

# **Birmingham Open Spaces Forum**

**Trustees' Annual Report and Receipts and Payments accounts for the year ended 31 March 2025**

**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 2025 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 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 including Birmingham City Council, Birmingham Tree People, Birmingham & Black Country Wildlife Trust, the Canal & River Trust, the RSPB, the University of Birmingham and Birmingham City University, 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)”.

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## 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;

- A review of our vision, mission and values allowing for more succinct and definitive statements to determine our way of working and why we exist.
- Implementation of our revised membership criteria meaning that barriers to membership were significantly reduced.
- An amendment to our Constitution to allow for an advisory committee chaired by a nominated Trustee and including 2 other nominated Trustees.
- An increase in our membership numbers of 15%.
- The appointment of an Operations Director tasked with reviewing the existing staff structure and operating practices.
- Consolidated the remit of our Committee and appointment of one of our Trustees to oversee it.
- A partnership project with the RHS and HMP Birmingham, where prisoners worked alongside our members in community food growing groups, with the produce eventually being shared across Birmingham.
- Definitive endeavours to better engage food growing communities into our forum, especially allotment associations.
- Continuing engagement work in areas of Birmingham identified as having little access to environmental justice.
- The appointment of our first ambassador acting as a passionate advocate of what we do and encouraging involvement in our charity.
- The commencement of a series of events to commemorate our 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary as a constituted organisation.

## 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.**

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.

Originally, Birmingham Open Spaces Forum (BOSF) existed to bring together people across Birmingham with an interest in parks and green open spaces and our work supported groups who wanted to ensure that green open spaces were accessible to people who live and work across the city. We did this, and continue to do so, by providing information to groups and individuals, creating opportunities for groups and individuals interested in open spaces to share skills, knowledge and experience by arranging networking and knowledge exchange events in addition to delivering communications about the environmental agenda and working with partners. During 2024, we challenged ourselves to involve persons and groups whose priorities and passions were not necessarily aligned to ours. Using a mantra of "you

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## Report of the trustees continued

don't know, what you don't know", we extended our community development endeavours to areas of Birmingham identified as having little access to environmental justice and put in place the foundations to realise groups and members from those areas. Particularly significant were the amendments to our membership criteria. Our endeavours saw our membership numbers increase by 15% and establish groups in two areas of the city, (Balsall Heath West and Kings Norton South), where hitherto, we had never had a presence.

As ever, we organised many events for our members to engage with others interested in the environmental sector and the latter part of the financial year saw us embark on a series of events which continued throughout the subsequent financial year to celebrate our 20th anniversary as a constituted organisation. These events included;

- A wassail at Perry Hall Park.
- A commemorative tree planting event at The Dell in Druids Heath.
- 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.
- After school study groups and nature walks piloted in areas designated as having little access to environmental justice.
- Coffee mornings at Quinton Meadows, Hodge Hill Common, Marsh Hill Allotments, Ward End Park, Selly Oak Park.
- A Christmas Lecture to celebrate, entertain and inspire further our impressive volunteers; the lecture was presented by Professor Silvia Gullino, whose lecture centred on urban challenges and particularly, safety in parks.

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

With support from Birmingham City Council, 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 £229,623 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 **106,410** hours of volunteering work across a range of disciplines with an estimated financial value of **£1,340,766**, which was an impressive 6% increase on financial year 23 – 24. 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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## Report of the trustees continued

We continued to support the City of Nature Alliance both strategically and as a delivery partner. Using the data and anecdotal evidence collected during the previous financial year, we revised our ways of working to make ourselves more high profile; our team facilitated events and engagement with nature through a series of activities in parks and communal spaces, which promoted interaction with local communities. Our objective was to encourage people to realise the opportunities that lie within local green spaces and in doing so, realise a sense of custodianship and hopefully, membership of our Forum. Complementing this work were the changes to our membership criteria, which removed barriers to membership.

Although we had previously worked with allotment and community food growing groups, we identified that the number of these type of groups within our membership was particularly poor. We formed a more considered relationship with food growers throughout the city by virtue of a project with the RHS and Birmingham HMP. The project saw prisoners grow food produce from seed, and when ready, these plants were delivered to community food growing sites throughout Birmingham. This led to three allotment and community growing spaces contacting us to become members. It also strengthened our partnership with the Birmingham and District Allotment Confederation and Social Farms and Gardens, creating further opportunities to work together and to raise awareness of BOSF membership and its benefits to the food-growing sector. As part of this future work, we benefited from a report undertaken by a student from Birmingham University about the Right to Grow in Birmingham and how difficult it is to access community space to do so.

