions in local parks	243	-	(35)	-	208
	Tai Chi sessions in Sennelleys Park	-	2,130	(980)	-	1,150
	Tai Chi sessions in Billesley Common	-	1,800	(840)	-	960
	Tai Chi sessions in Queens Park	-	1,785	(1,120)	-	665
	Tai Chi support	-	600	(315)	-	285
Greening The Grey	Support for groups to clean up open spaces	4,514	28,585	(34,949)	1,850	-
Seedcorn Fund	Funding to support groups with applications for funding	34,053	30,000	(17,193)	-	46,860
Dulverton Trust	Website development	4,328	-	-	-	4,328
Cona Project	Funding towards FPA programme	2,741	-	(2,661)	-	80
<b>Total restricted funds</b>		60,094	99,903	(84,214)	1,850	77,633

Birmingham Open Spaces Forum  
Trustees Report and Receipts and Payments Accounts  
for the year ended 31 March 2024

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**Unrestricted  
funds**

General funds	129,783	119,763	(103,071)	(1,850)	144,625
<b>Total funds</b>	<b>189,877</b>	<b>219,666</b>	<b>(187,285)</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>222,258</b>

Transfers relate to costs in excess of funding transferred from unrestricted funds.

**3. Transactions with related parties**

There were no transactions with related parties during the year that require disclosure in these accounts (2023: none).