Unfortunately, Birmingham Council remained in special measures, and we worked to promote the importance of parks and green open spaces with senior Council personnel, making them aware of possible implications that might arise from any pecuniary decisions they considered. We facilitated visits to several of our sites for the Leader of the Council and engaged frequently with local ward Councillors informing them of what we do and how their constituents worked to shape and protect local green spaces. We undertook a survey of our members to establish the impact of cuts to the Ranger Service and reported the findings to Birmingham Council. We created a profile which illustrated, and continues to illustrate, our worth to the Council and the savings that can be made as a result of their support and a limited degree of investment.

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 the Birmingham & Black Country Wildlife Trust, RSPB, National Trust, the University of Birmingham and the City of Birmingham University.

**(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 some funding to allow for the provision of Tai Chi sessions across Birmingham but worked to empower existing members with regard to fundraising for their own financial support to do so. We have continued to

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## Report of the trustees continued

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, trough planting and improved community cohesion.

More widely, we developed a communications delivery plan which enabled us to better promote our work and that of our members, as well as engage more competently with environmental events, activities and partners. The plan includes a commitment to create and launch a new website in 2025, better able to recruit more members and support existing ones.

## Financial review

Over the year, BOSF received a total income of £159,707. There was an expenditure of £190,701 leaving a shortfall of £30,994 which was supported by our free reserves. The organisation received grants from various funders and these sources of income have allowed us to finance all our activities as well as guarantee a consistent restricted and unrestricted stream of funding.

- £20,000 from William Cadbury in respect of staff costs.
- £10,000 from Garfield Weston for core costs
- £3,600 part payment from the RHS in respect of a partnership food growing project with the RHS & HMP Birmingham.
- £3,859 from Public Health Birmingham to continue the project referred to above during 25 – 26.
- £5,750 from Sport England to work in areas considered to be lacking in environmental justice.
- £9,000 Commonwealth Games Funding to advance our work via a series of events and exhibitions.
- £21,525 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).
- £15,640 from Birmingham City Council to continue collecting and processing valuable data (volunteer hours) from friends' groups.
- £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.
- £2,611 from donations brought about by the endeavours of our Ambassador.
- BOSF also received funds from small funders to provide the delivery of free outdoor tai-chi sessions;
  - National Lottery      £1,575
  - AVFC                      £ 878

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## **Report of the trustees continued**

### **Expenditure**

Our overall expenditure increased by just 1.82%, which illustrated our commitment to stabilizing our charity bearing in mind the loss of income associated with the final payment of the Esmee Fairburn fund and our endeavours to find new, core funding. Our staff costs increased by 26% reflecting the additional staff that were employed to work in areas lacking in environmental justice. Associated with having a busier team, were the increases in fundraising, expenses and payroll.

### **Overview**

2024 – 2025 was a stable year for BOSF which saw us determine our direction of travel and implement a membership structure allowing us to better fulfil our objectives. The continuing endeavours of our insightful Trustees means time has been spent deliberating on risks and probable challenges and their foresight continues to steer BOSF to a place where we are able to sustain ourselves.

Based on the information available in respect of the future, the reviewed forecast and cashflow for March 2025, 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 2025, the account held £47,011. Unallocated reserves at the end of financial year 24 – 25 totaled £101,415. Trustees reviewed the reserves policy and expenditure plans and reserve levels were adjusted in 25 – 26.

### **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, 26<sup>th</sup> April 2023 and 24<sup>th</sup> April 2024.

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

All trustees are elected at a BOSF Annual General Meeting, four of which are recruited specifically for their skills and/or knowledge to allow them to contribute effectively to the Charity's activities and to discharge their obligations as Trustees. In this particular financial year, one of our Trustees, Nicola Brown, stepped down from her role due to caring responsibilities.

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.



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## 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.

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**Reference and administrative information**

**Charity Number:** 1170171

**Trustees:**

C Blythe (Chair)  
A Grande Cristobal  
E Woolf MBE  
C Nijjar  
F Elder  
M Checkley  
N Brown (resigned May 2025)  
R Brown  
S Watson  
N Worton

**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: 16<sup>th</sup> January 2026

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 2025**

I report to the trustees on my examination of the accounts of Birmingham Open Spaces Forum ('the charity') for the year ended 31 March 2025 which are set out on pages 12 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  
1 Saracen Close, Ettington, CV37 7SZ

Date: 16 January 2026

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## Receipts and Payments Accounts

	Un-restricted funds £	Restricted funds £	Total funds 2025 £	Total funds 2024 £
<b>RECEIPTS</b>				
Donations & grants	12,611	33,203	<b>45,814</b>	99,893
Charitable activities	41,360	71,444	<b>112,804</b>	119,105
Bank Interest	1,089	-	<b>1,089</b>	668
<b>Total receipts</b>	<b>55,060</b>	<b>104,647</b>	<b>159,707</b>	219,666
<b>PAYMENTS</b>				
Fundraising costs	-	23,803	<b>23,803</b>	17,193
Payments for volunteer data collection	12,480	-	<b>12,480</b>	11,260
Staff cost (note 1)	57,386	50,581	<b>107,967</b>	85,238
FRAP project costs	18,368	-	<b>18,368</b>	23,386
Tai Chi Sessions	(38)	7,424	<b>7,386</b>	17,859
Other project costs	1,018	1,760	<b>2,778</b>	3,487
Freelance administrator	-	7,068	<b>7,068</b>	8,939
Consultancy fees	113	-	<b>113</b>	280
Conference & networking events	1,263	-	<b>1,263</b>	11,289
Website/IT costs	1,021	2,510	<b>3,531</b>	3,961
Travel expenses	2,955	160	<b>3,115</b>	2,073
Training	-	-	-	176
Insurance	724	-	<b>724</b>	629
Payroll charges	312	-	<b>312</b>	284
Independent Examiners fee	1,100	-	<b>1,100</b>	1,000
Bank charges	275	-	<b>275</b>	231
AGM costs	418	-	<b>418</b>	-
<b>Total payments</b>	<b>97,395</b>	<b>93,306</b>	<b>190,701</b>	187,285
<b>NET OF RECEIPTS AND PAYMENTS</b>	<b>(42,335)</b>	<b>11,341</b>	<b>(30,994)</b>	32,381
Transfer of funds	<b>(875)</b>	<b>875</b>	-	-
Cash funds at beginning of year	144,625	77,633	222,258	189,877
<b>Cash funds at end of year</b>	<b>101,415</b>	<b>89,849</b>	<b>191,264</b>	222,258

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## Statement of Assets and Liabilities

### Cash at bank and in hand

	Un- restricted funds £	Restricted funds £	2025 Total £	2024 Total £
Unity Trust Current account	54,404	89,849	<b>144,253</b>	196,336
Unity Trust Deposit account	47,011	-	<b>47,011</b>	25,922
<b>Total</b>	<b>101,415</b>	<b>89,849</b>	<b>191,264</b>	<b>222,258</b>

Approved by the Trustees and signed on their behalf by:

Date: 16<sup>th</sup> January 2026

C Blythe  
Chair of Trustees

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## Notes to the financial statements

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

Staff costs comprise:

	2025	2024
	£	£
Salaries	102,346	81,717
Working from home allowance	1,278	864
National Insurance	1,286	225
Pension costs	3,057	2,432
<b>Total</b>	<b>107,967</b>	<b>85,238</b>

The charity's Trustees were not paid nor received any other benefits from employment in the year (2024: £nil). No expenses were reimbursed to Trustees in the year (2024: £nil).

### 2. Fund movements

		At beginning of year	Receipts	Payments	Transfers	At end of year
		£	£	£	£	£
<b>Restricted funds</b>	<b>Funder</b>					
	Volunteer Development					
Awards for All	Coordinator	5,485	-	(6,741)	1,256	-
	Volunteer Development					
John Feeney	Coordinator	3,945	-	(3,970)	26	-
BCC	Bordesley/Highgate	499	-	(526)	27	-
Sport England	Family Movement in Balsall Heath	6,127	5,750	(8,292)	-	3,585
Various	Thai Chi sessions in parks	9,862	2,453	(7,424)	(195)	4,696
Birmingham Sport	Tai Chi sessions in local parks	239	-	-	(239)	-
William Cadbury	Community Development					
Trust	Coordinator	208	20,000	-	-	20,208
	Support for groups to clean up					
Greening The Grey	open spaces	-	28,585	(34,970)	-	(6,385)
	Funding to support groups with					
Seedcorn Fund	applications for funding	46,860	30,000	(23,803)	-	53,057
Dulverton Trust	Website development	4,328	-	(2,500)	-	1,828
BCC	City of Nature project 2024	80	5,000	(5,080)	-	-
BCC	Community & Prison project	-	3,859	-	-	3,859
BCC	City of Nature project 2025	-	9,000	-	-	9,000
<b>Total restricted funds</b>		77,633	104,647	(93,306)	875	89,849
<b>Unrestricted funds</b>						
General funds		144,625	55,060	(97,395)	(875)	101,415
<b>Total funds</b>		222,258	159,707	(190,701)	-	191,264

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## **Notes to the financial statements continued**

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 (2024: none).